

SOIceFest brings ice climbers to North Hastings



Feb. 25, 2020 By Kristena Schutt-Moore

The ice was perfect, and so was the weather for climbing it. From Friday, Feb. 7 to Sunday, Feb. 9, ice climbers from around Canada and the United States took full advantage of the conditions during the annual SOIceFest.

Over the years, the Southern Ontario Ice Climbing Festival, or SOIceFest to keep it short, has challenged participants with a wide range of conditions: rain, snow, cold and sun. This year was no different, and despite a dumping of snow just before the weekend, SOIceFest saw a record attendance, explains SOIceFest coordinator Andriy Kolos.

This year the main ice climbing venue was located on Diamond Lake. The ice sheet covering the rock cliff that sprawls over the one end of the lake offered many different types of ice climbing routes. This made it the perfect location for both experienced climbers and beginners.

Professional ice climbing guides from the Canadian Rockies were on hand to assist any new climbers. This year SOIceFest held its first beginners climbing event and the Sunday afternoon was dedicated to new climbers. The interest was so great that the instructors stayed after the festival till Tuesday, Feb. 11 to continue giving classes and workshops.

I've never been so passionate about something I'm so bad at! said Krysten Patrick from Sudbury. I tried climbing at last year's SOIceFest and immediately got hooked!

When not climbing the ice cliffs of North Hastings participants were able to take part in events at The Arlington Hotel or the Army Navy Air Force Barn in Maynooth. Participants said that the highlight of the evening program was a presentation by southern Ontario climber/photographer Peter Hoang who gave a presentation on how he learned to ice climb in Bancroft and then took those skills and began climbing ice in the Canadian Rockies, Peru, China and Argentina. Hoang had such a great response from the crowd that he has already planned to come back as a presenter for next year's SOIceFest.

Presentations and workshops are just two of the activities already in the works for next year's SOIceFest. Those interested in more information about the festival can visit the website www.soicefest.com to hear about new plans or programs as they are developed. SOIceFest would like to thank the volunteers at ANAF Maynooth, Arcteryx, ACMG, Yamnuska Mountain Adventures, UofC's Outdoor Centre, the Alpine Club of Canada's Toronto Section who frequently visits the Bancroft area for their trips, and the local businesses that provided door prizes.