



A party for the Highlands

Posted: Sep 18, 2014 9:48 AM EDT Updated: Sep 18, 2014 3:17 PM EDT

By GREG WATRY

gwatry@njherald.com

BYRAM -- The Highlands Festival at Waterloo, a music and environmental festival, is back this year with new artists and new activities for Sussex County to enjoy on Saturday and Sunday at Waterloo Village in Byram.

"We're bigger and better," said festival coordinator Lisa Kelly of the second annual festival. "It's sponsored by the New Jersey Highlands Coalition" and is meant to raise funds "to protect the natural resources of the Highlands Region."

"The Highlands Region of New Jersey is critically important environmentally because ... a large percentage of the drinking water for the state comes from" the area, she added.

The New Jersey Highlands, according to the festival's website, stretches about 60 miles and provides more than half of New Jersey's population, 5.4 million people, with clean drinking water.

Specifically, money raised from the festival will go to help support the coalition's 2015 small grants program. Kelly said grants are typically between \$1,000 and \$1,500.

Festival guests can peruse scenic Waterloo Village, enjoy canal rides, kayak on Waterloo Lake, partake in environmental education programs for both kids and adults, take a trek with geocaching and hiking adventures and attend food seminars, among many other activities.

New to this year's festival is a road rally event, which will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, Sept. 21. In the event, a driver and navigator will maneuver a street-legal vehicle through a prescribed route through the New Jersey Highlands.

"We just give you a list of instructions, and you need to follow the instructions accurately," Kelly said.

While the roar of engines and the thrill of racing may excite some, others might want to kick back and listen to some tunes.

More than 20 bands/artists, spanning different genres, will perform at this year's festival. A main stage and gazebo stage will provide continuous music performances throughout the two days.

"In addition," Kelly said, "we're going to have a traditional bluegrass porch jam" with rotating bluegrass acts.

Headlining Saturday's lineup, at 7:45 p.m., is Jim Weider's Project Percolator. A former lead guitarist with The Band, Weider describes the music as "groove rock and roll."

"We jam out, but all the songs have melodies," he said.

Weider describes jamming as a conversation between musicians. "The bass player will push the groove, or the drummer will go into a different kind of groove," he said. "We'll kind of make up the guitar parts that follow."

Famous for playing the thicker sounding Telecaster guitar, Weider said Project Percolator will be playing originals and covers of The Band songs.

The music will "lean towards the bigger, uptempo tunes," and then "a couple of atmospheric tunes to put in," he said.

A veteran player at the Historic Blairstown Theater, a sponsor of the Highlands Festival, Weider said he heard about the festival through the theater's management. The pair were a good fit, as Weider is a fisherman who said he's dedicated to keeping the water clean.

Local talent will also be represented at the festival. Robin DeLorenzo will take the gazebo stage at 4 p.m. on Saturday for an intimate acoustic session.

"Playing live for me is the best part of everything," the Hopatcong vocalist said. "The tell-tale sign of a good song is when you can play it with a band or strip it down."

DeLorenzo is promoting her new album "Walkin' Miles In My Shoes," which was released on May 28, at the festival.

When DeLorenzo isn't playing music, she's busy being a mother to her seven-year-old daughter. "I'm a mom first, and an independent artist second," she said.

She described her music as Americana, as it combines a wide variety of genres, from pop and blues to soul and R&B.

While the acoustic show is a change of pace for her, DeLorenzo said the festival scene is completely different from playing in bars.

"People expect to see a certain level of musicianship," she said. "It's a whole different frame of mind because you know you have a captive audience."

Performer Zak Smith agreed, "With a festival ... you want people to remember you."

Smith, a resident of Montclair, will play the main stage on Saturday at 4:30 p.m., with the Zak Smith Band.

Smith, who is a 2012 Jersey Acoustic Music Award Winner for best vocalist, infuses "traditional and gospel influenced alternative and americana sound," according to the festival's website.

Smith's Highlands Festival performance is part of his northeast tour promoting the release of his new album, "Signs of Life," which drops Oct. 7.

Smith, who enjoyed writing from an early age, said music builds off his love for poetry. "It's the best part of poetry plus something else," he said. "Music has its own emotional content."

In keeping with the festival's environmentalism theme, Kelly said the festival's aiming to be a zero waste festival, with different bins for attendees to dispose their waste in.

"Hopefully, we'll minimize our trash," she said.

Other major sponsors of the festival include Hudson Farm Foundation, Sussex Honda, Intercar Mercedes, Investors Bank, Vonage, New Jersey American Water and others.

If you go ...

What: Highlands Festival

When: Saturday 11 a.m.-9 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

Where: Waterloo Village, 525 Waterloo Road (off Route 206), Byram

Admission: \$15 advance, \$25 at the gate; weekend pass \$25 advance, \$40 gate; children 12 and under free; parking fee \$5

Information: highlandsfestivalatwaterloo.org

Lineup: Saturday

Main Stage

12 p.m. -- Steel City Sunrise

1:30 p.m. -- Subcommittee

3 p.m. -- Schooley Mountain Band

4:30 p.m. -- Zak Smith Band

6 p.m. -- Citizens Band Radio

7:45 p.m. -- Jim Weider's Project Percolator

Gazebo Stage

1 p.m. -- Gordon Thomas Ward

2:30 p.m. -- George Baier

4 p.m. -- Robin DeLorenzo

5:30 p.m. -- Len Mooney
7:15 p.m. -- Mike Esposito

Sunday

Main Stage

12 p.m. -- Nadine LaFond
1:30 p.m. -- The Hawk Owls
3 p.m. -- Quimby Mountain Band
4:30 p.m. -- The Main Squeeze

Gazebo Stage

1 p.m. -- Byrdgrass
2:30 p.m. -- Arlon Bennett
4 p.m. -- Paul Gargiulo Band

© Copyright 2000 - 2014 WorldNow and New Jersey Herald