Seneca Fest gets underway tonight on Ram Cat Alley

BY ERIC SPROTT
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — After months of tedious planning to set the wheels in motion, city of Seneca officials will physically begin the process of putting on the 10th annual Seneca Fest to help kick off the summer this evening.

The free Memorial Day weekend event will kick off tonight with Jazz on the Alley, with Mary Jane and Monk Ewing set to play from 6:30-9 p.m. on Ram Cat Alley and the night also serving as a tribute to the nearby Lunney House Museum.

A classic car cruise-in and glow run will follow Friday, with a day full of music, carnival rides and vendors in the downtown area set to be capped with a concert by the Temptations Review with Dennis Edwards at Gignilliat Field around nightfall.

"I think this is going to be as big as we've ever had before," Seneca council member Joel Ward said at a recent meeting of city council's events committee.

City events coordinator Riley Johnson, who's in his seventh year on the job, shares Ward's optimism, as he's expecting large crowds to descend on Seneca in the coming days, especially with favorable, sunny weather in the forecast.

"This is going to be a great, successful event, and we'll have people in our city staying in our hotels, eating in our restaurants and shopping in our shops," he said. "Memorial Day is pretty heavily traveled, so people going

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Huge crowds are expected to converge on Seneca this weekend for the 10th annual Seneca Fest, which will kick off with Jazz on the Alley tonight. FILE

to the beach can stop over and stay for a day, and when they're in Seneca, they can hike the trails and fish on the lakes and check out downtown."

As per usual, Ram Cat Alley will be closed to traffic this evening for Jazz on the Alley, and road closures in the Main Street area will begin Friday around 11 a.m. to accommodate the car show, which will begin at 3 p.m. in the Norton-Thompson Park area.

In addition to Jazz on the Alley and the car show, Johnson expects a heavy crowd for Friday's second annual Glow in the Night 5K and fun run. Last year, the event — which will begin at the Shaver Complex and weave through the Adams subdivision — drew 500 runners when city officials were preparing for 200.

"The dollar stores were raided out of all their glow stuff last year, and the neighborhood came out in full support," Johnson said. "All the runners loved how the Adam subdivision folks were out in their yards tailgating, and they'll know to be out in their yards around 9:30 p.m."

The event will begin around 9 p.m. at Shaver, with the free fun run for kids 10 and under slated for 9:15 p.m., followed by the 5K at 9:30 p.m. Online registration is available for $20, and a form can be found on the city website at seneca.sc.us. The cost will be $30 the day of the event.

Beginning at 11 a.m. on Saturday, numerous vendors brought in by the Blue Ridge Arts Center will line Townville and Depot streets — and possibly Ram Cat Alley, along with the merchants there — offering a variety of activities and crafts for kids and adults.

"There will be five or six people demonstrating their craft, which the kids are going to like," said Blue Ridge Arts Center board member Dorothy Meredith.

Food vendors will also be on site, with city recreation director Rick Lacey saying some will be in town tonight and Friday as well.

Carnival and train rides will also be available at Norton-Thompson Park on Saturday, along with music on the Ram Cat Alley stage from the O'Neal Township performing from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., followed by Elvis impersonator Clyde Shedd from 2-5 p.m.

After that, traffic in the area will be returned to normal, and the action will shift from downtown to Gignilliat Field, where the Temptations Review with Dennis Edwards will perform around 8:30 p.m.

Gates for the free concert — $5 donations will be taken at the gate for the city soup kitchen and Our Daily Rest — will open at 6 p.m. Funk Factory will go on at 6:30 p.m., followed by the Temptations Review around 8:30 p.m.

Around 8 p.m., the headlining act will be available for a meet-and-greet session at the stadium.

"If the weather works out where it's really good, I think it can be one of the biggest shows we've had," Johnson said. "And if they're not 100 percent satisfied with the show, we'll give them their money back."

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