

BEECH MOUNTAIN, N.C.— Beech Mountain's youth sledding hill, a popular winter attraction in the North Carolina mountains, has opened for the 2017-18 season.

The sledding hill is owned and operated by the Town of Beech Mountain, which instituted several offseason upgrades. Grading work evened the slope and created a longer stretch to slow down at the bottom, while special padding, like the type used at ski resorts, was installed at the bottom of the hill and along the sides.

Other improvements included dividing the hill into a slower side for younger kids and a faster side for older kids, and increasing the capacity of water flow to the snow gun to maximize snowmaking.

"We have a better water supply than in previous years thanks to the town's new water treatment plant," said Kate Gavenus, tourism director for the town of Beech Mountain.

The sled run is for children 12 and under, with parents allowed to accompany younger kids. Plastic sleds are required. Families may bring their own sleds, or they're available for rent and purchase at nearby stores on the mountain.

Hot chocolate is available at the pizzeria across the street, while complimentary Wi-Fi and heated rest rooms are next door at the Beech Mountain Visitor Center.

"Parents often watch their kids from the lobby of the Visitor Center, so we added extra seating in the lobby this year to accommodate more people," Gavenus said.

The free sledding hill is open daily, weather permitting, through late February or early March. Weekday hours are 1-5 p.m. and weekend hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

"Every year it is wonderful to see just how much visitors love the experience," Gavenus said. "Getting out in the snow is so much fun, especially for first-timers. It can be a life memory."

Real-time sledding hill conditions are available all winter long by calling the Visitor Center toll-free at (800) 468-5506. Additional info is available at: www.beechmtn.com.

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