



GONE WITH THE WIND

HUSKIES LEAD THE WAY AT POCONOS DOG SLED EXPERIENCE



By **JESSICA WELSHANS**
jwelshans@sungazette.com

instruction, it's time for guests to grab a seat. Options include a sleigh pulled by a snowmobile, in the dog sled itself, referred to as the basket, or on the back of the dog sled as the actual musher.

"You are indeed the musher and the dogs are under your control. Of course they are professionals and know to follow the guide, and know the trail. However, you control when they can go — and when they stop."

On Feb. 12, father and daughter, Paul and Jen Politano, of Lookout Mountain, Ga., were among the guests at Arctic Paws. The Politanos, who have owned huskies for 30 years, decided to try a sled dog experience instead of skiing. It was Paul's first time for mushing and he said he loved every minute of it.

"You can't help but fall in love with them," Paul said about the dogs.

Losing yourself

On a typical run, six to eight guests participate in a relay, taking turns as a musher, basket rider or on the passenger sleigh.

The tour takes about an hour but can vary depending on questions, photos and the dogs.

The course is about six miles long and is full of turns, hills and flat spots. Dogs can pick up some speed on the plateaus.

Marsh, operator Eric Walker and their staff encourage guests to take photographs from the beginning to the very end. They even are generous enough to stop



the sled, get a group together and take a photo to make the memory last.

"You just lose track of time when you are feeding off of how much fun guests are having," Walker said. "If people enjoy it, I want them to be an advocate for the dogs."

Private tours also are available for one to four guests.

In the beginning

Marsh said their plans to take over the dog sledding course began years ago when they visited Pocono Manor to see the setup at the time. After they came to the course a few weekends, they learned more about the huskies that pulled the sleds.

"We purchased two puppies, Migus and Yazzie, just to play, as a hobby," she said.

Then their pack grew and they took over at the golf course with Arctic Paws.

The dogs are mostly rescues, with stories all their own. Some were abandoned, others were living in shelters, sometimes for a long time, and some were given up by breeders because their coloration meant they couldn't be bred.

Walker and Marsh opened their hearts to these dogs, who need both a home and a job.

"We learned about how many huskies are out there to be given forever homes," Marsh said. "Few we have gotten as puppies, but most of the huskies are given to use by humane societies, personal owners or shelters."

Puppies come from Celtic Acres Farms in upper Marlborough, Md., and some of the rescues come from various shelters and rescues in the region or from as far away as Canada, Wisconsin and Washington, D.C.

The dogs are purebred or mixed Siberian and Alaskan huskies.

Walker points out that each has its own personality. But almost all of the dogs are social and crave attention, which is a trait of their breed.

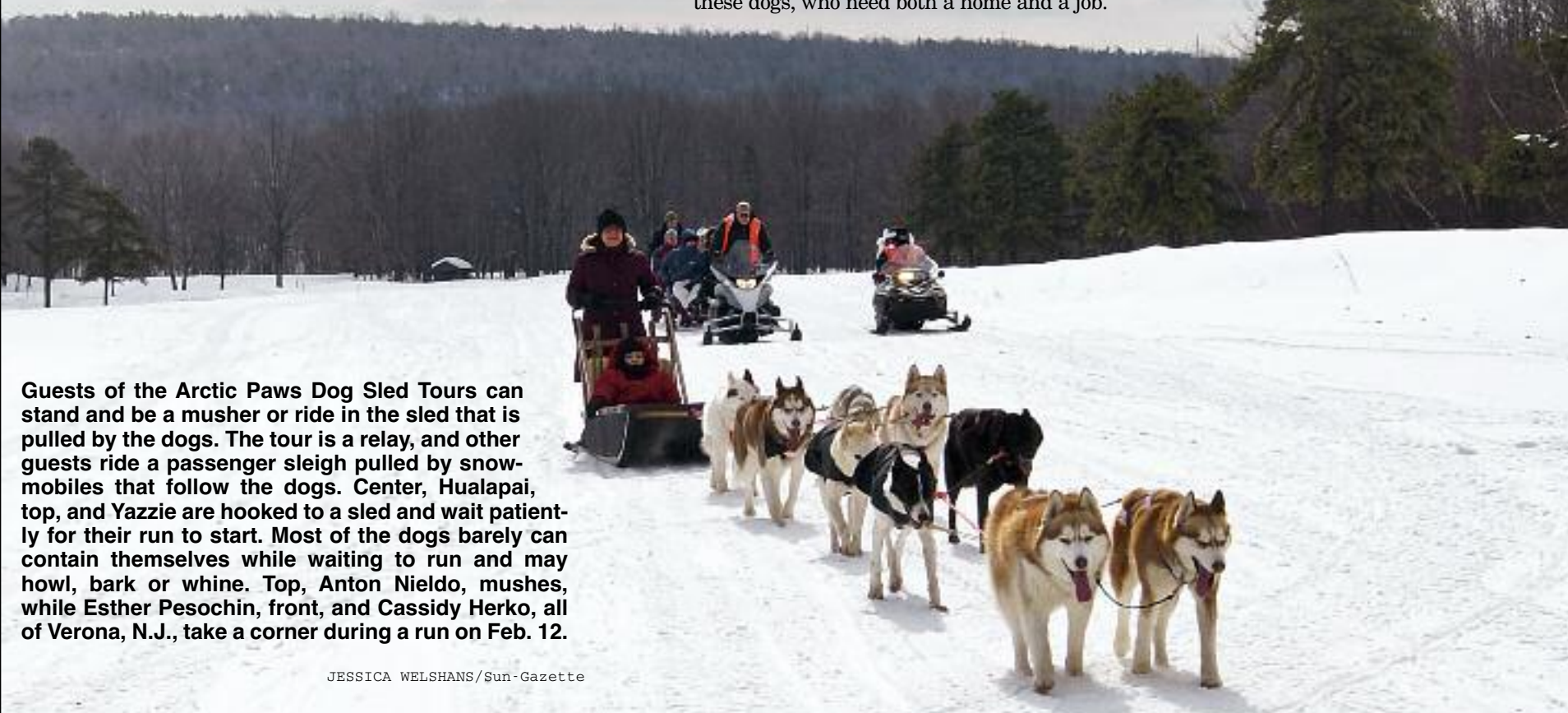
Guests have the opportunity to be up close with the dogs and learn about each one. The staff will gladly share each one's story and explain their unique personalities.

(See HUSKIES, Page F-5)

Self control

Before a guest steps on a sled or sits in a basket, Arctic Paws staff show each one how the equipment works. The most important part of the sled is its brake.

After the equipment introduction, sled function tips and safety



Guests of the Arctic Paws Dog Sled Tours can stand and be a musher or ride in the sled that is pulled by the dogs. The tour is a relay, and other guests ride a passenger sleigh pulled by snowmobiles that follow the dogs. Center, Hualapai, top, and Yazzie are hooked to a sled and wait patiently for their run to start. Most of the dogs barely can contain themselves while waiting to run and may howl, bark or whine. Top, Anton Nieldo, mushes, while Esther Pesochin, front, and Cassidy Herko, all of Verona, N.J., take a corner during a run on Feb. 12.

Outdoor Briefs

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The meeting is open to the public and will be held at the Warrensville General Store. For more information, call Cindy Bower at 998-8244.

Get ready for spring plantings

MONTGOMERY — The Black Hole Creek Watershed Association monthly meeting will be at 7 p.m. March 1 in the Montgomery Borough office on Main Street.

Crissy Vanpelt will show attendees how to plant seeds indoors and will explain how to prepare the garden for spring planting.

The program is free and open to the public. For more information, call 547-6289.

TU chapter holding fly-tying classes

LOCK HAVEN — During March, the Lloyd Wilson Chapter of Trout Unlimited will hold one evening class per week on fly tying. A small fee applies for adults, while children or students can get a discount.

Classes will be held 6:30-8 p.m. at the Citizen Hose Fire Co. and consist of the follow dates and patterns:

- March 2 – Wooly bugger
- March 10 – Bead head hare's ear nymph
- March 16 – Adams dry fly
- March 23 – Grasshopper
- March 30 – Grannom caddis

Trout Kickoff to be held in city arena

The Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited's annual Trout Kickoff and Outdoor show will be held 10 a.m.-6 p.m. March 5 and noon-5 p.m. March 6 at the YMCA Pickelner Arena in downtown Williamsport.

Features include a fish pond for children, a Chinese auction and a raffle with cash prizes as well as a fly rod. Vendor space is available; if interested, e-mail Bob Spencer at bes12@windstream.net.

Photographer to speak at banquet

MILTON — The annual Icebreaker Sportsman's Banquet will be held at 5:30 p.m. March 6 at Christ Wesleyan Church, 363 Stamm Road. The guest speaker is Charlie Alsheimer, an outdoor writer, nature photographer, lecturer and whitetail consultant.

For more information, or to purchase a ticket, call the church office at 742-8987 or visit www.cwchappenings.org.

Conservancy plans fundraising dinner

The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy will hold a Celebrity Waiter Night on March 11 at the Peter Herdic House Restaurant, with proceeds to benefit its land conservation program.

Writers will include Jerry Allen, of Lycoming College; Rosanne Casale Bolsar, Fish Real Estate; Rick Mason, state Department of Transportation; Tony Nardi, Fish Real Estate; Tom Raup, attorney; Amy Shotwell, Verizon; Mark Shuman, Clear Channel Communications; Jerry Walls, community planning consultant; and Greg Zeitler, Sit Happens and Special Olympics coach.

To make a reservation, call the restaurant at 322-0165.

Elk foundation chapter sets fundraiser

PENNSDALE — The Tiadaghton Chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will hold its annual fundraising banquet March 19 at the Pennsdale Civic Center.

Doors will open at 4 p.m.

For more information and reservations, call 482-4364.

Hunter trapper education scheduled

MUNCY VALLEY — Hunter Trapper Education programs for youth ages 11 and older will be held this spring at the North Mountain Sportsman's Club, Shipman Hill Road. Classes are set for:

- March 25-27 (6-9:30 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday)
- April 14-16 (6-9:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday)

Participants must attend all three sessions of the class to complete the course. Upon successful completion, a HTE card will be issued.

Individuals may enroll online at www.pgc.state.pa.us. Click on "Education and Hunter Trapper Education." Registration is limited to 45 people per class.

For more information, or help, call Rick Smith at 928-8941 or see www.northmt.com.

Sportsmen set annual banquet

HUGHESVILLE — The Consolidated Sportsmen of Muncy Creeks will hold its annual banquet at 6 p.m. March 26 in the Hughesville Volunteer Fire Department's social hall. Doors open at 4:30 p.m.

Jonathan Wyant, wildlife conservation officer with the state Game Commission, will present a program titled "Bears In Our Backyard."

March 19 is the last day to order tickets. No tickets will be sold at the door. To purchase tickets, call Art Fry at 368-1245 or Bill Sherwood at 584-3551.

The evening includes a roast beef dinner with homemade pies, a Chinese auction, gun and rod drawings, a 50/50 drawing, a live auction with auctioneer Wayne Arthur, musical entertainment featuring The Konkle Family, and door prizes.

As with all Consolidated Sportsmen of Muncy Creeks' fundraisers, proceeds will be used to provide trout feed for the more than 12,000 trout to be stocked in the tributary streams of Muncy Creek; to maintain its two trout nurseries; and to perform limited stocking of game.

Bluebird Society to hold conference

STATE COLLEGE — The 13th annual Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Conference will be held April 1-2 at the Penn Stater Hotel Conference Center. It is open to all who are interested, though a registration fee is charged.

Attendees who register before March 15 can save \$5. For more information, call Linda Frye, Clinton County coordinator for the Bluebird Society at 769-7375.



JESSICA WELSHANS/Sun-Gazette

A couple takes a turn mushing their own dog sled at Arctic Paws Dog Sled Tours on Feb. 12. Ania Drabina stands as musher, while Doug Firre is bundled into the basket. At the front of the team, one of the lead dogs looks back at its companions. Lead dogs respond to the musher's commands and are responsible for finding and following the trail, as well as setting the pace for the team. Behind the lead dogs are the swing dogs, who help the team and the sled make turns. Next in line are the team dogs, which provide the "dogpower" for the team. Closest to the sled are the wheel dogs.

Huskies teams lead the way at Poconos dog sled experience

(From Page F-1)

"Some are wise old spirits who are serious while others are clowns and full of mischief," Marsh said. "They are all great at what they do and (they) love people."

When offered attention, the dogs tend to offer a paw or sometimes kisses. Most more than welcome a nice ear scratch.

Throes of passion

Huskies were born and bred for a specific job — pulling a sled. In fact, it's almost their passion.

"It's amazing to see creatures like this doing what they completely were meant and created to do," Marsh said. "So many things today are manmade and mechanical — rehearsed or programmed — this isn't. It's live and real and full of unique adventure that is not rehearsed."

The staff hopes when people leave, they have learned about and become interested in dog sledding, developed an appreciation for what these animals can do, and created amazing memories and gigantic smiles.



JESSICA WELSHANS/Sun-Gazette

Esther Pesochin, front, and Shea Herko, middle, sit in the sled basket while Cassidy Herko manages the musher position. All three are from Verona, N.J.

▶ IF YOU GO

- ▶ **WHAT:** Arctic Paw Dog Sled Tours
- ▶ **WHERE:** Inn at Pocono Manor, 1 Manor Drive, Pocono Manor, PA 18349
- ▶ **WEBSITE:** <http://arcticpawdogsledtours.com>
- ▶ **TELEPHONE:** 839-0123 (receiving voice mail only) or call the Manor at 839-7111 or 1-800-233-8150

Lycoming Audubon changes meeting site

Starting Wednesday, the Lycoming Audubon Society will hold its regular membership meetings at the Old Lycoming Township Volunteer Fire Co. social hall, 1600 Dewey Ave.

Located just off Route 15, the social hall provides plenty of space inside and

ample, adjacent parking outside.

From Williamsport, take Route 15 north to the Foy Avenue exit, bearing left at the split within the ramp. At the stop sign, turn left; at Dewey Avenue, turn right, and you're there.

For more help, call 244-8671.

Agencies offer series of webinars on deer management

A mini-series of white-tailed deer management webinars will be offered "live" at noon and 7 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month beginning in March and running through May.

The webinars will be presented by wildlife biologist Kip Adams, of the Quality Deer Management Association, and wildlife biologist/forester Matt Ross. Each will last about one hour.

They are designed for anyone interested in learning about white-tailed deer biology, habitat, and management.

Topics include:

- March 15: Implementing a Successful Deer Management Program
- April 19: White-tailed Deer Breeding Biology and Communication
- May 17: Providing Quality Habitat for White-tailed Deer

Participation does not require special software.

Registration is required by visiting <http://rnnext.cas.psu.edu/PAForestWeb/>.

The webinars are sponsored by:

- Penn State Cooperative Extension
- The Quality Deer Management Association, and
- Penn State School of Forest Resources Web Seminar Center.

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Chronic wasting disease found in Maryland deer

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Natural resources officials say the first case of chronic wasting disease has been confirmed in a Maryland white-tailed deer.

The Department of Natural Resources received confirmation of the disease on Feb. 10. A hunter in Allegany County reported taking the deer in November in Green Ridge State Forest.

Twenty other states and Canadian provinces have chronic wasting disease documented in deer, elk or moose.

Officials say the disease does not present a risk to people, pets or domestic livestock. However, hunters are reminded to never consume the meat of sick animals.

Montana blocks Yellowstone park bison slaughter

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer on Tuesday signed an executive order blocking the shipment of hundreds of Yellowstone National Park bison to slaughter.

The Democratic governor told The Associated Press that he was worried the shipments could spread the disease brucellosis, now largely confined to Yellowstone's wildlife, to Montana livestock.

Park officials had planned to slaughter potentially hundreds of bison testing positive for exposure to the disease, which causes pregnant animals to prematurely abort their young.

Schweitzer said he wants to send a message to federal officials that a new approach is needed to control a bison population that spills out of the park and into Montana every few years.

In the interim, he suggested the park bring in loads of hay to feed 525 bison captured so far this winter after they migrated out of the snow-packed park to lower elevations in search of food.