



Andover's Michelle Lambert enjoys the thrills of mushing.

Mushing: Michelle Lambert's Fascinating Hobby

Charlie Darling

We saw the Ragged Mountain Mushing pick-up truck at the Transfer Station the other day, so of course we had to find out more. Andover resident Michelle Lambert was kind enough to fill us in on her fascinating hobby. (A much longer version of this interview appears at AndoverBeacon.com in the Outdoors section.)

Andover Beacon: How did you get involved with mushing?

Michelle Lambert: First, I fell in love with the Siberian Husky breed. We adopted from Patriot Siberian Husky League (PSHR) of Walpole, Massachusetts, including two puppies that were born and fostered in Plymouth, New Hampshire.

Whatleigh Torsey, who had raised that litter and is a musher, asked me to come and help her train. Before I knew it, I was a musher's "handler." I loved working with such smart, affectionate, and happy dogs.

AB: What is there about mushing that makes it appealing to you?

ML: Dogs, dogs, dogs! I love that the dogs are happy. They love to run! And I love the challenge. There is a lot of adrenaline. It can be crazy fast, with five to 12 dogs pulling me along. I also love just being in the woods and only hearing the breath of the dogs running.

AB: Tell us about the dogs ...

ML: I am not what you would call a traditional musher. My pack gets to come into the house through dog doors, at their leisure.

Juno is 14 years old. He is deaf now and has some dementia. He is the smallest, but he enjoys herding the rest of the pack.

Yacha is my lead dog. She has to learn commands like gee (right), haw (left), and many others; a lead dog has to be smart.

At seven months old she needed a bilateral femoral hip surgery due to severe dysplasia in her rear hips. Her surgery was a success, and when she was

ready, I put her in harness and it was like she never left.

PaMola comes from a long line of sled dogs, so she is a natural. I was in the room when she was born; she slipped right into my hands. My bond is the strongest with her.

Ridley was rescued last June. He is very tall. Sometimes I think he is part Great Dane. He was diagnosed with cataracts when he was a puppy, but this does not affect his ability to run.

Ridley's brother is Vader, as in Darth Vader. Some days I call him Space Invader because he is always on my lap.

Like Ridley, Vader is new to mushing. At first, he had no idea what to do or expect. Echo taught Vader to just let the human put this contraption on him, and then run!

Echo is Yacha's brother. He is the teacher in the pack. He is also the protector. He's a bit goofy. Sometimes he lets me sweep the floor with him.

AB: Tell us about your sleds.

ML: The sled I use on snow is called a Danler Hornet XT. It weighs 19 pounds. It's very fast. It can hold some cargo. The best thing about this sled is it folds up and fits in the backseat of a car!

During the spring and fall, I use what is called a dry-land rig. It's a four-wheel bicycle without pedals made out of airplane-grade aluminum, with four-wheel disc brakes and 20" fat tires. It has a passenger seat, too!

AB: How do the dogs react to a day on the trail?

ML: When I take them to the gate on the Northern Rail Trail, they act like real sled dogs. I take each one to the line, and they start barking, howling, and jumping up and down.

The hardest part for them physically is if we get caught when the temperature gets too hot while running. We have to slow way down, take many water breaks, and take our time getting back to the truck.

Emotionally, I think it's hard for them

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Join Discussion on Creating Strong Economy in the Lake Sunapee Region

Press release

Center for The Arts (CFA) invites businesses, creative organizations, and community leaders to an open dialog on how to use the arts to create a strong economy in our local community. Join us for coffee and conversation on March 8th at 9 AM at the Tracy Memorial Library.

The creative economy includes all businesses, organizations, and individu-

als who work in or support creative industries. Working together we can make our community an attractive place to live and to visit, boosting the local economy and making our community stronger.

Join us as we plan future efforts, regional events, and broader publicity to bring more people to the Lake Sunapee Region for one night or for a lifetime. RSVP to info@centerfortheartsnh.org

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