



## 2021 Minnesota Nordic Skiing Lifetime Achievement Awards

### Minnesota Nordic Skiing High School, Collegiate and Biathlon Recognitions



# 2021



# Minnesota Nordic Skiing Lifetime Achievement Awards Program

*\* Due to the coronavirus, the awards program was not held \**

## *2021 Minnesota High School, Collegiate and Biathlon Skier Recognitions*

Minnesota High School Nordic  
Individual Champions:  
Molly Moening, Roger Anderson

Minnesota Based Nordic  
Collegiate High Achievers:  
Maj-Lis Helmer,  
John Schwinghammer

Minnesota Based Biathlon  
High Achievers:  
Cheresa Bouley, Matej Cervenka

### **Recognition of past Lifetime Award Recipients**

2006 Glen Johnstone  
2007 Norm Oakvik  
2008 Mike Marciniak, Anne Ryken  
2009 Lars Kindem, George Hovland  
2010 Bob O'Hara, Pat Lanin  
2011 Bjorn Lasserude  
2012 Jack Jeffery  
2013 John Filander  
2014 Emily Lanin, Bill Simpson  
2015 Avho Taipale  
2016 Bob Montebello  
2017 Bonnie Fuller-Kask, Larry Myers  
2018 Bruce Adelsman, Darby Nelson  
2019 Glenn A. Fuller, Roland Ring-Jarvi  
2020 Paula Anderson, Gary Larson

### **Recognition of Lifetime Legacy Award Recipients**

2016 Nikolai Anikin  
2016 Robin Baker  
2016 Charlie Banks  
2016 John Burton  
2016 Earle Dickinson  
2016 Tim Knopp  
2016 Jinny McWethy  
2016 Brother Charles Rademacher  
2016 Toni St. Pierre  
2016 Al Waverek  
2016 Don Wolter

***2021 Lifetime Achievement Awards - Dave Paulson, Mark Helmer***



# 2021 MINNESOTA NORDIC SKIING LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

## Dave Paulson

Dave Paulson set foot on Nordic skis at an early age and has not slowed down over the last seventy years! His history is one of a deep love for the sport and of the people he has met along the way. “Nordic skiing has been a crowbar in my life opening doors and introducing me to some of the most wonderful people I have grown to cherish.” Because of Dave’s passion and dedication to skiing he has also opened up many doors for others and made a lasting impact on the sport and people’s lives.

Growing up in a small Norwegian town in southwestern Minnesota, Dave’s grandfather set up a small ski jump on his farm for his grandson to enjoy. This instilled a love of skiing and his grandfather taught him to ski by skiing through the woods each day to check on animal traps they had set. The next step was getting into ski racing and then he was really hooked. This experience explains why in his first year coaching at North High School in Minneapolis that he covered ski jumping, alpine, AND Nordic skiing!



Over the years Dave has given much to the sport. An exhaustive list of his involvement follows:

Consultant and instructor of ski trail design that influenced many trails around the state

Chair of the *Minneapolis Nordic Ski Coaches Association*

Founder of the Nordic ski program at *Southwest High School*

Academic Coordinator for the National *US Nordic Development Team* that was stationed at Telemark and was called the Telemark Academy

Regional Coordinator for the *Bill Koch Ski League*

Regional Examiner for the *Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA)*

Co-organized the *First Banks Loppet* with Steve Sponsel in 1981 which was the predecessor of the *City of Lakes Loppet*

Chair of the *Minnesota Governors Trail Development Committee*

Regional Technical Representative for Swix and Fischer ski companies

Chief of Start for the *Korteloppet* and *Junior Birkie* for the last several decades as well as holding every non-paid position for the *Birkebeiner!*

*Loppet Foundation* race and program volunteer

Level 200 USSA Coach most recently coaching U-16 skiers at the *New England Championships*

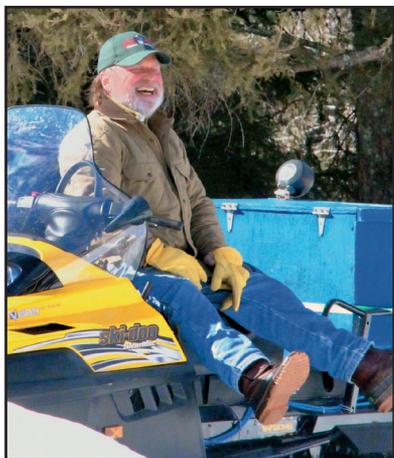
Nordic Ski Coach with the *Chanhassen-Chaska High School* program since 2012

Dave shared, “Nordic skiing has defined much of who I am. If someone told me that I could only choose one sport in heaven and had to say good bye to all of the other sports for all of eternity, I wouldn’t blink. I would grab a pair of cross country skis off that heavenly ski rack and head out into the snow.”

The Minnesota Nordic ski community is grateful for Dave’s very significant contributions over the decades. Dave is truly deserving of the Minnesota Nordic Skiing Lifetime Achievement Award!

# 2021 MINNESOTA NORDIC SKIING LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

## Mark Helmer



Mark Helmer was born in Duluth, Minnesota. He attended high school at Duluth Denfeld and played hockey. After high school he went to Alaska Methodist University, now Alaska Pacific University, on a hockey scholarship. Mark had never seen anyone on Nordic skis before he saw, from his dorm room, someone going across a snowy field on narrow things on their feet as well as in their hands. He learned it was cross country skiing. Coincidentally, Mark had a student job that included checking out Nordic ski equipment to students on weekends. It was 1971 and Mark taught himself how to ski and practiced his skiing at night to begin with.

Mark began racing in 1980, and continued to compete for three decades. Over the course of those years, he competed in Norway, Sweden, Canada, and Alaska in addition to many Minnesota marathon races including Mora, Finlandia, and Ely. Mark skied 23 Birkebeiners, finishing in the top 100 twice, and top 200 eight times. Mark was a charter skier in the Pepsi Challenge and skied it 20 times before ending his streak as he became a father and his

priorities changed. Mark estimates that he skied in about 75 marathons during his competitive skiing years. One of his ski racing memories, Mark recalls, was encountering a moose in the middle of a trail in Alaska.

In 1982 Mark began ski training on a private classic style 10km ski trail near Two Harbors owned and maintained by Charlie Banks. (Charlie was honored, posthumously, with the Minnesota Nordic Skiing Lifetime Achievement Legacy Award in 2016). Mark and Charlie became the best of friends with their shared passion for skiing, maintaining ski trails, and fishing. In 1992 Charlie's wife, Dorothy, died unexpectedly. Mark suggested opening up the trails to the public "to give Charlie something to do" and Charlie agreed. Mark also suggested to name the trail system Korkki in honor of the Korkki family who homesteaded the land in 1910. Charlie's wife was a Korkki. Charlie sold some of his land to Mark and he built a Chalet structure. Mark added maintenance buildings with the chalet thus officially establishing the Charlie Banks Ski Trails and Korkki Nordic Ski Center. Mark also established a non-profit, with a board of directors, to keep the trails open and handle the business end of the operation. Mark credits his wife, Elizabeth, for her enduring support of his efforts and commitment to the Korkki Trails.

Over the years, Mark and Charlie put in countless hours of trail improvement, maintenance, and grooming on the Korkki Trails – keeping it a traditional narrow tracked classical trail system of pristine skiing through pine trees, streams, ponds and with some challenging hilly sections. Mark notes that the Korkki Trails are "old-time, old fashioned, single track skiing!" Mark is known for his perfectionistic art of ski trail grooming and, at times, will be out on trails in the wee hours (4:00 am etc) to catch the "right" grooming time given snow and temperature conditions. In addition to the trails, Korkki also hosts three community events. The Erik Judeen Memorial Classic Race, which started in 1963 and is the oldest ski race in Minnesota. Korkki also hosts the nearly 40-year-old Bangin' in the Brush 10km Trail Run and more recently, the Balsam Bash 20km Fat Tire Bike Race. Korkki also hosts the Two Harbors High School Ski Invitational, all of which Mark has been the "Assistant" Chief of Trails.

Mark has three daughters, Chelsea, Anna-Britta, and Maj-Lis. Mark states that one of his biggest delights about Nordic skiing has been watching his daughters learn to ski and become accomplished skiers and racers. Very impressively, Maj-Lis is receiving the 2021 Minnesota Based Collegiate High Achievement Award as she is a freshman skiing for St. Scholastica. This is the first time that MNSA has honored both a parent and child in the same annual Lifetime Achievement Awards recognitions!

In reflecting on his love of Nordic skiing and the Korkki trails, Mark notes that watching all of the kids and families come through Korkki is a highlight as well as his deep friendship with Charlie Banks that spawned what Korkki Nordic is today. He states that there is nothing better than putting Pine Tar on his wooden skis then going out for a nice ski tour on the Korkki Trails and beyond. In the nonskiing part of his life, Mark is retired after 34 years in the railroad industry. Mark is also President of the Duluth Retriever Club. For all that Mark has contributed to Minnesota Nordic skiing, especially through his tireless dedication to the Korkki Nordic Ski Center, Mark is truly deserving of the Minnesota Nordic Skiing Lifetime Achievement Award!

## 2021 MINNESOTA BASED BIATHLON HIGH ACHIEVERS:

### Cheresa Bouley

A new name has suddenly appeared among the female leaders in the Minnesota biathlon scene. Cheresa Bouley, from Zimmerman, MN, has added biathlon to her skiing repertoire and is having a great time of it! Among skiers, Cheresa might be considered a late comer to the sport after only having begun Nordic skiing in 7th grade. Thanks to her mom, who is a skier, her high school coach, Zach Varty, and most notably, her current coach, Bill Meyer, Cheresa has been learning remarkable things as she makes her way up with each level in biathlon competition.

Cheresa was a MN High School State Meet qualifier her last 3 years of high school. She continued on with her skiing at St. Cloud State University, though this last year the collegiate competition was canceled for SCSU so most of her racing was done independently through CXC races. The highlight of her year was skiing at the North American Biathlon Championships in West Yellowstone, Montana. Cheresa earned a 6th and 3rd place finish among the Junior Women. Most importantly she was able to finish ahead of several women who she had previously competed with at Junior Worlds! That proved to be a great boost in confidence motivation as she sets her sights on her future goal of making the Olympic team.

Cheresa has learned a great deal about working hard and having the drive to do well. She shared that putting in effort produces amazing results and that relying on God and her faith have increased in importance. Cheresa is the daughter of Chad and Lynda Bouley.



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### Matej Cervenka



Matej Cervenka is off to a great biathlon start both in terms of his background and his ability! Coming from a family of skiers and also from a heritage that excels at biathlon (Czech Republic). Matej's path certainly had some built-in support from early on. Though last year was pretty limited in terms of competition, Matej competed in roller ski biathlons over the summer through the last MN Cup race last March at Mt. Itasca. He was consistently the top U17 male finisher. In addition, he was the top U17 male finisher in US Biathlon's Virtual Summer Nationals held in Jericho, Vermont. He also participated in the Czech Republic's 2019 Summer Czech Nationals and won his age group. Quite impressive in a country that is richly steeped in biathlon.

He has had several strong mentors in his brother, Vasek, and Garrett Beckrich who are fellow biathletes. He shared that they have taught him to be patient and to not rush things. He was also able to see how hard work pays off through seeing their success. One skiing experience he has really enjoyed is going to training camp in Colorado with his dad, Vladmir, who serves as his

biathlon coach. Matej also skied in the MN State High School Ski Meet and placed 29th. The reason he has enjoyed adding biathlon to his ski portfolio is because it does not involve classic skiing!

Bill Meyer, a MN Biathlon coach, shared, "Matej grew up around biathlon as his parents coached at Mt Itasca. Early on he was known for his pushup ability and other strength measures appropriate for his age. He has continued to persevere and increase his shooting skills and skiing skills with unusual dedication. In the past year, he has shown himself to be the dominant under age 17 male biathlete in our state and regional races in MN." The future looks bright for MN Biathlon and Matej!

# 2021 MINNESOTA HIGH SCHOOL NORDIC INDIVIDUAL PURSUIT CHAMPIONS:

## Molly Moening

Molly came into the 2021 ski season as the reigning individual high school champion, as well as part of the St. Paul Highland Park team that also earned the top spot on the podium in 2020. Not knowing just how the 2021 season might go because of Covid was a bit nerve-racking. Molly wondered if she was just training for nothing at times. However, thanks to a strong and cohesive team, good coaching, and Molly's drive and determination, she and her team took things in stride and prepared like a State Meet was going to happen - and that attitude and preparation proved to be true! Molly once again skied to victory as the 2021 State Champion and her team placed an impressive 2nd.

Molly grew up surrounded by skiing and her dad, Brad, has served as her coach for her entire career. Though she felt a bit of added stress coming in as the reigning champion, she was better prepared for what to expect. She credits her sisters, Erin and Maeve, in helping her to ski at her best. Molly also had consistent strong finishes at the 2021 CXC races. From skiing she has learned discipline in terms of staying focused on training year round, leadership skills in her role as an older skier on the team, and also how to be a good teammate. Molly looks forward to continued good training as she prepares for her last State Meet next year - which has always been her favorite race - and being surrounded by a great group of athletes. Molly is the daughter of Brad and Eileen Moening.



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## Roger Anderson



Sweet revenge. Coming down the final hill of the 2020 MSHSL Nordic pursuit, Roger Anderson of Robbinsdale Armstrong was in the lead over Henry Snider of Mound Park Academy. Roger had won the freestyle leg of the event, and was determined to win State. Coming into the stadium, Snider found another gear and managed to nip Roger by 6/10's of a second and the win. With that in his mind, Roger prepared for the 2021 State Meet, determined to avenge the loss. The classic race was first – Roger's strongest event. He finished with the best time in the field. Starting first in the freestyle, Roger was closely followed by strong competitors. Despite a hard charge by Colin Freed of Wayzata, Roger held him off to win the state title by 4.1 seconds, becoming the first individual state champion in Armstrong school history.

Roger began his ski career as a 4-year-old in the Theodore Wirth MYSL club. The next stop was the Fast Kids program at the Loppet Foundation. By 7th grade, Roger was racing on the ski team at Robbinsdale Armstrong. In addition to prowess in classic and freestyle, Roger finished 4th in the SkiX at the Super CXC regional finals in March.

Next year Roger will be skiing for the University of New Hampshire Wildcats in the Eastern Intercollegiate Ski Association, joining his sister Lucinda on the team. Academically Roger is looking forward to pursuing his interest in forestry and furthering his interest in mountain biking in the Granite State. Roger is the son of Sara and Willie Anderson.

# 2021 MINNESOTA BASED NORDIC COLLEGIATE HIGH ACHIEVERS:

## Maj-Lis Helmer

Maj-Lis Helmer was born in Duluth, Minnesota. She began skiing at the age of three, when her parents, Mark Helmer and Elizabeth Holliday, would strap on some skis and begin their endeavor to find the blue M&Ms that were previously hidden along the trail for motivation. She grew up skiing and adventuring in the woods of her home trails, Korkki Nordic. She graduated from Duluth East High School in 2020, where she competed in swimming, nordic skiing, and rowing. She qualified for the State Nordic Ski Meet three times.

After graduating, she chose to attend the College of Saint Scholastica where she is currently pursuing degrees in Exercise Physiology and Psychology, while competing in Nordic Skiing and Cross Country Running. During her freshman ski season, her top result was 11th place in the 15k skate at the NCAA Central Region Championships. She also qualified for the NCAA Skiing Championships in Jackson, New Hampshire.

Looking back on her ski journey thus far, she is grateful for the opportunities and lessons learned on and off the trails. Skiing has shaped her into who she is today and has taught her to be humble, dedicated, and passionate. She believes that working hard, but remembering to have fun while doing so are the keys to success. She is grateful for her amazing coaches that have not only helped her to develop into a good athlete, but a better person as well.

Maj-Lis's ski results in 2020-2021 placed her as the highest ranked Minnesota based female Nordic Collegiate skier in the Central Colligate Ski Association (CCSA).



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## John Schwinghammer



John Schwinghammer is the highest ranked Minnesota based male Nordic Collegiate skier in the Central Collegiate Ski Association (CCSA) for the 2020-2021 season - skiing for St. Scholastica.

John grew up in Mora, MN and says he was on skis at 2 years old “ski toddling” with his parents. He participated in the Mora Fast Tracks ski instruction program through elementary school. He joined the Mora High School Nordic team as a seventh grader and skied through his senior year.

As a junior in 2016, John finished 41th at the Minnesota High School State Nordic Ski Meet and help Mora attain a 7th place team finish. As a senior John finished in 14th place at the State Meet as the Mora Boys team finished in 5th place as a team. John is also a very talented runner. He was a member of the Mora Boys Cross Country team which won the Minnesota

High School Cross Country Championship in 2014, 2015, and 2016. His senior year, in 2016, he was a member of the State Champion 4 X 800 Relay Team.

After high school John attended South Dakota State College for two years and focused on cross county running and track and field. He then transferred to St. Scholastica for the Covid shortened 2019-2020 Nordic ski season. In 2020 John competed in 14 events and scored for the team in 4 events. His best finish was 8th in the Rhinelander Classic race. At regionals he placed 11th in both the skate and classic events.

In 2021 John skied Varsity the last three weekends of the season. His best finishes were 5th in at Ishpeming and 6th at Duluth, both classic races. John qualified for Nationals and had a great classic race going, at a pace that could have earned him All-American status (Top 10), but unfortunately, he had a bad crash that set him back in his race.

John will be skiing for St. Scholastica next year as a 5th year senior. He is looking forward to improving upon the successes that he had this Covid-19 impacted season. John is majoring in Chemistry with a minor in Psychology. His academic / career goal is to be accepted into medical school and become a physician. Regarding his participation in Nordic skiing, John noted “I really like skiing, being outdoors, being able to spend special times with my friends on snow. Skiing also helps me get away from the day to day stressors.”

# MINNESOTA NORDIC SKI ASSOCIATION

Having formed in 2001 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and advancing the sport of cross country/Nordic skiing in Minnesota, the Minnesota Nordic Ski Association (MNSA) is now in its 20th year of operation. MNSA's founding and primary focus throughout its history is to serve as the liaison organization between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Grant-In-Aid (GIA) Ski Pass Program and ski clubs, trail organizations, cities, counties, and state parks that rely on GIA funding to maintain, improve, and groom the 93 public ski trails in the ski pass system. MNSA has had numerous accomplishments over 20 years that has led to the improvement and enhancement of the Ski GIA program. In 2006 MNSA established the annual Minnesota Nordic Skiing Lifetime Award to recognize individuals who have contributed significantly to the advancement of Nordic skiing in Minnesota. In 2017 the award categories were expanded to include the Minnesota State High School Individual Champions, Minnesota Biathlon High Achievers, Minnesota Based Collegiate High Achievers, and Minnesota Master Skiers. Individuals, ski clubs, trail and race organizations, and ski retail interests are invited to join MNSA to help further the advancement of Nordic skiing in Minnesota.



## Current Ski Club / Ski Organization Membership in MNSA

- Bemidji Area X-C Ski Club
- Brainerd Ski Club
- Itascatur Club, Park Rapids
- Lake Country Nordic Ski Association, Cass County
- Nordic Ski Club-Central MN, St. Cloud
- Norpine Trail Association, Lutsen
- North Star Ski Touring Club
- Northern Lights Nordic Ski Club, Grand Rapids
- Sugarbush Trail Association, Tofte
- Vasaloppet USA

## Current MNSA Board

Tolly Vollen, Bruce Slinkman,  
Molly Weyrens, Neil Franz,  
Darby Nelson, Ken Jorgenson,  
Greg Fangel, Bob O'Hara,  
Greg Boomer Moritko,  
Arne Stefferud,  
Kent Montgomery



Minnesota Nordic Ski Association

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