

# Mackinac Island Summer Worker Is 2010 Olympic Hopeful

By Leslie Rott

Amy Petrouski's reputation proceeds her. Whether she's landscaping or decorating cakes, people on the Island know who she is. Maybe it's because of her vibrant personality or her all-or-nothing attitude, or it could be the crazy workout she does at five in the morning every day.

Residents may also know Ms. Petrouski as Mackinac's resident bagpipe player. This summer, she has played at the Frank Horn memorial softball game at Great Turtle Park in June and the Bernida restoration benefit dinner at the Mackinac Island Yacht Club in July.

She has resided on Mackinac Island for the past four summers and knew since she was 10 years old that this is where she wanted to live.

One thing that many people may not know about Ms. Petrouski is that she is training for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Ms. Petrouski began speed skating just over four years ago, at the age of 19. Self-motivated and determined, she has quickly climbed the ranks. She now trains with Shani Davis and has had the opportunity to train with Apolo Anton Ohno, two stellar athletes she once idolized, but



**In the summer, away from the ice, Ms. Petrouski trains with the newest technology, a special seat belt used to strengthen thigh muscles and perfect balance on a short track.**

now counts among her greatest friends.

They are confident that she will make it to Vancouver in four years.

"They're such an inspiration to me," Ms. Petrouski said. "I couldn't be in better company."

For half the year, she trains on ice at a rink an hour and a

half away from her home on Chicago's south side, and during summers, she comes to Mackinac Island for dry-land training, which includes riding her bicycle almost 75 miles a day, running backwards, and doing other strength training exercises. It is, she said, a traditional speed skating training regimen.

The racing bike she uses, she said, requires the body to be in the same basic position as is required for speed skating. But because of her intense and unique workout, she does it very early in the morning before anyone is up to watch her.

Ms. Petrouski began playing the piano at the age of two and took up the bagpipes at age nine, eventually winning national competitions. At the age of 17, however, a debilitating pain in her eyes caused her to quit playing. She was diagnosed with a blockage in her brain stem, given just two months to live, and underwent emergency brain surgery.

That experience gave her the inspiration and motivation to live her life fully and to take up speed skating, an interest she had entertained since age 12. While she only began participating in the sport several years ago, she says she has been training for it her whole life. She refuses to give up on her quests and contends that no matter what happens, she is just happy to be doing something that she loves.

This may be her last summer on the Island for awhile, as she wants to spend the next several years preparing for the qualifying competitions for the Winter Olympics in 2010.

She has spent her summers

here working for Sandra and Debra Orr at the French Outpost, beginning as a waitress and moving on to become a jack of all trades, "a grounds, maintenance, landscaping, sometimes-cake-decorating person," as she called it.

At 25, she hopes her accomplishments and ambitions will inspire those around her, even if she doesn't make it to Vancouver. Her friends say they already are inspired.

"Amy's worked with us for several years and she's a hard worker and we love her energy and we are glad that she is part of our family," said Wendy Crowley, director of operations for French Outpost.

Her close friends know her as "Crazy Amy," "Hurricane Amy," or "Famous Amy." She's known as "Crazy Amy" because while all her friends are out partying, she is busy riding laps around the Island on her bicycle. The "Hurricane" came from the fact that she talks really fast and doesn't like to waste any time. "She blows in and before you know it, she's gone," said one friend. It isn't hard to see why she is called, "Famous Amy," since everyone on the Island seems to know who she is.

So watch out Vancouver, Crazy, Hurricane, Famous Amy is on her way.

## Committee Explores Ambulance Fees

By Leslie Rott

After receiving a bill of \$15,805 from Allied EMS Systems, Inc., the finance committee met Wednesday, August 24, with Dave Slifka, Allied's executive director, and Debra Meert, the company's director of finance, to discuss what the City of Mackinac Island owes for ambulance services.

The bill that the City received is for half of the total loss in revenue for the last six months, owing in part to higher overhead for the service. As the year progresses, it is expected that run volume will go up and revenue loss will be reduced.

Mr. Slifka said the reason the City owes more at this point, as compared to last year, is that the city's ambulance service certification was elevated from basic to limited advance, meaning that certified Emergency Medical Technicians are able to treat patients at the scene. No longer a "load-and-go" to the Mackinac Island Medical Center, according to

Mr. Slifka, not only is the volume of runs increasing, so are the wages required to pay EMTs for their work.

Mr. Slifka added that although the EMTs are certified at the limited advance level, most of the calls they receive still fall under the category of basic. EMTs get paid more per call, but the calls do not make up for that wage increase.

It is estimated that, year to date, there have been 40 more runs this year than last, however, it was not known how many of those were emergency service calls and how many were for simply transporting patients.

Committee Member Jason St. Onge said he expected that the amount of money owed to Allied would be going down.

Mayor Assistant Kelly Bean assured him that the numbers are normal.

"This is exactly how it goes

every year," she said. Mr. Slifka agreed, estimating that by the end of the year, the City should end up with a credit.

The City budgets \$30,000 a year to subsidize the contracted Allied operation, which includes, but is not limited to EMT wages and benefits and vehicle repair and upkeep.

Mr. Slifka said the financial issues are not unique to the City of Mackinac Island.

"It's something we are all facing because of the State's new standards," he said. "We're doing everything we can to be creative and keep these expenses in line."

The committee asked that Allied send quarterly financial reports to the City so they could be more closely monitored.

"We just needed to get it clarified in our heads," Mayor Margaret Doud told the representatives from Allied.

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