

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ely Winter Festival Held February 4-14, 2010 in Ely, Minnesota

ELY, Minn. - January 14, 2010 - Preparations are underway for the 16th annual Ely Winter Festival slated for February 4-14, 2010, in the northern Minnesota tourist city known for its local beauty and wilderness. The volunteer Board has announced a schedule of events with something for all ages and interests, ranging from the annual Mukluk Ball, Sled Dog Rides, and historic Voyageur Encampment, to a crafts fair, food events, musical concerts and the Ely ArtWalk taking place over the Festival's 10-day period.

The cornerstone of the Festival is the International Snow Sculpting Symposium in the town's Whiteside Park with 20 smaller "amateur" blocks and 20 large "expert" blocks, each carved by a three-person team. "We have over 60 snow carvers, both local and some who travel here each year just for this event," said Chris Ellerbroek, co-director of the Symposium. "It's exciting to see the town fill up with visitors who come to see the carvings that seem to get better every year."

The downtown area becomes a veritable art gallery, as merchants clear their windows to display local artists' works in the Ely ArtWalk, running congruently with the Festival. Over 450 pieces of art by 120 artists will be displayed this year.

The "Snow Carvers Jam" returns this year, as does the official Opening Ceremonies, featuring entertainment by local talent and a Grand March of area organizations. The Mayor and City Council officially open the Festival and present the Festival Grand Marshalls an inscribed canoe paddle.

This year's Grand Marshalls are Doug and Nancy Scheibe, owners of the Front Porch Coffee & Tea Co., the Festival Headquarters for the past few years. In addition, Nancy is a snow carver in the Symposium and also carves a replica of the Festival pin each year in front of the Front Porch.

Saturday, February 6 is the annual Mukluk Ball with the Lamont Cranston Blues Band, hosted by owner Patti Steger, Broadcasting Hall of Famer, anchor and reporter Don Shelby of Minneapolis station WCCO-TV, and Will Steger. This year, the Mukluk Ball will be held at the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa's Fortune Bay Resort Casino near Tower, MN. Bus service is being provided from Ely.

Other events include a crafts fair, fish fry, Polka Jam, snowshoe tour of the Hegman Lake Native American Pictographs, a Bagpipe demonstration, and a multi-media presentation by Arctic explorer Tyler Fish of his 2009 North Pole trek.

On Saturday, February 13, pianist/singer/composer Irene Hartfield, longtime New York City musician now local resident, will be presenting a Valentine's concert at the college auditorium. Irene is also the current Chair of the Ely Winter Festival Board.

The Sundays of both weekends have sled dog rides available at Northern Lights Lodge.

Festival pins, brochures and information are available both weekends at the Festival Headquarters, the Front Porch Coffee and Tea Co., which has free wi-fi for customers' laptops and computer rental time available, as well as organic hot beverages and light, healthy food.

Up-to-the-minute details on events and Festival news can be found on the Festival's website ElyWinterFestival.com. Of special interest is the gallery, containing video and still shots of past years' snow sculptures. A web cam of the park and the snow sculptures is also available on the site during the Festival.

The Ely Winter Festival is a non-profit organization whose activities are made possible in part by grants from the Ely Chamber of Commerce, Iron Range Resources, Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, and an Arts Across Minnesota grant provided by the Minnesota State Arts Board through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature, as well as local sponsors.

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More information:

Ely Winter Festival: www.elywinterfestival.com

(media page: www.elywinterfestival.com/media.html)

Ely ArtWalk: www.elyartwalk.org

Ely Chamber of Commerce: www.ely.org

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