Winter Carnival: 100 years of ‘making memories’

By MARY BYRNE Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — The Centennial Celebration of the Winter Carnival will be as much about reminiscing on celebrations of years past as it will be about looking forward to future ones.

“We want people to reminisce about fun times they’ve had over the years at Winter Carnival and just share memories … and build memories that last a lifetime,” said Recreation Director Christy Moore. “And what better place to do it than Greenfield?”

After a canceled event last year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the return of the weekend-long event is expected to kick off Feb. 4 with events and activities scheduled throughout the day.

“We’re very happy to be able to offer this special event again, now that we’re familiar with the safety measure we need in place to do it and ensure everyone’s safety,” Moore said.

With crafts and entertainment happening earlier in the day, a torch lighting at 4 p.m. at Greenfield Common will mark the official start of the 100th annual Winter Carnival. Later in the evening, a “glow party” will take place at Beacon Field followed by a “warming fire” at 5:30 p.m.

At 6 p.m., the Parade of Lights — a parade of decorated vehicles — will depart from Newton Elementary School and make its way to Beacon Field by way of Main, Federal and Beacon streets. The weekend to follow includes a wide range of in-person and virtual events and activities.

A longstanding tradition, the carnival dates back to the winter of 1923, according to the Recreation Department.

The ice palace on the Common during Winter Carnival of January 1923.

At its height in the 1920s, an estimated 5,000 spectators attended the 1927 celebration where two ski jumpers leaped through a flaming hoop off the ski jump after dark.

In addition to ski jumping, the event also featured “fancy skating,” speed skaters playing hockey on Highland Pond, a cross country ski race, snowshoe & ski hikes, a Carnival Ball at the Armory, a fireworks display and band at Beacon Field, and ice sculptures at the common and at private residences, according to the Recreation Department.

“In the 1920s, things were very different as far as the landscape,” Moore said. “We don’t have the toboggan chute that came down at the base of the Poet’s Seat Tower, and we certainly can’t do the ski jump … but there’s so many outdoor things that we have available, in Greenfield. Some of those things we’ll highlight.”

Reminiscent of carnivals long ago, ice skating will be offered all weekend at Beacon Field, as will a horse drawn sleigh and wagon rides. As part of the vintage snowmobile show and rides on Sunday, people are encouraged to bring their own vintage sleds.

“Our hope is to have people dig out some of the old fashioned sleds that might be in their attics or garages, and have them on display,” Moore said.

And while the ice castle that was built and displayed on the Greenfield common for at least one of the earliest Winter Carnivals, live ice carvings will take place throughout the weekend. At night, those sculptures will be illuminated.

Overall, this year’s event aims to include a mix of new and old, in an attempt to resonate with how things were a century ago, Moore said. Combining new and old, in particular, will be the Glacier Hideaway — an outdoor ice bar speakeasy outside Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center.

“We’re trying to be creative and think about what our little Greenfield looked 100 years ago,” said Recreation Director Christy Moore.

Meg Baker, secretary of the Greenfield Historical Society, said that up until about the 1960s, the Winter Carnival was a major aspect of the winter months in the region.

“In the ‘20s, it was a massive … social event in town, a little bit like the Fourth of July is now, in terms of big celebrations,” Baker said.

By the 1960s, however, it had waned in popularity, she said. Then, in the 1980s, the event saw a revival.

“If you were a little kid in the ‘50s, and you remembered it being this cool thing that happened when you were a kid … it takes the kid growing up, it being this cool thing that they ‘re 7 or 8, it’s enough of an event, and then again when they’re 7 or 8, it’s enough of their lifetime for it to be a thing they do every year,” Baker said.

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Schedule of events

Staff Report

The following is the schedule of events for the 100th anniversary of the Winter Carnival. For a full list of ongoing events and activities, as well as more information on how to register for individual events, visit https://www.greenfieldrecreation.com/wintercarnival.html or https://bit.ly/34EGuNd.

Friday, Feb. 4

8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Winter Music with Leith Oliver (Downtown/Instagram Live: Live Music with Leith Oliver)

9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Take and Make Craft Kits (Greenfield Public Library)

4 p.m. Torch Lighting (Beacon Field Common)

5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m. Warming Fire (Beacon Field)

5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m. Glow Party (Beacon Field)

6 p.m. Parade of Lights (From Newton Elementary School to Main Street, Federal Street, Beacon Street)

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. The Glacier Hideaway (Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center)

6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. LED Glow Show (Beacon Field)

7 p.m. Fireworks (Beacon Field)

8 p.m.: No Lenses/Whalom Park (Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center) – Western Massachusetts-based folk rock group will be performing at the performing arts venue on Main Street

Saturday, Feb. 5

Events at 20 Sanderson Street

9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Family Fun Fest

10 a.m. – 11 a.m.: Free Paint-Your-Own Pottery

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Face Painting

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Board Game Social – games will be provided by Greenfield Games

Additional events:

9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Take and Make Crafts (Greenfield Public Library)

10 a.m.: Virtual Jigsaw Puzzle Contest – Registration required, details can be found at greenfieldrecreation.com

11:45 a.m.: 12:30 p.m.: Mr. Popper’s Penguin’s Family Dance Lesson (Dawn’s School of Dance)

Noon – 6 p.m.: Glacier Hideaway (outside Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center)

1 p.m.: Cribbage Tournament

Sunday, Feb. 6

Events at 20 Sanderson Street

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Family Fun Fest

10 a.m. – 11 a.m.: Mad Science Show

10 a.m. – 11 a.m.: Free Take-Home Activities

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Face Painting

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Board Game Social – games will be provided by Greenfield Games

Additional events:

12:30 p.m.: Community-Wide Tip of War (Beacon Field)

1 p.m.: K9 Reg Pull (Beacon Field)

1 p.m.: Ice Bowling (Beacon Field)

3 p.m.: Broomball (Beacon Field)

3 p.m.: Cardboard Sled Race (Beacon Field)

3:30 p.m.: Awards Ceremony (Announcement of the winners of the parade of lights, cardboard sled race, vintage snowmobile show, cookie bake-off, chili cook-off and snow sculpture contest winner) – Beacon Field – noon to 4 p.m.

Sledding and Outdoor Ice Skating

Snowman Village – Bring your own snowmen and build your own snowman

Snow Sculpture Contest – Judging begins at 3:15 p.m.

Warming Fire

Music with DJ Jason Ante

Snack Bar

Cookie Bake-Off

Chili Cook-Off (To enter, contact the Recreation Department)

Vintage Snowmobiles and Snowriders

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GREENFIELD

GUILLAUME

Work on building a snow castle during the 97th annual Winter Carnival in 2019 at Beacon Field.

刃ahlstrom-Hakki, from left, Marc Guillaume and Skylar Guillaume work on building a snow castle during the 97th annual Winter Carnival in 2019 at Beacon Field.
Greenfield winter carnival marks 100 years

Baker said.

Moore, too, said she’s known people who have “aged out” of the activities offered at the annual celebration, only to then start bringing their own families to participate.

“I think that’s what making memories is all about, allowing opportunity to create new traditions as well,” Moore said.

One newer event that has since become a Winter Carnival tradition, she said, is the ice sculptures that line Main Street each year.

“One think people look forward to that,” Moore said. “It’s definitely one of my favorite events.”

And traditions, Baker said, mean a lot to people.

“We like doing things that are steady and help us mark the passage of time through the year,” she said.

“Especially as we go into year three of the pandemic, it’s nice to have things that mark time passing, and to celebrate that we’re still here.”

For a full list of events, visit www.greenfieldrecreation.com/wintercarnival.html. Registration for certain events, including the Parade of Lights or the Virtual Puzzle Contest, can also be found online.

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