

Mebane City Beat: Easter is on its way

BY KELLY HUNTER

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS OF ORANGE

In the midst of spring, when the air turns warm and the days stretch longer, the community of Mebane comes alive with a celebration that's as unique as it is heartwarming—the Downtown Mebane Eggstravaganza and Bunny Hop. Now in its third year, this event has woven itself into the fabric of our community, embodying the spirit of creativity, family fun, and local pride.

Looking to offer a non-traditional spring egg hunt, the insightful minds from the City of Mebane, in partnership with the Downtown Mebane Development Corporation (DMDC), created an event that entertains and encourages families to explore and celebrate our downtown businesses. The Downtown Mebane Eggstravaganza and Bunny Hop focuses on inviting children to design their own Easter eggs, which will be showcased in the windows of participating shops, establishing a new tradition incorporating art, festivity, and commerce.

Participation in this event always begins about a month out, with the Easter egg coloring sheets becoming available for the public to download from the city's website. You can also obtain physical copies from the Mebane Arts and Community Center or the Children's Department of the Mebane Public Library. This year, the coloring sheets became available on February 19, with the last day to obtain a coloring sheet being March 15.



COURTESY OF THE CITY OF MEBANE

After children decorate their eggs, they cut them out, write their names on the back, and drop them off at the Mebane Arts and Community Center or Mebane Public Library. Then, on Saturday, March 23, the Easter Bunny will hop through Downtown Mebane, placing beautifully decorated eggs in the various baskets painted on our local store windows and doors. The Easter Bunny will also be available for photo opportunities between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. if you can catch him hopping around downtown! From March 23 to the 31st, the eggs will be displayed at local establishments, and we invite children and their families to search for their eggs.

What sets the Eggstravaganza and Bunny Hop apart is its ability to grow and adapt while maintaining the simplicity and charm that instantly

made it a beloved tradition. With more businesses joining every year, the event continues to aid in creating lasting memories for both current and future residents.

For our local businesses, the event is more than just a seasonal celebration; it's an opportunity to connect with the community, showcase their offerings, and remind everyone of the charm and vibrancy that makes Downtown Mebane a special place. No prizes are awarded for the egg designs, but the creativity and joy they bring are reward enough, highlighting the talents and imagination of our youngest residents. Recreation and Parks Director Aaron Davis states, "The City of Mebane Eggstravaganza and Bunny Hop is a wonderful event that brings patrons to our historic downtown and cultivates a sense of joy and togetherness

among families in our positively charming city. We enjoy seeing the big smiles on the children's faces as they roam around downtown businesses, searching for their personally decorated eggs in one of the colorful baskets in the windows. We aim to help support our downtown business and hope that many participating families will venture to a new store they haven't visited before."

Participation in this year's event is widespread, with local businesses such as Champions Martial Arts, Clay Street Tavern and Provisions, Edward Jones, Grit and Grace, The Little Shops of Mebane, Junction on 70, Solgarden, Martinho's, Lou's Bakery, and more opening their doors—and windows—to the community's creativity. For those looking to be a part of this egg-cellent tradition in the future, please contact Barbara Hollerand with the DMDC at mainstreet@cityofmebane.com.

Each year, the Eggstravaganza and Bunny Hop is a vibrant showcase of what makes Mebane truly special—our strong sense of community, support for local businesses, and commitment to creating joyous memories for our families. It's an event that speaks to our values, creativity, and love for our vibrant downtown. As we look forward to another successful celebration, remember that our greatest strength lies in our unity and shared commitment to making Mebane a wonderful place to live, work, and play.

Kelly Hunter is the communications specialist with the City of Mebane.

Youth hockey group may be without a place to play

DALE EDWARDS

MANAGING EDITOR/NEWS OF ORANGE

In an area of the state where basketball is second to none, sports played and performed on ice have increasingly become a hot commodity. Orange County and its closest neighbors have benefitted from the Orange County Sportsplex, which provides access to a quality skating rink for the public and teams, some of which have achieved state, regional and national prowess.

As one would expect, the rise in popularity—and lucrativeness—of ice sports has put a squeeze on the amount of rink time available to ice synchro teams, hockey organizations and people and kids just wanting to experience ice skating.

On March 6, coaches, organizers, players and families involved with the Hillsborough Hogs, the longest-running youth hockey organization in the Triangle, learned the group may soon be without a place to skate. A letter was issued by Andrew Stock, general manager at the Orange County Sportsplex, announcing that the Sportsplex would take over all youth hockey administration, including registrations, essentially severing the partnership between the facility and the Triangle Youth Hockey North Carolina, which is more commonly known as the Hillsborough Hogs. The change would likely happen in Fall, 2024.

"We had been engaging with the Triangle Youth Hockey board for over 2 years about this topic and how we could structure recreational youth hockey ("house league hockey") to ensure that we maintain history, affordability, quality, and most importantly, access," Stock's letter stated. In our most recent meeting, the (TYHNC) board presented a revised plan that would not only prevent growth in recreational youth hockey, but a reduction in participants."

According to the letter, it was at this point that the Sportsplex decided it would not be in the best interest of Orange County for TYHNC to continue as the provider of recreational youth hockey.

The letter from Stock and the Sportsplex was not well-received by the Hillsborough Hog community.

Tom Deis, president of Triangle Youth Hockey of North Carolina,



COURTESY OF TRIANGLE YOUTH HOCKEY NORTH CAROLINA

A team of young hockey players and their coaches hold up their sticks at the Orange County Sportsplex in Hillsborough.

issued a response that took umbrage with what he called "misleading statements" in Stock's letter.

"In the last seasons we have had the highest registration in TYHNC history despite limitations of ice availability," Deis' statement said. "Since TYHNC began running a house league program, we have never turned away a player interested in joining us."

All of that has happened, the statement continued, despite having TYHNC's average weekly practice ice time reduced by 1 1/2 hours.

"Knowing the limited amount of ice offered to us for Fall 2024/2025, we proposed restructuring our teams to be larger in roster size, but still maintaining the same number of participants or greater," said Deis' statement.

Deis' letter also said the TYHNC proposal referenced in Stock's letter was meant to be a collaborative proposal of ideas and suggestions, and that the organization initiated the meeting with senior Sportsplex management "to determine how to best harmonize our various programs to maximize participation."

"It was never intended as a blueprint for all youth hockey at the Sportsplex," the statement said.

The Hillsborough Hogs were established in 1980, and has members spanning in ages from 6- to

18-years-old. The group offers a range of hockey programs, including beginner, house league, and advanced travel-level teams. The organization partners with the Polar Hurricanes House League to create a "House" and "Advanced House" division within each age group. "House" is for less experienced players with similar

hockey skills. "Advanced House" is for more experienced hockey players who wish to play at a more competitive level, but without the actual travel and cost associated with travel teams.

"We are the largest on-ice customer

see **HOCKEY**, page 9

Consumer Cellular®

**NO HIDDEN FEES.
NO HIDDEN
ANYTHING.
FREEDOM CALLS.**

Plans start at just \$20/month.

844-244-0253

© 2024 Consumer Cellular Inc. Terms and Conditions subject to change.