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Visit Estes Park partners with local organizations to bring exciting new family-friendly attractions to Estes Park

For the benefit of locals and visitors alike, Visit Estes Park (VEP) has partnered with the Town of Estes Park (Town) and the Estes Arts District (EAD), respectively, to bring a community climbing boulder, a mural—dedicated to the wildland firefighters who defended the Estes Valley last October—and (hopefully) a snow machine, to Estes Park.

These attractions will encourage year-round visitation, contributing to economic growth in the area, and offer positive and memorable experiences to all who visit and live in our community; all of which are key components of VEP's mission, vision and goals.

Community climbing boulder

VEP is contributing a community climbing boulder to the Town's Big Thompson Recreational Area improvement project, located west of the parking structure along the Big Thompson River. The boulder will complement the addition of picnic shelters, irrigation, and landscaping making it another pleasant outdoor area where guests and locals can spend time. The Town estimates this project will be completed and open to the public by winter 2021-2022.

Firefighter mural

The idea for a mural to thank the firefighters who defended our town last fall came from the Estes Park Nonprofit Resource Center during an Estes Valley Resiliency Collaborative (estes.org/evrc) discussion. VEP, in support of this recognition, partnered with the EAD to see the idea to fruition. VEP is funding the creation of a mural by EAD artist Wade Johnston. The mural's location is being determined, but will be located along Elkhorn Avenue in a prominent location.

"You never know who is a wildland firefighter when you pass by someone in their street clothes. Generations of firefighters on vacation will pass by the mural and be touched by the gesture, whether they fought the fires or not," says Rachel Ward Oppermann, Public Information & Communications Specialist at VEP, who is also a volunteer firefighter in Allenspark. "And it will add beauty and character to our town, which we are thrilled about," she added.

Snow machine

This project is still in the works and we're very hopeful it works out. Here's our vision: free winter attractions, made from snow, that change every year. Think snow and ice sculpture park created by local artists, a sledding hill, or a snow park dedicated to snow sports, available to locals and guests throughout the winter. The attractions will provide opportunity for new and enhanced signature events to be held in conjunction with them, such as outdoor music, vendors and food trucks stationed nearby. And these are only the initial ideas the EAD has, which would be in charge of annual programming and work with the Town to execute creation of the attractions. VEP would help to fund the project through a grant to the EAD.

Nick Smith, Treasurer of the EAD (formerly the Chairperson) commented, "We are honored to receive this grant to help create a winter art exhibition and snow play event for our community and visitors. We believe this program will add elements of winter culture and sport that will make Estes Park a better place to live, work and play."

Currently, the EAD has submitted their operating plan and Covid 19 compliance plan to Larimer County for approval and direction to help facilitate a safe and sustainable program. If the team is able to move forward, a test phase will be executed this winter utilizing a rented snow machine. Data collected will be analyzed in consideration of a future snow machine purchase.

VEP will promote each attraction across owned, earned and paid media to keep Estes Park top of mind with guests planning vacations or looking for inspiration for a future trip. VEP has already secured a stop for the mural on Colorado.com's mural trail (currently under development) which is an itinerary of must-see murals in towns throughout Colorado targeted to roadtrippers. The trail will be promoted by the Colorado Tourism Office and destination partners included in the itinerary.

"We're very excited to contribute to the community by adding value to the Estes Park experience for guests and locals, while fulfilling our mission and vision," says Abi Huebner, Interim CEO and Director of Stakeholder Services at VEP. "We look forward to more partnerships that benefit our community and visitors in the future."

Learn more about VEP by visiting www.visitestepark.com/transparency.