

No Child Left Inside

Event Brings 500 to Burr Pond

By N.F. AMBERY

TORRINGTON — Although Saturday started like a test for the most outdoors-minded youth, with its 25-degree snow flurries, about 500 people attended the ninth annual “No Child Left Inside” winter festival at Burr Pond State Park.

Children and adults attended for the ice-fishing, ice-sculpting, snowshoeing, ice-safety demonstrations, and marshmallow-roasting at the 384 Burr Mountain Road park. The event ran from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and was sponsored by the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

The Hayford family members warmed themselves around a bonfire after partaking in the many activities of the event. Elaine Hayford brought daughters Leah, 10, and Hope, 17, to the event.

“I think it’s a great idea to get kids outside,” she added. “It’s been a lot of work today, and it’s also been sloshy, but we almost caught a couple of fish.”

Peta Holly of Hamden attended the event with her daughter Elsa, 5, who climbed a large snow mountain created by snowplowers. Holly, who moved to the area four months ago from the urban Melbourne, Australia, said she was currently experiencing her first New England winter.

“I’m not used to the weather,” Holly said. “But the snow is great for playing.”

Brian Talon of Southington attended the ice-sculpting workshop with daughters Emma, 8, and Lily, 9.

“It’s great,” Talon said. “So many people have come out.”

Talon admitted that he and his daughters had already spent a full day outdoors; that morning they had hiked along the trails of Mount Tom State Park in the Litchfield area.

Amid five-foot snow drifts, Boy Scouts from Troop 44 of West Hartford manned the concession stands near the frozen pond. Ice-fishing poles and bait

were provided by the fisheries’ volunteers.

Attendee Thomas Nemecek from Middletown, who wore a camouflage snow suit, said his son Triton, 5, enjoyed ice fishing the best.

“It’s a good event,” Nemecek said. Event coordinator Teresa Gagnon said, “It’s a fun day. A lot of people romp around the snow. The whole idea is to get everybody outside and to learn about what to do while unplugged from TV and the computer.”

DEEP education supervisor Diane Joy said in previous years the winter festival was held at different locations in the state, but the current location appears to be best for certain activities.

“Here at Burr Pond you are guaranteed good ice fishing,” Joy said. “We have 11 inches of ice.”

Joy said many families have been dealing with cabin fever.

“So it will be good to get the word out that the state parks are open and available not only during the summer but throughout the year as well,” she said.

Ken Bomba of Bozrah came with his children Kayden, 7, Xzavier, 6, Josiah, 5, and Nevin, 3. Josiah admitted her favorite event activity was marshmallow roasting. Kayden enthusiastically declared his was ice fishing. Meanwhile, Nevin’s was sledding. Bomba said this was the first year his family had attended the event.

“It’s a great activity,” he said. “It gets them away from electronics and out of the house.”

Caitlin Nield and Peter Clark of Northfield took members of their respective families to go ice fishing. Nield’s daughter Zoe Pisarski, 6, and niece Caila Palaia, 7, joined Clark’s daughter Lillian, 5, in fishing over a small hole in Burr Pond while Mr. Clark attached bait to their lines. They were joined by dozens of other families who had the same idea.

Judy Witzke of the Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education’s Fish-



Photos by N.F. Ambery

Evan Deleo, 7, exhibited to passers-by a 26-inch, four-pound chain pickerel that another fisher had caught while Bob Mangione, an event volunteer through the DEEP, supervises.



Caitlin Nield of Northfield goes ice fishing with daughter Zoe Pisarski, 6; Lillian Clark, 5; and niece Caila Palaia, 7.

eries Department exhibited in a tent to families a display of different types of game fish. Witzke was joined by 60 other volunteers at the event. At the nearby fish-filleting table, Evan Deleo, 7, exhibited to passers-by a 26-inch, four-pound chain pickerel that another fisher had caught.

Bob Mangione, an event volunteer through the DEEP, said his associates were ready to clean any caught fish: “If the families catch them, we fillet and deep-fry them, so that they can enjoy them.”

Gammy Moses, an instructor and program director of the New Haven-based Solar Youth, a nonprofit organization that mentors low-income youth, brought eight of his students to the event. Moses, who wore snowshoes and carried an ice-fishing pole, said, “The event is cool. We all had a good time. We didn’t catch any fish, but it’s more about the process than anything.”

Volunteer Chris Clark brought two search-and-rescue German shepherds to the event. Veteran canine 9-year-old Emma and 8-month-old search-dog-in-training Syka were originally there for the demonstration of a rescue but the presence of other attendees’ dogs

made Clark decide not to take the duo off the leashes. Instead, Clark said, “They’ve been having a blast, playing in the snow and meeting people.”

Reuben and Kim Randalot of Oakville helped their daughter Lucy, 3, roast marshmallows as well as bake potatoes around the bonfire. Lucy said her favorite part of the day was ice fishing.

“The day is amazing,” DEEP volunteer Doris Johnson of Hartford said. “People are really eating. Kids are eating 10 marshmallows each at a time!”

Burr Pond State Park history is rich. In 1851, businessman Milo Burr placed a dam on several mountain streams to create water power for a tannery and three sawmills downstream. The sawmill company cleared the forest of pines and oaks for miles for homes and burgeoning local industries.

Meanwhile Gail Borden of Borden Inc. built the world’s first condensed milk factory on the site in 1857. The milk product proved of great assistance to the Union Army during the Civil War. Fire destroyed the mill in 1877. A bronze tablet marks the site of the former company, at a location just below the park’s falls. In 1949 Burr Pond was designated as a state park.



The Hayford family (Leah, 10; Hope, 17; Rebecca; and mother Elaine) gathers around a fire.

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