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 boosted back of the mountain as revelers paused to watch. Becken Ritze-Webb, 10, of Newton was spending the evening with his dad, Erik Ritze-Webb, who'd returned from a surfing tournament in Orlando just a few hours earlier.

Becken's friends all became ill and cancelled out on skating, 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. Ritze-Webb said.

During the day at the EcoTarium in Worcester, staff and guests celebrated "New Year's Eve" with family-friendly countdowns, the tossing 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'd 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 too rapid to make prediction through the threat of last thunders 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 well into midnight and many were skating around 8, planning to be on the slopes for the final run just as the year ended.

"I want to ski from 2018 into 2019," Lisa Centner of PAXTON said.

Ellie Sirois of Shrewsbury said she planned to be on the slopes at midnight, too.

Derek Oviedo, Sarah Dutky and her son, 10-year-old Bastien were tubing and snowboarding but ever 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,慌忙ly marked the transition to 2019.

In New York, Cyno Dog, Sonja and Carnation agencies 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 paramedics checked for weapons and then banned into press, ringed by metal barricades, where they waited for the stroke of midnight.

Bad weather forced police to stamp glass to fly a drone to help keep watch over the crowd.

In Las Vegas, fireworks were 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 Dolly's version of "I Dreamed a Dream."

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, snowboards and glass items to the street celebration.

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