

Mono Winterfest brings the community together to brave the cold

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Despite cold conditions, hundreds came out to attend Winterfest at the Mono Community Centre on Feb. 1, enjoying outdoor and indoor activities.

Winterfest has been a community staple for decades, and 2026 was no different for Mono and the rest of Dufferin County. Promising to provide new ways to have fun outside, Winterfest came ready with dozens of outdoor activities and events.

Local resident Cynthia Percival, who delivered ski supplies courtesy of the Mono Nordic Ski Club, said that Winterfest has something for everyone, regardless of age or interest.

"Winterfest is seriously amazing," she said during the event. "There's food and activities for kids, silent auctions happening inside, a skating rink, fat bikes? it's just a beautiful, beautiful day out here."

Percival and her husband are regular skiers, so they are typically found on the trails during the winter. She said Winterfest is a perfect example of what residents can do outside during the winter months.

"There's so much to do in Dufferin County," she said. "We have Winterfest, of course, but there's also Hockley Valley Resort, and of course, the Bruce Trails nearby as well."

Mono Mayor John Creelman, manning the hot cider stand in the parking lot, said that Winterfest continues to innovate and succeed.

"We have an absolutely terrific recreation committee here that puts in a lot of time and effort," he said. "We actually just added snowshoeing this year, alongside our skiing and all the other things that we've done for years and years, to great acclaim."

For Creelman, the highlight of Winterfest is handing out cider.

"The apple cider is my favourite part," he said. "You get to meet people, see them come together, it's a great experience."

Well-known favourite events returned, such as skating, sledding and tubing, as well as some new attractions. Fat biking and snowshoeing were available this year, adding to the outdoor fun.

The skating rink let families practice their various skill levels together, while some more advanced skaters took to the ice with hockey sticks and pucks.

On the slopes, kids raced each other down the hills, while parents tried to keep them from flipping or slamming into others who were trying to climb back up to the top.

Rounding off the outdoor experiences was an open fire, offering a respite from the cold and marshmallows for kids to roast over the flame.

Inside the community center, there was just as much activity.

Numerous community groups were set up at tables across from the cafeteria. Winterfest provides the perfect opportunity for residents and organizations alike to connect, share ideas and promote community involvement.

Groups like the Bruce Trail Conservancy, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and Mono-Mulmur Citizens' Coalition all had desks set up for guests to come in, ask questions, and connect further with community groups that interest them.

A silent auction sat in the middle of the space, offering a plethora of options to bid on, from clothing merch to tickets to Theatre Orangeville's upcoming production, Common Ground. Food was also served on site, with volunteers staffing the kitchens and OPP auxiliary officers manning the barbecue outside.

Thanks to the hard work of the recreation team, volunteers, and, of course, the large turnout from the community, Mono's 2026 Winterfest was another success. The annual festival highlights that while winter can be cold, if braved, there's still a lot for residents to enjoy while staying active outdoors.