

September 24, 2024

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of Lillian Suddaby and her scholarship application to attend the 2025 Liatoppen Youth Biathlon Festival in Norway. I have had the pleasure of coaching Lily in various endurance sports for the better part of the last decade and I have watched her grow from a rather timid girl into a hard-charging young woman who thrives on pushing her boundaries in a variety of sports.

The first time I remember meeting Lily was when she joined our weekly summer mountain bike program. She was a solid rider, but markedly timid both socially and physically. Still, she enjoyed being out in the woods and spending time with her friends, so the hook got set and she was headed down the path of endurance sport. I do not actually know when biathlon was introduced to the mix, but for a girl from northern Vermont who was already a hunter, it too was an excellent fit.

Since that first summer of riding, Lily has blossomed into an avid XC ski racer and biathlete, competing both for her middle school and for the Craftsbury Ski Club in races around the state. In the summer she continues her ski and biathlon training while also racing XC and enduro on her mountain bike for our Craftsbury Cycling Development team. Within the last year, Lily went from begrudgingly racing because it was expected of her to absolutely smashing, no matter the discipline. Last winter she traveled around New England and New York chasing her newfound love for racing biathlon. I cannot say I would have expected that out of the girl I met in 2018, but that's the beauty of coaching kids - you are always surprised by the ways they grow and change. I count myself lucky to be trailside watching Lily race or do intervals on the bike, gritting her teeth yet still smiling through the obvious discomfort that comes from training hard for an endurance sport.

Attending the Liatoppen festival will be a huge opportunity for Lily and I hope that the Flyin' Ryan Foundation can help support her attendance. Not only is biathlon a sport that teaches perseverance and discipline through the combination of the diametrically opposed tasks of cross country ski racing and target shooting, but it also is a gateway to a much larger world. Biathlon is the most popular winter sport in much of Europe and Norway is, in many ways, the heartland. Attending the Festival will expose Lily and her teammates to just how far the sport can take them, from trails in the Northeast Kingdom to the vaunted stadiums of Norway. It will truly be an adventure of a lifetime, but also one that could set Lily down a path of immense personal growth and development through sport.

Lily fully embodies the Core Values of Ryan Hawks. Her diverse outdoor pursuits give her ample opportunity to explore every day, whether it is literally riding or skiing a new trail or plumbing the depths of her own physical capacity during a workout or race. As the oldest of 3 siblings, she sets an admirable example for her younger brothers and I have gotten to watch them follow in her footsteps on bikes and skis as well. Lily is immensely coachable, willing to bear down and

do the hard tasks while also keeping an open mind and tackling new skills with grace and resolve.

Lily is a pleasure to have around, no matter the situation. Easy days on the bike or skis are punctuated by her laugh and energetic storytelling and the tough days bring with them the glint of determination in her eyes as she powers up the trail. I am excited to watch her continue to develop as both an athlete and a person and I count myself exceedingly lucky to get to help her out along the way. I hope that the Flyin' Ryan Foundation will join in supporting her journey.

Sincerely,

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