

THE OVERLOOK

Windham Marks America's 250th With Sandcastle Contest

Families competed for prizes honoring patriotism, creativity, and originality at CD Lane Park in Maplecrest.

by **Connor Greco** July 10, 2026



Sara Bentley and her son, Coleson Bentley, of Maplecrest take part in Windham's annual sandcastle contest at CD Lane Park. Roy Gumpel/The Overlook.

Windham's sandcastle contest has become an Independence Day tradition.

Now in its sixth year since being revived, the contest drew dozens of families to CD Lane Park on Saturday, July 4, to craft unique sand creations and enjoy free ice cream. Part

of a full day of festivities marking the nation's 250th anniversary, many of the sand sculptures had a patriotic flair.

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The competition began at 11 a.m., giving participants nearly two hours to work on their sculptures. Three CD Lane Park lifeguards judged the entries: Rachel Maggio, Jenna Maggio, and Ellie Worster.

Windham Supervisor Tom Hoyt said the contest was brought back six years ago after a hiatus. While he didn't remember exactly when it began, Hoyt said town resident Peter Lyman had organized the event "for years."

"It went by the wayside," he said. "About six years ago, when we did the rehabilitation at the park, myself and the Town Board partnered with the Windham Foundation and brought the event back."



Sandcastle contest judges Rachel Maggio, Ellie Worster, and Jenna Maggio (from left) join Windham Supervisor Tom Hoyt at CD Lane Park in Maplecrest. *Roy Gumpel/The Overlook.*

Participants must use items found around the park in their creations, Hoyt said.

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“You can’t bring objects in to be part of the castle,” he said. “It’s got to be the sand, a tree branch, some rocks, pine cones, or whatever, and make it out of native material to the park.”

Participants did not take the rules lightly, scavenging around the park for unique materials to use in their creations.

Three-year-old Coleson Bentley of Maplecrest was attending his third contest. He said he was building “a doggy castle.”

Bentley’s mother, Sara Bentley, said they were working against the clock.

“This is our third time redoing it,” she said. “We would’ve had a lot more if we started right at the beginning.”



Coleson Bentley’s “doggy castle” takes shape during Windham’s annual sandcastle contest at CD Lane Park in Maplecrest. *Roy Gumpel/The Overlook.*

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Stephanie Silva, who has a condominium in Windham, said it was her first time at the contest.

“We didn’t even know that this was part of the last 4th of July,” she said. “This year, we were like, ‘We definitely have to make it here.’ We didn’t really know what to expect so next time we’ll come a little bit more prepared.”

Following a tour of each sand creation, judges announced the winners. A sand eagle built by members of the Murray, Cole, and O’Brien families won the “Most Creative” award. The families received a \$30 gift card to Clutch and Throttle, a cafe in Windham.

Lauren Cole, who lives in the Albany area, said the contest has become a family tradition.

“We are here every year, we love it here,” she said. “We come every 4th of July. The parade is really fun, too.”

The families have stayed at the same rental property for years, Cole said.

“There’s an Airbnb on 23 that we’ve been using for the last five years,” she said. “It’s very traditional.”

Cole said the family had arrived at 10:30 a.m. to begin their work.

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The Smith family also took home the Most Patriotic award, along with movie tickets to the (Mountain Cinema in Hunter).

“It feels good,” said Eloise Smith, the self-described team captain. “We have won every year except last year. We needed to win again.”

“This was our comeback year,” she said.

Photos by Roy Gumpel for The Overlook.

Windham Weekly

A Section of the *Mountain Eagle*

Windham Foundation and town of Windham continued a tradition begun by Peter Liman, bringing the annual Sandcastle Contest to C.D. Lane Park on July 4th, drawing hundreds of visitors. Among those on hand were (left to right) town supervisor Thomas Hoyt, Windham Foundation treasurer Jakob Mieczko and the ice cream ladies Lisa Hoyt and Elisha Schieren (ice cream provided by Hickory Hill Market).



4th of July family event included (front left to right) Audrey Calcagni, Emerson, Brooks and Quinn McKee, Carson Gonzalez and (back) Camila Villegas, Helene Saller, Maya Duvae, Barry Smith and Eloise Calcagni. The younger sandcastlers created the tribute to the 250th birthday of America.

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American birthday cake “baked” for the 250th celebration of America by (left to right) Maddox and Jax Walton and Jake Genel, making the trip to the mountains with their families from Brooklyn.

“We love it here,” said (left to right) Atlas Cole, Ethan O’Brien and Anna O’Brien, meaning Windham and America. They created an “American Eagle” using pine cones, sticks, stones, shells and (of course) sand.

