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Pendleton Legal Helps ABSF Raise \$16,000 for Recreational Trail

Pendleton Legal, S.C. recently helped the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) raise \$16,000 to help secure permanent rights for a multi-use recreational trail in Northern Wisconsin.

The ABSF is a non-profit organization dedicated to hosting one of the world's best cross country ski events (the American Birkebeiner Race), maintaining one of the nation's premier recreational trails, and promoting healthy lifestyles for people of all ages. The Birkebeiner Race Week is made up of several events, including the 55K Birkie Marathon Ski Race (the second largest ski race in North America). Each winter, over 10,000 racers head to Hayward, Wisconsin to test themselves on the grueling trails on which the Birkie is raced. The Birkie is patterned after the Birkebeiner Rennet, which has been held in Norway since 1932. Both events honor and re-create a historic Norwegian event when in 1206, two warrior soldiers—called "Birkebeiners" because of the birch-bark leggings they wore—skied infant Prince Haakon to safety during the Norwegian civil war. The Birkebeiner soldiers became a Norwegian symbol of courage, perseverance and character in the face of adversity.

Protection and maintenance of the American Birkebeiner Trail is one of the ABSF's primary goals. The American Birkie Trail is used year round by skiers, mountain bikers, runners, marathoners, biathletes, para-Olympians and hikers, and is the site of numerous popular skiing, biking, running and biathlon races. While much of the Birkie Trail crosses public land, part of the course is on private land. The starting area of the course is in particular jeopardy, as it partially lies on land connected to the Telemark Lodge, a downhill ski resort that has gone through several financial crises over the last several decades.

Concerned that a recent bankruptcy involving the Telemark Lodge could jeopardize the future of the Birkie, Pendleton Legal, S.C.'s founder, Sandie Pendleton (who raced his first Birkie in 1984), suggested that a series of fundraising dinner events should be held in the major cities from where many Birkie participants come (Milwaukee, Chicago, Madison, the Twin Cities, San Francisco, etc.). The goal of the events is to raise enough funds to enable the ABSF either to buy the land on which the start has traditionally been held, or to buy a permanent easement across alternative nearby land.

In 2012, Sandie met with ABSF officers and directors, including new Executive Director Ben Popp, who enthusiastically embraced the idea. Sandie and Ben established an organizing committee for the first event in Milwaukee, which featured as its keynote speaker Caitlin Greg (2010 U.S. Olympian and 2013 Birkie winner). Pendleton Legal, S.C. was one of the corporate sponsors of the first Milwaukee event, and the event met its goal of raising \$20,000 for the ABSF. Pendleton Legal was also involved in the second annual fundraiser in the Milwaukee area, with Sandie acting as the auctioneer during the evening's festivities, which helped the organization raise over \$16,000 (on a very blizzardy evening). If you have an interest in organizing a similar event in your local area, contact us, we'd be glad to help.

("American Birkebeiner" and "Birkie" are registered trademarks of the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation, Inc., and are used here with permission.)

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(The information and views discussed in this article are for general information purposes only. An organization that has specific questions as to the effect the above development may have for it should discuss such with its attorney, or with an attorney who is familiar with this area of the law and the organization's specific operations or concerns.)

About Pendleton: Alexander "Sandie" Pendleton is a shareholder with the Milwaukee law firm of Pendleton Legal, S.C. Sandie has over twenty years of experience counseling clients involved in sports and recreational activities, including power sports activities, and is a frequent speaker and writer on recreational liability issues.

About Pendleton Legal, S.C.: At Pendleton Legal, S.C., we continue to believe the right to the "Pursuit of Happiness" is a right worth preserving. Our S/F/R Team (Sports, Fitness & Recreation Team) guides and fights for businesses and organizations that provide recreational opportunities and products, so that our clients are not overwhelmed by liability that might otherwise threaten their continued success (or even existence). Preserving the right is often not an easy or simple task, but we know this mission is an important one to our clients, and to the future of a free society. In addition to our S/F/R services, we provide legal expertise across the numerous areas of law encountered by businesses and organizations in the normal course of their day-to-day operations and growth. If you would like to explore whether we can help your organization achieve its mission, contact us.