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Why do you think the Vernon Winter Carnival is important to our community?

A Light in ur Winter Blues

It was halfway through the eternal blues of Winter. The days were dark and cold. That evening I had gone with my family to our favorite look out spot. I held a hot chocolate in my mittened hands and cuddled close to my mom. I was staring up at the sharp icy sky reminiscing about hot summer days when a warm light caught my eye. I turned to see it rising up from behind the trees. Colour, a flickering flame followed by a loud whooshing noise. It was soon followed by another then another. The sky began to fill up with brightly lit hot air balloons kicking off the beginning of the Winter Carnival.

I remember specifically on that night how welcomed I felt. Me and my family have lived in Vernon for about five years now but I will never forget that first winter. That winter when we took down our christmas tree and headed into the dull days that followed after christmas. But right when the winter blues began creeping upon me, the community of Vernon got together to make this beautiful event of light. A light in the darkness of winter, with a history dating back to 1893. When snowflakes fell, and with them a dream came true. From a few skate blades on ice and cocoa in cups to a tradition that would last as long as the merry hearts of its bearers. A tradition that digs deep into the roots of our region. That same kindle was lit that night as all of Vernon gathered to share its spirit. A shared spirit of love, harmony and euphony.

Along with the hot air balloons, the parade has always been my favorite. So after that first kickoff I knew the rest would follow suit. Eager I would always light with joy to see the different floats. The creativity and hard work that our peers put in to make the spectacle. Glittering tassels lining their hems, costumes of carefully sewn fabric, baubles of all colors, princesses and snowmen. You name it, all reflecting on my eyes. And as if we hadn't already enough candy from christmas we now got more. I remember participating in it one year my dads shop had decorated one of their big trucks and we all got to sit on hay stacks in the back. I'd been rushing around with my sister to make sure every kid got a sweet handful of our candy. Afterwards we all went to the festivities that included a sledding hill, ice sculptures, and more hot cocoa. But the sweetest of all was the welcoming community that I immediately made friends with. All of us running around carelessly even with snow filling our boots. Oohing and awing at all the different decorations. These memories are my childhood and will never leave my side.

So many traditions and activities, and so much work gone into them. It's what shapes our community. Without them we wouldn't be Vernon. These events are so thoroughly part of us, part of me and my family now, that no winter would be the same if it didn't include a winter carnival. It's our special tradition, it's our history. Celebration and community revolve around these events. It's a time where we can all gather and share banter as stars turn on and order themselves into the winter night.

That day up on that hill, with the balloons visible in the distance I fell in love with Vernon. All the joy and love gathered in this one spot of earth. And I learned that day the true meaning of community. Not just a group of people living in the same area but a family. Family and friends who all gathered and despite any discontentment laughed and shared the love that keeps Vernon alive.