

An estimated crowd upwards of 600 people participated in the freewheeling celebration of the starkweather basin and solstice at the ninth annual summer solstice celebration at Olbrich Park where kites and spirits were flying high June 25<sup>th</sup>.

Originally conceived as a celebration of the Starkweather Basin, 50 people were able to canoe down Starkweather Creek and see this part of our basin. On land, face painting and art projects entertained kids while the final touches readied the 200 plus puppets for the Procession of Species parade around Olbrich Park. All costumes were gloriously unique and home made from paper mache and scraps thanks to Artistic Director Laurie Rossbach's workshops (Procession of the Species) and tables there at the solstice celebration. The Procession of Species parade included everything from a proud 3 year old giraffe, to an adult jack-in-the-pulpit, to a determined Badger to an infant turtle. At 5:30 pm Caller Ted McManus intoned, "Come our feathered friends who fly through the air... come the lizards and dinosaurs... Come the badgers... Come our plants" as all of Darwin's fish, fowl, birds, insects, plants came forward. in costume pausing before the crowd for a bit of applause. Led by the Forward Marching Band in uniforms as diverse as the band members and with a touch of klezmer style marching music, Darwin and over 200 marchers representing surviving species paraded around the periphery of Olbrich Park ending at the sledding hill. There a pageant play was mimed by the Madtown Liberty Players featuring a brave Badger who ultimately tore off the head of a devilish weasel who had attacked a teacher and nurse, even stealing a school bus and crutches. Throughout the day the Irish band Onadare and the Forward Marching Band serenaded the crowds while families picnicked and children danced. People sat by the music area on hay bales while a quartet of Gary Karch, Kyle Richmond, Steve Spera & John Steines (current and former members of Perfect Harmony) sang Sun songs (in perfect harmony no less) in celebration of the longest day of the year.

The bonfire at 8:41pm lived up to its reputation as a towering inferno of Xmas trees and wreaths. With hundreds of people swaying and celebrating, drummers drummed and Madison Fire Tribe dancers danced. The crowd sang the Starkweather Creek Anthem with bagpipe accompaniment to celebrate this special basin we love. Hot air balloons slowly and gracefully lifted into the dark sky. People energized wishes for the next 6 months and threw them into the fire. And just when one thought nothing could inspire us more, an eerie parade of white extinct species puppets came slowly and gracefully to the fire, traces of those precious, vulnerable creatures whose memory gives us that final, gentle push to keep working steadfastly on behalf of our basin, our ecosystem and each other.

This event was sponsored by Friends of Starkweather Creek, the SASY Neighborhood Association, Madison Arts Commission, Wisconsin Arts Board, WORT radio, and by many neighborhood businesses, including Absolutely Art, Blair Landscape, Bunky's Café, Design Coalition, Glass Nickel Pizzeria, Goodman Community Center, Martin Glass, Sustainable Atwood, The Victory Cafe, Urban-Thoreau, Willy Street Coop.

Volunteers are needed for both the winter and summer solstice celebrations! Anyone willing to help can get involved by emailing: [volunteer@madsolstice.org](mailto:volunteer@madsolstice.org)