Gordon's cure for cabin fever

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The town of Gordon offers a cure for cabin fever.
Winterfest kicks off at 2 p.m. Saturday, with ice skating, sledding, snow bowling, a warming fire and free indoor crafts, all in the heart of Gordon. At 8 p.m., Chetek-based band the Twerps will rock the town hall.

“The Twerps specialize in getting people involved,” said Karen Griffin, a member of the Gordon parks and recreation committee, which planned the event. “They’re very high energy.”

Last year, the committee launched Winterfest to raise money to revitalize the town park. The group hosted silent and Chinese auctions, a Boo-yA soup meal and live music by the Twerps.

It was more of a success than anyone had anticipated, said Ree Ann Hoyt, committee chairwoman.

“It was beyond expectation,” said Pam Boettcher, town supervisor.

The group raised $5,000, which they earmarked for a public basketball court, something that hasn’t been available to Gordon youth for more than 20 years.

Griffin said she was impressed to see so many people of all ages having a great time.

“It was a hoot,” said fellow committee member Randy Moey, owner of the Tradin Post.

This year, the event has grown to include a host of free family-friendly activities and a raffle. The expansion was made possible by an outpouring of support from individuals, businesses and organizations. Volunteer firefighters man the warming fire while junior firefighters supervise the bowling. The members of the Lockman-Jensen American Legion Post 499 out of Gordon provide a warm site for crafts and many volunteers. Area businesses such as ICO and the Village Pump in Solon Springs have provided pizza, soda and other drinks to be sold in the town hall.

Nearly every business, group or volunteer approached for help said “yes.”

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"We had a fantastic turnout," Griffin said.

That’s typical in the town with a population of 743, said longtime resident Mert Warn-
er.

"The Gordon community is unique," he said. "They all work together."

People wear many hats, sit on numerous committees and volunteer often.

"It’s really awesome to live in a town like Gordon," Boettcher said.

She applauded the businesses and individuals, from Minong to Duluth, who sup-
ported the event with donations.

Silent auction items run the gamut from handcrafted bar stools, hand-crocheted blankets and original art pieces to gift certificates, golf passes and spa baskets. The Chinese auction caters to youth, with more than 65 kid-friendly items – from Barbie dolls to board games. And the raffle offers a grand prize of $1,000. Auctions run from 2-6:30 p.m. when winners will be announced. Admission to the dance, which starts at 8 p.m., is $5 per person.

The goal of the parks and recreation committee, which was resurrected two years ago, is to develop a family-
oriented focus within the community.

"We would like to offer various recreational areas and events that will encourage families from near and far to enjoy the lifestyle of a small, rural town in northern Wis-
consin," Hoyt said.

The inaugural Winterfest gave them a boost. When Warner and his wife, June, stepped forward to donate additional land to the park last year, the committee grew wings.

The offer was, Boettcher said, "overwhelming."

"They just have such a giving spirit," she said of the Warners. "They knew they could do something to make a difference and they did."

Warner said gifting the acre and a two-tenths parcel, which adjoins the current park property, will provide room for new facilities and a safer site for the current playground.

"We just wanted to help the kids in town," he said.

Warner said he was impressed with the hard work the parks and recre-
ation committee members and volunteers have put in.

"They’re not doing it for themselves; they’re doing it for the young people in Gor-
don," he said.

Their work is also good for the community.

"If we can offer more to bring people into Gordon, business has to follow," Grif-
fin said.

Depending on the success of this year’s Winterfest, the committee should have enough funding for the basket-
ketball court. Future plans include a possible tennis court, new playground equip-
ment and more.

For now, volunteers and organizers are hoping for a big turn-out Saturday.

"The event appeals to all ages," Boettcher said.

It’s a day of fun that goes toward a good cause, Griffin said.

"Even if you just come enjoy the free family events it meets our mission of providing family activities in Gor-
don," she said.

For more information, visit Winterfest at www.gordon-wi.us.com/.