

River Day puts emphasis on Rouge River's ecology

BY RUBY RUBAN
STAFF WRITER

Although it is still a month away, many communities are already gearing up for Rouge Rescue, which is scheduled for June 7.

"The focus of the annual event, which is now called River Day, has evolved in its 17 years of existence. In the early years, many communities spent the day removing logjams and trash from the river. The persistence has largely paid off, and much of the trash that used to characterize the river has been removed from many sections. But the logjams continue to plague the river. Or do they?"

Friends of the Rouge, a non-profit group that helps organize River Day activities, is trying to get the message out that logjams are a natural process and actually beneficial to the river.

BENEFITS EXIST

According to Carolyne Foster-McCaughy, the group's managing director, logjams create habitat for wildlife, including aquatic insects and fish. They also help oxygenate the water and stabilize the river banks.

She said many communities are now getting away from logjam removal, and are instead concentrating on other kinds

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Carolyne Foster-McCaughy
of the Rouge

of activities, such as the planting of native vegetation, streambank stabilization projects, and even nature walks.

"Over the years, we've learned it's not healthy for the river when you rip out logjams. We want people to know we are no longer promoting it. We really want to get people involved with other environmentally friendly activities for River Day," Foster-McCaughy said. "Logjams may look unsightly in many cases, but it's the natural process of the river."

The Rouge River watershed drains 438 square miles, and encompasses 48 communities in three counties before

dumping into the Detroit River. Roughly 1.6 million people live in the watershed, making the Rouge one of the most urban rivers in the state.

Still, Foster-McCaughy and many others involved with River Day feel many people don't realize what an asset the Rouge is.

Tracy Slintak, who is coordinating River Day for Farmington Hills, has scheduled a number of different activities, including planting native vegetation at Heritage Park.

She is also arranging an "ecology walk" in the park to educate volunteers about the Rouge watershed.

"All of these activities are designed to make people realize the Rouge is something more than just what people used to pull trash from," said Slintak, the city's environmental coordinator.

Other Rouge communities are planning similar activities. Southfield is planning to remove garlic mustard, an invasive species, from its Valley Woods Trail.

Troy is scheduled to plant native plant buffers along the Rouge in either Firefighters Park or the Crescent Ridge Detention Basin.

Beverly Hills will conduct a nature walk at the Douglas Evans Nature Preserve.

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Foster-McCaughy is hoping all the new activities will help draw more volunteers to this year's River Day. Last year, only about 1,000 people participated at the 20 sites along the Rouge. That is down considerably from the event's peak of about 3,000 volunteers in years past. Her goal for this year is to attract between 1,500 and 2,000 volunteers.

Friends of the Rouge representatives recently met with site coordinators. There are currently 24 sites scheduled to host River Day activities.

Foster-McCaughy said the group tried to encourage the site coordinators to conduct nature walks, which she hopes will make more people realize the health of the Rouge has dramatically improved in recent years. "Nature walks are kind of interesting. People don't really know what's in their back yard. The Rouge offers a lot of beautiful natural areas, but a lot of people just don't recognize that. If you take them out on a nature walk, they'll get an appreciation, and therefore spread the word that we need to restore and protect this resource," she said.

Individuals interested in hosting a River Day site or to volunteer for the event can contact Friends of the Rouge at (313) 792-9627.

Badgers help out at Boys and Girls Republic

Boys and Girls Republic, which helps children at risk, will be "invaded by badgers" Saturday, May 3, but the institution will welcome the event. That's because several alumni from the University of Wisconsin (Badgers) Michigan chapter will volunteer to spruce up BGR, primarily painting some of the facilities in which the youth are housed.

"Last year, we built a gazebo on the grounds," said Stuart Cibulka, a Ford Motor Company engineer and community service chairman for the Motor City Badgers. "This year we'll help paint and do

some fix up work. We are pleased to be able to help." The local University of Wisconsin chapter has about 1,500 members in southeast Michigan, according to Cibulka. Mary Peck, BGR Executive Director, said, "Boys and Girls Republic is very grateful for the volunteer work. They are very generous to give so much of themselves on their days off to help us."

"Everyone here is very appreciative and, of course, whatever the volunteers do saves us vital financial resources. We are deeply indebted to these kind volunteers."

Hills Rec department offers discount tickets

Enjoy a Sunday afternoon ball game at Comerica Park this summer and save \$8 per ticket through a special discount offered by the City of Farmington Hills Recreation Division. Stop by the Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile between Middlebelt and Inker Road to receive a voucher that will allow the purchase of \$20 upper box tickets for just \$12 for all 2003 Sunday Detroit Tiger games except June 1 and July 27.

Vouchers should be taken to the stadium the day of the game or mailed in advance.

In addition to Tiger tickets, the Recreation Division also offers discount tickets to the

following destinations: Toronto, Cedar Point, Crossroads Village in Flint, Greenfield Village & Henry Ford Museum, King's Island, Michigan Adventure in Muskegon, Michigan Renaissance Festival, Michigan State Fair, Oakland County's Red Oaks and Waterford Wave Pools, Six Flags Great Escape in Chicago, Six Flags World of Adventure, and the Beach Waterpark in Cincinnati.

For more information about the Detroit Tiger discount vouchers or other discount tickets, call (248) 473-1800. The Costick Center is open 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

BUSINESS NEWS

5/3 celebration
Fifth Third Bank, Eastern Michigan, will make May 3 a day to remember for customers, employees, and the communities it serves by celebrating its second annual "Fifth Third Day."

"Fifth Third Day is an annual event held to give back to customers, employees and the communities in which the bank serves."

Anyone who walks into a banking center on 5/3 will receive a small giveaway item just for stopping by, as well as a chance to win one day's interest at 8.3 percent on \$5.3 million. All employees will receive a gift and a free lunch from the president and CEO of the affiliate.

"We use this little coincidence of our 5/3 name to create a special day," said Patrick J. Fehring, President of Fifth Third, Eastern Michigan. "We like to say Fifth Third Day is the one true bank holiday."

The day's festivities will also include a \$83,000 donation to The Hospice of Michigan and another \$83,000 donation to the Michigan Women's Foundation, both to be presented by Fehring at a luncheon ceremony being held at the Hospice of Michigan offices in Detroit on Friday, May 2.

While relatively new to Michigan, Fifth Third's roots go back to 1818, when the Bank of the Ohio Valley was formed in Cincinnati. That bank became the Third National Bank in 1871 and merged with the Fifth National Bank in 1908, creating the Fifth Third name.

SINGLES CALENDAR

METROPOLITAN SINGLE PROFESSIONALS

Single Mingle Dances
MSPs hold Single Mingle dances on Friday nights throughout the month. Call (248) 851-9909 for times and locations.

Golf/Sofball Leagues
Co-ed golf and softball leagues are now forming. Call (248) 851-9909 for sign-up information.

Barn Dance
MSPs will hold a Western Barn Dance at 7:45 p.m. Saturday, May 10 at the Lazy J Ranch, 625 South Hickory Ridge Road.

Summer Bowling
The MSPs are forming a co-ed summer bowling league every other Sunday at Drakeville Lanes in Farmington Hills. Sign-up meeting will be held at 7 p.m.

Book Discussion Group

MSPs book discussion group meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Borders Books in Farmington Hills.

Borders will offer a 20-percent discount on all titles chosen for discussion.

Volleyball
Drop in and play volleyball 6:30 p.m.-dusk every Tuesday at Heritage Park in Farmington Hills.

Euche
MSPs play euchre 6:30-9:30 p.m. every Monday at the Brass Point Inn in Farmington Hills.

Social and Travel Club
For people 35 years old and up. Activities include dinners, dances, cards, camping, theater, sports, travel. To learn more about the club

call (248) 435-5320 or go to www.sstis.org.

Fun & Fine Dining Parties
Join MSPs every Thursday between 6:30-9:30 p.m. for socializing with dinner afterwards. Enjoy sampling some of the best and most interesting dining places in the metro Detroit area.

West Side Singles
Friday dances to be held every Friday night at Burton Manor, located on Schoolcraft Service Drive, just west of Inker in Livonia.

The dances are open to the public. Doors open from 8 p.m.-1 a.m., 25 years of age and older. Dressy attire required, held in non-smoking bar/rooms with a B.J. and budget bar. Admission price is \$4 before 8:30 p.m. and \$6 after 8:30 p.m. For information, call Anita at (734) 961-0909.

Urban rescue mission looking for help from the suburbs

BY RENEE SKOGLUND
STAFF WRITER

Calling all churches in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Monroe counties. Ignoring the problem of homelessness in the Metro Detroit area doesn't make the problem go away. The fallout from social problems crosses all suburban borders.

To remedy the problem and raise awareness of homelessness in the broader community, the Oakland Open Door Rescue Mission of Detroit will host a Church Bazaar & Community Fair noon to 8

p.m. Friday, May 16, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, May 17.

The event will include matching bands, church choirs, food courts, homemade items for sale, a flea market and a bake sale. There also will be a children's corner. The bazaar will be held at the Oakland Open Door Rescue Mission, 3442 McDougall (at Gratiot), Detroit. Proceeds will benefit the mission's Women and Children Transitional Housing Program.

For more information on the event, contact Alecia Beckers or Melody Holmes at (313) 879-1825.

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