

she decided to do what she felt in her heart was right for her and meaningful for her community: Start a youth Nordic program.

So she went to the local schools and put up posters inviting kids to join her Nordic ski team.

Much of what Fiddler does now in her own coaching, she explains, is founded in her own experience. "I'm ever grateful for [coach Karlsen], for being there ... he included me, that's the biggest thing. First of all," she adds, "I got that opportunity at Bates, where someone just said, 'Hey, come and be on our team!' ... I was good at stick games on the field, but it was not proven that I could even ski, and this [coach] was willing to take me on.

Then I had Torbjorn [say] 'Hey I think you can do this thing.'"

Fiddler said she believes strongly in the role of a good coach. "I've always tried to look out for that person and pay it back somehow," she explains. In her own coaching, she said she strives to help her athletes achieve that much more, just as her coaches helped her.

From the very beginning, Fiddler had help from many people, working for little or no pay. Her friend, Barbara Cameron, also a great skier, helped teach those first lessons. Ueli Luthi, head of ski school at Tamarack where Fiddler was working full time as an instructor, supported her passion for teaching Nordic skiing, and eventually they expanded the lessons to include adult programs, and programs for younger kids, bringing elementary school students up for P.E. once a week.

Fiddler even took some of the high school kids to races. But only the first four to sign up got to go, as she only had four spots in her car. In 1995, a student from Mammoth High School won the state championship. That same year, her daughter, Laurel, was born.

Fiddler says Andrea Lawrence, American alpine ski racer, three-time Olympian gold medalist, and long time resident of the Eastern Sierra, was a great friend, resource, and inspiration for her. At the time, the world of ski racing was largely male-dominated, and Fiddler's experiences as a racer were not always perfect. "I used to talk to her a lot about ways I felt I wasn't being understood as an athlete in the system."

Fiddler says she thinks a lot of that has changed for the better, even though many of the top coaches are still men, while many of

the local youth league coaches are women. She notes that "coaching ski racing is a traveling job." She got many offers to hit the road coaching racers after she retired, and turned them all down because she had a little girl at home.

"It shouldn't be underestimated what women do in the more 'grassroots' coaching," she explains. "Maybe not everyone is going to go on to ski at the international level or be an Olympian, but it doesn't matter... [as a coach], you've made an impact on a kid, and you've guided them in some way in their lifestyle or their value system... it's brilliant, and it's so overlooked." Reality is, every level of coaching is important, Fiddler continues: "They should all be valued!"

And that is from someone who has seen some of the best – at all ages, and all levels.



## Kristin Broumas

The value of grassroots efforts in the ski world is by no means limited to ski racing.

Kristin Broumas of Community Skis is part of a movement to bring ski manufacturing back to a local level, thus encouraging more efficient manufacturing processes, and allowing the rider to have a deeper connection with his or her skis.

Kristin Broumas and Michael Lish, formerly of 333 Skis, recently partnered with Davey McCoy, forming Community Skis in Mammoth Lakes. McCoy's interest in the company was piqued after he took a pair of skis that he built on a five-day backcountry trip. He loved the skis, and their holistic business model.

Broumas grew up in Maine, and fell in love with skiing while working as a *sous chef* at a ski area. She has a B.S. in interior design, and was working at an architectural firm in Boulder, Colo. when she found 333 Skis. She ordered a pair of skis for her dad, and was intrigued by the company. She spoke with Lish, and she decided take a chance, leaving her job, dog, and boyfriend behind to be part of something truly novel.

A large part of their focus has been to

educate the future ski smiths of the world. Done on a small, local scale, skis can be crafted much more efficiently, and tailored exactly to the needs and desires of each individual skier. The two have had many interns come to learn from them, and they envision a sort of open-source manufacturing where every ski community has a ski smith, and each ski smith can share knowledge and resources on a broader scale – rather than one big company with a cookie-cutter approach, shipping the manufacturing overseas where factories are often inefficient and fueled by coal.

Broumas said she finds that she uses much of the same creative energy making skis as she did while working as a *sous chef*.

"Cooking," she says, "is like the manufacturing of food." She gestures to the workshop space behind her.

"People can watch the process completely," she explains, "The wet lay process, which is where we actually glue the skis together, is in the front here, which we call the sushi bar ... the open factory concept is kind of like an open restaurant, where you're more connected to your product." And it all happens, right in front of you: "It's like the farm to fork movement," she adds.

The connection with clients is perhaps the most unique and important aspect of Community Skis. Broumas has noticed a tendency, especially from female clients, to defer questions to their boyfriends or husbands. But Broumas is there to guide her clients through the entire process, and she said she recognizes that her presence may help her female clients take a more proactive role in the manufacturing of their own skis.

At first, sometimes people are surprised to be talking to a female about their skis, but "it's all about the information and the knowledge," Broumas explains, "and once somebody realizes you know what you're talking about, any preconceived notion kind of disappears."

She also notes that Community Skis is not your typical ski company. It attracts a different kind of clientele, and any ego or intimidation melts away in the excitement for a new set of skis which are truly made to your heart's desire.

Broumas said she is equally excited about her job as her clients are about their skis. She gets to be creative, and is always learning something new, in such wide-ranging

subjects as ski manufacturing, web design, marketing, and communication. But as with many small businesses, Broumas explains, "it's 24/7, there's no real stopping point. And I love talking about skiing, so that's not a real problem." But it certainly demands a special dedication, and a belief that in the end, it's all worth it.



## Carolyn Tiernan

Any mountain town tends to have an inordinately high proportion of folks who have taken their passion and turned it into their profession,

in one way or another. But sometimes mixing work and play can lead to burnout in both, and suddenly what used to be fun is only work. Dr. Carolyn Tiernan is an example of someone who works hard and plays hard and has achieved a remarkably high level as both a professional and an athlete.

Tiernan learned to cross country ski (and speak Norwegian) as an exchange student in Norway in 1969. She returned home and went to the University of California, Davis for her undergraduate studies. She connected with a group of cross country skiers in Yosemite, many of which were Norwegian university students, and joined them as one of the early Nordic instructors for Yosemite Mountaineering School.

After college, Tiernan did some racing and went to Stanford for medical school. After her residency, she got more serious about her racing, competing in the U.S. Open and U.S. Masters Championships, and going to two Olympic trials. Though she has won many races over the years, and been on the U.S. Masters Team, she never made the U.S. Nordic team. She did, however, travel with them as their doctor for two years during their Scandinavian races, thus bridging her two worlds.

Today, Tiernan is an emergency room physician in Bishop, and just this spring she won the World Masters 30k for her age group. Her racing has become a great excuse to travel. This spring the race was

in Oberwiesenthal, Germany, so she went sightseeing in Prague. Next year, the World Masters will be in Italy, and she plans to visit Venice.

"Being an emergency physician," Tiernan explains, "I work very hard when I work, but it also allows me to have time off so I can ski."

Tiernan goes to Norway every few years to ski (and keep up her Norwegian). On one of those visits, she and friend Ann Klinefelter skied the Norwegian Birkebeiner, traveling from the Russian border to the Swedish border: 444km in seven days. Just for fun. Tiernan loves cross-country skiing for the sensation of floating, its meditative qualities, as well as "the total body movement, and the freedom of being able to, with relatively little effort, go long distances in the mountains." In this case, across an entire nation.

After several decades of cross country skiing, Tiernan says, "I feel like I'm still learning technique, and still learning how to ski more efficiently. I very much appreciated Nancy Fiddler's technique classes and training tips when she was working for Tamarack... She's always trying to improve her own technique and also improve ways to teach technique to other people."

When Tiernan isn't out trying to improve her own cross-country technique, you might find her playing the saxophone for the Bishop Big Band or the clarinet in the Eastern Sierra Symphony. Because cross-country skiing and music are reserved for her own enjoyment, Tiernan finds a balance with her professional life, and has achieved an admirably high level in all she does. Perhaps it is also because she has cultivated a habit of learning and pushing herself, in all that she does, from the very beginning.

While it is a passion for skiing that links all three of these ladies to the mountainous Eastern Sierra, they have each found success in their own inspired way. But each of their stories is not necessarily isolated from the other, nor are the lessons they have learned or taught along the way. Each story was shaped in some way by mentorship and opportunity which was not squandered or ignored, and instead met with a spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance. And each story finds at its end a new beginning—bringing inspiration and opportunity to the next round of ski lovers.

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