

Walker Area Partners continue work on Walker Bay Days

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In just one month volunteers have made significant progress on plans for the first-ever Walker Bay Days.

The new summer festival will be held Aug. 11-12 at Walker City Park, celebrating the city of Walker and life on and around Leech Lake.

The event is being planned jointly by the Walker Area Partners (WAP) and the Walker Bay Days (WBD) committee

At the March 29 WAP meeting, subcommittees met briefly, then gave progress reports.

Nonprofits invited as WBD vendors

The vendor committee, chaired by Amy Jones, will be inviting local nonprofits to participate and to use WBD as a fund-raising opportunity.

For a \$150 fee, each vendor will rent a 20-by-20 foot space under a huge tent, where they may sell "whatever they want" — food, beverages, ice cream, sweets, baked goods, clothing, handmade crafts or other items.

Part of the fee, \$50, will be refunded if the vendor's area is kept clean during the event and is cleaned up afterward.

The first invitations will go to nonprofits that are members of the Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce. They must let the WBD Committee know by May 1 if they plan to participate. After that, other area nonprofit groups will be invited.

The number of vendors will only be limited by the capacity of the tent. Vendors will keep all proceeds above and beyond the rental fee.

To learn more about being a vendor, contact Jones at Heritage Gifts, 547-3501.

Info booth, admission bracelet

An information booth at city park will sell WBD-related products such as hats, T-shirts, lanyards, plus event admission bracelets.

The affordably-priced bracelets or wrist bands will give the wearer access to all WBD events, games and activities and to the vendors' tent.

Reporting on promotions, Kristin Chitwood said about \$4,000 has been designated for flyers, posters, direct mailings, newspaper ads, signs, etc. Other ideas include leasing a billboard on Highway 10 south of Brainerd for two months, and to have a sailboat emblazoned with the Walker Bay Days dates and logo that will be parked in various locations around town.

Volunteers have already collected about \$7,000 in sponsorships, and are hoping to get about \$18,000 more. Sponsors are needed to underwrite the costs of bands, raffle prizes, tent rental, etc.

Games, water events, parade, etc.

A wide variety of games are being planned, including basketball and volleyball tournaments, tug of war, and the Walker Bay Olympics. Games and events will be finalized by May 26.

Bill Bieloh said a kids' karaoke contest will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. Friday. A disc jockey has been hired to provide music at the park Friday from 5 to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 2 to 8 p.m. Live music is also being arranged for both days.

Bieloh and Scott Bruns are also working on a fireworks display.

Water events will include two poker runs on the lake, a small sailing event or race, a dogfish tournament and a lighted boat parade Saturday night. Chair Mitch Loomis said his subcommittee will invite the Beulah Leona to be part of the parade.

Shuttle, church service, logo

Steve Bilben reported that a shuttle bus will ferry visitors back and forth from parking areas to the park. The Moondance Trolley may be used to transport folks around town.

Pastor Mark Olson of Hope Lutheran Church suggested holding an ecumenical church service at the park Sunday morning as a wrap-up for Walker Bay Days. The offering would go toward the local ministerial fund.

The Walker Bay Days Logo Contest runs through April 17. The logo will be used on promotional materials and other items related to the event. For contest details, look for ads in The Pilot-Independent, or contact Jeff Holly at 547-1515, or Chitwood at 547-2023.

Next meetings

To keep Walker Bay Days plans moving ahead, two meetings will be held next month, April 12 and 26, at noon at Hope Lutheran Church. Committee members hope to have most plans finalized by Memorial Day weekend.

Walker Area Foundation

In the second part of the meeting, Jim Lohr explained what the Walker Area Foundation (WAF) is and does.

WAF is a charitable community foundation whose goal is to foster community philanthropy, broaden the base of charitable giving and to be a resource for donors. It wants to provide opportunities for individuals and organizations who wish to invest in their community to improve the quality of life.

WAF mainly supports projects within the boundaries of the WHA School District.

Their mission is to build an endowment for the future; to partner with other organizations and stakeholders; and to use grant-making to foster improvements; and to encourage community philanthropy.

WAF is a public 501(c)(3) charity. They accept gifts from individuals, families and businesses for either specific charitable purposes or general endowments. They also accept and administer funds from other groups to help them achieve their goals. Most gifts to WAF are tax-deductible.

Types of gifts could include cash, appreciated securities, property and real estate; bequests; life insurance; and trusts. Lohr predicted that, in the future, most gifts will come in the form of bequests in wills.

WAF decides what to support in two ways. It will consider formal grant applications from those who have definite charitable projects or goals in mind.

It also supports widely-recognized but unfocused community needs, such as the critical care hospital project.

WAF is governed by a volunteer board of not more than 15 members. Officers are elected annually. The group invests their money using the "prudent investor rule" and gets investment advice from a committee of outside investment professionals. So far, WAF has raised about \$115,000.