

# Truckee cross country skier an Olympic hopeful

By **Giuliana Rende**

TRUCKEE – When asking homeowners and visitors what they love most about Tahoe Donner, one might expect them to start with praises for the majestic scenery, the convenient accessibility and the huge array of activities and programs. Yet, what you're more likely to hear from both long- and short-term residents is that it's the people. The personal connections. The chance to unplug from their devices, and swap their online "communities" for a real-life community, taking place in real-time, with real people.

Tahoe Donner residents are bonded together under one powerful passion – love for the outdoors. And no one understands the strength of this community and its bond better than Hannah Halvorsen.

Born and raised in Tahoe Donner, Hannah Halvorsen is a 19-year-old cross country skier on the U.S. Ski Team. She's a member of the 2017 World Junior Championships bronze medal-winning relay team, and has her sights determinedly set on representing the U.S. at the 2018 Olympic Games in PyeongChang, South Korea.

When talking with Halvorsen, it quickly becomes clear that she credits Tahoe Donner's warm community and world-class programs as integral parts in helping her get where she is today, and reaching her goals for the future.



Hannah Halvorsen of Truckee is a contender for the 2018 Winter Olympics. Photo/Provided

### **Where it all began**

“My first introduction to cross country skiing was being pulled in the back of a sled by my parents at the Tahoe Donner Cross Country Center,” Halvorsen says. Her successful career began not only on the cross country trails here, but also in the many places and programs throughout the community.

A big smile overtakes her face when she talks about getting up, snow or shine, every weekend for a family ski, hitting the trails not only with her parents and brothers, but also with the other kids and families in the community.

Halvorsen also talks fondly about her elementary school memories of attending the cross country after-school ski program, crediting it as a vital part of her development as a junior skier.

“The weekend family ski became constant, as did the people we ran into. The same people were always out there to a level of consistency that if we didn’t run into Mark Nadell we would ask him the following week where he was last Saturday,” Halvorsen said.

It was there that she began to form life-long bonds with other skiers who were also becoming passionate about skiing.



Hannah Halvorsen and her teammates celebrate their bronze medal at the 2017 World Junior Championships. Photo/Provided

### **Passion grows, talents flourish**

Halvorsen continued her development as a competitive ski racer throughout middle and high school, spending countless hours training on and off the snow. She worked tirelessly, honing her cross country skills and her fitness levels to become a serious competitor on the international stage. According to Halvorsen, it was during this time that she quickly realized

the rare and valuable opportunity she had to be training at one of the world's premier Nordic ski training centers.

"Older teammates of mine who had traveled the world for racing would confidently name Tahoe Donner as the most spectacular place to cross-country ski. We could go for hours without repeating a single trail," Halvorsen said.

She recalls hitting the trails daily, often twice per day, for hours at a time. Her common routine was to start at the break of dawn doing hard intervals to Hawk's Peak before school, and then back to the trails after school, often training past sundown. In fact, Halvorsen estimates that she probably did several hundred evening recovery jogs around Lion's Leap.

### **From junior racer to Olympic hopeful**

Throughout high school, Halvorsen continued to develop as a ski racer, and began reaching goals that proved she was on track toward realizing her Olympic dreams. In her sophomore year she qualified to represent the U.S. in Finland at the Under-18 Nations Cup, and in her junior year she competed in Sweden and Norway. In her senior year, Halvorsen qualified for and competed in the Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer.

After graduating high school in 2016, Hannah was nominated to the U.S. Development Ski Team. She and her relay team went on to compete at the World Junior Championships in Park City, Utah, where they earned the first U.S. bronze medal in the event's history.

Just this past June, Halvorsen moved to Anchorage to join the Alaska Pacific University Ski Team and enroll as a psychology major. As much as she loves her amazing new surroundings, she is already eagerly anticipating her visits back to Truckee.

### **Support Halvorsen**

Although Halvorsen is now a member of the U.S. Ski Team, her

ski training and travel are not fully funded. Halvorsen and her family are working to raise funds, and hoping that the Tahoe community can help. To donate, go **online**.