



Zuma's
Paw Prints

Count Down to the Opening of Iditarod 2007

June 19, 2006

Hi Boys and Girls,

I'll bet you looked at the title of this Paw Print and wondered, "What is she thinking?" Well, this coming Saturday (June 24) is the first day that mushers can sign up for the 2007 Iditarod Race. This is always a very exciting day for everyone connected with the Iditarod because there is a big fiesta at Iditarod Headquarters (HQ) in Wasilla.

The day begins at 7 a.m. at the Wasilla Senior Citizen Center on Knik Rd where a group of almost 50 volunteers gather to count the ballots for the election of board members for the coming three years. One third of the board is elected each year in June for three-year terms. The announcement of the new or re-elected board members is announced at the annual membership meeting that starts at 10 a.m. at Iditarod Headquarters. Lots of member attend this yearly meeting and stay for all the festivities.

While the meeting is going on inside the Iditarod building, the crew from the Millennium Hotel of Anchorage and picnic volunteers are setting up on the lawn at Iditarod Headquarters for the annual volunteer picnic. Volunteers continue to arrive and will total over 400 by the end of the day. The eating begins at noon (I know all about getting to the front of the food line and I also know the value of laying under the tables or beside the volunteers while they eat). After lunch there will be games for the kids and at least one for adults. There will be lots and lots of door prizes that have been donated by the many sponsors and supporters of the Iditarod Race.

At 2 p.m., the first musher will approach the sign up table and submit his paperwork and entry fee, officially opening the 2007 Iditarod. In 2006, the Iditarod rules committee did something totally different with the drawing for starting position. The mushers got to choose their own starting position (bib number). They went on stage at the banquet in Anchorage before the race in the SAME ORDER THEY SIGNED UP IN, so being first to sign up gives the musher the advantage of being able to choose any number he/she wants to leave the starting line. Then, as each musher chooses his/her number, there are less and less numbers for the mushers who sign up later. We expect to see a lot of mushers on Saturday.

In order to be first or very early in the sign up, the Iditarod allows mushers to camp out on the Iditarod property before sign up day. Once a musher comes to HQ and declares his intent to camp by signing the numbered list, he/she may not leave the property again until after the sign up on Saturday. One exception is made to this rule on Friday evening when the mushers attend a special meeting of the Iditarod Official Finishers Club. All Iditarod finishers who live or happen to be in the area attend this meeting. Since the sign up is the next day, there are a lot of mushers here for the meeting. The camping mushers are given a deadline to be back on the Iditarod property after the meeting ends. Failure to return on time will put the musher at the end of the list.

Everyone at the office is getting ready for Saturday. There are musher packets to prepare for both the Iditarod and Jr. Iditarod. Volunteer forms need to be prepared for those who want to sign up now for 2007. If I am not careful, these humans will be stepping all over my tail. I had to hide under one of the

desks in the cubicle area after almost getting run over. Candy is busy rounding up supplies and equipment as well as door prizes for Saturday. She sure knows how to plan a party!

I plan to take pictures Saturday so I can share them with you over the next couple of weeks. Hope you are having as much fun on your summer break as I am.

Until next time,



Lots of Tail Wags,
Zuma