

Gnome search gets underway as prelude to SpringFest

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By Drew Johnson

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Mushrooms created by Mia Waisman of Fuzzy Lovies, who will be one of the artisans at the Gnome Depot at SpringFest 2023 in South Portland. *Contributed / Jim Britt*

South Portland and Cape Elizabeth residents have a week to get into the gnome spirit in time for SpringFest 2023 next weekend, and a weeklong gnome scavenger hunt leading up to the festival is designed to help.

The second annual festival revolves this year around one theme – gnomes.

“It’s such a fun theme to build an event around,” said Jim Britt, president of the South Portland-Cape Elizabeth Rotary Club, which organized the festival.

Many of the 70 businesses that have contributed to SpringFest are participating in Gnome-Week Discovery Search, this Friday through Friday, May 19. Interested searchers can download an app, Eventzee, and use code SF23 for clues to the locations of gnomes hidden

throughout the two communities.

SpringFest kicks off on the evening of Friday, May 19, with a Gnomes @ Knight street party from 7-9 p.m. at Thomas Knight Park with a DJ, food trucks, a marching band and a good number of gnome-themed activities for all ages. The park is located at the end of Waterman Drive in South Portland.

“It’s gonna be an absolute blast, nothing that Thomas Knight Park or South Portland has ever seen before with people coming to dance the night away,” Britt said.



A gnome scavenger hunt in advance of SpringFest will be Friday, May 12, through Friday, May 19. *Contributed / SpringFest*

The next morning, Saturday, May 20, pancakes and sausages will be served from 8-11 a.m. at a South Portland High School football fundraiser at the Community Center on Nelson Road. The cost of the Gnome-a-licious Pancake Breakfast is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

The festival, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Mill Creek Park in South Portland, will feature a KindKids concert at the Gnome Gazebo at 11 a.m., a Gnome Depot Makers Faire, where local artisans will display and sell gnome-themed crafts, a Get to Gnome Us tent for local businesses and organizations to promote their work, and a Best of Gnome cornhole tournament.

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Simultaneously, a free GnomeSports basketball clinic, run by the Jr. Celtics Academy, will be held at the South Portland Community Center for students in grades 3-12. To register, go to spspringfest.com.

The whole gnome party got started months ago with donations of various gnomes for the event. Libraries in South Portland and Cape Elizabeth have been getting children geared up with gnome-themed book programs. Students at South Portland High School produced Gnome Home kits for people to build at the festival with the goal of creating “The World’s Largest Gnome Village.”

“The students there, specifically the Jobs for Maine Grads students, designed and assembled kits – a thousand of them, in fact,” Britt said. “Seniors are having fun building them, and we’ve had hundreds at the South Portland Recreation Center at the front desk get picked up by people.”

“It’s just part of the fun,” Britt said. “It’s just a wild, interesting thing that has emerged from this gnome theme.”

Britt gave credit to Rotary member Sari Greene for taking the lead on the event.

“She’s the organizer. She is totally dedicated to this and I’ve never seen anything run so methodically,” Britt said. “This event would not be happening if it wasn’t for her.”

Greene was not available for comment before the The Southern Forecaster’s deadline.

Whether or not you’re into gnomes, SpringFest is simply a way to bring people together, Britt said.

“Folks need to find their way there and have some fun, grab their neighbors, bring them,” he said. “That’s what it’s all about.”

For more information on the scavenger hunt and festival activities, go to spspringfest.com.

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