

'Big Ole' festival planned in June

ESCANABA – Featuring a new name on a popular event, the “Big Ole’s Pioneer Days” festival is being planned for June 26-27 in Delta County.

Formerly known as “Balloons on the Bays & Pioneer Days,” the third annual event will feature such familiar activities as the turn-of-the-century steam and gas engine village, sawmill and historic museum; timber jack show; adult beverage tent; live music; special kids’ activities; dog show; food and craft vendors; wood carving demonstrations; and members of the Tuskegee Airmen.

New attractions this year include a fiddler’s competition, a homebrew competition by the Bay de Noc Brewers Association, authentic campfires with Paul Bunyan sized marshmallows, an arm-wrestling competition and a “Big Ole Enduro” competition with log throwing, climbing, jumping, dragging, running and tossing events.

“The festival’s new name reflects a lesser emphasis on hot air balloons and a greater emphasis on our pioneer heritage here in the U.P.,” said Steve Masters, executive director for the Delta County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau. Citing weather as the motivating factor in the change, Masters said hot air balloons will still be a part of the festival and tethered rides will be available weather permitting, but the festival will focus much more on pioneer activities.

“The ‘Big Ole’ theme is a nod to Paul Bunyan’s blacksmith, who shoed Babe the big blue ox,” explained Masters, who noted a 42-foot carved statue of Big Ole had at one time been located at the entrance to Escanaba, welcoming both residents and visitors, alike.

“We are excited about bringing back to our communities this annual festival with its blend of family-friendly activities for all ages,” said Vickie Micheau, executive director for the Delta County Chamber of Commerce. “We offer this as an occasion for friends and family to experience the fun of an old-fashioned event while taking in all the unique opportunities Delta County has to offer.”

The Big Ole’s Pioneer Days festival will be held at the U.P. State Fairgrounds and is being organized by OSF St. Francis Hospital & Medical Group, OSF Home Care and the Delta County Commerce Center. Sponsors include the Delta County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Stewart Manufacturing, Bill Marmalick with Premier Real Estate, 41 Lumber, Radio Results Network, WMXG MIX 106.3 FM, Radio Eagle, WDBC/WYKX, WLUC TV-6, U.P. State Credit Union and the Great Lakes Timber Show.

Proceeds from the festival will benefit the OSF St. Francis Hospital & Medical Group Foundation and OSF Hospice. Additional events and activities are still being planned and will be announced as details are finalized. For more information, call the Delta County Commerce Center at 906-786-2192 or visit www.deltami.org

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