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A Reimagined McCall Winter Carnival Announces 2024 Theme and Signature Events

McCALL, ID (Wednesday, October 25, 2023) – As fall color peaks in the scenic mountain town of McCall, community business leaders are strategically reimagining the area’s signature winter celebration.

This year, **the McCall Winter Carnival will be held from February 23 to February 25, 2024**, changing its place on the calendar but preserving all of the event’s favorite traditions.

The 2024 Winter Carnival Theme is “Color Outside the Lines”. It’s a tribute to creativity and community and will focus on honoring the area’s educators and their steadfast presence and commitment to excellence in the communities that make up the West Central Mountain region.

“We’re inviting educators from Cascade to Council – and everywhere in between – to serve as the Grand Marshals of the signature Mardi Gras Parade,” says McCall Area Chamber of



Commerce Executive Director, Julie Whitescarver. “Our local schools have been a source of consistency and inspiration for many years, and we want to celebrate the role they play in building future leaders and innovators as our community undergoes unprecedented growth and change.”

2024 Winter Carnival Schedule of Events:

Friday, February 23

Snow Sculpture Tour

Kid’s Torchlight Parade

Snowshoe Golf

Tiki Torch Trek at McCall Golf Course
McCall Starz on Ice Figure Skating Show
Vendor Court
Live Music on the Main Stage + Beer Garden

Saturday, February 24

Snow Sculpture Tour
Mardi Gras Parade
Talent Show
Snowshoe Golf
Live Music on the Main Stage + Beer Garden
Fireworks on the Lake
McCall Starz on Ice Figure Skating Show
Vendor Court

Sunday, February 25

Snow Sculpture Tour
McPaws Monster Dog Pull
Snowshoe Golf
Grand Bingo

McCall's tourist visitation during the months of January and February has skyrocketed more than 200% over the past decade, prompting business leaders to re-schedule the Winter Carnival to a weekend that will allow the community to better serve the huge influx of visitors.

It's estimated that as many as 60,000 visitors have flocked to the 4,000 person town for the event in recent years. That comes on top of significant growth in visits from winter recreationalists like skiers and snowmobilers, who prize the prime winter snow months of January and February.



The goal of the McCall Chamber of Commerce, the organization that hosts Winter Carnival, is to spread out the crowds across more weekends so that hoteliers, restaurateurs and shopkeepers can more realistically serve the people who visit.

“An unintended experiment took place during the COVID era, when Carnival was cancelled for health and safety reasons,” says McCall Chamber Marketing Manager, McKenzie Kramer. “We surveyed business owners and found that 80% of them saw no drop in business or an increase in business the year Carnival was cancelled. That gave us the confidence to make this needed adjustment so that our hospitality industry can more realistically give those who visit McCall the friendly, high-quality experience they’ve come to expect and treasure.”

[Learn more about what prompted the change](#)

In recent years, several cornerstone downtown business owners have chosen to close their doors rather than face the prospect of providing a less-than-satisfying experience to Winter Carnival crowds.

“For the last couple of years, as a business, we decided to close down during Winter Carnival,” says Cosette Martineau, longtime co-owner of My Father’s Place restaurant. “We did not have the staffing to adequately service the influx of people.”

“Because the crowds have swelled to such unmanageable numbers, many business owners, including myself, have expressed concern over whether Winter Carnival has outlived its usefulness,” says Cori Rice, who owns the Christmas Shop and Silver Linings retail stores in downtown McCall. “Additionally, with staffing shortages that all businesses are experiencing, recruiting staff to commit to a ten day stretch of chaos has been problematic, if not impossible.”

“As a hotelier and downtown business owner, I think this is a good solution,” says David Carey, who operates Hotel McCall, Rupert’s Restaurant and Foresters Club. “I am confident that skiers and snowmobilers will fill our beds, tables and bar seats during peak season. As a community member, I’m happy to see that the events and traditions people love most will continue, just later in the winter.”

Organizers of other community events have the option of scheduling them during Carnival or establishing them during other time periods when lodging and other services are more available.

Jerry Wortley is one of the organizers of the Idaho Sled Dog Challenge. That event will continue to be held the last week in January/first week in February. Wortley says not competing with Winter Carnival will give his event room to grow. “We host a week-long event, and now, if people come up to the race there might be hotels available that were all filled up during Winter Carnival.”

“Winter Carnival began as a tool to bring visitors to our area when they would not otherwise be here,” adds Rice. “Outdoor recreationalists are already here in January and February, and many snowmobilers, skiers and winter sports enthusiasts I’ve talked with over the years have expressed discontent with Winter Carnival being held during peak snow conditions. All businesses will benefit from smaller influxes of visitors throughout Winter rather than an overwhelming volume that stresses the locals to the point of sheer exhaustion.”

[Learn more about the history of Winter Carnival](#)

“We are extremely pleased the Chamber is listening to the businesses of McCall concerning Winter Carnival,” says Martineau. “We support the changes that they are making. We are looking forward to the new traditions to be made.”

2024: February 23 to 25

2025: February 21 to 23

More info: www.visitmccall.org/carnival2024

Still Photos and B-roll of the McCall Winter Carnival are [available for download here](#)

Background: *The McCall Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau is committed to maintaining a desirable quality of life featuring year-round recreational opportunities, as well as a thriving economic climate. The MACCVB works with local businesses, citizen groups, city governments and neighboring communities to see that growth is directed in a positive and beneficial manner. The chamber is the concerted voice of local businesses to promote and protect their interests and the community as a whole.*



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