

Race to the Sky is coming to Lincoln

Tammy Jordan
Blackfoot Valley Dispatch

January 8, 2020



*A pair of huskies howl in anticipation before the start of Race to the Sky in 2014.
(Roger Dey photo)*

“Get Your Mush On,” is the new theme and tagline for the long-standing tradition of the annual Race to the Sky dog sled race.

Now in its 35th year, this one should be another one for the books. Jack Beckstrom, one of the founders of the Race to the Sky event passed away two years ago. Since then, race organizer Chris Jewitt, along with other race staff have been working hard to continue Jack's work and the legacy of Race to the Sky.

The Race is scheduled for February 7–11. Race planners, mushers and their teams are hoping for more snow to fall before then. Jewitt says there is a "Plan B" in the event the snow levels aren't high enough, but notes that mushers and their dogs really prefer the race trail and notes the Race has only been cancelled once in 35 years.

If you've been in Lincoln for any length of time, you may remember the race beginning in a different location than it is currently.

In years past, spectators would line Highway 200 as the start of the Race brought the dogsleds down Main Street. What a lot of people weren't aware of is that the change in venue to Hi Country for the start of the race came as a result of safety issues. Racers historically would make their way down Main Street and have to turn off the highway to get on to the trail. The difficulty came when mushers had to turn their teams off the highway. "The dogs would get into what they refer to as a 'tunnel vision' on long straightaways which makes it difficult to turn the teams sharply off the road," Jewitt explained. "In addition, as they made those turns, it put spectators in harm's way. The move from having the Race go through the center of town out to Hi Country was made for logistical and liability issues." Some folks in Lincoln saw this move as taking business away from the center of town, a fact that Jewitt, as a newcomer, wasn't really aware of until just recently. While the locations and events are already set for the 2020 Race, beginning in 2021, Jewitt plans to move the awards ceremony, also currently held at Hi Country at the completion of the Race, back to the center of Lincoln by rotating the ceremony each year among local sponsor establishments.

This year, the Race is scheduled to start at 2 p.m. but activities such as vet checks and a Friday evening banquet, will be open to everyone, free of charge. Jewitt advises folks to dress warmly for the Race and notes that the Lincoln Outdoor Club will be there, selling food items to raise money for their upcoming activities. Lincoln's American Legion Post 9 will also be there with hot beverages.

GPS tracking is available for fans to keep track of their favorite mushers and teams throughout the Race. For the full schedule of events and to find out more about the GPS tracking feature, visit the Race website at: www.racetothsky.org

Prior to the race, Jewitt is also looking for ways to spread the word about Race to the Sky and to provide education about it to those who are interested. She's willing to come talk at any organization meetings or local businesses. If you'd like to have her attend one of your local meetings or business, contact her directly at 406-210-4420 or silentwings@blackfoot.net.

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