

Skiers put in the miles for a cause

Cross country skiers have been racking up the mileage for Ski-A-Mile for 21 years in the Flathead Valley.

Each year, young and old novices and Nordic pros seek pledges and ski on the groomed trails at the Whitefish Golf Course to support the Nurturing Center's child abuse prevention programs.

This year Blacktail Mountain Ski Area joined in and offered a discount lift ticket to any skier or snowboarder who collected \$50 or more in pledges.

Susan Christofferson, executive director for the Nurturing Center, was up at Blacktail for its first Ski-A-Mile, which she hopes will become a new tradition.

"What a rich fabric of the community Blacktail has!" she said. "I saw dads slipping handwarmers into their kids' mittens, and kids with binkies going down the hill."

So far this year more than \$9,000 in pledge money has been collected, with still more to come.

One family, in particular, went the extra mile by collecting almost \$1,500.

"That's nearly 17 percent!" said Christofferson.

Chris Holt and her two children, 10-year-old Stella and 7-year-old Henry, have been involved in the fund-raiser for years. "This family is modeling to the rest of the community the way we help one another," Christofferson said. "And these children will grow up someday to be outstanding citizens. The family is providing that critical link between enjoying life and giving back."

Ski-A-Mile proceeds exclusively benefit the Nurturing Center's child abuse programs and services to families to prevent more costly future problems, said Christofferson.

Among those is the in-home program called House Calls, through which families may receive advice on establishing appropriate discipline techniques and child development.

Qualifying families also may request in-home visits from a family support specialist.

This is just one of the many support groups the Nurturing Center offers to families valleywide. "We are committed to make our child abuse prevention programs work," said Christofferson.