



Winterfest attracts fun-seekers



Crowning the 1950 ice queen, Beverly Deitering, is chamber president Ed Strolle.

Gaylord's annual Winterfest began as the Winter Festival 18 years ago.

In 1972, a group of snowmobilers wanted some organized activities to participate in and came up with the idea of a Winter Festival.

Ed Calkins, executive manager of the Gaylord / Otsego County Chamber of Commerce at the time, said the chamber and the merchants thought it was a good idea, and suggested additional events, including a parade down Main Street.

Some of the early events includ-

ed snowmobile drag races, cross-country ski races, sleigh rides, helicopter rides, an ox roast and a pancake supper, among others.

After the festival was suspended for a number of years, it was revived in 1983, under the name Winterfest.

Jim Lappan, then a director of the chamber and an organizer of the event, said the original idea of Winterfest was to provide something for the local people to do in mid-winter.

"It was originally something to get people out in the wintertime," Lappan said.

The snowmobile events remain-

ed popular, he said, especially the snowmobile safari. Downhill tubing at Michaywe' has always been popular as well as fun, he said.

The children's fishing contest on the Otsego Lake ice existed prior to Winterfest, he said, but Northland Sportsmen's Club organizers agreed to hold it during Winterfest, and it continues to be one of the best-attended events.

Lappan said this year's Winterfest is adding a completely new event with the appearance of hot air balloons.

"They'll be spectacular," he said.

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