

Vermont Chamber of Commerce

PICKS For Kids

By Vicky Tebbetts

Start the season off with a lesson in **candy cane making**. Visit Laughing Moon Chocolates in Stowe to pull, turn, roll, and twist your own special candy cane into a beautiful, delicious, work of art! Try traditional flavors: peppermint, spearmint, wintergreen; the more adventurous may enjoy maple or cinnamon. Candy cane demonstrations occur every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday at 11 am, between November 21 - December 23, 2009. Free to watch, \$6 to make your own. www.laughingmoonchocolates.com, 802-253-9591.



Featuring confectioners from New England, New York, and beyond, the **Vermont Festival of Sweets** includes a chocolate art exhibit and competition, cooking demos, and chocolate spa treatments. Satisfy your curiosities, indulge your senses, and experience the artistry and craftsmanship of confections by some of the region's finest chocolatiers, pastry chefs, candymakers, cake makers, pie makers, and other sweet experts. Shop for gifts and holiday meal supplies. Fun for the whole family! The show spans two days at Burlington's Doubletree Hotel: Saturday, November 21 from 10 am - 6 pm, and Sunday, November 22, 2009 10 am - 4 pm. www.vermontchocolateshow.com.

A day-after-Thanksgiving tradition, the Church Street Marketplace in Burlington kicks off the season with "**Holiday Magic**" on November 27, 2009. Celebrate the official beginning of the holiday season with the annual Santa Parade and Lighting Ceremony at Burlington's famous outdoor walking mall. Santa Claus arrives on the Marketplace at noon; at 5:30 pm, Vermont Stage Company commences the annual Lighting Ceremony with a production of *The Night Before Christmas* on the Marketplace Top Block. With a professional cast of 20, the classic holiday story comes to life in this humorous and endearing rendition. The show culminates with the illumination of 400,000 lights up and down Church Street and the lighting of the 50' tall Christmas tree at the head of the street. Activities continue throughout the month of December. Musicians, exhibits, and miniature horse rides for children. For a complete events listing visit www.churchstmarketplace.com.



Wassail Weekend in Woodstock paints a picture of a quintessential, twinkling New England holiday village. Get in the spirit of this festive weekend, with a spec-



ular horse parade and caroling around the village green, house tour, musical events, yule log, luminaries at twilight on the green, Santa's visit to the winter wonderland. Shop, dine, stay - find gifts for everyone in our unique shops or relax in a cozy inn and dine on fine cuisine. Experience holiday magic in Woodstock, Vermont! December 11-13, 2009; some events have fees. www.woodstockvt.com, 888-496-6378.

Enjoy the traditions of the season at the **Coolidge Holiday Open House** in Plymouth Notch, one of Vermont's most picturesque villages. Visit the Coolidge Birthplace, decorated as it would have been in 1872, the year the future president was born. Several other historic buildings with winter exhibits will also be open, free of charge. Saturday, December 12, 2009 10 am - 4 pm. www.historicvermont.org/coolidge, 802-672-3773.

Feel the exhilaration of being pulled in a horse-drawn sleigh! **Sleigh Ride Weekend at Billings Farm & Museum** in Woodstock is January 16 - 18, 2010, 10 am - 3:30 pm. Other activities include sledding with jack jumper sleds, hands-on activities for children, and visits to the farm and farmhouse. Programs in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend include showings of the film "On My Own: The Traditions of Daisy Turner," which chronicles the life of former slave Alexander Turner of Grafton, Vermont, as told by his daughter Daisy, when she was 102 years old. www.billingsfarm.org, 802-457-2355.



Jump into winter with the **Bennington Winter Festival and Penguin Plunge!** The festival begins on the morning of January 30, 2010 with the Penguin Plunge, an icy dip from the Lake Paran Boat Launch in North Bennington to benefit the Special Olympics. A community-wide event follows, with activities such as dog sled rides at Park-McCullough

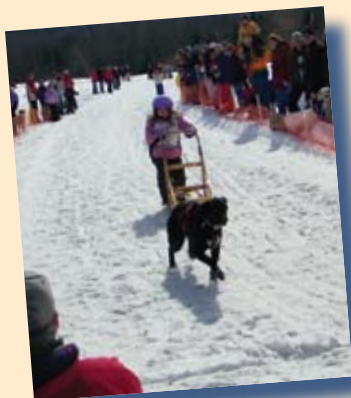
House, a chili contest, kids' carnival at North Bennington Graded School, an ice carving competition in the village, and much more. www.bennington.com, 802-447-3311.

A southern Vermont tradition since the 1920s, the 86th Annual **Harris Hill Ski Jumping Competition** attracts the country's top male and female athletes for a two-day ski jumping competition. Watch participants sail 300 feet, at speeds up to 60 mph, before they land! Designated the final stop of the elite national ski jumping SuperTour, the Competition is the only 90-meter ski jump in New England, and one of only six in the U.S. of similar size and caliber. Visit and watch and feel your own heart soar. February 13-14, 2010 in Brattleboro, from noon to dusk each day. www.harrishillskijump.org, 877-254-4565.

With a tag line of "Fun for All Ages," **Chester Winter Carnival** is sure to generate some smiles. Presented in the quintessential Vermont town of Chester on February 13



and 14, 2010, the Carnival specializes in competitive activities with Olympic-style medals, along with food, dancing, and heart-warming camaraderie. Highlights include a high-spirited broom hockey benefit tournament, an evening ice skating party, sled races, snow sculptures, snow golf, sled dog demonstrations, and horsedrawn wagon rides. www.chester.gov.office.com, 802-875-2693.



Calling all dog lovers - bound to the **Burke Mountain Sled Dog Dash!** High atop a hill in the beautiful Northeast Kingdom, this event hails some of the world's most competitive sprint dogsled racing teams. Scenic trails and large open fields allow for exciting viewing as highly trained canine athletes and their owners showcase this sport. In between trials, kids may try a gentle dog-

sled ride of their own. Hot food and a warming tent donated by the Vermont National Guard make the Burke Mountain Sled Dog Dash a pleasant experience for even the smallest member of the family. Races take place in East Burke, February 27-28, 2010, 8 am - 4 pm; a \$5 donation is requested for parking. www.sleddogdash.com, 802-626-7395.

Spring into March with the **Ben & Jerry's Annual Winter Festival** in Waterbury on March 6, 2010, and rejoice in fun-filled outdoor activities for all ages. The famous Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream Factory hosts a festival to welcome the extended daylight, enjoy the snow, and of course, eat ice cream! Local business vendors offer food and demonstrations. A DJ cranks out the tunes; compete for prizes autographed by the company co-founders, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield. Amble among the snow sculptures; try your hand at mini snow golf, or snow bowling. Ice cream samples and sugar-on-snow top off the outdoor fun! Inside the factory, enjoy a free tour, as well as gift shop and scoop shop specials. www.benjerry.com, 866-BJ-TOURS.



Cabin fever, anyone? Participate in or observe the **Helly Hansen Big Mountain Battle at Smugglers' Notch Resort**, a fun event where teams of skiers and snowboarders of intermediate skill levels or better negotiate an on-slope course set on Smugglers' three mountains. The teams are

tracked by GPS, and the first team to finish the course earns a trip to the national finals. A challenging opportunity for teams of all shapes and sizes... parents and kids, spouses, friends! Spectators and competitors alike enjoy the post-competition party with awards and prizes. Get ready to Battle at Smugglers' Notch, March 20, 2010, 8 am - 2 pm. The contestant fee is \$75 per team; public viewing is free. www.smuggs.com, 802-644-8851.

Plain **old-fashioned playing in the snow:** build a snow fort, snowperson, or snow sculpture. How high can you pile that snow? Can you climb it and slide down? Can you tunnel through like a maze? Can you build a snow dragon or snow princess? The fluffy, white snow is waiting. Go out and have fun.



Kids will be dazzled at Vermont's only public planetarium at **Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium** in St. Johnsbury. Learn and gaze in wonder at the night skies, constellations, the Moon, and planets; and journey into a study of Venus, the planet named after the Roman goddess of love. Planetarium shows run Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm; each planetarium presentation is approximately 50 minutes long. For groups of 10 or more, please call ahead to reserve tickets. www.fairbanksmuseum.org, 802-748-2372.

Vermont's quaint stores have something for everyone - and that means children, too! When you're ready to spend some time inside, enjoy some kid-friendly shopping at some of Vermont's **one-of-a-kind toy stores.**



Whether you seek a gift, a treat for a kid who's been really helpful, or something new for the car ride home - Vermont's toy stores carry the best domestic and imported brands, as well as treasures made right here in the Green Mountain State. Check out Jamie Two Coats Toy Shop in Shelburne Village (802-985-3221), Woodbury Mountain Toys at 24 State Street, Montpelier (802-223-4272), and Maple Landmark Woodcraft Factory Store in Middlebury (www.maplelandmark.net, 800-421-223). If it's simply an extensive collection of T-shirts you seek, try the Vermont T-Shirt Company in Waterbury Center, which boasts sizes from 6 months to 6XL. 802-244-6240 or www.vermonttshirt.com.

Grab a hat and snow pants, and sail down a sparkling, snowy hill on a sled! An affordable group activity that is easy on the body, with lots of choice as to slope and speed - there's a reason **sledding** is classic entertainment for all ages. From smaller inns to Vermont's large resorts, many lodging accommodations provide sleds for guests' use.



A visit to the **Vermont Institute of Natural Science**, or VINS, located just 1/4 mile west of the Quechee Gorge of Route 4, will awe the whole family. See live raptors up close, including an American Bald Eagle. Fill your ears with the chirping sounds of native wild Vermont songbirds as you walk through the Songbird Aviary. Enjoy live animal programs and more! Limited winter hours, so please call ahead or visit their website. www.vinsweb.org, 802-359-5000.