

From: Debra Glenn
To: hicksn, stembridgej
Date: 2/17/2009 10:31:30 PM
Subject: Iditarod 2009

Dearest Celeste Junior High 8th Graders, Jessica and Nicole Instructors:

It is indeed with a most grateful heart that I received your gift tonight. Like me I see that it has made a long journey too. I don't even know if you realize it, but your package was first sent to the area of Michigan where a group of us Iditarod mushers train - McMillan. But actually, it is quite a story...our mail is actually housed inside of a tavern because once the snow begins to set in for the season, no one can get back to our cabins unless they are on a snowmobile or driving a dog sled team. When I left the cabin, your package made it to my new (old) home...more on that in a minute, but thank you so much for trying so hard to get this package to me. I am truly touched by your thoughtfulness, and the usefulness of your gifts.

Now I must tell you that in order for me to continue to train and get to Anchorage so I could pull the hook on Fourth Avenue and begin the Iditarod race, a couple of things had to happen this year...as you can and obviously did read in my bio, I have been preparing for a few years (as most mushers in their rookie year have done...the dogs make it look easy, but in actuality, most of us have run thousands of miles with their team, and work real hard, as an Olympic athlete...all things have to fall into place). This year my husband and I were living in the house we built with our own hands, my Iditarod team with me, when the town changed the dog ordinance and gave me ninety days to leave our home. This is the home where we raised our children, and emotionally very difficult to leave, but of course I could not get rid of my dogs. So, I got permission from another town to move into an abandoned farmhouse, and this is where I am now. I felt it was a miracle in today's economy that someone came to purchase our home two days before I was due to start training. I was also sponsored with the use of the Toyota Tundra to get to Alaska with. I felt all things were falling into place. Then half-way through the qualifier, in -50 degree temperatures, I got word at the checkpoint that the people had lost their professional job, moved out, not paid the utility bill, and the pipes burst. Suffice to say I had to leave the cabin and go home to fix the house and get it put back up on the market. When you hear the news about all these bad things happening in the economy, it is true. It ruined my getting to do Iditarod this year because I could not spend the money to get my drop bags onto the trail. There are 22 bags with thousands of pounds of raw meat and provisions that I needed to ship to the west coast by freezer truck, and pre-arrange for it to be picked up and transported by barge to Alaska where bush pilots drop them onto the trail. It takes several thousand dollars.

I am so sorry to disappoint you that my time to race will have to be delayed. But I look at the handwarmers you sent and they were the perfect gift. If you allow me to, I will train with them and do qualifiers with them next year. The hand-crank light was (pardon the pun) brilliant! This would have come in handy on my qualifier this year because my headlamp batteries froze and for about twenty miles I had to run by the light of the moon. Luckily I made it to the checkpoint alright, but wow, your emergency light device would have saved me, what a great idea. You all went through so much to help me. I am so very grateful.

So let me tell you, you now have a personal and upfront close friend of Iditarod. I have been mushing with many, many Iditarod mushers for four years and can tell you things about mushers you will NEVER

hear from the 'Insider'. Also, if you have questions about anything that has to do with the race, preparations, dogs, terrain, survival techniques, just ask me and I'll get back to you right away. You have my personal e-mail address right now. You can write whenever you like and I will try my hardest to enhance your Iditarod experience. I am dear friends with the Mackeys, the Seaveys, all the rookies this year, spent the day with Paul Gebhardt, dinners with Rachael, church service with DeeDee, campfire talks with many others, ran dogs with Ed Steilstra, and have many funny stories.

My dogs: Timber, Orca, Abby, Tinder Box, Dakota, Bear, Adtka, Scooby, Whiskey, Blue, Alice, Sepp (after Leonard Seppala), Guinness, Sladey, Red and Marley are here with me. We will continue to train. My sled is sitting empty in my front yard. It is so difficult to have to be part of this transition, but anything worth doing is worth waiting for and working hard for. I won't give up because it is a part of me. In the meantime, I am friends with Jon Van Zyle (Iditarod artist), and I am writing several short books and he is going to illustrate them...books that have to do with sled dogs and life, "So, You're New to the Pack" (about moving and going to a new school); "Don't Lift Your Leg on Your Friends (about kids not often true to their friendships, very harsh...competition in sports - competition for boyfriends, etc.), "Don't Take What Isn't Yours"...many funny antics of our beloved furry friends.

Anyway, I am so sorry to have disappointed you. I am honored that you chose me to be your rookie musher. I hope somehow I can enrich your experience. Just write to me.

Love,

Deb "Danny" Glenn