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## Poohville: 100 years of Winnie the Bear

Northern Ontario town celebrates 100 years of Winnie the Bear.

Author A.A. Milne's beloved Winnie-the-Pooh character continues to delight people around the world, a fact not lost on the people of White River, Ontario, where the original Winnie came from. From August 14 to 17, the northern Ontario town will mark the 100th anniversary of the black bear cub's purchase by a World War I soldier passing through on his way to the battlefields of Europe.

Among those who will attend is Deb Hoffman, who holds the Guinness world record for Pooh memorabilia.

"My current Guinness Record is 10,002 but this year I should top 11,000," said Hoffman. "Each year I drive thirteen hours from Wisconsin to attend the festival."

Hoffman, a computer software designer, has spent about \$100,000 on acquiring collectables related to Winnie and his friends from the Hundred Acre Wood. Four rooms in her home at Waukesha, Wisconsin, are filled with stuffed toys, figurines, bags, mugs, and clothing related to famous bear. She says she's been in love with Winnie-the-Pooh since she was two years old.

White River has held a Pooh festival annually since 1989 and has made the bear popularized by Walt Disney a permanent roadside attraction. Visitors can have their photos taken with Winnie at the Honey Tree along the TransCanada Highway and learn more about Winnie's history at the White River Heritage Museum.

Lieutenant Harry Colebourn, a veterinarian from Winnipeg bought the orphaned cub from a trapper, and named him Winnipeg — later shortened to Winnie — after his hometown. Colebourn brought him to training camp in England, where he entertained soldiers with his antics. Before leaving for the front, Colebourn donated him to the London Zoo, where he quickly became a star attraction and an inspiration to Milne and his son.

This year's festival includes numerous events, including a teddy bear picnic at which participants will try to break the world record for "Largest Gathering of Plush Winnie the Pooh and Friends."

Watch a 10-minute clip of the movie "A Bear Named Winnie" and view the photo gallery below.

— Text by Nelle Oosterom



Deb Hoffman with her Guinness world record for Pooh memorabilia. Photo: Deb Hoffman



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