

Friday fest will provide rockin' salute to Harley

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Free downtown celebration combines tributes to company anniversary with music, more

Port Washington will be hog heaven Friday afternoon and evening as Rock the Harbor, a free festival to celebrate Harley-Davidson's 110th anniversary, takes over downtown.

The festival, which will run from 3 to 11 p.m., will combine a celebration of the iconic motorcycle company with music and patriotism.

Among the vendors at the festival is Jean Davidson, granddaughter of Walter Davidson, one of four founders of the motorcycle company.

Davidson will sell and sign copies of her book, "Harley-Davidson Family Memories."

"Everyone I've talked to has said she's a must-meet person," festival co-chairman Amy Gannon said. "She's a really neat person."

Gannon said she's confident a good crowd will turn out for the event, noting that more than 100,000 cyclists are expected to visit the area for Harley's celebration.

Even though Harley-Davidson has booked some premiere acts for its celebration on the Summerfest grounds in Milwaukee — Aerosmith is scheduled to play on Friday — she noted that there is limited seating and tickets are costly. Port's event is free.

"We've been out talking to people, and I've been pleasantly surprised by the number of people who knew about it (Rock the Harbor)," Gannon said. "A lot of them said they are coming here.

"That's why we're doing this, to help Port Washington and the local businesses."

Rock the Harbor is a partnership between Port Washington Main Street and Suburban Motors Harley-Davidson, which will hold a ride from its Thiensville shop to Port Washington Friday.

Motorcycles are expected to line the streets throughout the festival. Organizers have designated the parking lot behind Duluth Trading Co. and the Ozaukee County Administration Center lot for motorcycles.

Exclusive motorcycle parking will also be on Grand Avenue from the festival grounds west to Milwaukee Street.

"Everyone wanted that Sturgis look in downtown," Gannon said.

That's not the only designated motorcycle parking area. Suburban's riders, as well as

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members of an antique cycle club, will have reserved parking in the 100 block of East Main Street, Gannon said.

Washington Street east of the festival grounds will be reserved for handicapped parking, she added.

Patterned after the city's successful Community Street Festival, Rock the Harbor will close off Franklin Street from Jackson Street to Grand Avenue and Washington Street east of Franklin Street.

Approximately 50 vendors will fill the grounds, among them area businesses, restaurants and civic organizations. The Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial Float will also be parked on the grounds.

Music will be a big part of the festival, with country music artist Darryl Worley headlining the festival at 8 p.m. on the Main Stage at the intersection of Lake and Washington streets on the lakefront.

Worley has had three No. 1 singles — "I Miss My Friend," "Awful, Beautiful Life" and "Have You Forgotten" — and 20 hit singles.

While most of the seating for Worley's concert is first-come, first-serve with no admission charge, festival organizers have sold roughly 200 tickets for a reserved seating area in front of the stage, Gannon said.

Many tickets have been purchased by businesses that are donating them to soldiers, veterans and emergency responders, such as police officers and firefighters, she said.

If any of the \$40 seats are still available Friday, they will be sold at the will-call tent, she said.

Crankshaft and The Gear Grinders will open for Worley, performing roots and Americana music on the Main Stage from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Between the concerts, Army Major CJ Wirsching-Neuser, co-owner of Vines to Cellar, will be promoted to lieutenant colonel in a ceremony presided by Brigadier General Pat Heritsch. Her husband Jim will take part in the ceremony, which is expected to take about 15 minutes.

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