

## OVERVIEW

# Blast off!

## Annual Winter Blast event finds new life in Royal Oak



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER BLAST ROYAL OAK

The legendary giant slide will make its way to Royal Oak at Winter Blast, sending riders through a dark tube at up to 20 mph and dropping them down at a 40-degree angle.

By Mike McConnell

mcconnell@medianewsgroup.com

Metro Detroit residents of all ages are gearing up for some winter fun in Royal Oak this weekend at the city's first ever Winter Blast festival, set for Feb. 18-20. The free event, previously held at Campus Martius in Detroit since its inception in 2005, was canceled last year due to the pandemic, and reportedly lacked the funding for its return to Detroit in 2022.

Finding a new home in downtown Royal Oak, Winter Blast has been revived by organizer Jon Witz, who also produces the city's popular Arts, Beats & Eats festival over Labor Day Weekend. Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort, a longtime sponsor of Arts Beats & Eats, is the presenting sponsor for the Royal Oak Winter Fest this year as well.

"We are overjoyed to be back and have the community come together and take advantage of the many activities that people of all ages can see and do at Winter Blast Royal Oak," said Raul Venegas, executive director of Marketing, Entertainment & Sales for Soaring Eagle in a statement. "We're creating a beautiful winter wonderland that's sure to be well received by residents, metro Detroiters and beyond and become the go-to destination for a weekend of winter fun for years to come."

About 50,000 people or more are expected to turn out for the winter festival in Royal Oak.

An outdoor ice rink sponsored by M3 Investments will be set up in the west parking lot of the Farmers Market at 316 E. 11 Mile Road. Skate rentals are \$5 for kids and \$10 for adults.

"Winter Blast just wouldn't be the same without ice skating, so we're proud to bring to life the M3 Rink at Royal Oak Farmers Market to give attendees the chance to glide, spin, lunge or perform whatever skills they may have on ice skates and to do it for free throughout the festival weekend," Witz said in a statement.

Winter Blast will feature a garden filled with carved ice sculptures that will colorfully light up at night. Sponsored by Henry Ford Health System, the ice garden will be set up on Third Street near Main Street, and include on-site ice carving demonstra-



Royal Oak's Winter Blast event will be packed with winter-themed experiences, family activities, live entertainment and more.

tions.

More than 40 musical acts are set to perform throughout the weekend, and there is a kids stage and family activities zone.

The main Headliners include Larry Lee & Back in the Day, Killer Flamingos, and Cast Iron Cornbread in one of the heated large tents at the comfort zones.

A 300-foot zip line raised 34 feet in the air is one of the attractions, along with a giant slide where riders can travel up to 20 mph inside a dark tube at 40-degree angle. A 30-degree angled slide for children is offered for those who want a slower ride.

Other highlights include marshmallow roasting stations, snowshoeing, and a Winter Blast Polar Plunge in cold water to raise

money for Special Olympics Michigan.

Buskers will walk around through the festival area doing juggling acts and magic tricks.

A variety of food trucks are part of the event, offering everything from chicken wings, and sweet and spicy barbecue to desserts and international food. Among those taking food truck participants are Crispelli's, Fork in Nigeria, Big Bo's, Big Mike's, Imperial Tacos, Mercurio's, Cinnabon, Niko's Gyros, Panzerotti, and Wing Snob.

For more information visit winterblast.com.

—Jenny Sherman contributed to this story

### Hot: 10,000 to receive gift cards to spend at downtown businesses during Winter Blast

Ten thousand people will receive \$10 gift cards to use at downtown Royal Oak retailers to enhance local shopping before and during the Winter Blast festival this month.

The \$100,000 giveaway is from the city's Downtown Development Authority's Royal Oak Retail Dollars program.

Ambassadors from the committee putting on the three-day Winter Blast event will be handing out the gift cards randomly this weekend and during the festival, said DDA Downtown Manager Daniel Hill.

The gift cards can be used at more than 30 participating retailers in the downtown, including shops such as Blu Jean Blues, Five 15 Mojo & More, Made in the Mitten, noir Leather, Paper Trail Books, Rail & Anchor, the Salvation Army store, Toyology, UHF Music, Write Impressions stationery, and Your Personal Jeweler.

—Mike McConnell, MediaNews Group

### Cold: Brave frigid water, take the Winter Blast Polar Plunge

Festivalgoers are invited to brave the chilly winter air and take the Winter Blast Polar Plunge to benefit Special Olympics of Michigan.

This year's polar plunge is sponsored by Howard & Howard Attorneys. Community members, family and friends are encouraged to take the "plunge" into a pool of freezing water benefiting a great cause. The Polar Plunge is sure to be a crowd-pleaser while also providing support for a special charity.

Select from the following Plunge Times:

- 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18
- 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19
- 6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19
- 1 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20

Those interested in taking a dip in the cold waters can register at winterblast.com/special-olympics-polar-plunge. Following registration, a page will be created for each registrant to encourage family and friends to donate in support of their plunge.

Plunge check-in begins one hour before each plunge time at the "Polar Plunge Info" Tent, where you can turn in cash & check donations, get your incentives, and prepare to plunge! Participants will have access to a special heated changing area to warm-up and a coupon for a Winter Blast Freebie. Those that raise \$500 or more are eligible to win a prize package provided by Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort including a two-night stay, \$200 in spa services, and a \$200 dining voucher.

—Courtesy of Winter Blast Royal Oak



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## Music and entertainment schedule

All performances are subject to change

### SOARING EAGLE STAGE

#### IN THE UNITED WAY 211 COMFORT ZONE

##### FRIDAY, FEB. 18

- 4:15 — 5 p.m. Acoustic Ash (Acoustic/Songwriter)
- 5:30 — 6:30 p.m. REDD (Pop/Hip-Hop)
- 7 — 8 p.m. Groove Fellowship (Funk/R&B Fusion)
- 8:30 — 9:30 p.m. Strange Heart (Indie/Rock)
- 10 — 11 p.m. Cast Iron Cornbread (Rock)

##### SATURDAY, FEB. 19

- 11:15 a.m. — 12 p.m. Damon Terrell Acoustic Duet (Jazz)
- 12:30 — 1:30 p.m. Nique Love Rhodes & the NLR Experience (Hip-Hop/Fusion)
- 2 — 3 p.m. All Grown Up (Rock)
- 3:30 — 4:15 p.m. 75 Days of Sun (Ska)
- 4:45 — 5:30 p.m. Ryan Jay (Country)
- 6 — 6:45 p.m. New World Soul (R&B)
- 7:15 — 8 p.m. Frame 42 (Rock/Classic Rock)
- 8:30 — 9:30 p.m. The Reefermen (Rock)
- 10 — 11 p.m. Larry Lee & Back in The Day (R&B/Motown)

##### SUNDAY, FEB. 20

- 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m. Mark Reitenga (Acoustic Folk Rock)
- 1 — 2 p.m. The Jacki Daniels Show (Pop/Country)
- 2:30 — 3:30 p.m. Maraj Virtuoso & Friends With The Better Things Band (Neo-Soul/Latin Lo-Fi Rock)
- 4 — 5 p.m. Dave Hamilton Band (Rock)
- 5:30 — 6:30 p.m. Jill Jack Band (Americana)
- 7 — 8 p.m. Killer Flamingos (Pop/Rock)

### HOUSE OF DANK STAGE

#### IN THE HOD COMFORT ZONE

##### FRIDAY, FEB. 18

- 4:30 — 5:15 p.m. Al'Exist (Alternative Soul)
- 5:45 — 6:30 p.m. Royal Oak Blues Band (Blues)
- 7 — 7:45 p.m. J. Santino (Pop/R&B)
- 8:15 — 9:15 p.m. Dirty Mic and The Boys (Psychedelic)
- 9:45 — 11 p.m. Alise King (R&B Soul)

##### SATURDAY, FEB. 19

- 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m. Marquette (Alternative R&B)
- 1 — 2 p.m. Jack's Revenge (Rock)
- 2:30 — 3:30 p.m. Standing Room Only (Classic Rock)
- 4 — 5 p.m. Taylor Tucky (Modern Country)



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER BLAST ROYAL OAK

On the Soaring Eagle Stage, the musically-filled weekend will include performances by bands and musical acts representing a variety of genres.

- 5:30 — 6:30 p.m. CHIT! (Classic Rock)
- 7 — 8 p.m. Spiral Crush (Rock)
- 8:30 — 9:30 p.m. The Persuasion Band (High Energy Party)
- 10 — 11 p.m. Roots Vibrations (Reggae, Soca)

##### SUNDAY, FEB. 20

- 11:15 a.m. — 12:15 p.m. ABI (Songwriter/Acoustic)
- 12:45 — 1:45 p.m. Avatar Mode (Indie Post-Rock)
- 2:15 — 3:15 p.m. In Flow (Reggae/Hip-Hop)
- 3:45 — 4:45 p.m. The Band Mint (Hip-Hop/Rock)
- 5:15 — 6:15 p.m. Big Pappa and the Machine (Variety)
- 6:45 — 8 p.m. Motor City Josh & the Big 3 (Blues)

### HUNTINGTON KIDS STAGE & FAMILY ACTIVITIES

#### IN THE DTE ENERGY COMFORT ZONE

##### FRIDAY, FEB. 18

- 4 — 4:30 p.m. 3 Little Pigs Puppet Show
- 5 — 5:30 p.m. Magical Randy Lee
- 6 — 6:30 p.m. 3 Little Pigs Puppet Show
- 7 — 9 p.m. Sonya Alvarez
- 9 — 11 p.m. Wave Point

##### SATURDAY, FEB. 19

- 11 — 11:30 a.m. Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 12 — 12:30 p.m. Nat Spinz Hula Hoops
- 12:45 — 1:15 p.m. Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 1:30 — 2 p.m. Michigan Science Center
- 2:15 — 2:45 p.m. Magical Randy Lee
- 3 — 3:30 p.m. Nat Spinz Hula Hoops
- 4 — 4:30 p.m. Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar

- 5 — 5:30 p.m. Nat Spinz Hula Hoops
- 6 — 6:30 p.m. Magical Randy Lee
- 7 — 9 p.m. Dantiez Saunderson
- 9 — 11 p.m. King Saadi

##### SUNDAY, FEB. 20

- 11 — 11:30 a.m. Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music
- 12 — 12:30 p.m. Magical Randy Lee
- 12:45 — 1:15 p.m. Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music
- 1:30 — 2 p.m. Michigan Science Center
- 2:15 — 2:45 p.m. Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 3 — 3:30 p.m. Magical Randy Lee
- 4 — 4:30 p.m. Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music
- 5 — 5:30 p.m. Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 6 — 6:30 p.m. Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music
- 6:30 — 8 p.m. House Music



Marshmallow roasting stations will be located throughout the festival grounds.



Offering free admission and two hours of free parking in the structures and only \$.75 per hour after that, Winter Blast Royal Oak is affordable fun for the whole family.





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**About Derek L. Hill, DO**

Derek L. Hill, D.O.  
 is an orthopedic hip and knee specialist and a Clinical Associate Professor in the  
 Department of Surgery at Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine.  
 He is Board Certified by the American Osteopathic Board of Orthopedic Surgeons.

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### Winter Blast Map



# FEBRUARY 18-20

## DOWNTOWN ROYAL OAK

Friday: 4pm - 11pm • Saturday: 11am - 11pm • Sunday: 11am - 8pm



### Official Winter Blast After Party Locations



511 S Main St, Royal Oak (5th and Main)



526 S. Main St, Royal Oak (6th and Main)



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ACTIVITIES

# Winter Blast to provide endless family fun

From ice skating and s'mores stations to a giant slide and ice-carving demonstrations, there will be plenty for kids and families to do at this year's Winter Blast. After the kids take a spin around the ice rink, they can warm up with the following activities, available from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

**HUNTINGTON BANK KIDS STAGE**

Located inside the DTE Energy Comfort Zone, the Huntington Bank Kids Stage will host a variety of fun, interactive performances for kids of all ages, from puppet shows and magicians to live music and winter activities from Michigan Science Center.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

- 4 p.m. — 3 Little Pigs Puppet Show
- 5 p.m. — Magical Randy Lee
- 6 p.m. — 3 Little Pigs Puppet Show

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

- 11 a.m. — Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 12 p.m. — NatSpinz Hula Hoops
- 12:45 p.m. — Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 1:30 p.m. — Michigan Science Center
- 2:15 p.m. — Magical Randy Lee
- 3 p.m. — NatSpinz Hula Hoops
- 4 p.m. — Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 5 p.m. — NatSpinz Hula Hoops
- 6 p.m. — Magical Randy Lee

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20**

- 11 a.m. — Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music
- 12 p.m. — Magical Randy Lee
- 12:45 p.m. — Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music
- 1:30 p.m. — Michigan Science Center
- 2:15 p.m. — Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 3 p.m. — Magical Randy Lee
- 4 p.m. — Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music
- 5 p.m. — Zippity: 2 Guys & a Guitar
- 6 p.m. — Kevin Devine's Rollicking Music

**MICHIGAN SCIENCE CENTER**

**Frostology — 1:30 p.m. on Saturday & Sunday:** Investigate how temperature relates to the movement of atoms and molecules in this exciting presentation. Utilizing liquid nitrogen participants will see some 'cool' effects on solids, liquids and gases.

**Arctic Expeditions — all-day activity**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER BLAST ROYAL OAK

An outdoor ice rink sponsored by M3 Investments will be located in the western parking lot of the Royal Oak Farmers Market.

**stations:** Become arctic explorers as you practice using tools and uncover some mystery items in a "snowy" tundra landscape made of insta-snow. Then, take part in an engineering design challenge as you construct a tower to withstand icy hurricane winds with our "Vortex Cannon Tower Topple" station. These activities are free for curious minds of all ages.

**CRAFT MAKING FROM ARTS & SCRAPS**

**Get crafty and create something unique with Arts & Scraps on Saturday and Sunday:** Using recycled industrial materials, crafters will create Cute Cozy Critters to take home for a cozy memory of Winter Blast. All activities free of charge.

— Courtesy of Winter Blast Royal Oak



The Huntington Bank Kids Stage, located inside the DTE Energy Comfort Zone, will offer a wide variety of entertainment kids of all ages can enjoy.

ENTERTAINMENT

## Official Winter Blast after party at The Morrie and Tequila Blue

If you're still looking for fun after the festival activities come to an end, look no further than the official Winter Blast after party at The Morrie and Tequila Blue. The Morrie, located just outside the festival on the east side of Main Street and 6th street, offers American bar cuisine and seasonal craft cocktails. They host a wide array of DJs and live bands on a regular basis, and have a whole lineup of local acts planned to keep the party going all weekend long. Tequila Blue is a Mexican style cantina, located above 526 Main Dueling Piano Bar, that evolves into a nightclub throughout the evening. They offer Mexican cuisine with an American twist, as well as delicious craft cocktails. Stop by Tequila Blue to catch some of metro Detroit's hottest DJs.



**THE MORRIE AFTER PARTY STAGE**

Located at sixth and main street

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

- 5 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Lilly MacPhee
- 8:15 p.m.-10:45 p.m. Good Gravy
- 11:30 p.m.-2 a.m. Killer Flamingos (OFFICIAL AFTER PARTY)

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

- 12 p.m.-3 p.m. Mike Freeman
- 3:45 p.m.-6:15 p.m. Olivia Dear Duo

- 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Rock Mob
  - 10:30 p.m.-1 a.m. KTPG (OFFICIAL AFTER PARTY)
- SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20**
- 12 p.m.-3 p.m. Mike Stefaniak
  - 3:45 p.m.-6:15 p.m. AJ Lynn Duo
  - 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Mike Leslie Band
  - 10:15 p.m.-12:45 a.m. Your Generation in Concert (OFFICIAL AFTER PARTY)

— Courtesy of Winter Blast Royal Oak



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Winter activities pack the schedule of events at Winter Blast Royal Oak.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER BLAST ROYAL OAK

## COMPETITION

# Flaunt your facial hair at the Winter Whisker Wars Saturday

By Jenny Sherman

[jsherman@medianewsgroup.com](mailto:jsherman@medianewsgroup.com)

Do you take pride in your facial grooming? If so, this may be the competition for you!

Modern Viking LLC will be hosting the Winter Whisker Wars on Saturday, Feb. 19, on the Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort Performance Stage in the United Way 211 Comfort Zone. Register at least 45 minutes in advance of judging time to be eligible to compete in any of the four categories: Odin's Lip (majestic styled mustache), Titan Tight (Best trimmed beard shorter than 6"), Warrior (partial beard), and Chieftain (full natural beards). The guest judge for the competition will be Michigan native Mark Byrnes, who won first place at the 2021 National Beard and Mustache Championship.

Registration for the competition will begin at 2 p.m. First place prize winners for each category will receive a prize of over \$100 value. For more information about Winter

Whisker Wars, or to register to compete, contact Modern Viking LLC at [modernvikingllc@gmail.com](mailto:modernvikingllc@gmail.com).

### WINTER WHISKER WARS COMPETITION SCHEDULE:

**Category 1:** Odin's Lip — Majestic Styled Mustache — only mustaches are judged.

Register at 2:25 p.m.

Judging at 3:10 p.m. in the United Way 211 Comfort Zone

**Category 2:** Titan Tight — Best trimmed beard shorter than 6" (measured from bottom lip). Register at 3:40 p.m. Judging at 4:25 p.m. in the United Way 211 Comfort Zone

**Category 3:** Warrior — Partial beard; goatee, chops, anything less than a full beard. Uniqueness rules. Register at 4:55 p.m. Judging at 5:40 p.m. in the United Way 211 Comfort Zone

**Category 4:** Chieftain — Full natural beards, over 6". Register at 7:25 p.m. Judging at 8:10 p.m. in the United Way 211 Comfort Zone



PHOTO COURTESY OF WINTER BLAST ROYAL OAK

Regardless of whether you prefer to rock a stache, goatee, or full beard, show off your whiskers at the Winter Whisker Wars on Saturday, Feb. 19, sponsored by Modern Viking LLC.



There is so much to do at this year's Winter Blast festival, planned for Feb. 18-20 in downtown Royal Oak. PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER BLAST ROYAL OAK



Create Cute Cozy Critters using recycled industrial materials with Arts & Scraps on Saturday and Sunday.



Ice Sculptures like these from recent Winter Blast festivals in Detroit will be part of the attractions when the festival comes to Royal Oak for three days from Feb.18-20.

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