

‘GETTING IT DONE’

Eagle volunteers continue to build community ice rink, an 80-year tradition

By Randy Wyrick
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EAGLE — Building Eagle’s ice rink is like an Amish barn raising, only flat, says Andy Clark.

Eagle’s outdoor town park ice rink is one of the county’s oldest traditions. It started when Eagle built its town park in the 1930s and continued this year the Friday after Thanksgiving when a group of volunteers gathered to start the work.

Eagle people have been out there 80 consecutive years. Local dads, including Clark and Tom Ehrenberg, used to flood the ground, which worked for decades. WECMRD — now Mountain Recreation — donated a liner a few years back, and sideboards sort of evolved, built with power tools and tall tales.

One of the rink’s most beautiful features is its simplicity. It’s a massive plastic tub that does not cost the town a dime. The most complicated part was hooking up the P.A. system to Clark’s phone so they’d have music while they worked. More than once the call went out, “I need a millennial.”

Laying it out took a couple hours, as they lined up the boards and liners correctly.

Clark and Ehrenberg ran Avon’s pond hockey tournament for years. A few years ago, Ehrenberg went to the great faceoff circle in the sky, but Clark and several others know how Eagle’s rink should be built. Dozens of other people now know how, too.

KEEP ON THE GRASS

Covering that much grass means they get a perspective few others do. They see the dog poop that the dog owners did not clean up. It’ll still be there in the spring after the ice melts, waiting for the slacking dog owners to come to their senses and do the right thing.

They have to hang caution tape around the outside. Before the ice is built up, several misguided souls always lace up their skates and walk onto the plastic sheets, poking holes in them.

There are also almost always a couple moms who show up with their kids in tow, before the ice is formed, and fuss that the volunteers building the rink need to hurry up.



All of the pieces and parts are stored in Andy Clark’s Allied moving vans, and moved to Eagle’s town park, where volunteers put the ice rink together.



Andy Clark, left, is the driving force behind Eagle’s ice rink. He’s making sure the next generation knows how it’s supposed to be done.



Jesse Greve is making sure everything is straight. Greve is one of thousands of local kids who cut his teeth on Eagle’s outdoor ice rink. He went on to play college hockey at St. John’s.

Those volunteers can flood the rink about an inch and a half to get started. After that, it’s about a quarter inch a night.

That means it could be ready for Eagle’s Christmas on Broadway on Saturday, Dec. 1.

Wind is always entertaining when you’re handling large sheets, and there was the time the wind kicked up, a sheet got loose and wrapped itself around the park’s bathrooms.



Volunteers of all ages showed up the Friday after Thanksgiving, as they always do, to help build the Tom Ehrenberg Memorial Ice Rink in Eagles town park. Volunteers started building the rink every year beginning in the 1930s, when Eagle built its town park.

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The first thing volunteers do is to make sure the liner sheets are aligned correctly.



Caution tape around the entire rink is there to remind people to stay off the ice until it’s ready. This year that might be in time for Eagle’s Christmas On Broadway at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 1.



When the liner sheets are where they’re supposed to be, volunteers seal the seams with Tyvek tape.

‘ZAMBONI BROTHERS’

Amid the cold and camaraderie, someone asserted that they’re the last of the “Zamboni Brothers,” a group of local guys who built the rink every year for years. Jeff Dallmann was one of those original Zamboni Brothers and was back out there Friday with his three kids.

These days, the Zamboni Brothers are less gender specific. Several women and girls were working Friday morning.

Ehrenberg was an original Zamboni Brother. He worked

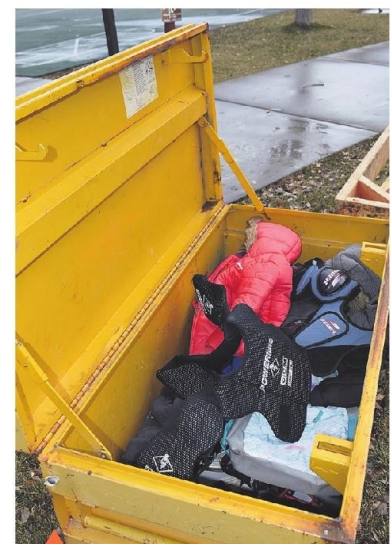
in Eagle County’s public works department and was a master at creating machines. He and some friends built Eagle’s makeshift Zamboni.

It’s now called the Tom Ehrenberg Memorial Rink.

“Every town needs a bunch of Tom Ehrenbergs. They see what most of us don’t, and just set about getting it done,” Clark said.

A few things never change. Everyone building the rink is happy to be there, working together.

Kids learn to use power tools and swing hammers that weigh almost as much as they do. Their moms tell them to put on their coats.



It seems fitting that the huge metal toolbox beside the rink contains the tools the kids need, hockey equipment.

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