Arthur celebrates sesquicentennial during Cheese Fest

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Arthur Amish Country Cheese Festival to be held on Saturday, Sept. 2 through Monday, Sept. 4.

On March 24, 1973, Erland Kondrup, owner of the Arthur Cheese Company, hosted an open house. There were free samples of the company's award-winning cheese, plant tours, and a no-limit Swiss cheese special at 94 cents per pound.

This year's event will keep many Cheese Festival traditions alive such as the free cheese giveaways, free submarine sandwiches, Cheese Eating Contest, Cheese Curling Competition, and the Cheese Carving Contest.

At 10 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 2, there will be the Ceremonial Cutting of the Cheese. A large wheel of cheese will be sliced by guest cheese cutters. In the past, local politicians, athletes and other celebrities including Coach Lou Henson of Fighting Illini fame, have been guest cheese cutters. This year, a person from the past, Michael H. Warren, founder of Arthur, will be cutting the cheese along with some of his descendants still living in Arthur.

The parade also kicks off on Saturday at 3:50 p.m. Tradition is that the parade starts at 3 plus one minute for every year the Festival has existed. It should be an extra-special parade with, hopefully, additional participation because of Arthur's Sesquicentennial.

Michael Hoblican Warren and his wife, Eleanor Ann Warren

Community worship service

A Community Worship Service is being planned by the Arthur Ministerial Association and local churches to celebrate Arthur's Sesquicentennial celebration during Cheese Festival weekend.

Everyone is welcome and local churches are encouraged to join this service if they would like. The service will begin at 10 a.m. at Penn Station on Sunday, Sept. 3. We will give thanks to God and praise the Lord for the many years of Christian community we have had together here in Arthur for the past 150 years.

The Cowboy Church that meets at Penn Station will provide 30 minutes of music from 9:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. before the service. Refreshments will be served during that time so all are encouraged to come early and fellowship.

The 10 a.m. service will include participation from local pastors and churches. The Rev. Mike Johnson will be bringing the morning message. Mike was the long-time former pastor at Vine Street Christian Church in Arthur and is now retired and living in Indiana.

A short history of Arthur churches will be shared by Mayor Rod Randall and a couple of special music numbers will be shared as a part of this service as well.

An offering will be received for the Arthur Grade School Backpack program, which provides weekend food for children and families in our community.

Founders' Day dinner

Approximately 200 people will be on hand at the Founders' Day Dinner on Saturday, Sept. 2, at Penn Station in Arthur for a fun evening celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Arthur on Sept. 2, 1873.

There will be a display of Arthur memorabilia to view, video clips from the past to watch, music, and good fellowship.

This event will feature a grilled pork and grilled chicken dinner, birthday cake and ice cream, an interview with a guest from the past – Michael H. Warren, entertaining Arthur history, and the opening of the time capsule from 1973.

Guests may begin gathering at 5:30 p.m. at Penn Station in downtown Arthur. The dinner will begin at approximately 6 p.m.

Those attending are encouraged to wear clothing representative of the time of Arthur's founding or of any other era that represents a time in Arthur's past.

The Founders' Day Dinner not only honors the founding of Arthur in 1873 by Michael Warren, but it also honors all those throughout Arthur's history who founded schools, churches, businesses, industries, parks and libraries, clubs and organizations, fire departments, police departments, and municipal government that have made this an exceptional community for 150 years.

Time capsule to be opened

At the Founders' Day Dinner, on Sept. 2, Arthur's time capsule will be opened and the contents that were placed inside it during the Village's 1973 Centennial Celebration will be revealed.

Progress Industries manufactured the welded-aluminum time capsule and it has been resting for fifty years in a concrete vault located in the floor of the Welcome Center since the time that building was constructed in 1973. The vault was then covered by a granite stone that is engraved "Open in 2023."

During the Founders' Day Dinner festivities, the time capsule will be opened and the contents passed out to those present, or their family members, who can be identified as the proper recipients of the items. Unclaimed items at the dinner will be available a week or later at the Municipal Office.

After its opening, the time capsule and some of its miscellaneous contents will be on display at the Arthur Public Library.

In 1973, two sizes of envelopes, a $5 envelope and a $10 envelope, were sold to the public for placing items in the new time capsule. The money was used to help defray the costs of Arthur's Centennial Celebration.

Stamped on the outside of the envelopes was "Do Not Open until 2023" and, on the front of the envelopes, were hand-written names of those who were to receive these items.

In addition to these envelopes, there are reportedly other items placed inside the time capsule by the Centennial Committee.

The time capsule will be reused and placed back into the vault at the Welcome Center sometime later this year. Before that, the public will have an opportunity to help fill the capsule with items for future Arthurites when it will be opened again in 2073.

THE MARNER CHEESE FACTORY as it looks today. Located just north of Beachy's Bulk Foods on the old Marner homeplace.

Obituaries

Homer Russell

Homer Russell, age 84, of Granite City, formerly of Sullivan, passed away on Thursday, August 17, 2023, at 9:31 p.m. at St. Louis University Hospital.

A funeral service in his honor was held Friday, August 25, at Mitchell-Jerdan Funeral Home, Mattoon; the Reverend T.L. Smith and the Reverend Shine Doughty officiated. A committal service followed at Neoga Cemetery. Military Rites were conducted by Mattoon VFW Post 4325. The visitation was held Thursday evening, August 24, at the funeral home.

Homer was born on September 14, 1938, in Neoga, to the late Homer Ellsworth and Doris Lucille (Ferguson) Russell. He married the love of his life, Joyce Cecilia Webb, on July 17, 1981, in Charleston. Together, they shared a son, Christopher T. Russell of Collinsville; stepson, Kenneth A. Webb of Texas; stepdaughters, Alani Star of Merritt Island, Fla., Karla Remegi of Hilton Head Island, S.C.; other survivors include two brothers, Ronald L. Russell and wife Janice of Mattoon, and David L. Russell of Latitz, Pa. He is preceded in death by his brother, Richard E. Russell; and beloved canine companion, Cesar.

Homer honorably served his country in the United States Army from 1961 until 1964. He was a member of Mattoon VFW Post #4325 and The American Legion in Windsor.

He was a member of Grace Pointe Apostolic Church in Granite City, former member of Community Christian Church in Tamarac, Fla., and Fellowship Christian Church of God of Sullivan. He leaned greatly on his faith throughout his life.

Homer was the former owner and operator of Russell Stables in Sullivan. Prior to that, he was an employee of Moultrie County Beacon in Sullivan, Hudson Construction Inc., Illinois Consolidated Telephone, and the Nickel Plate Railroad.

Homer was a member of American Quarter Horse Association, Arabian Horse Association, Lincoln Land Carriage Club, Signal Journeyman, and IBEW Union #399.

An avid horseman, Homer loved being around and caring for horses. This was a passion he shared with his son, Christopher, who shows and trains performance horses. Homer traveled all over the country to support his son at his competitions. The pride he had in his son was evident and he loved nothing more than to tell someone how proud he was of Christopher.

Russell

Homer leaves a legacy defined by family, love, purpose, and fulfillment.

Memorial in Homer's honor may be made to American Quarter Horse Association, 1600 Quarter Horse Drive, Amarillo, TX 79104.

Please visit www.mitchell-jerdan.com or www.facebook.com/mitchelljerdanfuneralhome to light a virtual candle in his honor or share a memory with the family.

Michelle 'Sissy' Hastings

Michelle "Sissy" Lyn Reese Crist Hastings, 48 years young, passed away peacefully at her home in Hammond.

Memorial visitation will be held from 6 to 8 p.m., Thursday, August 31, at the Hilligoss Shrader Funeral Home, 66 East US Highway 36, Atwood.

She was the youngest and only daughter born to Michael Reese and Emma Spreitler on December 7, 1974 ,at 11:24 a.m. in Sparta. Her fondest childhood memories were of her Grandpa Heiny and Uncle Charlie from where her love of Harley Davidson, billiards, and singing started. As an adult, Michelle was a social butterfly who never met a stranger. She was an extremely kind and gentle soul and always willing to help someone. She wrote poetry and loved to sing. Michelle loved all genres of music but one of her favorite artists was P!NK; the louder she was belting the words from the top of her lungs the happier you knew she was.

In her downtime, she enjoyed cuddling up with her dogs and watching true crime shows. Michelle's all-time favorite thing to do was to spend time with her love, Keith, and have the wind blowing through her hair on the back of a Harley. In the more recent years of her life her health had declined and taken a toll on her. However, where there is bad there is also good. Grandbaby Olivia was born and had become a light of her life with whom she was always excited to spend time with. If there was one word to describe Michelle, it would be Love, love in every and all forms would be her hallmark. She immensely loved people incredibly hard, even when you didn't realize you needed it.

Haastings

She was preceded in death by her father, Michael Henry.

She is survived by the love of her life, Keith L. Hastings of Hammond; her cherished daughters, Chelsey Rae Crist (Brian Morrison) of Sparta, Alysia Paige Crist (Lucas Larimore) of Atwood; stepchildren, Alex and Kevin Hastings of Decatur; and step grandchild, Olivia Hastings; her mother, Emma Louise; her eldest brother, Michael (Amy) Reese of Marissa; niece, Harley; nephew, Philip; and great niece, Tylan; her other brother, Timothy (Amanda) Reese ;and niece, Kassey. She is also survived by her beloved uncle, Charlie (Brenda) Reese of Sparta; her grandmother, Carol King; and her lifelong friends, Leslie of Salem, and Sue of Newman.

Michelle will be missed by many.

I came forth from the Father, and have come to the world; again I leave the world and go on unto the Father. (John 16:28)

Online condolences may be shared via hilligossshraderfh.com.

Sojourn Rocs

Continued from page 1

Benatar, Roy Orbison, Santana, SRV, Steppenwolf, Stones, Ted Nugent and ZZ Top–just to name a few. It's like having all of your favorite rock bands on stage in front of you at the same time. As you can see, trendy genres such as grunge, hip-hop, rap, etc., really don't fit into their repertoire.

Sojourn Rocs also crosses over and performs country hits that strike a chord with audiences. For example, they perform Brooks & Dunn tunes as well as hits by Carrie Underwood, Don Williams, Dwight Yoakam, LeAnn Rimes, Lee Ann Womack, Martina McBride, Miranda Lambert, and Patsy Cline.

When it comes to singing, Robb Tony, Kyle, and Emily can do it all. They blend their voices in harmonies that make audiences sit back and take notice. Robb amazes everyone with his ability to belt out songs without missing a note on the bass. It seems as if Kyle could sing almost any song and do it all night long. Emily has a vocal range that emulates artists from Aretha Franklin to Pat Benatar. When she sings, you'll feel the deep spiritual vibes that fill the air. You can't help but get into the songs that Tony sings. He loves rock 'n' roll and his ability to carry a lead that will get your attention and keep it. Sojourn Rocs always performs with youthful enthusiasm and musical camaraderie.

Alex keeps everything in sync. His grooves and rhythms emulate an artist as if the artist was there himself. It is as good as it gets! When you hear him play tunes by BTO, The Doobies, Led Zeppelin or Maroon 5, you'll know what I'm talkin' 'bout!

You'll connect with Sojourn Rocs because you'll recall fond memories of people and places on The Journey. Don't miss the fun! When you hear them, you'll realize they are playin' the hits and bringin' back the memories, the way you expect them to be played.

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