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TOP STORY

Busy weekend ahead beckons Mesa families

Tribune News Staff

Mar 7, 2024



The Mask Alive! Festival of Masks will be held for the seventh year at Pioneer Park in Mesa.

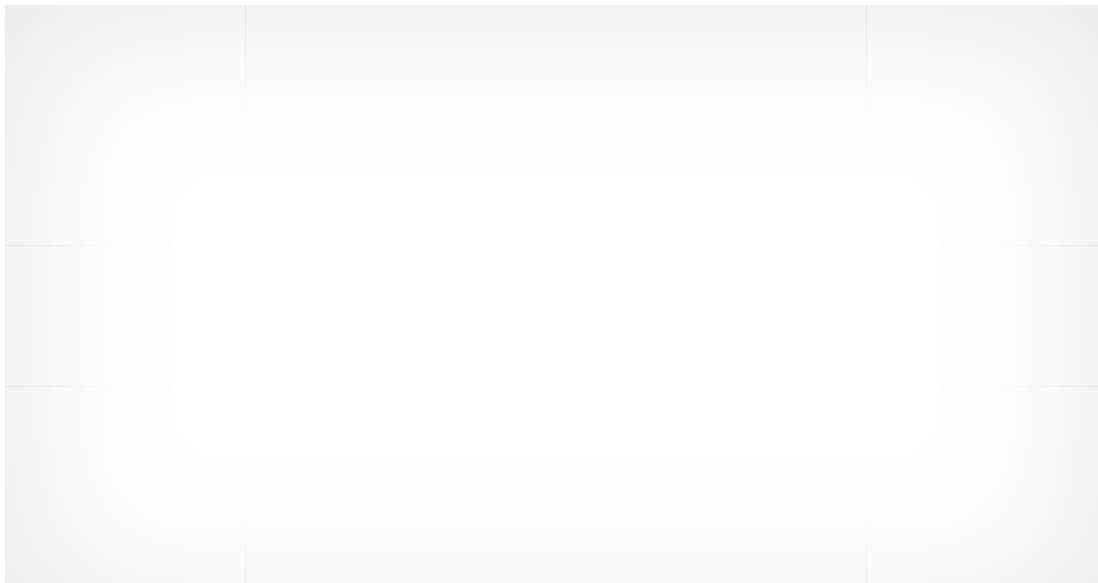
(File photo)

Whether you love Mesa, masks or Native American dance, Mesa has something for you next weekend.

The jam-packed weekend includes two big Saturday engagements – I Love Mesa Day and Mesa Community College’s Thunderbird Pow Wow – while Sunday is the date for the seventh annual Mask Alive! Festival of Masks.

Best of all three are free family friendly events.

ADVERTISING



Here's a run-down on the schedule.

I Love Mesa Day

I Love Mesa Day, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 9, offers a plethora of activities and amusements at The Yard Off Main, the community gathering space at Main and Macdonald that is open through mid-April.

Sponsored by the city and the Downtown Mesa Association, it includes free admission to the i.d.e.a. Museum from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the Arizona Museum of Natural History from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The i.d.e.a. Museum will be holding storytimes throughout the day along with programming by the Great Arizona Puppet Theater, Violent Duncan and Childsplay.

At The Yard Off Main, people will find carnival rides, face painting and balloon twisters inside The Post at 26 N. Macdonald, a petting zoo, five bubble gum fun stations, stilt walkers, a ball walker, Tinker Bell, Jasmine and a lot more princesses.

Besides food trucks, live music by Rock Lobster and Jaelyn Kay.

I Love Mesa Day will also host Read On Mesa's Literacy Lane – a celebration of literacy and community. Attendees can participate in readings from special guests, explore and connect with an array of free literacy programs and resources and sign up for a Mesa Library card.

Over 20 downtown restaurants, bars and unique stories will be offering promotions and specials to add to the fun.

“Downtown Mesa is a rapidly changing part of our city, full of new and legacy businesses,

great community events and several award-winning destinations for arts and culture,” said Mayor John Giles. “I Love Mesa Day will be another great opportunity for people to visit, return to or discover downtown Mesa for the first time.”

“We are excited that so many of our local owned businesses in downtown Mesa are offering special offerings and discounts during I Love Mesa Day,” said Terry Madeksza, Downtown Mesa Association president and executive director.

For a complete list of activities: downtownmesa.com and mesaaz.gov.

MCC Pow Wow

The Mesa Community College American Indian Institute and the Inter-Tribal Student Organization host the MCC Thunderbird Pow Wow from 10 a.m. – 9 p.m. March 9, in the John D. Riggs Stadium on the Southern and Dobson campus, 1833 W. Southern Ave.

The Gourd Dance begins at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. The Grand Entry procession is at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The Pow Wow features people from different tribes celebrating their traditions and ancestry. The all-day event also features American Indian food as well as arts and crafts vendors of jewelry, apparel and artwork.

“The MCC Thunderbird Pow Wow is meaningful not only to me but to the entire Indigenous community of Mesa,” said Jaden Bird, ISO club member and Pow Wow chair. “We often miss our families and friends on the reservation and having this event shows that MCC supports our people and culture.”

Dancers wear regalia adorned in elaborate designs, beadwork, fringe and applique that hold special meaning specific to the individual and the tribes they represent.

Margaret Talia White (Diné), senior student services specialist in the MCC American Indian Institute, called the event “a welcoming opportunity for Indigenous tribal members and the community as a whole to come together to celebrate and learn about the heritage of many Native peoples.”

Multicultural mask festival

Adults and children of all ages are encouraged to wear their most wild and creative masks at

the 7th annual Mask Alive! Festival of Masks 2-5 p.m. Sunday, March 10 at Pioneer Park, 526 E. Main St.

Presented by Cultural Coalition, the Raza Development Fund and SRP, it offers cultural entertainment, masked characters, puppets and art activities.

Attendees can expect to see traditional Mexican folklórico dances, like the viejitos dance of children wearing masks to look like older people, and the vibrant colorful dances of lion and dragon puppets from China.

The park will be filled with live musical performances from Japanese Taiko Drums, Mexican mariachis, food trucks, artist vendors, and mask masking art activities for the family.

The Cultural Coalition is a local nonprofit committed to supporting Indigenous artists and encouraging youth arts education for over 25 years.