



## **NASA CUSSA/DJRC A WINNING COMBINATION**

At just 7 years old, Nathalie Kenny committed to one thought. She wanted to go fast. Kenny had visions of podium finishes and a successful future in ski racing, and Dan Janowiak helped her grasp that dream. “When I started training with Dan is when I really realized what my strengths and weaknesses were,” Kenny said. “He shaped me as a skier.” Kenny, a two-time state champion in the giant slalom currently skiing for St. Olaf College, is a shining example of the dedication and top-notch training yielded through Janowiak and the Northwestern Alpine Ski Academy’s impressive pedigree. And, she’s hardly alone.

NASA — formerly the Manistee Ski Club established in 1976 — has produced numerous state champions and dozens of All-State athletes from across Michigan who have gone on to earn college scholarships and represent the United States on foreign soil. “What sets us apart right now is our track record,” Janowiak said. “The work that we’re doing speaks for itself.” NASA and its elite coaching staff, led by Janowiak and his 37 years of experience, place athletes in a challenging environment from which they thrive — from their home base at Crystal Mountain and well beyond northern Michigan.

The Development Program, which has housed up to 100 participants at a single time, is designed to teach safety and etiquette on the slopes while developing passion for a lifelong sport.

The NASA Race Academy, which began in the mid-1980s, is the next step. It turns skiers into racers and exposes them to competition on a variety of terrains. “From the Race Academy, I established a love for speed and how to handle it and be comfortable,” Kenny said, “but Dan really fine tuned my skiing and made me a racer.”

The NASA CUSSA Program began two decades ago when Janowiak started guiding northern Michigan athletes in United States Ski Association events. It is NASA’s elite-level program and enables skiers to pit their skills against the best in Region III and across the United States. “The jump to CUSSA is a huge difference in ability in the level of competition,” Kenny said. “You’re traveling farther, you’re putting in more time, the technique and the quickness is more essential to fine tune everything. It’s a step up and a higher level of competition.

“CUSSA is a program for people who are serious about ski racing,” Kenny added. “They want to really improve and go out and get those podiums.”

NASA’s CUSSA athletes have gone on to record dozens of All-State honors in the last decade, and claim seven state titles and four runner-up finishes in the last five years

alone. Most began training with Janowiak at a young age, leading to tremendous results.

“In 2005, when I began working with the younger kids, those fifth, sixth graders soon became freshmen in high school and what I found was I really had these kids quite ready to make a big impact in the high school environment,” Janowiak said. “And in most cases, these athletes came into high school most often at an All-State caliber.”

Lyndee Janowiak, who first hit the slopes with her father as a toddler, went on to become one of the nation’s top skiers. She won a USSA J2 national title in the giant slalom and was on the United States Ski Team Development Team before becoming a three-time All-American at the University of Vermont.

More recently, Madison Ostergren, as a first-year U16 skier, won a 2012 Central Division slalom title. With the goal of skiing for a Division I college, Ostergren is now a member of the prestigious Rowmark Ski Academy in Salt Lake City. “Where she’s at age-wise now, for her to attain that lofty goal of skiing at a Division I level, we have the coaching here in the Central Division, but we don’t have the terrain for these athletes to work on to get to that level,” Janowiak said. “She needed to be in a big-mountain environment.” So on Janowiak’s recommendation, Ostergren, now a high school junior, applied and was accepted to Rowmark. “He is the best coach I’ve ever had,” Ostergren said of Janowiak. “He really took skiing to a different level than I was doing. ... Honestly, I wouldn’t be able to do it without Dan.”

The commitment to CUSSA and high-level racing is significant and many skiers choose to get a jump on the competition by attending Dan Janowiak Race Camps. The summer camp at Mt. Hood in Oregon provides skill development and gate training on challenging terrain. The fall camp at Copper Mountain in Colorado gives athletes a jump start on the upcoming winter season at a time when skiers in Michigan typically haven’t had a chance to get on snow. “That was huge,” said Kenny, who went to Mt. Hood once and Copper Mountain four times. “The Thanksgiving camp really gets you going because we get runs upon runs. We get up at five in the morning, we’re on the lift at 6:30 and we don’t leave until noon. You get not only a different terrain but longer runs and you’re going over rollers and you’re at altitude so it’s more difficult physically and mentally, and it gives you a leg up in the beginning of the ski season, especially with races right in the beginning of December.” Skiing requires a physical, mental and financial commitment, the last of which involves a choice by parents when it comes time to choose who should provide their children direction and training.

Tracy White, Ostergren’s mother, was looking for a new coach for her daughter and received a mailer from Janowiak. “I called him, he agreed to meet with us, and instantly I knew he was a perfect fit,” White said. “He’s a real father figure.” Ostergren attended Janowiak’s fall camp four times and the summer camp twice and White said trust was essential. “When you send your child at 12, a girl especially, away for a week to 10 days, by themselves with other kids and a male coach, you have to really trust who you’re sending them with. “(Madison) fell in love with Dan from the first day and she called him the ‘winter dad,’ because he not only coaches but it’s a hard age (of skiers)

that he deals with, a lot of emotion, and a sport that's so fickle. You do all this training and you get 30 seconds to make an impression and you turn the wrong way, you're down. Dan handled all of that and he really did help Madi get to the next level and more than that, he recognized that she had done everything she could do in Michigan. He really got her into the program she's in."

That's a result of the training from Janowiak and NASA's USSA-certified staff, which includes Geoff Paine, Matt Ellis and Rick Bobian. "We've been able to create a training environment where we have fun," Janowiak said, "but we really make good use of every minute that we have budgeted for our training time. "It's so easy for coaches to take their athletes into a training environment, whether it's the gym or on the hill or wherever, and you're just kind of going through the motions. The focus and the attention of the athletes just isn't there. "When the kids see me working really, really hard and being focused all the time, they want to do that, so they work hard." That translates off the slopes as well.

Kari and Andrea Paine helped lead Manistee to a Division 2 state championship in 2009 and both excelled individually, collecting multiple All-State honors. The two were also part of the CUSSA program, and like numerous other NASA athletes, thrived in the classroom despite a busy schedule.

In the last decade alone, four NASA athletes have been their class valedictorian or salutatorian. "It was basically the busiest season of the year for them, and for some odd reason they got their best grades," said Mary Paine, mother of Kari and Andrea. "All these things that they learned from racing has helped them in their future and college — all the organizational skills, working with people, dedication and hard work."

Whether you're 7 or 70, skiing is a lifelong sport rooted in one thought. "I love speed and I wanted to go fast," Kenny said of her desire to pursue ski racing through NASA's direction.

Through its variety of programs — highlighted by NASA CUSSA/Dan Janowiak Race Camps — NASA athletes are going fast across the state and around the globe. "I think what makes NASA the best is our recent track record — we have had tremendous success," Janowiak said. "The results, the achievements speak for themselves and all along the way our kids had fun doing what they love to do."