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2021 McCall Winter Carnival gets back to its roots

Winter festival to focus on ice sculptures, family fun, and outdoor-recreation activities amid COVID-19

McCALL, Idaho (Oct. 29, 2020) — McCall, Idaho, is preparing to celebrate 56 years of the McCall Winter Carnival. Every year, the small town of 3,000 typically welcomes a surge of more than 60,000 people during the 10-day winter jubilee.

This year's observance runs Friday Jan. 29 through Sunday Feb. 7 and while the essence of Winter Carnival will remain unchanged, many events will be altered to align with public health and safety best practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Carnival-goers can expect to enjoy snow sculptures, vendors, family fun, outdoor recreation and the traditional small-town charm of McCall.

"At its core," says McKenzie Kraemer with the McCall Area Chamber, "Winter Carnival was started to get people outside, break the cabin fever, and build community. This is exactly what you will find this year, and something we could all definitely use."

Some things will look different in 2021. Events including the Children's Torchlight Parade, Mardi Gras Parade, firework shows, beer garden, and Main Stage music will all be put on hold due to COVID-19.

"While we know it is disappointing to not be able to host these events," says Kraemer, "they are simply going to have to wait until we are clear of the pandemic."

Large gatherings are of particular concern and the McCall Area Chamber's commitment to the health and safety of residents and visitors mean that changes needed to be made for the 2021 Carnival.

The McCall Area Chamber, working in partnership with The Go Agency, a Boise-based event company, will continue to work on new, safe events to incorporate into the 2021 McCall Winter Carnival. This also includes partnering with the numerous local businesses and nonprofits that host events during the 10-day festival.

“Many events may look a bit different this year,” says Kraemer, “but the spirit of Winter Carnival remains alive and well.”

The inspiration for the Winter Carnival dates back to 1924, when McCall created the Payette Lake Sports Carnival, named after the large, picturesque, glacier-carved, sandy-beached body of water that provides much of McCall’s summer and fall allure. The Sports Carnival existed for several years before becoming an ice-breakup contest, which ended when gambling became illegal in 1941.

In 1965, the community rallied to bring back a winter festival to help promote the area’s pristine skiing. This effort led to the first annual McCall Winter Carnival at Brundage Mountain Resort, which *Ski Magazine* has claimed is home to “the best powder in North America.” The two-day event included slalom racing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, and snowshoe and snowcat races.

Since then, the gala has grown into the popular, 10-day festival known today. The McCall Winter Carnival continues to attract visitors and amateur and professional snow sculptors from throughout the world.

To stay up-to-date on planning for the 2021 McCall Winter Carnival, please go to VisitMcCall.org.

About the McCall Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor’s Bureau

Established in 1964, the McCall Chamber of Commerce works diligently to support the community’s thriving tourism economy by working with local businesses, citizen groups, city governments, and neighboring chambers of commerce to maintain a desirable quality of life for all who live and visit the area. The private, nonprofit, voluntary business association boasts more than 300 members, represents about 70 percent of businesses licensed in McCall, and supports and promotes local businesses for a sustainable, healthy, and engaged community for years to come.

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