

Watermelon Festival a slice of community fun

By Erick Peterson
EO Media Group

IRRIGON — No matter how you slice it, organizers are getting giddy as the 2022 Irrigon Watermelon Festival draws near. Charlene Cooley, event program director, said everyone is excited as the festival prepares to celebrate its 38th year.

The all-day event is Saturday, July 30. While the parade will wind through downtown Irrigon, most of the activities take place at Irrigon Marina Park, 430 Eighth St. NE. The fun features everything from a breakfast, games and live entertainment to a car show, street dance and, of course, watermelon.

Cooley said the festival focuses on a similar theme each year — community. Several local civic groups take part in the event. Some of the town's churches, businesses and school organizations also participate.

These groups, Cooley said, organize games, food and entertainment for the festival. Thanks to their efforts, the festival is a busy day of activities.

The festival gets to a sizzling start at 6:30 a.m. with a big breakfast at the park. Also, the parade is an early highlight. Beginning at 10 a.m., it runs through Irrigon, going down Columbia Lane, North First Street, Northeast Main Avenue, 12th Street and ends at the entrance to the park.

Local school cheerleaders, firefight-



Irrigon Watermelon Festival/Contributed Photo

Residents show their watermelon spirit on July 27, 2019, during the Irrigon Watermelon Festival parade. The 2022 event is Saturday, July 30, at Irrigon Marina Park.

ers, sheriff's deputies and other groups are typically represented, Cooley said. However, as a celebration of the town, the parade features many participants. To join in, parade registration starts at 8 a.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 Opal Place.

"Anyone who wants to be in the parade is welcome," Cooley said.

One special person is planning to

take the parade's lead. Dirk Dirksen, who recently retired as the Morrow County School District's superintendent, is the grand marshal.

After the parade, the celebration continues at Irrigon Marina Park.

"We have lots of foods, local crafts, vendors and more," Cooley said.

The car show, children's games, boat rides, a lip-sync contest and more provide fun for just about anyone, she added. Also, a co-ed softball tournament is hosted by the Friends of the Irrigon Library.

The live entertainment cranks up at noon with Zac Grooms. Olivia Harms will take the stage at 4:30 p.m. and Sky Dogs are performing, too.

A beer garden runs during the evening entertainment. At 9 p.m., Desert Sounds Entertainment illuminates a light show and DJ performance.

Cooley said the watermelon festival is the "one big event that Irrigon has."

"People come home for it," she said. "It's a celebration of community and something that people look forward to, remember and come back for."

For more information, including a full schedule, visit www.facebook.com/irrigonwatermelonfestival.

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