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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lisa Beckstead
(775) 225-8039
lisa_beckstead@kokatat.com

ARCATA LOCAL WINS AT 2008 GREENLAND NATIONAL KAYAKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Arcata, CA – Helen Wilson, a sea kayaker living in Arcata, California, first picked up a Greenland stick in December 2006 and never looked back. Helen recently competed in the 2008 Greenland National Kayaking Championship, and received first place medals in individual rolling, group rolling and the distance harpoon throw. She found her experiences in Greenland to be life changing, and wishes to share them with others.

Historically, kayaks (qajaqs) were used in the Arctic for hunting and fishing in order to survive. Rolling the qajaq was an essential self-rescue skill that was learned and used in case of a capsized. Various rolls were developed to handle any and all situations that might arise, from being entangled in fishing lines, to losing a paddle and needing to roll using hunting equipment; or using only hands or elbows to right oneself. As the world changed, qajaqs weren't being used as much for survival, and there developed a concern that the history and culture associated with the sport could be lost. In 1984, the Greenlandic people started kayaking clubs in several regions in Greenland. Competitions are held yearly and include racing, harpoon throwing, Eskimo rolling and rope gymnastic. The purpose of these competitions is to keep tradition alive, and to teach the skills that Greenlandic people have used for so many years. The Greenland National Kayaking Championships take place over the course of a week and are more of a celebration than serious competition, in which all ages, from children to the elderly, compete.

Helen works at The Arcata Eye newspaper and is the program assistant for Kayak Zaks, where she teaches rolling at the Arcata Community Pool. She is also the President of Explore North Coast (www.explorenorthcoast.net), Humboldt County's Sea Kayaking Association. She has performed rolling demonstrations and instruction at several events. Helen enjoys open ocean paddling in her skin-on-frame qajaq and can be found playing off the northern California coastline and in the lagoons several times a week. She has pursued many water sports including synchronized swimming, scuba diving and diving. She is never far from water, and enjoys being underwater as much as being on the surface. Helen has made an effort to learn the names of the rolls in Greenlandic, and her son, Alex, often calls them out for her during rolling demonstrations. She wishes to share her experiences in Greenland, and to help others learn more about the Greenlandic culture, traditional paddling skills and the fun that can be had by learning to roll.

Helen will be instructing, presenting, and performing rolling demonstrations at the following events:

West Coast Sea Kayak Symposium www.wcsks.org

Humboldt Bay Paddlefest www.humboldtbyapaddlefest.com

Traditional Arctic Kayak Symposium (TAKS) www.shamankayaks.com/shaman/taks

Delmarva Paddler's Retreat www.delmarvapaddlersretreat.org/ez

For more information about Helen or the 2008 Greenland National Kayaking Championship, visit www.greenlandorbust.org

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