



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## 1.11.19 - Thousands Skate to Binghamton for Annual Pond Festival

FRED AKSHAR January 11, 2019

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This January, anyone can play hockey at the Binghamton Pond Festival. Teams of all ages and abilities are invited to register to participate in the festival, which will take place over three weekends starting January 11th at the beautiful Chenango Valley State Park in Chenango Forks

Each hockey weekend is open to the public to attend, and will feature plenty of non-hockey events, including live music, and a variety of other wintertime fun and games.

Binghamton Pond Fest Founder and Producer Tytus Haller said, "The hockey community is a very diverse group that is rooted in all kinds of ways in our local community, and is very supportive of good causes and events. All of the money we donate stays here in the Binghamton area and I think it's great to see conversations and openness that help to remove some of the stigmas associated with various mental health challenges that we all battle at different times in our lives. I've had a great deal of support and help from the staff at Chenango Valley State Park and their Friends of the Park group in making the event a success and fun."

Adult teams will play for fun and a tournament championship, kids will be able to experience the beauty of outdoor hockey, and the entire community is invited to take part in the winter fun.

While the majority of events will take place at Chenango Valley State Park, this year the Pond Festival's parent organization, Broome Winterworks Inc., will feature a special event in downtown Binghamton. The Binghamton Ice Fest and Chili Competition will take place on Court St. on Saturday, January 19th from 12:00pm - 6:00pm featuring ice sculptures from the Ice Farm and a chili competition featuring chilis prepared by more than a dozen local businesses and organizations.

In its first three years, Binghamton Pond Festival has donated over \$23,000 to local nonprofits, with nearly \$20,000 going to the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier (MHAST) and their Do It For Darren (DIFD) initiatives for youth suicide prevention and youth mental health awareness. As the festival continues to grow, organizers anticipate being able to donate even more.

Keith W. Leahey, Executive Director at MHAST, said, "We are honored to be the charity

recipient for the Binghamton Pond Festival again this year. Above and beyond the important funds raised, we are thankful for the opportunity to promote youth mental health and suicide awareness in our community.”

The event games will be played on Chenango Valley State Park's refrigerated outdoor ice surface, funded through a grant secured by Senator Fred Akshar through the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. In its first couple of years, unpredictable weather and temperatures made holding the Binghamton Pond Festival difficult, but the new outdoor surface allows a variety of events to be held year after year.

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*Senator Fred Akshar said, “The Binghamton Pond Fest is an exciting and inclusive event that attracts visitors from across the country to our community during some of the coldest months. It's great to see the event expanding every year. I was proud to do my part in securing funding to help Chenango Valley State Park host events like this and others for our community for years to come.”*

Broome County Executive Jason Garnar said, “Broome County is proud to sponsor this event again in 2019. This unique, family-friendly event encourages Broome County residents to get out during the winter season. I’m excited to see local residents and visitors from across the country enjoying the 2019 Pond Hockey Festival!”

Judi Hess, Director of Visit Binghamton, said, “Visit Binghamton is excited to have this series of Pond Hockey events taking place in the community and drawing out of town visitors at this time of year. The out of town visitors will have a positive economic impact for the entire county.”

In addition to partnering with the NYS Parks Department and MHAAS, Binghamton Pond Fest 2019 is partnered with many other local organizations and businesses, including Jack Sherman Toyota, The Colonial, UHS Sports Medicine, the Binghamton Devils, Matco Electric, The Double Tree, Rocco J. Testani, Visit Bing, American Fireworks, North American Breweries, Pyramid Business Systems, Catskill Shed Company, Amici's, Warehouse Carpet, AP Entertainment, The Friends Group of Chenango Valley State Park, The Southern Tier Hockey Association (STHA) and The Binghamton Blizzard Girls Hockey Association.

The full schedule of events and registration information below is also available at [www.bingpondfest.com](http://www.bingpondfest.com).

### **January 11: Free Try Hockey Night**

On Friday, the festival hosts a free "Try Hockey" event at the park from 6:00pm-8:00pm hosted in part by Southern Tier Hockey Association (STHA) and the Binghamton Blizzard Girls Hockey Association (BBGHA). Kids will need to bring nothing with them but a good attitude to try the sport.

Registration Information: <https://www.bingpondfest.com/try-hockey-2019-any-age.html>)

### **January 12-13: Youth Hockey Weekend**

The Pond Festival features USA Hockey sanctioned 4 on 4 youth gameplay along with other wintertime fun.

### **January 18th: Skills & Skating Clinic**

Starting at 5:00pm, North American Hockey Systems will host three separate 1-hour sessions for skaters of all ages. These sessions are open to all, but preferably for those that have

established basic skating skills. Each session will have up to 30 different participants in it. Session groups will be assigned by age once registration is full.

Registration information: [https://www.bingpondfest.com/store/c9/Skating\\_Clinic.html](https://www.bingpondfest.com/store/c9/Skating_Clinic.html)

**January 19th: Binghamton Ice Fest and Chili Competition (Court St. in Downtown Binghamton)**

On Saturday January 19, the nonprofit Broome Winterworks Inc. will host an ice carving display and demonstration on Court Street in Downtown Binghamton featuring:

- 8 single-block ice carvings on display
- Two separate ice carving demonstrations at 1:00pm and 3:00pm
- Photo opportunities for the family with ice sculptures featuring hockey, ice throne and ice fire tower themed designs.
- Animal Adventure onsite with a portable petting zoo.
- A chili competition featuring local organizations, and businesses. Chili tasting tickets will be available the day of at a central booth at the event.

This year's chili competition participants include:

- Dos Rios Cantina
- The Colonial
- Smokey Legend Gourmet BBQ

- Water Street Brewing Co.
- The Loft at 99
- Libbie Haller for the Binghamton Pond Festival
- Phillip Valenta for Do It For Darren (DIFD)
- Ranger Ricardo
- Pinkies Barbeque
- Boricua Soul Catering & Sweets
- Rent A Chef Catering Services of Binghamton
- Chroma Cafe & Bakery

### **January 25-27: Adult Hockey Weekend**

The Adult Outdoor Hockey Weekend will wrap up the Pond Festival. Participants and crowd members will enjoy the beautiful scenery and experience first-hand a weekend of action packed games, a full fireworks show, tons of live music featuring Tim Ruffo and Tori Viccica, 5k obstacle and snowshoe races through the park, and lots of other wintertime fun.

Registration Information:

[https://www.bingpondfest.com/store/c2/Adult\\_Hockey\\_Registration.html](https://www.bingpondfest.com/store/c2/Adult_Hockey_Registration.html)

### **January 26 : Wintertime Fireworks Show**

6pm at Chenango Valley State Park

### **January 26: 2vs2 Bubble Hockey Tournament**

930pm at Dos Rios Cantina. Winning team will earn a prize trip to a NJ Devils home game.

### **January 27th: Pond Hockey Trail Run and Snowshoe Race**

Attendees have a choice of snowshoe race OR winter trail run with optional obstacles as part of the Binghamton Pond Festival to support the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier and their DIFD initiatives for suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

Races will start at near the Confluence pop up tent in the ice rink area with courses stretching throughout the park and finishing back near the rink area.

Registration Information:

<https://runsignup.com/Race/NY/ChenangoForks/PondHockeyTrailRun>

For a complete list of events, visit [BingPondFest.com](http://BingPondFest.com) or [Facebook.com/BingPondFest](https://Facebook.com/BingPondFest)