

Northland 300 stops in Ely, makes history

Special Olympics Athlete Steven Eull and Coach Jason Reinsch participated in their first ever Northland 300 on Jan. 21-25, 2009 making history for the Northland 300 and Special Olympics Minnesota.

This was the first time that an athlete and a coach have ever participated in the 3-day, 300+ mile event to raise funds for Special Olympics Minnesota, a cause they truly believe in, benefit from and support.

Thursday morning, Jan. 22, kicked off the event with an Opening Ceremony, where athlete Steven Eull from the Special Olympics Minnesota team the "Flames" (White Bear Lake) walked with Laurie Mallory,

Special Olympics Minnesota athlete from "Lake County Special Olympics" (Two Harbors) carrying the torch and passing it to Steven who lit the Special Olympics cauldron, the "Flame of Hope."

Eighty-nine snowmobile riders and support team members including Steven's mom Patsy and Jason's wife Lynn, began their journey at 8:30 a.m. destination Grand Ely Lodge, Ely.

Steven and Jason rode on the "Voyageur" team with Marc Williams (team leader) who is a 21 year participant of the Northland 300.

Upon completion of 150+ miles, the team arrived in Ely at 5:45 p.m. Eull commented, "it

is really a fun ride" and was very excited to ride 150+ miles the first day of the journey.

Friday, Jan. 23, the "free day," participants rode trails around the Ely area, relaxed, and later that evening attended a "70's Party" hosted by Grand Ely Lodge with a DJ, food and prizes. Costumes were terrific and a fun time was had by all.

Saturday, Jan. 24, with temperatures at -18 and windchill of -37 didn't stop Northland 300 participants from continuing their journey back to Two Harbors.

Northland 300 riders were concerned for Eull as a passenger and braving the cold. Eull's concern was that he wanted to

finish the ride and let the deciding parties know that he "didn't mind the cold. He was a tough cookie."

Riders returned to Superior Shores Lodge commenting on the great trail conditions thanks to local groomers for their efforts.

Participants attended the Banquet and Awards Ceremony Saturday evening where it was announced that 2009 Northland 300 participants raised \$204,974.21 (\$140,275.35 cash + \$64,698.86 in-kind).

This set another fundraising record for the Northland 300 of over \$3 Million for Special Olympics Minnesota in 21 years.