



Competitors in the Rigidized Riverfest Regatta in past years included this replica of the Edward M. Cotter fireboat and a submarine. This year's festival begins at 6 p.m. Friday at the new Buffalo River Fest Park. News file photo

Buffalo River Fest moves to Waterfront

By Anne Neville

Published: June 16, 2011, 12:00 AM

In the 11th year of its existence, the Buffalo River Fest finally made it to the river. Held for the first decade at landlocked Father Conway Park at Louisiana and Ohio streets, this year's River Fest will be the first event in the new Buffalo River Fest Park on Ohio Street near the foot of Michigan Avenue.

"The festival is the very reason for the park," says Margaret "Peg" Overdorf, executive director of the Valley Community Association. Although she is happy to see the festival moved to the edge of the Buffalo River, Overdorf says, "Now we have to work out the logistics. We were used to running it at Father Conway Park, but now it's all new."

The festival begins at 6 p. m. Friday with the music of Bill LaRusch from 6 to 8, followed by the Diva Show Band from 8 to midnight and "I Got It" bingo from 6 to midnight. The Waterfront Memories and More Museum will have a tent, with information on the history and heritage of the area. Bert Hyde of the museum says, "It will be photos and information from when it was forest, to the Indians, to the grain elevators, to now."

On Saturday, events begin at 9 a. m. with a softball tournament in Father Conway Park, followed by the Rigidized Riverfest Regatta at 11. A "Float Your Boat" contest will include prizes for the most creative vessels on the river. A three-hour historic walking tour will start at 2 p. m., led by the the Buffalo Hiking Club. The walk will include the grain elevators, Cobblestone District, Commercial Slip and Erie Canal

Harbor. Overdorf says Great Lakes Tugs, the Cleveland company that operates tugs in Buffalo, will display a G-Tug, “the kind that pulls the Great Lakes freighters, so people can get a look at one up close. They’re even painting it. I told him he didn’t have to, but he said, ‘No, we want it to look pretty!’ ” A photography and art show is planned from 2 to 9 p. m., and more artisans, including jewelry-makers and crafters, are being sought. The waterfront museum tent will be open from noon to 10 p. m. Saturday and “I Got It” bingo will be played from noon to midnight.

Refreshments include food from some of the city’s new mobile vendors, as well as chicken dinners, hot dogs, Italian sausages, fried dough and more festival foods.

Music Saturday will include Hartzmetz Sounds from noon to 3 p. m.; **Large Marvin from 3 to 7 p. m.**; Bill LaRusch from 7 to 8 p. m. and Urban Renewal from 8 p. m. to midnight.

Major sponsors of the Buffalo River Fest are Rigidized Metals, DEMCO, Edbauer Construction and Ontario Specialty.

aneville@buffnews.com