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PRESS RELEASE

THE ICE IS OUT IN NEWPORT!

For the first time in two years, spring came early to Newport - at least according to Lake Memphremagog. Newport Parks & Recreation's annual Ice Out contest has been a tradition since 2014 and falls through almost religiously during the second week of April. This year's unusually balmy March weather sped things up for locals looking for a sign of spring and their chance to win the big cash prize.

"This year we received 1,269 guesses for the contest, which was brought in over \$2,500 in ticket sales to benefit the playground project," said Recreation Coordinator Laura Smith, who has the tedious job of entering each guess into the computer. "A lot of submissions were from Vermont and New England, but we also received some from farther away like Georgia and Minnesota. The dates spanned from as early as March 6, all the way out to May 20. We're all glad we don't have to wait *that* long for spring to arrive," she said with a smile.

Staff rushed into town Saturday morning after receiving reports on social media that the Ice Out mascot was missing from the bay near Gardner Park. Newport saw a high of 61 degrees that Friday which inspired a surge of over 100 guesses to be submitted online that day alone. The official Ice Out time, which is monitored to the minute by a clock in Gardner Park, was at 8:53PM on Friday, March 20.

The announcement was exciting news for Crystal Cook, a Lyndonville resident who travels to Lake Memphremagog regularly for ice fishing. "I saw the 'Ice Cubed' mascot in the bay, and thought why not? You can't win if you don't try!" She was a first-time participant in the contest and entered five online guesses - all for March 20. Her entry for 8:37PM was only 16 minutes shy of the actual time which is the closest of any Ice Out winner to date. Cook will take home \$1,244.50 in prize money which she plans to tuck away for a rainy day. The other half of the ticket sales will help fund the Gardner Park Playground & Splashpad Project.

Tickets can be purchased year round at the Newport Parks & Recreation Department office or online at www.NewportRecreation.org/ICEOUT.