

# Night skiing in Central Oregon

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As the sun sank below the Cascades Saturday night, volunteers hurried to light candles at Virginia Meissner Sno-park. They had already set out hundreds of paper bags, each one filled with a bit of sand and a tea candle. The candles lit the trail for 1 ½ miles to the park's shelter for the annual candlelit ski known as Luminaria.

"It's a family night out," said Larry Katz, as he bent down to light a candle. "You'll see tons of little kids in the parking lot. When it gets dark, it really is cool."

By 5:30 p.m., skiers and snowshoers of all ages began streaming down the trail. Some parents towed kids in small sleds.

Katz, who is treasurer for the Meissner Nordic Club, said this is the main annual fundraising event for the organization, which grooms the sno-park trails, provides firewood at the shelter and does a lot of other work to keep the area in good condition. There is also the annual waffle feed, when the club provides Norwegian-style waffles, cooked on a fire at the shelter. This year, the waffle feed is scheduled for March 1, according to the group's website. The Meissner Nordic Club gets its funding from donations, club memberships and corporate sponsors, Katz said. All of the local high school nordic ski teams train at the sno-park, which also hosts a variety of sporting events.

Sue Vordenberg, a local retiree and skier, started the Luminaria around 2003, when the United States was at war in Iraq, according to The Bulletin's archives. Vordenberg has said her idea was to create a "ski for peace."

Club members Wally and Lucia Zurakowski finished lighting candles just as it began to get dark. "It's a good event because it brings out a lot of people and it helps people learn how to ski," Wally Zurakowski said.

John Marvin, of Bend, said it was the first year he participated in the event with his wife, Alison Wells. Marvin is a member of the Meissner Nordic Club, but he missed the Luminaria last year. After he saw photos of the event, Marvin decided they had to make it this year.

"It's just magical," Marvin said, as he hiked down the trail on snowshoes.

Wells was also having a good time. "It couldn't have been a better night," she said.

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Joe Kline / The Bulletin A silhouetted cross-country skier participates in the Luminaria ski on Saturday evening at Virginia Meissner Sno-Park west of Bend. The annual event is a fundraiser for the Meissner Nordic Club.



Joe Kline / The Bulletin Participants in the Luminaria ski warm up around a fire prior to hitting the illuminated trail on Saturday evening.

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