



# ROCK ON MORRISVILLE!

*An event you won't want to miss*

Lots of towns have fall festivals to celebrate the harvest season, but there is only one Rocktoberfest in Vermont. Five years ago, Morrisville inaugurated this annual event that takes place on the first Saturday of October, and it's still going strong.





The planning process for Rocktoberfest begins in January, according to Community Development Coordinator Tricia Follert. “I’m the only municipal worker,” Tricia says proudly of the volunteers who come forward for this event. “The rest are all volunteers. We have a phenomenal community. In this area, when you put out the word, you always get volunteers.” The committee meets on a monthly basis, planning to bring back the favorite events of previous years and adding new ones when possible.

#### GRASSROOTS FUN

Just about every entity in Morristown—businesses, schools, and nonprofits—takes part in the festivities. “When we first started this,

we said we wanted it to be interactive,” Tricia says. “We ask the groups that get involved to do things, not just hand out information.” As a result, different groups sponsor activities, such as face painting or juggling. “You walk away with an experience,” she says, “not just information about the organization.”

One of the most popular events is pumpkin bowling. This year the location was changed to Hutchins Street, which has a good angle for those looking to score some strikes and spares. Another much-beloved event is the recycled miniature golf course set up by ReSource. “They use old plywood and metal to build ramps and curves,” Tricia says. “People line up for it. It’s something the whole family can do.”

When Rocktoberfest began, the first Saturday in October was chosen intentionally so as not to coincide with Stowe’s Oktoberfest. Since then, Stowe has changed its date, but Tricia is undeterred. “I like that people have more options,” she says. “This is the height of the fall foliage. The more people we attract, the more they’ll see.”

#### SOCKTOBERFEST, AN AUCTION, AND MORE

In previous years, Tricia purchased several hundred inexpensive “rock ‘n roll looking” sunglasses to give away, but this year she’s sticking close to home. Wheelhouse Design is a Morrisville company that makes novelty socks sold across the country. Every year,



Kids and adults alike have a blast at Rocktoberfest, where events range from pumpkin bowling and dancing to face painting and juggling. Hand-painted Adirondack chairs offer front-row seats to the autumn action and are auctioned off, and scarecrows fit right in throughout Morrisville.



Wheelhouse holds an annual three-day event to sell its discontinued products, but this year, “Socktoberfest” will be held in conjunction with Rocktoberfest. And Tricia is getting socks made especially to celebrate the event; she’ll give these out in place of the sunglasses. “It’s something people will love and remember,” she said. “It’s something you’ll use every day and a great cross-promotion. Plus, quality locally made items are so much better than cheap plastic from China.”

One of the more striking aspects of Rocktoberfest is the auction of hand-painted Adirondack chairs, an idea sparked by a display Tricia saw in Massachusetts. Every year, community members have the opportunity to decorate 20 Adirondack folding chairs, with an additional five chairs adorned by the art class at Peoples Academy. The chairs are displayed around town throughout Rocktoberfest and then auctioned off.

“I wanted to have public art and I also wanted to promote accessibility,” Tricia says. “The chairs are scattered so that people can







take a break as they walk around. These chairs just keep getting better and better! Every year there is a waiting list of people who want to decorate them.”

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Another popular part of Rocktoberfest is the Mo-Vegas Chili Cookoff. Here, Tricia has learned from experience. For two years, it was a burger contest involving a panel of judges, but there were so many burgers that the judges couldn't do them justice. Instead, they switched to chili—always welcome on a brisk autumn day—and made the event a fundraiser for Lamoille County Food Share. For \$5, anyone can get a cup of every contestant's chili with a scoresheet to grade the various options. The winner gets a certificate.

If chili isn't your thing, there are plenty of other food vendors, and Tricia makes sure there isn't too much overlap so the choices are plentiful. There is no beer tent, but visitors can stop by Moog's Tavern if they're in the mood for a brew. Those looking for exercise can also take part in a 5K fun run/walk that starts at 10am. An hour later, the music begins

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Families gather to take a break from all the fun they're having at Rocktoberfest.

and doesn't stop until 7pm, featuring bands like the Coquettes and the Cop Outs. For the third year, individuals, businesses, and nonprofits are also invited to take part in a scarecrow competition to be judged by members of the community. The scarecrows will be affixed to the light poles on Portland Street.

Morrisville's River Arts has an Artisan Market that includes workshops where participants can create something to take home. Tricia is excited to be able to use Rocktoberfest to unveil another public art project she has been working on. She recently secured grants and corporate sponsorship for three metal tree sculptures, the first of which will be on display for the occasion.

Tricia says there is a good mix of both locals and visitors at Rocktoberfest. She doesn't do much advertising, but people seem to find her. Vendors start contacting her in January to ask about being part of the event. "I love doing this," she says. "Every year we jazz it up a little bit more. This is a family fun day in Morrisville and people love it."

For more information about Rocktoberfest, visit [www.rocktoberfestvt.com](http://www.rocktoberfestvt.com) or email Tricia at [tfollert@morristownvt.org](mailto:tfollert@morristownvt.org). ❀