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**SNOWMASS FETES MARDI GRAS WITH “THE BIGGEST SHOW ON SNOW”
Parade, king cake, beads, and more are hallmarks of this authentic celebration**

Snowmass Village, CO. Wintery Colorado may seem like an unusual destination for a Mardi Gras celebration, but the resort town of Snowmass Village hosts one of the oldest Mardi Gras festivals in the Rocky Mountains. On February 5, Snowmass Village morphs into the “Biggest Show on Snow” for its 26th annual Mardi Gras celebration. This Fat Tuesday fete is one of the most popular events of the winter season in Snowmass.

“Snowmass is the ultimate Mardi Gras mountain destination,” says Susan Hamley, Marketing Director for the Town of Snowmass Village. “We work hard to honor the original New Orleans visitors who introduced the festival over a quarter century ago.”

This dawn-until-wee-hours authentic fete began unofficially in 1980 by New Orleans natives seeking an alternative to their hometown celebration. Today Snowmass still lures a large contingent of New Orleaners with crowds as large as 5,000 annually.

The “Biggest Show on Snow” kicks off with the 16th annual Mother of All Ascensions Uphill Race. This costumed madcap dash up nearly 2,000 feet in elevation starts at 7 a.m. and finishes with over \$15,000 in prizes being awarded for such categories as best and worst costume and best and worst time. Starting around the noon hour, local restaurants kick off celebrations that offer Cajun cuisine, hurricane drink specials, and crawdad boils.

Mardi Gras continues with more traditional elements throughout the day. An enormous King Cake is given out on the Mall, while a Kids Carnival includes stilt walkers, face painters and more. The annual Bead Throw tosses nearly 30,000 beads and prizes into the crowds. The wildest, wackiest parade in the mountains follows at 4 p.m., packing the Mall with wall-to-wall revelers, floats, kings and queens, mountain jesters, the EL Jebel Shriner Pipe & Drum Band, the Basalt Dance Troup, jugglers, jokers, and feather-festooned fools strutting their big top style. Cash prizes totaling \$800 are given for Best Costume, Best Use of Theme, and Best Float.

After the parade, the parties move indoors to local hot spots such as Zane's Tavern, Mountain Dragon, Big Hoss Grille, and the Cirque, which celebrate with live music, Mardi Gras giveaways, and Fat Tuesday drink and food specials.

For the complete visitor schedule and lodging options, visit www.snowmassvillage.com. For additional media information, including photos, contact Allison Johnson at (970) 309-5485.

The resort town of Snowmass Village, Colorado, is located in the heart of the Elk Mountains 9 miles from Aspen, Colorado. Snowmass is accessible via four regional airports (Aspen, Eagle, Grand Junction, and Denver). Snowmass offers diverse lodging and daily activities for families, adventurers, and couples. For a media guide of this popular mountain destination, please visit www.snowmasspress.com and for visitor information go to www.snowmassvillage.com.

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