

GREENFIELD

Winter wonderland or season switch-up?

102nd annual Winter Carnival taking on summer theme

By **ABNER ROJAS**
For the Recorder

GREENFIELD — Despite February being one of the coldest months of the year, attendees of the 102nd annual Winter Carnival can warm up with summer-style activities under this year's theme of "Season Switch-Up."

Local businesses will be lending a hand to the Greenfield Recreation Department, the Winter Carnival's primary organizer, to capture those summer vibes during the three-day event, planned for Friday, Feb. 2, through Sunday, Feb. 4. Attendees can find tropical-themed doughnuts at Adams Donuts, summertime drinks and beach music at Mesa Verde restaurant, and a beach party at Beacon Field featuring limbo, snow volleyball and other summer-themed activities.

If the summer style isn't for you, there will still be plenty of

other events to enjoy, such as music, dance lessons and ice skating. Back again this year are the popular K-9 keg pull and cardboard sled race. Attendees of all ages can also experience more traditional winter activities that pay tribute to the carnival's long history dating back to the 1920s.

"Friday has the Parade of Lights, warming fire, fireworks and you can see the ice sculptors working," said Recreation Commission member Heather Valenta, adding that Saturday features a lot of indoor events while Sunday's itinerary includes a lot of outdoor ones. "Any of those days you can walk downtown and view the sculptures, enjoy a drink at Mesa Verde's ice bar and enjoy another drink inside at Main Street Bar and Grille."

Whether you've been coming to the Winter Carnival all your life or will be visiting for the first time, each day will have a variety of activ-



STAFF FILE PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Murray Long of Essex, Vermont, carves his ice sculpture on Main Street in Greenfield for the 2023 Winter Carnival. The 102nd annual event returns Friday through Sunday.

ities to choose from. For organizers and attendees alike, everyone has an activity that's particularly close to their hearts.

For Valenta, that event is the K-9 keg pull, which will be held Sunday

at 1 p.m. at Beacon Field. Dogs of all shapes and sizes, coaxed by their owners, sprint to the finish line pulling appropriately sized "kegs"

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday, Feb. 2

■ All day — Artists will be crafting ice sculptures throughout downtown. Vote in the online contest by 10 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 4.

■ 2 to 4:30 p.m. — Stop by the Greenfield Public Library meeting room for hot cocoa and board games.

■ 4 p.m. — A celebratory torch provided by Suburban Propane will be lit on the Greenfield Common.

■ 4 to 8 p.m. — Mesa Verde's outdoor beach bash and ice bar. Both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages will be available.

■ 4 to 8 p.m. — Stop by Court Square to watch fire-spinning performances, warm up around the fire barrels and toast some s'mores.

■ 5:30 to 7 p.m. — Come to Beacon Field for sledding, ice skating, music by DJ Jason Antes and a warming fire.

■ 6 p.m. — The Parade of Lights will travel from Newton School, along Main Street, down Federal Street, onto Beacon Street and end at Bea-

Winter Carnival to offer season switch-up

CARNIVAL FROM A1

ranging from beer cans for smaller dogs to full-size kegs for larger ones.

"This will be our 13th year for the keg pull," Valenta said. "It's fun to watch and participate. People love doing things with their furry friends, especially if they can get an award."

Others hold the ice sculptures, which will be carved in front of 11 downtown businesses this year, particularly dear. Carnival attendees can vote for their favorite.

"Downtown ice sculptures are always a favorite," said Recreation Director Christy Moore. "The intricate designs that are created from a simple block of ice are remarkable. Seeing them lit up at the end of the night is always special."

"The ice sculptures are the first things that come to mind," Kay Lyons, a member of the Historical Society of Greenfield who has volunteered with the Recreation Department for the cribbage tournament and the Parade of Lights for many years, said when asked about her favorite part of the carnival. "There have been ice sculptures and snow sculptures right from the start of the

Winter Carnival in 1922."

While the ice sculptures have remained a staple throughout the years, other parts of the Winter Carnival have evolved. When the event began in 1922, there were multiple ski jumps and toboggan chutes in an effort to promote tourism and establish the area as a winter sports destination, according to Moore and Lyons. Other standout years include the 1927 Winter Carnival that drew an estimated 5,000 attendees to witness two ski jumpers leap through a flaming hoop. Today, though, the idea of having those kinds of activities is less feasible.

"Unfortunately, the ski jumps and toboggan chutes are long gone," Moore said. "Mother Nature does not provide as much snow as in years past."

"I think the biggest changes to the Winter Carnival have had to do with changes in the climate and landscape, although some have to do with the public's tastes in entertainment," Lyons added. "It's hard to imagine the big ski jumps ... in our winter landscape, and of course Highland Pond hasn't had skating in recent years because environmental laws mean the pond can't



Mika the husky, owned by Mark Theriault, competes in the K-9 keg pull during the 2018 Winter Carnival at Beacon Field in Greenfield. The 102nd annual event returns Friday through Sunday.

STAFF FILE PHOTO/DAN LITTLE

be dredged."

Among other events of the past, the owner of the Weldon Hotel, eager to cultivate tourism, used to hold a Winter Carnival Ball as part of the festivities, according to Lyons. The dances and balls that were held at the Weldon and later the Armory stopped happening sometime in the 1990s. The town also used to crown a Winter Carnival Queen.

While the events have changed, the spirit of the carnival hasn't, organizers say. At its core, the idea of bringing people together and embracing the winter season through fun activities remains.

Being a three-day celebration, it might be difficult for festival goers to pick which day to attend. Moore, too, said it would be hard to choose.

"Each day is truly filled with terrific Winter Carnival

events. If we had to pick, it would be Friday," she said. "Where else can you spend the day enjoying live ice carvings as you walk downtown, then stop by and enjoy a drink at an outdoor ice bar, catch some fire spinning in front of City Hall, grab a bite to eat, and enjoy the Parade of Lights and fireworks shot off from the iconic Poet's Seat Tower."

For more information about the Winter Carnival, visit greenfieldrecreation.com/wintercarnival or find the Greenfield Recreation Department on Instagram or Facebook. Keeping Mother Nature in mind, Moore advises attendees to keep an eye on the department's social media pages as any weather-related scheduling changes will be announced there.