Holyoke winter carnival to get bolder, colder

Annual event held Feb. 7-16

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HOLYOKE – It’s time to layer up and step out for the 2014 Holyoke Winter Carnival.

The carnival kicks off on Friday, Feb. 7 and runs until Sunday, Feb. 16. The first week of activities will surely lift the winter blues.

The Holyoke Parks and Recreation Department will sponsor the always majestic “Luminaria,” as thousands of twinkling lights line the snow covered paths at the recently renovated Community Field; Holyoke’s official winter playground.

Visitors can greet neighbors, sip hot chocolate or lace up some skates and tool around Community Field’s refrigerated ice track. The Enchanted Circle Theater will enrich the carnival atmosphere with special performance featuring costumes and creatures of all sorts.

Community Field’s ice track will be open daily throughout the carnival. The track can withstand temperatures up to 50 degrees.

At 6 p.m., the Wistariahurst Museum will host the annual “I Love Wine” event. Guests sip and sample the latest offerings and bask in the home’s Victorian splendor. The wine tasting benefits the museum’s mission.

The next day features the music and storytelling of Mary Jo Maichack. The concert takes place in the Holyoke Public Library’s Community room at 11 a.m.

The library will also host scavenger hunts on Feb. 8 and 14. The Holyoke YMCA will hold the Polar Bear Relays from 10 – 11 a.m.

A series of events are planned for Heritage State Park, including a free Family Fun Day, the Cactus Head Puppets, Forest Park Zoo on the Go and the Pioneer Valley New England Mountain Bike Association.

The Holyoke Merry-Go-Round is considered a near mandatory visit at the park.

For those seeking warmth, good food and healthy competition, Salsarengue Restaurant on High Street will host their annual domino tournament. The tournament begins at 2 p.m. Also on Feb. 8, Berkshire East Ski Resort will hold Holyoke Winter Carnival Night. Berkshire East is offering a $15 lift ticket, which will be good from 4:30 p.m. until closing.

The day ends with the Friends of the Holyoke Public Library’s Annual Gala. Tickets are $30 a person or $50 for couples. The gala will take place in the newly expanded and renovated library, which celebrates the libraries stately past and 21st Century innovations.

For a fun, family activity, the United Congregational Church will host a movie night. The free feature is “Despicable ME 2.” Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

With the Winter Olympics only days away, Fitpatrick Rink will hold a Curling demonstration on Sunday, Feb. 9 from 1 – 3 p.m. Imagine shuffleboard on ice combined with fanatical sweeping skills.

“Hot Dogs on a Cool Day” returns to Holyoke High School. The always-popular dog show features the area’s finest pooches. Whether a poodle or a St. Bernard, sleek or shaggy, miniature or massive, all dogs are welcomed.

Categories include: Best Costume, Best Trick, Best Smile (dog not owner) and Best in Show. Ribbons will be awarded for each category. A special judges panel will determine the winners. Barking encouraged.

For bruising action, a company of Holyoke Firefighters will face-off against a team from the Franklin County Sheriff’s Department. The puck drops at Fitpatrick Rink at 3 p.m. The Pioneer Valley Vipers Women’s Hockey Team will take the ice.

For a schedule of events, visit the carnival’s website at www.holyokewintercarnival.org.