

## Just weeks before start, Yukon Quest short of money

**IN A HOLE:** Cash donations to run race, put up purse lagging.

By BETH BRAGG

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With less than five weeks to go before a record field begins the 1,000-mile run from Alaska to Canada, the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race is only two-thirds of the way to raising the \$150,000 purse promised to mushers.

And that's just part of a fundraising shortfall that leaves the race \$175,000 short of what it needs for this year's race, Sue Thomas, the Quest's executive director in Canada, said in an email Wednesday.

The nonprofit organization is \$125,000 short of the \$475,000 needed to put on the race, Thomas said, and \$50,000 short of the \$150,000 in promised prize money.

"The Quest made this commitment in August and surely wishes to honor that commitment," Thomas said of the purse.

She said about half of the budget, or \$240,000, is covered by in-kind donations, and the race has found those sponsors. When the race lost long-time sponsor Norcan, which supplied about \$15,000 in vehicle support, Whitehorse Motors stepped in to fill the need, Thomas said.

It's the cash donations that have come up short.

"Even though we have cut costs as much as possible, we still need cash for paying suppliers and the purse," Marti Steury, the race's Alaska executive director, said in a press release.

Thomas said the race lost one major cash sponsor, \$25,000 donor Minto Explorations/Capstone Mining. A number of sponsors who were donating smaller amounts have not returned this year, and in an interview earlier this winter with CBC Thomas speculated that the Quest is competing for dollars in Whitehorse with the Arctic Winter Games, which will be held in the Yukon city in March.

The Quest is coming off an epic year that saw young Dallas Seavey win a race held in brutal weather that imperiled a number of mushers and turned a few into heroes for their efforts in rescuing those in trouble.

Seavey isn't part of a record field of 32 mushers signed up for this year's race, but Lance Mackey -- the Quest's only four-time champion -- is.

The 29th annual Quest begins Feb. 4 in Fairbanks.

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## **Donations coming in to help money-strapped Yukon Quest**

by Suzanna Caldwell / [scaldwell@newsminer.com](mailto:scaldwell@newsminer.com)

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**FAIRBANKS** — The community is coming together, in large and small ways, to make sure the 2012 Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race has the money it needs.

After announcing last Wednesday that the organization was short money for the purse and expenses, donations have been filtering in to Quest headquarters in both Fairbanks and Whitehorse.

Enough money has come in that the Quest confirmed it will be able to pay out the \$150,000 purse to the top 15 finishers.

More than a dozen individuals and organizations have stepped up, including \$5,000 from Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and \$10,000 from Kinross Fort Knox. In Whitehorse, White Pass and Yukon Route railroad confirmed its donation of \$3,000.

While the purse total has been confirmed, the race is still in need of \$125,000 in race expenses.

Lorna Shaw, community and government affairs manager for Fort Knox, said Fort Knox has sponsored Quest mushers and kennels over the years but had never come on as an official Quest sponsor. Shaw said it made sense to come on as a sponsor considering the traditions dog mushing and gold mining share.

“(This sponsorship) is a good marrying of the two traditions,” she said.

Social media is playing a significant role in raising money. As of Monday night, more than \$3,600 had been raised via Facebook and PayPal donations. Sue Thomas, executive director in the race’s Yukon office, has been monitoring the accounts and said that donations from as far away as Germany and Australia have been received through the accounts.

The Facebook fans have purchased both start and finish bibs and are on their way to “lead dog” sponsorship — the \$5,000 level that includes potential street banners, chute banners and other recognition within the race.

It’s another part of the Quest fundraising efforts that include selling 1,000 \$10 buttons, one for each mile of the race, and a Purse Party on Jan. 21.

For Fairbanks executive director Marti Steury, the outpouring of support is inspiring.

“It’s been humbling,” she said. “You forget that you’re the steward of something bigger than you, part of something bigger than yourself.”