

SARATOGA SPRINGS - There will be fireworks on July 4, 2008. There will be fireworks, and it won't rain, insist organizers of this year's celebration.

Saratoga Springs Commissioner of Finance Kenneth Ivins announced on Wednesday that his office has formed a citizens' committee to plan a three-day celebration of the national holiday to take place from Friday, July 4 to Sunday, July 6. The celebration will be called "Saratoga's All-American Celebration: Family, Freedom & Founding Fathers."

The citizens' steering committee is led by local resident Kyle York, who helped to plan last year's July Fourth festivities with former-Commissioner of Finance Matthew McCabe. The other committee members are David Zunker, president of the Saratoga Convention and Tourism Bureau; Jeff Shinaman, vice-president of membership and marketing at the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce; Susan Farnsworth, director of promotion and marketing for the Downtown Business Association; Commissioner of Public Works Skip Scirocco; and Deputy Commissioner of Finance Kate Jarosh.

Farnsworth said she was excited about the event. "I think it's wonderful that we have a tradition that's continuing, and it's very ambitious," she said.

York said that each of the celebration's three days would have its own theme, but that all three would focus on heritage and independence, and would aim to bring people to downtown Saratoga Springs.

York said events begin Friday, July 4 at noon in Congress Park, when the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will offer a reading about the significance of the holiday.

The Daughters will also honor a founder of the society, who is memorialized in the park.

Immediately following, families will be invited to lay out their blankets in the park and enjoy inexpensive food and drink and entertainment on a stage set up near the Canfield Casino.

"It will be a good way to start the day, because it will set a tone of heritage," said York.

He added that no acts had yet been formally selected to perform, but he expected to announce selection later in the spring.

Fireworks, at a location to be determined, will be the highlight of Friday evening.

On Saturday, the Streaks Running Club will host the second-annual "Firecracker" race in downtown Saratoga. Similar to the 5k run that anchors First Night celebrations, this sanctioned running event saw hundreds of participants compete on a four-mile course in its first year in 2007, and will be bigger this year, said organizer and club President Peter Goutos.

The Streaks Running Club is a not-for-profit organization that benefits runners at the Saratoga Springs High School. Goutos said volunteers and sponsors are still needed, and anyone interested should contact him at 316-4445.

The rest of Saturday will focus on Americana and Families, said Deputy Commissioner Jarosh. A grand parade on Broadway will follow the race, and organizers hope to promote a "food-fest," in the afternoon.

"I was at Chowderfest, and I overheard someone say: 'There should be a desert-fest,' so-," said Ivins.

He added that details of the events had not yet been confirmed, but that events on Saturday would steer revelers into local businesses, rather than asking restaurateurs to set up shop in booths around town.

York said organizers hope to have live music on Broadway on Saturday evening, in an event tentatively titled "Bands on Broadway."

Sunday will focus on city pets. Ivins said there were several dog events slated to take place on Grove Street, including dog contests for canines from every walk of life, and a dog treat tasting contest. Ivins said that his dog, Bailey Ivins, the first dog of Saratoga Springs finance, will be present on Sunday.

This year's festivities will be financed by private and corporate donations, and anyone interested in supporting the event should contact the steering committee at july4stoga@live.com.

Stay tuned for more information.

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