Mayfest fun begins in Walhalla

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
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WALHALLA — It's become a spring ritual for Marcia and Richard Heller to set up a tent and sell their wood crafts during Walhalla's annual Mayfest celebration.

Mayfest is in its fourth year, but the festival, which got under way Friday, has been held under different names since the 1980s. For the Hellers, this is the 25th year they've put their hand-carved wooden sculptures on display locally.

"We moved here 27 years ago from Illinois, near Chicago, and have been doing this for 25 years," Marcia said. "This might be our last year."

Marcia said her husband is 81 years old, and she'll be turning 80 soon. They live on nearly a dozen acres at the Warner Mill subdivision just outside Walhalla. Their son helped them put the tent up.

"We've done this as a hobby," Marcia said.



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Marcia Heller holds a beaver-cut piece of wood that her husband sculpted into a figure at their booth during the start of Mayfest in Walhalla on Friday. The spring festival continues today with music, food and a bicycle parade and rodeo in the morning.

Richard, who is the woodcarver in the family, said he's been sculpting wood since long before he retired from Illinois Bell Telephone. At his age, he's still going strong despite a fall from the roof of his house a year ago. Marcia said he fell from a height of more than 18 feet.

"That red clay doesn't give much," Richard said, adding that he was off his feet for months recovering from his injuries.

A steady stream of afternoon visitors walked on both sides of Main Street as downtown began to take on a carnival atmosphere with vendors selling jewelry, refreshments, jarred honey and jams.

People started congregating toward the green next to Arby's for the concert by southern rock group Confederate Attitude later in the evening.

Janet and Jack Schumacher of Chester were back for the seventh time to display and sell their natural soy candles and cream.

The tables at their tent were stacked with candles in lidded jars that when opened allow fragrances of fruit — mango, peach, strawberry, apple — flowers such as gardenia, golden rose, lilac and scotch pine, or more provocative scents — angel kisses, love spell, romantic getaway and sex on the beach.

The couple also displayed a board with written testimonials about their natural soy cream, which has helped people with psoriasis and eczema, insect bites, minor burns and more.

Mayfest continues today from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. featuring a bicycle parade, more music, food and fun for the entire family.

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