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2017 Tour of Anchorage returns to the trails on Sunday **The newest installment of the community's biggest ski event** **marks 100 years of ski racing in Anchorage**

ANCHORAGE – Nordic skiers from around Alaska and beyond will celebrate snow and 100 years of ski racing in our community at the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage's premier event, the Tour of Anchorage on Sunday, March 5. This year's event will also mark the first traditional Tour in three years – low snow the past two seasons forced organizers to alter the usual event. That won't be a problem this year as skiers are excited to revisit the Tour's 25-, 40- and 50-kilometer races across town.

Rich in history and unique in its courses, the Tour of Anchorage brings together cross country skiers of all ages and abilities to enjoy Anchorage's beautiful trails and participate in one of North America's largest ski races. The 2017 Tour of Anchorage is proud to be sponsored by ConocoPhillips.

This year is extra special as it marks our 100th anniversary as a skiing community. The first local ski races, documented in 1917, consisted of 5-mile loops that started and ended downtown on 4th Avenue. Skiing took place on the streets in those days, plowing was minimal and trails were often the result of dogsled, foot and horse travel, and skis. We've come a long way since then.

In 1988, the Tour of Anchorage arrived with the completion of Coastal Trail. There were around 175 participants. Popularity grew and for many years the number of participants ranged between 1,400 and 2,000. In 2007, the Tour hosted a record 2,050 participants.

Around 750 skiers are current registered for the 2017 event, including 50 from out of state; and a few hundred more are expected to sign up before Sunday. Typically, the Tour offers skiers the 25K classic, 25K freestyle, 40K freestyle and 50K freestyle events. Skiers of all abilities, from new skiers to elite racers, enjoy this unique community experience. The 25K races start at APU while the 40K and 50K races start at Service High School; all races end in the Kincaid Park stadium.

Tour of Anchorage bib pick up is noon-7p.m. Friday and 10 a.m.-noon Saturday at the APU Moseley Center. Race start times on Sunday for 50K: 8:30 a.m. at Service High School; 40K: 9:30 a.m. at Service High School; 25K Classic: 10 a.m. at APU; and 25K Freestyle: 11 a.m. at APU. Finish line festivities at Kincaid Park will feature music, entertainment and post-race food and beverages thanks to 49th State Brewing Company, Great Harvest Bread Company and Kaladi Brothers Coffee.

There are still opportunities to participate. Register and learn more about the race at www.anchoragenordicski.com/races/tour-of-anchorage/.

NSAA is dedicated to sustaining trails year round and providing Nordic skiing programs that encourage healthy activities and lifestyles for all Alaskans.