

## Walker Bay Days: how it all started

The Pilot-Independent

Last Updated: Tuesday, May 16th, 2006 03:06:06 PM

In the fall of 2005 the Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce put together an events committee to brainstorm about new events to bring people to the Walker area; not in the off-season, but to provide entertainment while the summer visitors are here.

Out of these sessions, Walker Bay Days (WBD) was born, set for Aug. 11, 12 and 13. The WBD committee felt an event was needed to celebrate Walker, Leech Lake and its people. They decided to forge ahead and gathered an enthusiastic group of leaders who felt the same way.

As always, money was a major issue The Walker Rotary Club responded by granting part of the money donated by Jim and Pat Negaard, \$5,000, with the Walker Rotary designated as title sponsor and event underwriter.

Many other local citizens and businesses, including First National Bank, Chip and Ineke Leer, Segue Title Co., Bill Dewey, Ace Hardware and RadioShack and Shores of Leech Lake made generous donations to make this event possible.

The WBD committee needed a local partner to pull off the event. The Walker Area Partners (WAP) is that group. The executive board meets bi-weekly and the steering committee meets monthly to make arrangements for Walker Bay Days. Initially, the committee had several goals. They wanted the event to be unique, for all ages and all types of people, and to raise needed funds for the area.

As a committee, they decided to allow only nonprofit organizations to sell food or other items during the three-day celebration; no other vendors will be allowed. The committee feels this will be a great opportunity for those organizations. There is a modest entry fee for WBD vendors. The tent, promotions, lighting, sanitation and entertainment will be provided. The WBD committee extends an invitation to all Walker area nonprofit organizations to participate in this fund-raising opportunity.

Proceeds from the event ...

During the Minnesota Design Teams' visit to Walker, it was mentioned that the Walker City Park is one area that definitely needs improvement.

The park is highly under-utilized and needs basic upgrades such as power, beautification, walking trails and a large pavilion. WAP unanimously voted that all proceeds from Walker Bay Days go toward those types of improvements. The park is one of the community's most treasured assets. One goal is for it to be used more often and enjoyed by everyone. The WBD Committee and WAP are working hard to ensure that this new event will be held every year, will attract people to the Walker area and will be fun for everyone. The committee is constantly amazed at how the event is taking shape and how much support the community has already shown.

Every week the committee gets great news that someone else wants to donate, add to the event or offer ideas. They're especially excited that youth will be represented by the Interact Rotary Youth organization. They are working hard with Stephanie Freeman to create a Saturday afternoon filled with games for children of all ages.

Contact any WBD committee members or join them at the monthly Walker Area Partners Steering Committee meetings held at Hope Lutheran.

For information, call Kristin Chitwood at 547-2023 or Jeff Holly at 547-1515.

For nonprofit fund-raising opportunities, call Amy Jones at 547-3501.

For donation opportunities, call Ben Brovold at 547-0033.

Executive board members

Here are the WBD executive board members for WBD.

- Jeff Holly and Kristin Chitwood — co-chairs
- Ben Brovold and Mike Pederson — treasurers
- Tamara Pederson, Amy Jones, and Erica Frizzell — vendors
- Mitch and Mara Loomis — doggie (dogfish) fishing tournament, poker runs, mini-regatta and lighted boat parade
- Bill and Kathy Bieloh, and Scott Bruns — entertainment and fireworks
- Steve Bilben — parking, traffic and shuttle
- Stephanie Freeman — games and park activities.