

[February 28, 2010]

## Medina County schools linked in to Iditarod

Feb 27, 2010 (The Akron Beacon Journal - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX) -- Schoolchildren in Medina County will get a front-row seat via the Internet for this year's Iditarod sled dog race in Alaska, following the mushers on their trek from Anchorage to Nome.

Their correspondent will be Jacinda Yonker, the gifted coordinator for the Medina County Schools Educational Service Center, who leaves Sunday for the Last Frontier.

"While I'm in Alaska, I'll be providing podcasts, videos and pictures back to students in Medina County," Yonker said. "I have over 100 teachers signed up for the enrichment activities." While in Alaska, she'll team with other teachers to develop curriculum, talk to mushers, visit a musher's home and learn from veterinarians about the proper care of dogs during the race.

"Anybody out there can look on the curriculum and join in on the fun," Yonker said. "It doesn't just have to be like a student. I've posted everything online, so adults and community members can get involved." The curriculum is tied to Ohio content standards in all core areas, said Yonker, who is assigned to Wadsworth City Schools but does activities for all students in Medina County.

"Also, we have 'Iditawalk' for the physical education section, and we have 'Iditaread,' which is a reading contest for the students," she said. "For every hour they read, that is an hour along the Iditarod trail." Teachers can decide which activities they want to do with their kids.

"In many of the buildings, all their teachers have a musher assigned to them, so they'll be following each musher and charting their progress each day, as well as trying to do some mathematical logistics with the race," Yonker said. "There's a little something for everyone." Yonker hopes to be close to the action in Alaska.

"I'll be able to bring back to the people in Medina County behind-the-scenes happenings at the Iditarod," she said.

Yonker always has been a dog lover -- (the family's 14-year-old Weimaraner died last month) -- and a lover of the outdoors, so the opportunity to involve the students in the race made sense to her. Her parents will stay with her 12-

year-old daughter while she is away.

"My daughter's hoping I'll bring back a sled dog," Yonker said. "She's going to follow me on the Internet. Her class is also following." Bringing home a sled dog might not be in the cards, but Yonker would like to get pulled by some.

"If I get a chance to ride one of the sleds, I'm going to," she said.

She'll post everything on a special Web site called a Glog, at <http://jacinday.glogster.com/jacindaaiditarod>.

Her sponsor, Bil-Jac, a family-owned Medina dog food company, will be following her on its site, <http://www.bil-jac.com>. Just click on the tab for Bil-Jac Community.

The Beacon Journal's education blog, First Bell -- On Education, also will keep track of her adventure at <http://education.ohio.com>.

The more than 1,150-mile race starts March 6, John Higgins can be reached at 330-996-3792 or [jhiggins@thebeaconjournal.com](mailto:jhiggins@thebeaconjournal.com). Read the education blog at <http://education.ohio.com/>.

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