

Saying goodbye to 2018 at Wachusett Mountain

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PRINCETON - The closing sounds of 2018 were echoing fireworks and shouts of delight from the slopes Monday night as skiers spent the last evening of the year at Wachusett Mountain where snow was falling early on.

A fireworks display illuminated the slopes and boomed back off the mountain as revelers paused to watch.

Beckett Britt-Webb, 10, of Newton was spending the evening with his dad, Erik Britt-Webb, who'd returned from a soccer tournament in Orlando just a few hours earlier.

Beckett's friends all became ill and cancelled out on skiing, so he convinced his father to bring him instead.

"We're going until 10 then we hop in the car and go home in time for New Year's Eve with the family," Mr. Britt-Webb said.

During the day at the EcoTarium in Worcester, staff and guests celebrated "Noon Year's Eve" with family-friendly countdowns, the toasting of resolutions and building 2018 time capsules.

The afternoon party attracted a playful collection of parents and children and featured a variety of school vacation-week activities with holiday-themed programs.

At Wachusett Mountain, David Crowley Jr., director of operations, said he's worked the last five New Year's Eve shifts there and it doesn't feel like work.

This year he was hoping that the snow would keep falling and not change to rain as predicted, though the threat of that thinned the crowd from previous years.

"It's one of the best days to be on the mountain," he said. "Everyone's in the spirit."

Skiing went on until midnight and many were snacking at around 8, planning to be on the slopes for a final run just as the year ended.

"I want to ski from 2018 into 2019," Eoin Greiner of Paxton said.

Ella Glow of Sterling said she planned to be on the slopes at midnight, too.

Derek Devardo, Sarah Dube and her son, 10-year-old Braiden were tubing and snowboarding but were headed out to a birthday party before midnight.

They enjoyed the fireworks, sponsored by Polar Beverages, and said they were getting their money's worth out of a season pass they had purchased.

Across the nation, fireworks, concerts, spiritual services and political addresses abounded to mark the transition to 2019.

In New York City, Snoop Dogg, Sting and Christina Aguilera welcomed 2019 in a packed Times Square along with revelers from around the world who came to see the traditional crystal ball drop.

A drenching rain hadn't stopped crowds from packing the area ahead of the made-for-TV extravaganza.

The celebration took place under tight security, with partygoers checked for weapons and then herded into pens, ringed by metal barricades, where they waited for the stroke of midnight.

Bad weather forced police to scrap plans to fly a drone to help keep watch over the crowd.

In Las Vegas, fireworks were to be shot from casino resorts and superstar performances given by Lady Gaga, Celine Dion, Gwen Stefani and others.

Celebratory midnight toasts were anchored by an 8-minute firework show on the Las Vegas Strip. The pyrotechnics were choreographed to a soundtrack that included Frank Sinatra's "Luck Be a Lady," Lionel Richie's "All Night Long" and Dion's version of "I Drove All Night".

New Year's Eve is worth more than \$400 million to Vegas.

Security was also a high priority for police on the Las Vegas Strip, where a gunman in 2017 opened fire on a country music festival, killing 58 people and injuring hundreds of others.

Police, including rooftop snipers and plainclothes and uniformed officers, were out in full force along with federal agents. Authorities restricted revelers from bringing backpacks, ice chests, strollers and glass items to the street celebrations.

- Material from *The Associated Press* was used in this report.

FIREWORKS AT WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN

