

## Winter Blast roars onto the calendar

And there's still time to become a sponsor

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The Motown Winter Blast is on tap to heat up downtown Detroit.

The seventh edition of the cold-weather fest will hit Campus Martius Park the weekend of Feb. 11 with some key new sponsors, a slate of 50 music acts and expanded opening-day hours, officials announced Wednesday.

Festival executives and local politicians gathered at Campus Martius to announce details for the free family event, which premiered in 2005 and served as a showpiece for Detroit's Super Bowl festivities a year later. The three-day festival has drawn about 75,000 people annually in recent years, according to organizers' estimates.

Newly aboard as sponsors are the General Motors Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Detroit tech firm GalaxE.Solutions. In a

time of frugal sponsorship dollars, they helped Winter Blast meet its \$300,000 budget, said fest director Jon Witz.

"This one went down to the wire in getting the support we needed," he said. "But the event has become an institution."

Witz is still seeking sponsor dollars to revive the fest's popular snow slide attraction, but other Winter Blast staples are in store, including snow cannons, ice sculptures and free outdoor skating.

Three stages will host 50 local music acts; performers are to be unveiled in mid-January.

Winter Blast will kick off at 11 a.m. on Feb. 11—four hours earlier than past installments.

Half a decade after Super Bowl XL steered the nation's attention to Detroit, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano said Winter Blast remains one of that event's most visible legacies.



Ice skaters enjoy the Motown Winter Blast at Campus Martius Park. The 2011 festival will kick off Feb. 11.

HEATHER ROUSSEAU/Special to the Free Press