



Highlands Festival scheduled for this weekend at Waterloo

Ellen S. Wilkove, Special to the Daily Record 12:51 a.m. EDT September 16, 2014

The Highlands Festival at Waterloo will feature chefs with locally grown food, craft beer and wine to wash it down, and a 7-mile bike tour of Waterloo Village to Cranberry Lake in Byram, courtesy of the Morris County Free Wheelers to work it all off.

The second annual event is a local environmental music festival aimed at building awareness of the New Jersey Highlands region, the Appalachian ridge that encompasses Oakland in Bergen County to Phillipsburg in Warren, spanning 88 municipalities where much of the state's drinking water originates, said Lisa Kelley, festival organizer.

Produced by the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, a 10-year-old nonprofit that exists to protect natural resources in the New Jersey Highlands region, the festival, rain or shine, will take place Saturday and Sunday at Waterloo Village. Advanced admission purchased online is \$15 for one day and \$25 for a two-day pass. Online tickets are available until the night before the festival, Kelley said. Gate entry is \$25 for one day, and \$40 for two days. There is no charge for children under 12.

An additional \$5 parking fee collected by the state is set aside for an account reserved specifically to improve the Waterloo Village district.

The cost of admission will help fund the 2015 Small Grants Program for a coalition of about 85 grassroots environmental nonprofits that work to protect natural resources, Kelley said. Grants are awarded up to a maximum of \$5,000 and help offset costs for non-governmental organizations that have an operating budget of less than \$200,000, according to the New Jersey Highlands Coalition Web site.

Funding-wise for the grant, the festival last year broke even at \$5,000, which Kelley said was a good start "that we can build on."

The festival consists of 3 main areas including a local food court dishing out delights such as gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches, courtesy of Fork in the Road NJ, vegan options, provided by Spoon and Sprout, plus the debut of Jeff A. Miller Catering a.k.a. J.A.M., the recently-contracted caterer who took over the Meeting House at Waterloo Village in June and has been renovating it for special events.

"The revenue we make for Waterloo will help revitalize it which is what the company stands for," said Robyn Bell, manager for J.A.M. at Waterloo. "Giving back to the community."

Plus, their farm-to-table service fits right in with the overall mission of the Highlands Festival.

A veteran Philadelphia-based caterer, Miller will be serving up tacos made from freshly ground corn meal and filled with a choice of locally-sourced chicken, pork and vegetables. He will also demonstrate how to make your own organic sausage, while other chefs will put their spins on garlic, home brewing, eating well on a budget and more.

"Don't expect to find typical festival food like funnel cakes," said Kelley. Food vendors must adhere to a price policy that requires they charge no more than \$10 per portion.

An expanded children's area at the gazebo sponsored by the Vanguard Music School in Denville, will feature kid's music by Big Jeff, African drumming groups and performances by Vanguard students.

Hands-on experiences include constructing bird and bat houses, sponsored by Home Depot, and creating clay tracks of wildlife with Dove Environmental Educators, Diana and Mike, as part of the Critter and Litter program, which teaches the consequences of pollution on wildlife.

Bike enthusiasts can team up Saturday with the Morris County Freewheelers for a 7-mile scenic ride through Waterloo Village to Cranberry Lake in Byram, while on Sunday a Road Rally sponsored by the Sports Club of America will afford motorists a 70-mile trek through the Highlands. Sanctioned by the Raritan Valley Sports Car Club Inc., the approximate 3-4 hour ride consists of points of interests to check out along the way.

Admission to the rally is \$100 to enter and includes 2 passes to the festival for driver and navigator. All proceeds from the rally will benefit the New Jersey Highlands Coalition.

Off-road, the craft and fair trade marketplace area will feature vendors selling wares produced from recycled and natural materials.

Tracee Palmer of Secret Garden Soap of Madison is one such vendor. The Madison resident who fashions her own soaps and lotions made from her very own LaMancha goats' milk is returning to the festival, if not for her success last year, but for the music and cause.

"It's really a lovely event," she said. "Everyone there is aware of the environment and nature. It's all about going back to local and water is the basis for all of this. Otherwise we'd be up a creek."

Meanwhile green services and products such as alternative energy solutions will be on hand in the Living Green area.

Other festival firsts include workshops ranging from beekeeping to backyard chickens, moths to mushrooms, rain-barrel making, for an extra cost of \$80, and several guided hikes.

Dubbed an environmental music festival, there will also be nonstop entertainment including a front porch bluegrass jam which will set up shop on a historic building on the waterfront, plus 20 carefully-selected homegrown performers such as the Quimby Mountain Band, Citizens Band Radio, Main Squeeze and

The Schooley Mountain Band, Nadine LaFond, Jim and the Project Percolator, to name a few.

Anyone interested can explore the Historic District of Waterloo Village via kayak for \$5, courtesy of the Musconetcong Watershed Association, or take a ride on the canal with the Canal Society of New Jersey.

Attendance is projected at 1,000 people per day, said Kelley.

"Make sure to bring lawn chairs," she said.

Highlands Festival at Waterloo: A Celebration of All Things Local

September 20 – 21

Tickets online: \$15 for one day, \$25 for weekend pass

Tickets at gate: \$25 for one day, \$40 for weekend pass

Children under 12, free

Parking fee: \$5

<http://highlandsfestivalatwaterloo.org>

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