If the snow has you yearning for some old-fashioned winter fun, head to Iola February 2–3 for the 52nd Iola Winter Carnival. A grand celebration of the community’s Scandinavian roots, the carnival showcases traditional winter activities brought here by the area’s Norwegian ancestors generations ago.

Although carnival activities take place throughout the community, the heart of the event is the Iola Winter Sports Club five miles northwest of Iola, home to Wisconsin’s newest 60-meter ski jump. This is where area children begin learning to ski jump and cross-country ski shortly after they begin to walk. Many of them go on to compete for club-sponsored teams in ski jumping and Nordic combined, an event for which athletes ski jump first, with their jump scores used to determine their starting positions in a cross-country race. Thanks in part to a quality ski-jumping complex that allows for year-round jumping, many Iola-area athletes have enjoyed successful competitive careers.

Of course, tradition has a lot to do with that success as well. Ski jumping is such a way of life here that just about everyone in the community is connected to the sport somehow, either as an athlete, a dedicated carnival volunteer, or simply an enthusiastic spectator. Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative is no exception; the co-op’s own Lila Shower, vice president of finance, comes from impressive ski-jumping lineage, starting with her father, Sig Malvik, a member of the Ski Jumping Hall of Fame. Malvik took his first jump in Norway when he was 3, and he continued to jump competitively for various clubs after emigrating to the United States with his family when he was 16, amassing a collection of titles and honors along the way. He made the 1954 U.S. National Ski Jumping Team and competed in the World Masters Championships several times in the 1990s.

Malvik’s contributions to the sport extend beyond competition; he has served as both coach and judge, plus he twice appeared on ABC’s “Wide World of Sports” as a translator and was a member of the hill crew for the ski-jumping competition at the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid.

Fortunately for Iola, Malvik has shared his expertise with the local community as well. He has served as president of the Iola Winter Sports Club, helping to build the facilities and club teams into what they are today. Throughout it all he kept jumping; when the 60-meter jump was comple-
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