



Finances on track for this year's Freedom Fest

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

The biggest event of the summer in Cass City is quickly approaching. Fireworks, parades and countless activities and performances are on the way to put a smile on the faces of all the town residents, as well as visitors from around the Thumb who come here to check out this annual festival.

The Freedom Festival will take place this year starting on June 30 all the way through to July 3. This will truly be a weekend to remember. And it's all thanks to the wonderful people of this town.

"A weekend full of events is obviously costly," said Judy Keller, chairperson for the Freedom Festival this year. "We are very fortunate to have supportive businesses and people who love this festival. We are very grateful."

A good amount of the budget for the festival, roughly \$13,000, comes from donations from local business-

es and people. This total is about the same as previous years, with things like insurance going up annually. However a majority of the costs stay the same. The rest of the funds come from sponsors like the Lion's Club, Rolling Hills Golf Course, and many other local and nearby businesses.

The biggest draw and cost, as usual, is the fireworks. Roughly \$7,000 of the total funds go toward the massive display held on Saturday night. Besides the fireworks, the rest of the larger costs come from things such as parade entries, insurance, port-a-potties all around the town, and advertisements.

Of course with such a big event like this, planning is a top priority and starts several months in advance. This year, planning for the festival started in January, according to Keller. The committee, which consists of people from all around Cass City who will be in charge of various events during the festival, were gathered and a new chairperson took over.

Previous coordinators had been "burnt out" due to the high levels of stress that can come with a job like this. And when no one stepped up to take the job, the Cass City Chamber of Commerce took over. Keller, who is an administrator with the chamber, was given the head job as well as being the person to contact for vendors, fireworks and other parts of the festival.

"I haven't had any big complaints with the job. The lack of a carnival (as opposed to last year) alleviated a

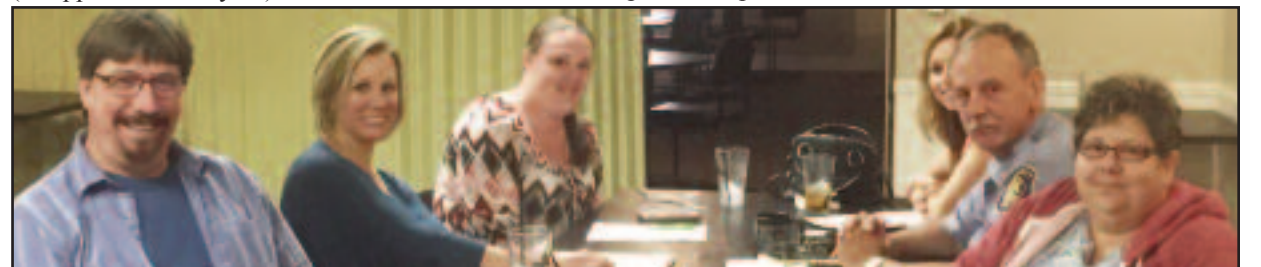
lot of problems, however something may come up between now and when the festival starts," said Keller.

From January on, the committee met monthly to give updates and make sure everything was coming along. This is the typical set up that has been done in previous years when planning. In February the parade coordinator, Vicky Sherry, contacted several bigger name acts, like the Glenview Clydesdales, to be a part of the festival.

Keller contacted potential sponsors

for the festival by March. And by mid-April everything started falling into place. After that was the busy month of June, where everyone scrambles to make sure that everything is set up and ready to go for the big event.

"It went from weekly things to deal with in April and May, to multiple things daily by June," said Keller. "But the schedule, the prices, it's all worth it. We make sure that there will be lots to do for kids and families."



PICTURED ABOVE is the planning committee for this year's Freedom Festival. The group, led by Judy Keller, has been working hard to set up the festival for the past several months.

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5K & 8K Run/5K Walk: 8:00 a.m.

CASS CITY FREEDOM FESTIVAL

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 30TH			SATURDAY, JULY 2ND			
TIMES		LOCATION	TIMES		LOCATION	
12:00 PM	4th of July Golf Tourney <i>Sponsored by: Thumb Cellular</i>	Rolling Hills Golf Course	After Parade	Cass City Lions Club BBQ Chicken Dinner	Lion's Pavilion	
6:00 PM	BINGO <i>Sponsored by: ProGraphix</i>	Lion's Pavilion	After Parade	Fire in the Sky 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament	Park	
<h3>FRIDAY, JULY 1ST</h3>			After Parade	2-Cylinder Tractor Display	Park	
			NEW!	After Parade	Dunk Tank - featuring local celebrities	Park
12:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Craft Show	Park	After Parade - 8:00 PM	FREE!! Kids Area - Inflatables, Water Slide, Obstacle Course <i>Sponsored by: Thumb National Bank / Cass City Chamber</i>	Park	
12:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Food Vendors	Park	After Parade - 7:00 PM	Cass City Pool - Free Swim to Public <i>Sponsored by: Reggie Ignash / Farm Bureau</i>	Village Pool	
12:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Petting Zoo & Pony Rides	Park	12:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Petting Zoo & Pony Rides	Park	
1PM-5PM / 7PM-9PM	Cass City Pool - Free Swim to Public <i>Sponsored by: Reggie Ignash / Farm Bureau</i>	Village Pool	After Parade - 9:00 PM	Craft Show	Park	
4:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Pageant in the Park <i>Registration 4PM, Contest 5PM</i>	Gazebo in the Park	After Parade - 9:00 PM	Food Vendors	Park	
NEW!	5:00 PM	Cornhole Tournament	Rolling Hills Golf Course	1:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Photo Booth	Park
6:30 PM - 9:00 PM	Music in Rotary Park	Rotary Park	NEW!	1:30 PM	Greased Pig Contest	Park
6:00 PM	Classic Car Show (enter from Doerr Rd) <i>Sponsored by: McDonalds</i>	McDonalds	2:00 PM	Thumb Area Tail Waggers	Park	
9:00 PM - 1:30 AM	Entertainment Tent - Featuring the band CEVX	Rolling Hills Golf Course	3:00 PM - 9:00 PM	MT Pocket Pullers Tractor Pull	North of Park	
<h3>SATURDAY, JULY 2ND</h3>			Dusk	Grand Fireworks!	Park & School	
			After Fireworks	Entertainment Tent - Featuring DJ Big Boy Entertainment	Rolling Hills Golf Course	
<h3>SUNDAY, JULY 3RD</h3>			<h4>Cass City Worship Experience - Seeger Street North of Main Street</h4>			
			8:00 AM	Hills & Dales Rehab 5K Run/Walk & 8K Run & Toddler Trot	Hills & Dales	9:00 AM
9:30 AM	Parade Entries Meet	Garfield St.	10:30 AM	Service	Downtown	
10:30 AM	37th Annual Great Parade	Downtown	<p><i>Events and times are subject to change.</i></p>			
12:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Cass City (CCRC) Airplane & Helicopter Display and Demo	Softball Field				
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	AAUW Kids Area Paint In	Gazebo in the Park				

Music in Rotary Park

The band Random returns to the stage Friday night

by **Conner Emery**
Staff Writer

Whether you're a big music lover or simply enjoy sitting back and relaxing after a long day of celebrating, Rotary Park has you covered this weekend.

6:30 to 9:00 p.m. Friday, the band Random will be performing at the park for all to hear and enjoy at no charge. The turnout during last year's concert was around 100 to 150 people, and a similar number is expected this year, according to Music in Rotary Park Coordinator Carolyn Sorenson.

"It makes for a nice relaxing Friday evening to come out and enjoy the music," said Sorenson. "The location is convenient and bands love to play there."

Random is a classic rock and country cover band whose members hail from the Cass City and Caro areas.

According to Sorenson, booking a band for this time of year can be difficult due to getting everyone together on such a busy, family-oriented weekend. However Random was more than happy to play at the park this summer, just as they have for the last four years.

"I requested to play at the Freedom Festival this year," said guitarist and local Cass City resident Don Childs. "My kids are coming up from Florida for the weekend — (I) figured they would come watch me play."

"They (Random) are a nice group and they've always done a nice job in previous years," said Sorenson.

"They're a good local draw."

This year the festivities will only include the live band as the variety show that took place last year has been moved to a later date — Friday, July 8.

Friday's concert was organized in conjunction with a free summer concert series held at Rotary Park throughout the summer. The weekly live concerts started June 24 and will continue every Friday until mid-August.

This year's summer concert series has five different sponsors; the Cass City Rotary Club, Baker College, Thumb National Bank, DTE and Chemical Bank.

"We have a good variety of music that appeals to just about everyone," Sorenson said.



THE BAND Random will be performing at Rotary Park on Friday evening. They will be playing a variety of classic rock and country covers.



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Pageant in the Park ready to dazzle crowds

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

Cass City will once again be shining a light on the beautiful and adorable amongst all ages at the fourth annual Pageant in the Park.

This year the event will once again be held at the Village Park Gazebo, by the corner of Church and Ale streets. It kicks off at 5 p.m. and everyone is encouraged to come out and watch, and maybe even get the courage to participate. Categories this year for both boys and girls will include 'Beautiful Baby' for ages one and younger and 'Terrific Toddler' for ages one to three. The rest of the categories featuring the

lovely girls and women of Cass City include 'Tiny Miss Sparkler' ages three to five, 'Young Miss Firecracker' ages six to eight, 'Junior Miss Rocket' ages nine to 12, 'Teen Miss Explosion' ages 13 to 16, 'Miss Dynamite' ages 17 to 21, and 'Ms. Golden Dynamite' ages 62+.

The best part about the pageant is how unlike a typical pageant it is. Contestants are encouraged to dress casually, like a school or church outfit, as fancy dresses and formal attire are usually cumbersome and uncomfortable this time of year. Also no makeup for contestants under 10 years old is a nice relief from the typical pageant.

"Pageant in the Park was designed to bring people to the park for the

event so that they could enjoy the events and recreational activities," said Nancy Barrios, the coordinator of the event.

Registration for the pageant can be done in advance by filling out the form that is available at the Cass City Chamber of Commerce office. However a majority of participants register during the open registration at the event from 4 p.m. to when the pageant begins, according to coordi-

nator Barrios.

The event is completely free, and is sponsored by Chris Barrios Insurance Agency. The prizes in each category include a trophy, a crown, and a T-shirt. A small prize will be given out to all contestants.

"We like to give something to everyone," said Barrios.

The pageant has been a passion project for Barrios; she started the event back in 2013 and is in charge

of the entire thing, apart from the judges and people helping set up. Barrios was a part of a similar pageant back in Lapeer called the Miss Lapeer Scholarship Pageant, and brought the idea to Emily Phillips. There had been a pageant during Freedom Festival in the past, but had since been dropped. She has run the pageant for three of the last four years, except in 2014 when Joey Kreeger took over.

AREA YOUNGSTERS (from left) Noelle Klaus-Tiny Miss Sparkler, Graham Klaus-Terrific Toddler Boy, and Abigail VanderElzen - Young Miss Firecracker, were among the winners in last year's Freedom Festival Pageant





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Running for a great cause, hospital gearing up to host annual 5K race

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

This year Hills and Dales General Hospital has a reason to celebrate, as their annual 5K Race will be celebrating its 20th year of existence at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday July 2.

The event was originally started by Greg Hanby in 1996, and he will be coming out to Cass City to take part in the run.

"It will be nice to run in the 20th anniversary of a race that I helped to get off the ground," said Hanby. "I have a lot of fond memories of working in the rehab department and watching the race grow over the years. Two of my children will also be running with me this year."

Hanby was the head of the race from 1996 to 2002, and then contin-

ued to help assist the event with course marking and day of race duties until 2006. He grew up in Cass City and will be returning to his hometown from Saline with his family.

"It's a great small town race that is very reasonably priced, and I love the hilly course through town," said Hanby. "It'll be nice to see old friends and familiar faces that have made the race a yearly part of their 4th of July celebration."

Nowadays the event, which is sponsored by many businesses including Ligrow 24 Hour Fitness, Special Scents Flower Shoppe, and Kelly & Co. Realty, is coordinated by Danielle Blaine, who is the community relations and foundation director at Hills and Dales.

"We expect to have our 200 partici-

pants," said Blaine. "We have the 5k walk and run, 8k run and 'Toddler Trot'."

Registration for the event starts at 6:30 a.m. and people can register up until the day of the races at www.hdgcrehab.com. The cost is \$10 for toddlers and \$20 for the 5 and 8K races. The Toddler Trot will take place at 7:30 a.m. and the other races will start at 8 a.m.

Prizes include medals and trophies that will be given out to the first, second and third place winners in each age/gender group, and participation medals will be given out to all Toddler Trot participants.

All participants will receive free passes to the Hills & Dales Health & Fitness Center, and there will be a raffle after the race for things like gas cards, free fitness memberships and other great prizes.

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Rolling Hills Golf Course hosts live music and entertainment

by **Conner Emery**
Staff Writer

Over the past few years, Rolling Hills Golf Course has been a hot spot of activity throughout the Freedom Festival weekend, and this year will be no different.

From Thursday through Saturday, the golf course will be hosting events for all ages to enjoy, although the focus will be on activities for the adults.

Starting out Thursday morning, the annual golf tourney will tee off. Twenty teams are currently registered and more are expected before the day of the tournament. The event involves four-man teams; check-in will be at 7 a.m. and at noon for the 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. tee times, respectively. A lunch at the turn and a steak dinner will follow. Proceeds from the tourney will go toward future festival activities.

Friday and Saturday night will be the main events at Rolling Hills, which will be hosting its 21-and-over entertainment tent for the fourth year in a row. Admission will be free for all attendees on both nights (must be at least 21 to attend).

"The festival is a coming home party for a lot of people," commented Amy Lowman, Rolling Hills

owner/event coordinator. "So it's a nice place to get everyone together and also enjoy some music and drinks."

On Friday, the tent will host a live band and an open bar and kitchen. The band CEYX will be playing a large variety of music from the 70's to today, starting at 8:00 p.m. Outside the tent, the venue will also feature an inaugural "cornhole tournament" slated to get underway at 6 p.m. Teams must sign up by Thursday, June 30, and check-in time will be at 5 p.m.

"Saturday is always our bigger day because of the fireworks," Lowman noted. "But this year we are hoping to get more people to come out on Friday as well."

Rolling Hills will open its entertainment tent again on Saturday. However, on this day, younger ones

will be allowed to attend, at least for a little while.

Lowman said everyone is welcome to come find a nice spot to sit, chill out, and watch the fireworks go off. The golf course is a great place to watch the fireworks, she added, and there will be a live DJ from Big Boy Entertainment on hand as well. Later, the party will continue in the tent for those ages 21 years and older.

While the tent offers a fun and relaxing break for many festival goers, the celebration can prove exhausting for others.

"I finally get to relax and enjoy the tent around nine or ten Saturday night, and get to catch my breath by Sunday," Lowman said, laughing. "It's good to see so many familiar faces and catch up with people from last year."



FIREWORKS EXPLODED in the sky over Cass City during last year's Freedom Festival to close out the weekend of patriotic celebration.


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Freedom Festival Parade ready for another great year

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

It's a decades old debate; what is the best part of the Cass City Freedom Festival — the parade or the fireworks?

Whether you're a bigger fan of the former or the latter, chances are good you're anticipating both during this year's celebration.

The annual parade kicks off at 10:30 a.m. Saturday on Main Street, with entries lined up by 9:30 a.m.

along Brooker and Vulcan streets.

This year there will be somewhere between 50 and 60 entries in the parade, which is expected to last about an hour, according to Parade Coordinator Vicky Sherry. As always, there will be a wide variety of floats, vehicles, and performers on hand to entertain the crowds.

As is tradition, local veterans will lead the parade. Once the procession reaches Main and Seeger streets, everything halts — a unique occurrence, given how most traditional parades usually run. The Cass City

High School Marching Band will then play the national anthem for the second year in a row as VFW Post 3644 Commander Joe Merchant lays a wreath at the Veteran's Memorial and Cass City Police Chief Craig Haynes and Elkland Township Fire Chief Glenn Guilds raise the flag.

"We like to honor our veterans for the Fourth of July," said Sherry, who has been active in the parade organization for the past five years. "The committee came up with the idea

some years back, and it has become a tradition."

After the brief ceremony, the parade will proceed, featuring local church groups, the Cass City Historical Society and its horse drawn carriage, the Thumb Area Antique Auto Club and its array of classic cars and tractors, and of course, a variety of floats and other attractions.

Also among this year's parade participants will be the always popular Glenview Clydesdales and the Elf

Khurafeh Shrine motorcycle drill team.

Sherry's favorite part of the parade is seeing everything come together — not surprising, given the popularity of the parade and the pressure that can come with coordinating such a big event.

"I'm excited when I get enough participants," she said, laughing. "But I like them all. The great part of the parade is that there is something special for everyone."



THE RAWSON MEMORIAL District Library Book Cart Drill Team returned to this year's grand parade, much to the delight of parade goers young and old.



MT Pocket Pullers to add competitive edge to festival

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

The revving of engines large and small will be heard at the hill behind the park on Saturday afternoon. The annual M/T Pocket Pullers Tractor Pull will take place from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. This is the 17th year of the event's existence, and will prove to be just as exciting as ever for both the competitors and attendees.

Melissa Richardson, the treasurer for the Pocket Pullers organization, has been a part of the event since its start in 1999 and is excited for the upcoming afternoon of fun. She encourages everyone to come out and watch, or even participate.

The only major difference this year as opposed to past years is the lack of a sponsor, the organization is running this year unpaid. However Richardson doesn't mind and is happy to bring the organization out for the Freedom Festival.

"We've had such a long history with the town and these people," said Richardson, "It's the least we can do to return the kindness that Cass City has given us."

There are no new categories for the tractor pull this year. However the three types that will be returning this year are garden, ultralite and the V6 & V8 tractors. For the garden tractors, which are for kids 4 years old and up, there will be both the 0-13

horsepower and the 14-20 horsepower pulls. For the ultralite tractors, there will be pulls for 0-580cc, 581-800cc, 801-1200cc, and 0-2400cc for the multi-engine participants. And last, but not least, there will be pulls for V6 & V8 small block tractors.

"Everyone wanting to participate will need to register by 2 p.m. that day, an hour before it starts," said Richardson, "There will be a table set up for registration at the event."

And if you think that an hour before the event is too late to register, according to Richardson that is when a majority of participants sign up.

Registration is \$10 for organization members and \$15 for non-members.

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A red, white and blue treat

Fourth of July celebrations usually include a mix of summer activities, from swimming at the beach to taking in the requisite fireworks. All these activities are of course accompanied by food. In the spirit of the holiday, serve up something red, white and blue ... or perhaps blueberry. Guests will savor this "Red, White and Blueberry Cheesecake Pie," courtesy of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council.

Patriotic red, white and blue cupcakes

- 1/2 cup dried cherries
- 1 package French vanilla cake mix
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups (about) small fresh blueberries, divided use
- 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar or to taste
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 roll red-colored fruit snack or fruit leather

Preparation:

Soak dried cherries in hot water for 15 minutes to plump. Drain thoroughly, then dry with paper towels. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line standard-size muffin pans with foil or paper muffin cups.

Combine cake mix with applesauce, eggs, and water, mixing on low speed for 30 seconds. Increase to medium speed and beat another 2 minutes. Fold in cherries.

Divide batter evenly into 24 paper-lined muffin cups. Drop 5 blueberries on top of the batter for each cupcake. Do not mix or press the blueberries into the batter.

Bake 18 to 20 minutes, until lightly browned. Cool to room temperature on wire racks before proceeding.

Beat cream cheese with confectioners' sugar and vanilla extract until smooth and creamy. Spread cream cheese frosting on tops of cooled cupcakes.

Using remaining blueberries, stud cupcakes with blueberries in rows (for stars) over the upper left quarter of the cupcake.

Cut the roll of fruit leather snack into strips 1/8 inch wide and 2 inches long. Place red fruit strips across the remainder of the cupcake surface in rows (for stripes) over frosting.

Refrigerate to set frosting.

These are fun for the kids to decorate for 4th of July, Flag Day, or Memorial Day.

Yield: 24 cupcakes



THE CROWD GATHERS to watch MT Pocket Pullers during last year's Freedom Festival celebration.

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Car show aims to be a blast from the past

by **Conner Emery**
Staff Writer

Classics, muscle, luxury, hotrod. If any of those labels pique your interest, or if you have a vehicle that you'd like to show off yourself, you may want to check out the annual Cass City Freedom Festival Classic Car Show.

Once again, a large variety of cars are expected for this year's gathering of classic car buffs, a tradition spanning more than three decades.

The show is set for Friday, July 1, at 6 p.m. in a field next to the McDonald's, which is again sponsoring the event. Over 100 cars were on display last year, and a similar

number is expected this year, according to show coordinator Jim Perry. "We get everything from antiques to street rods," said Perry. "As long as it's a special interest, it'll be in the show."

The cars come from various cities in and around the Thumb area — not only Cass City, but also Bay City, Saginaw, Lapeer and even Detroit. As long as you have a car, anyone can register, according to Perry.

One vehicle from the Thumb Area Antique Auto Club will be featured at the show — the plaque winner was decided by the auto club a few months ago and is a member of the club as well as a Cass City resident.

This year's recipient is Ron Monte and his awesome 1949 Ford pickup.

If you want to register your vehicle for the show, just stop in at the field, according to Perry, who along with his wife, Gerri, will be on hand at the field by around 4:30 p.m. Friday. Registration will take place from then up until the beginning of the show and is absolutely free.

"We put them in (the show) as they come in," said Perry, "You got to look at them all to see them all."

There will be prizes for various winners, mainly items from local businesses. All entries at the show will be entered into a drawing to decide the winners.



RON MONTEI, pictured above, is this year's plaque holder for the Classic Car Show. Pictured with Ron is his 1949 Ford pickup, which will hold the plaque during the show.

Community worship experience set during the Freedom Festival

by **Conner Emery**
Staff Writer

Due to popular demand, the Cass City Worship Experience will once again take over the corner of Seeger and Church streets Sunday, July 3.

The service will kick off with refreshments at 9 a.m., followed by the service at 10 a.m. It will be a great way to cap off an excellent weekend and Freedom Festival.

The event was launched last year to coincide with the large crowds expected for both festival and the 150th anniversary of the village of Cass City. An estimated 1,000 people turned out, and support for the community and planning committee has encouraged the Cass City Ministerial Association to sponsor and organize the service again.

All local churches involved with the service in 2015 will be returning this year as well — Living Word Worship Center, Novesta Church of Christ, Cass City Missionary Church, Cass City Nazarene Church, Our Lady Consolata Catholic Church, Mizpah Missionary Church, Cass City United Methodist Church, the First Presbyterian Church and the Frasier Presbyterian Church. Pastors from all of these churches will be helping out in one way or another, from communion services to leading prayers.

Brad Speirs from Novesta Church of Christ, Mark Karwowski, representing the Living Word Worship

Center, and Phil Burkett of the Cass City Missionary Church will all be preaching at the services, as they did last year.

"Everyone is not only allowed to attend, but encouraged to attend no matter what their religion is," Karwowski noted.

Karwowski, who originally suggested the idea of expanding the services beyond the park where it had been done in previous years, said the service is absolutely worth all of the extra work.

"We get lots of volunteers helping

with planning and executing," Karwowski said. "This is a community event and the community helps a lot."

Similar to last year, all of the proceeds of the services will be going to Revive Ministries in Cass City. The only difference this year will be the absence of inflatables, and the lunch that followed the services last year.

"Most people dispersed after the services last year," said Karwowski, "so we figured they weren't necessary to bring back — let people do their own thing after."



MORE THAN 300 area residents and visitors gathered together Sunday morning on Seeger Street, just north of Main Street for the Cass City Worship Experience. Several local congregations partnered to share musical and drama talents along with speakers during the service, which celebrated the village's sesquicentennial anniversary and honored the nation's servicemen and women as well as emergency response personnel.

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Helen Stevens Memorial Pool

Farm Bureau offers free swim to public

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

Weather forecasters were calling for Friday and Saturday to be real scorchers. Of course, this being Michigan, those predictions could change, but if you end up sprinting from shady spot to shady spot for relief from the heat and are desperate for a cool down, there will be a free swim for the public at the Helen Stevens Memorial Pool.

The free swim is open from 1 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, as well as after the parade to 7 p.m. on Saturday. For those unfamiliar with Cass City, the pool is located in the park near the baseball and softball diamonds.

Usually admission to the pool is \$3

a person or \$10 for a family of four or more, according to pool Director Erika Martin, so it will be a great opportunity for everyone to come out and cool off.

For the fifth year in a row, the free swim is being sponsored by Reggie Ignash and Farm Bureau Insurance.

"I love to swim and there are no large bodies of water around here," said Ignash. "So it's great to have the pool."

Ignash has a long history with the pool and always makes sure that he can sponsor free swims during the Freedom Festival.

"I grew up in Pigeon, but my dad came here and swam back when he was younger," Ignash recalled. "The pool is tons of fun; it gives kids an opportunity to go swim and cool off."



MEMBERS OF Farm Bureau Insurance, pictured left to right, Tanya Kulinski, Jessica Dressler, Reggie Ignash, and Kaylene Stine stand in front of the Helen Stevens Memorial Pool during a very sunny afternoon. The insurance company will be sponsoring the open swim that will be held Friday and Saturday during the Freedom Festival.



THREE-ON-THREE basketball action sizzled on the courts at Cass City Recreational Park, where teams competed in the Fire in the Sky tournament Saturday following the parade.

Basketball tournament set to fire up

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

The sounds of dribbling, squeaking shoes and swishes will fill the air Saturday afternoon as the Fire in the Sky basketball tournament once again gets underway at the basketball courts at the park.

The three-on-three tourney has earned a reputation for offering spectators an intense but friendly competition, and anyone is welcome to come out and participate or at least cheer on the teams.

"Our goal is to provide a service to the community," explained Tyler Erla, one of the tournament coordinators. "A lot of kids come out and have fun, and a lot of guys come back from out of town to play."

Erla, Cass City's high school boys' varsity basketball coach, teamed up with Aaron Fernald, the girls' varsity basketball coach, to organize the tournament for the second consecutive year.

There are roughly 15 teams registered for the event, and anyone else can sign up between now and

Saturday morning from 10 a.m. to noon and noon to 1 p.m. depending on the division. This is when a lot of people will show up and register, according to Erla, who indicated last-minute registration isn't a prob-



lem.

Sign-up costs \$40 per team, which is significantly less than in previous years.

The tournaments are divided among six different divisions; eight to 10 years old, 11 to 12, 12 to 14 (everyone in these groups will need to register by noon) and 14 to 16, 16 to 18, and adults 18 and above (everyone in these groups must register by 1 p.m.). The brackets will be set up following registration, depending on

the number of teams, and the games will start following the parade.

All the proceeds from the tourney will be going towards the Cass City Booster Club, a group mainly consisting of parents of student athletes that donates money to benefit local sports teams — equipment, uniforms, training camps, and other various items that are necessary for teams to compete.

"They help out the community and athletics any way that they can, mainly through funding," said Erla. "We give to them and it goes right back to these high school athletes."

Last year the tournament enjoyed a great turnout from the teams as well as spectators looking to stop and relax during all of the hustle and bustle of the festival. Family members and friends also turn out in droves. Erla is expecting a similar turnout this year and hopes to see an even bigger crowd.

Should inclement weather delay the competition, the event will be moved to the high school gym, depending on the intensity of the rain and how long it lasts.

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Local favorites Thumb Area Tail Waggers return to park

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

For the better part of the decade, an adorable and well behaved group of man's best friends have been delighting folks at the Freedom Festival, and that tradition will continue this year as the ever-popular Thumb Area Tail Waggers will be at the park at 2 p.m. Saturday.

This year's show will feature about 10 dogs of various breeds, ages and sizes. From puppies to full grown and older dogs, there will be something for all dog lovers to enjoy, according to Connie Sutter, leader of the club.

"It's always a good draw," said Sutter, who has headed up the group for two decades and has been a part of the festival every year the group has participated. "It's a lot of fun for the kids to see what the dogs can do," she added.

The performance will show off several tests of ability, athleticism and

obedience among the well-trained dogs, as well as a wide variety of tricks and other fun things for crowds of all ages to enjoy.

The Thumb Area Tail Waggers is a 4-H dog training club based in Caro, with young members hailing from towns throughout the Thumb. There currently are no members from Cass

City, but the group still wanted to come out to this year's festival. It's a win-win situation for both the dogs and the attendees, Sutter said.

"People like to see the dogs and what they can do, and the dogs are very friendly and like to socialize with all of the people," she commented.



Fun facts for Independence Day

*Three of our first five U.S Presidents died on July 4th. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson famously both died on July 4th 1826, with Adams famous last words being "Thomas Jefferson still survives", despite that statement being incorrect. Also James Monroe, the nation's fifth president, died on July 4th 1831.

*Ironically, the bulk of U.S. flags and fireworks are imported from China. About 87.5% of imported flags and 97% of imported fireworks come from the Far East country.

*Our national anthem, the "Star Spangled Banner" is a common part of the Independence Day festivities. However the anthem wasn't written until the War of 1812, and was not decreed as the national anthem until 1931.

*The American Pyrotechnics Association reports that more than 14,000 professional firework displays go off in the U.S. each Fourth of July. This obviously doesn't include the thousands of less than professional firework displays that go on around the country, careful with those M80's Bubba!

*In 1776, about 2.5 million people lived in the United States. Now, 240 years later, that number is approximately 323.7 million.

*Fourth of July is one of the biggest drinking holidays of the year in the U.S. Beer sales top around \$1 billion during the Fourth. It is believed that the tradition started when George Washington issued his soldiers double rations of rum to mark the anniversary of their independence.

New events on the horizon for festival

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

One of the best parts of the Freedom Festival is the variety of events and activities that take place throughout the weekend. You've got your staples of the festival that will never leave; the parade, the fireworks, the vendors, etc. But the more interesting thing is the events that are new every year; variety is the spice of life, as they say.

This year the festival will have four new events and activities that are sure to be entertaining additions and will be enjoyed by everyone.

Starting off on Friday evening there will be a Cornhole Tournament at the Rolling Hills Golf Course. Two-player teams will compete in double elimination games, with cash prizes for the teams that place 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. Registration costs \$20 and can be done at the clubhouse at Rolling Hills or on their Facebook page before June 30. You must be 21 years or older to register. Teams will need to show up at 5 p.m. to check in and the bags will start flying at 6 p.m.

The rest of the events will be taking place on Saturday at the park after the parade, starting with the dunk tank. The tank is exactly what it sounds like, and will cost \$2 to toss 3 balls and get the chance to get some lucky person dropped into the water. As of right now there hasn't been anyone willing to step up and volunteer to be dropped, so if you are interested or would like to nominate someone, contact Judy Keller at the Cass City Chamber of Commerce office. Also police chief Craig Haynes has considered getting in the tank if no one steps up, so let's get

him in there!

From 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday there will be a photo booth set up in the park. The booth will be similar to the kind of booth you'd see in a mall, after you take your pictures you'll get a strip of them for you to keep. There will be a wide array of props set up next to the booth that are all available to use for the pictures.

And finally, at 1:30 p.m. at the park, there will be a Greased Pig Contest. The chase will feature three or four little pigs, each around fifty pounds,

donated by local farmers from the area, and it will cost \$2 per person to attempt to catch the fast and greasy creatures. Dave Keller will be there monitoring the event and the first ten people who are lucky enough to catch the little pigs will win a T-shirt.

"When I've been telling people about the new events going on this year I mention the greased pig last," said festival coordinator Judy Keller. "Grandmas all get so excited wanting to get their grandkids out there to catch the pig."

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Intern's notebook

Memories of the Fourth of July

by Conner Emery
Staff Writer

I am very excited to see what this town has in store for the Freedom Festival this year. Not just because of all the fun events and activities, the good food and the good people, but also because it will be my first Freedom Festival.

And I know that the people of Cass City will show me why it is the best part of the year for many people.

I am relieved that despite not being from the area that I have not once felt like an outsider during my time at the Chronicle and in Cass City so far. Everyone has been super nice and cooperative with me and I can't thank you all enough.

Now as I said, I am not aware of what exactly I have ahead of me this coming week, I've been to many county fairs and the like over the years but not a Fourth of July event. Instead of being at a festival or watching town fireworks, my Fourth of Julys have always been spent with my family at our cottage in Port Austin. Sitting on the grass with my mom, grandpa, stepdad, little sisters, aunt and uncle, and my two cousins, we watch the neighbors set off their big fireworks display on the beach (which I swear gets bigger every year), and see other neighbors send up Chinese lanterns to honor those who have passed.

Celebrating the history of our independence as a country is obviously what this holiday is truly about. But I like to think that it's more about the memories that you make; things like searching for my family's Basset Hound up and down the beach after we thought she ran away, when it turns out she was just hiding under a bed from the fireworks; writing our names and pretending to play Harry Potter with sparklers; discovering a weird strobe light party with my cousin and sister and then stepping around it cautiously; and pretending to have a headache when I was younger because the fireworks were loud and scared me, then keeping an eye on my little sister years later when she did the same thing. I will remember those moments for the rest of my life, even if I have to arm wrestle memory loss to keep them.

As I've gotten older things have changed, like they always tend to do in life. My cousins moved away, my uncle and grandpa passed, and even I have found it difficult to make those little moments happen with school, work, and life in general getting in the way. But this year is going to be different; one of my cousins is back in the state now and will be celebrating with the rest of us. And we will be sending up a pair of Chinese lanterns of our own.

I'm looking forward to what Freedom Festival has to offer, no doubt about it. But what I am looking forward to most this year is when the noises settle down and my family sits on the beach together, making small talk, playing cards, or just listening to the crickets. We are smaller in number than before, but are just as strong.

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