



Waubeka officials expecting 10,000 Flag Day celebrants

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Free Flag Day Greeting ECards

Town of Fredonia - More than 10,000 people from Wisconsin and beyond are expected to honor Old Glory this Sunday in Waubeka.

Billing itself the birthplace of America's Flag Day celebration, the Town of Fredonia hamlet holds a patriotic festival each year on the second weekend of June.

The festival was started in 1946 by local World War II veterans, and it remains the biggest yearly celebration for the town and its 500 or so inhabitants.

The event will feature a parade with more than 100 marching bands, a lavish fireworks display, games and contests for kids, carriage rides, museum tours, live music and more.

John "Jack" Janik, who runs a local lumberyard and is president of the National Flag Day Foundation, headquartered in Waubeka, says countless fliers have been sent throughout the state heralding this year's theme: "Remembering Our Heritage: A Homecoming."

"Every year we have a different theme. We expect many new people - the phone has been ringing off the hook. This is a very exciting, patriotic event," Janik said.

Paralleling the homecoming theme is an outdoor ecumenical service on the grounds of St. Paul Community Church in Waubeka.

The 10:30 a.m. service will be led by the Rev. David Jerger of St. Paul's along with three former "Waubeka-ites," the Rev. Carroll J. Olm from Whitewater, the Rev. Paul Olm-Stoelting of Nokomis,

Flag Day



Photo/David Joles

The thirteen stars and stripes, held Monday by John "Jack" Janik, president of the National Flag Day Foundation, is among the 27 various star configurations of the American flag on display at the Americanism Center in Waubeka.



Photo/David Joles

A bust Bernard J. Cigrand, Flag Day founder, stands outside the Americanism Center.

Fla., and the Rev. Harry Stroessner of Ely, Minn. Each pastor will speak briefly, and Stroessner will deliver the sermon. Waubeka resident Virginia Brown will lead the prayer.

Following the service is a 12:30 p.m. program sounded off by a canon salute from the First Wisconsin Light Artillery. The program will be emceed by Channel 6 television personality Gus Gnorski. The national anthem will be sung by Miss Wisconsin Laura Herriot, and VFW Ladies Auxiliary President Carla Stockel will lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Additional highlights will include a speech by Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Margaret Farrow and an earthshaking air salute by World War II warbird fighter planes. During the program, Gnorski will call onto stage Ozaukee County Sheriff Maury Straub, Waubeka Fire Chief Peter Wagner and Wisconsin VFW State Honor Guard Capt. Matt Meyer.

"Gnorski will talk about the September 11 tragedy. This is a call to honor (speech) that will recognize the heroes who risk their lives for us every day," Janik said.

Also new to this year's event is a presentation by Janik on the first Flag Day and where the National Flag Day Foundation is today. Janik gave this same presentation in April to the Capitol Hill Exchange Club in the Senate dining room in Washington, D.C. Describing the club members as "the movers and the shakers of D.C.," Janik spoke to active and retired generals, priests, business people and others.

Janik said the club was interested to hear about 19-year-old Bernard J. Cigrand, who taught at Stony Hill School in Waubeka. On June 14, 1885, Cigrand displayed a small U.S. flag on his desk and told his students to write an essay describing what the flag meant to them.

Cigrand, who later became a dentist and dean of the Illinois School of Dentistry, was determined to make the anniversary of the day the flag became a national symbol, June 14, 1777, a national holiday. He staged rallies in Chicago parks, drawing nationwide attention. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation asking communities to stage Flag Day ceremonies as "special patriotic exercises."

President Harry Truman took it a step further. In 1949, he signed the observance into law, finally making it a holiday.

"We received a tremendous response. The Exchange Club was so interested in hearing about the origins of Flag Day," Janik said.

Janik's presentation will be at 4 p.m. in the hospitality room at the Americanism Center. The room will be decorated with photographs of famous Waubeka residents, including Charles Cooley, creator and father of vocational schools; Joel Hames Jr., one of the original Thunderbird pilots who flew for Franklin D. Roosevelt's funeral in 1945; and

Victor Voekes, a woodworker and artist whose furniture is displayed worldwide, including in Rome.

Wisconsin politicians who are expected to attend the celebration besides Farrow include U.S. Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner Jr. (R-Wis.), state Sen. Mary Panzer (R-West Bend), state Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen (R-Town of Brookfield) and state Rep. Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend).

For more information on the event, call (262) 692-9111.

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