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2020
The
MONTANA STANDARD

MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Members of the Montana Tech Oredigger football team emerge from cold water during the Polar Plunge for SnöFlinga 2019.

SnöFlinga winter festival turns 5

This year's event ready to rip

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Butte's fifth annual SnöFlinga winter festival is rarin' to go, even if the year's curiously warm, dry winter isn't fully cooperating.

"We're getting creative with our lack of snow," festival co-organizer Jenny Heglund says. "We could sure use some. But even with current conditions, we're good to go."

The one weather-related casualty is the skijoring competition, a hugely popular addition to the festival last year.

"Current conditions pose significant safety hazards for the athletes and horses," Heglund said when the decision had to be made last week. "We are planning to include skijor for SnöFlinga 2021."

But a new event this year promises to be a real crowd-pleaser.

At the Original, an ice-climbing wall will be attached to the headframe, and Butte's own Phil Dobson, an enthusiastic and experienced ice climber, will give a demonstration. (See related story). Also, equipment will be available and people will be able to try out the lower levels of the wall.

The Original mineyard will also be the site of the is at the center of many festival activities this year. The Polar Plunge, held in past years at the Mountain Con, will be at the Original. "Swimmers can jump off the stage into the pool," Heglund says.

Kids get their own day

From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Stodden Park will be the site of special Kids' Day activities, designed to encourage kids' fitness.

"They'll be sledding into inflatable bowling pins, doing an obstacle course, and playing with imagination blocks," Heglund said. "And inside the carousel there's a mini-expo on winter exercise for kids."

Also, all the kids who do the obstacle course will ride the carousel for free.

Curling is back!

The Copper City Curling Club "is excited," Heglund said. Through a grant from

the Butte Community Fitness Foundation, "They have more stones and a new Ice King" scraper to smooth the playing surface. Once again competitors will come from near and far for the competition.

Also, hockey fans will love a new feature this year: Free admission to a Butte Cobras game and a free skate afterwards with Cobras team members.

King and Queen

As in previous years, participants in all three races — the 5k run, 10k cross-country ski and the fat bike race — qualify to compete for the tiles of King and Queen of SnöFlinga. The competitors with the lowest combined time in the three races will win.

Avalanche safety course

Again this year, SnöFlinga will offer a free avalanche safety course, with the help of local mountaineer Hallie Zolynski. "It's a good idea for anyone who spends time in the backcountry in the winter — snowmobilers, backcountry skiers, everybody," Heglund said.

Incredible volunteers

Montana Tech, Butte High and Butte Central athletes will be volunteering, helping with various events, Heglund said.

Volunteers and community involvement are really what makes the festival work, she said. "Our team members who lead events donate countless hours to make the festival a success. This wouldn't happen without team of people we have. They are the true gems — the best thing about SnöFlinga."

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See SNÖFLINGA, PAGE 4 Kids will have their own SnöFlinga event this year at Stodden Park. Sledding into inflatable bowling pins and an obstacle course are planned.

Good Luck to all SNOFLINGA Athletes!
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SnöFlinga

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List of sponsors

Green Circle: Montana Orthopedics, St. James Healthcare.

Bunny Hill: Express Care, Butte 100, Opportunity Bank.

Heglund said the event has also benefited from grant funding from SARTA, the Montana Tourism Office and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation.

List of partners:

High Altitude Skate Oval
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Butte Chamber of Commerce
Butte-Silver Bow Police Department
Butte Copper City Kings
Copper City Curling Club
Spirit of Columbia Gardens Carousel

Getting people involved

Eventually, Heglund would love to see SnöFlinga grow to be the winter equivalent of the Folk Festival. But the biggest goal of the event, she said, is getting the community out and involved. "We want to give the people of Butte a reason to come out and enjoy winter, to be active," she said. "Sometimes in the winter, you need a little extra push to get out there."

As president of the Butte Community Fitness Foundation, which puts on SnöFlinga, Heglund says it "makes my heart happy" to see more people getting out and enjoying outdoor recreation in the winter.

While she didn't necessarily expect SnöFlinga to grow as quickly as it has, Heglund said it's not all that surprising, because "Butte loves a good festival, a good party. We just had to show people that they'd have a good time when they showed up, and they did. They caught on quick."

"It's great to see some more people out on the trails," she said. "That's what this is all about."

Runners and walkers participate in the SnöFlinga fun run during a past festival.

STANDARD FILE PHOTO

Chuck Richards shows good form launching a curling stone at the U.S. High Altitude Skating Center during a SnöFlinga winter festival.

WALTER HINICK, THE MONTANA STANDARD

SnoFlinga schedule 2020

Schedule of events for SnoFlinga 2020 Thursday through Sunday, Jan. 16-Jan. 19, throughout Butte.

THURSDAY, JAN. 16

7 p.m. — Viewing of "Colter: A Legacy of Adventure" at 5518 Designs, 27 N. Main St.

FRIDAY, JAN. 17

HIGH ALTITUDE SKATING CENTER

5 to 9 p.m. — Opening ceremonies at Butte High Altitude Skating Center, 34 Olympic Way. Pre-registration for Polar Plunge, free ice skating, bonfire, music, food, beverages

SATURDAY, JAN. 18

HOMESTAKE LODGE

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. — Open ski
10 to 11:30 a.m. — Nordic ski lesson session 1
10 a.m. to noon — Avalanche awareness clinic
12:30 p.m. — Return shuttle 1
1 to 3 p.m. — Nordic ski lesson session 2
1 to 3 p.m. — Snowshoe tour
3 p.m. — Return shuttle 2

HIGH ALTITUDE SKATING CENTER

9 a.m. — Departure shuttle 1
10 a.m. to noon — Elementary skate races
Noon — Departure shuttle 2

SKIJOR BUTTE

Canceled

STODDEN PARK

11 a.m. to 1 p.m. — Kids' day

HERMAN GULCH TRAILHEAD (Roosevelt Drive)

11 a.m. to 2 p.m. — Fat bike ride on groomed trails (60 to 90 minutes)

ORIGINAL MINE YARD

9 a.m. — Frosty 5K Fun Run & Walk (check-in available at 8 a.m.)
1 to 3 p.m. — Ice climbing demonstration
4 to 6 p.m. — Polar Plunge (check-in available at 3 p.m.)
4 to 9 p.m. — Sledding hill open

COMMUNITY ICE CENTER

(1700 Wall St.)
7 p.m. — Cobra hockey game
9 p.m. — (Open public skating)

COVELLITE THEATRE

215 W. Broadway
7 p.m. — TGR premiere: "Winterland"

SUNDAY, JAN. 19

COMMUNITY ICE CENTER

(1700 Wall St.)
10 a.m. to noon — Try hockey
4 to 6 p.m. — Curling
7 to 8:30 p.m. — Curling exhibition matches

HOMESTAKE LODGE

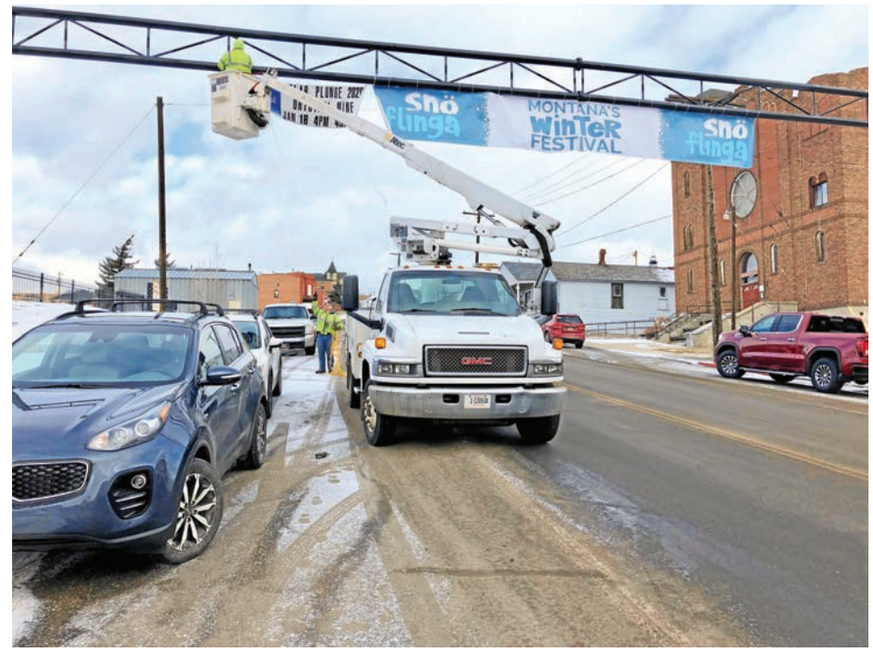
9:30 a.m. to noon — ADULTS Homestake Hustle Nordic ski races
Noon to 2 p.m. — YOUTH Homestake Hustle Nordic ski races

BIG M TRAILS (behind Kennedy School)

1:30 — Fat bike wintercross race (check-in available at 1 p.m.)
2 p.m. — Fat bike demonstration

SKIJOR BUTTE

Canceled



TRACY THORNTON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

County workers hang signs on North Main street for Butte's 2020 SnöFlinga winter festival.

Children sprint off the starting line during the kindergarten ice skating race at the Butte High Altitude Skating Center.

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PHOTO BY RYAN PALLISTER

Phil Dobson in the process of completing the climb he calls "Airborne Ranger" in Hyalite Canyon.

Ready to climb on ice?

DAVID MCCUMBER
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Phil Dobson has been ice climbing for about 15 years. The first couple of years "were pretty terrifying," he says with a smile, "but after that it gets really fun."

"We live in such a good place for ice climbing that I thought it was negligent not to at least try it," he said. "I love rock climbing, so I just bought a bunch of equipment, started studying, and got in way over my head a few times."

Dobson does a lot of his climbing in Hyalite Canyon near Bozeman — which has the "largest concentration of natural ice in North America," he says. "It's the true ice-climbing gem of the Rockies," Dobson said.

He says there's also good ice climbing in the Anaconda Range and the Tobacco Roots.

"And we're also near enough to world-class areas like Cody, Wyoming, Glacier National Park, and even the Canadian Rockies."

It surprises Dobson that there aren't more people in Butte who take up the sport because of the location being so perfect.

"There are only about a dozen" people from Butte who ice-climb frequently, he said. "I'd like to change that."

That's why he's psyched about doing some ice climbing instruction and an exhibition at SnöFlinga.

Dobson's plan is to put up a climbing wall at the Original headframe — not a sheet of ice but a plywood climbing wall, with a panel of ice above it where people can get the sense of what it's like to swing ice tools. He'll also have some ice available where he can teach people how to place ice anchors.

Dobson, who works at Montana Precision Products as a welder, says that "in the new guidebook, there are 450 pages of ice climbing locations in Hyalite Canyon. I've been climbing there for years and there are still huge sections of the canyon I haven't seen." He said that he often meets people there "from Oregon, California, Colorado ... they've traveled just to climb there."

At SnöFlinga, he says, "I'm going to talk about how ice is climbed, I'm going to demonstrate how ice is climbed, and I'm going to encourage people."

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Skijoring is canceled this year due to lack of snow, but organizers hope to bring it back in 2021.

Corie Downey of Whitehall pulls a skier during the Snöflinga skijoring competition on Saturday morning in Butte.

MEAGAN THOMPSON PHOTOS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

The SnöFlinga bear rides a fat tire bike in the parade at the Butte Christmas Stroll on Park Street in Uptown Butte.

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