

Oyster Festival volunteers gear up for 40th festival

By Leslie Lake



Photo: Alex Von Kleydorff / Hearst Connecticut Media

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Norwalk Seaport Association veteran volunteer Willow Landon rolls a fresh coat of white paint on flower boxes around the Main entertainment tent on Thursday August 31, 2017 for next weekend's Oyster Festival at Veterans Memorial Park. [less](#)

NORWALK — The Norwalk Seaport Association will mark a milestone this year when it puts the 40th annual Oyster Festival.

Association president Mike Reilly calls that “a very big deal.”

“The average time for most festivals is 7.5 years,” said Reilly, who is also chairman of the Oyster Festival. “The fact that we’ve been around for 40 years is a real long time for a festival and it really is all about the dedication of more than 1,000 volunteers.”

After scaling back to a two-day event at Veteran’s Park last year, this year’s festival will be three days — Friday, Sept. 8 through Sunday, Sept. 10.

“We’re very excited to get back to a three-day festival with the same hours as in the past,” Reilly said.

The festival will feature live music from dozens of bands on several stages. Friday night’s entertainment on the main stage is the Billy Joel tribute band, Mike DelGuidice & Big Shot. DelGuidice was hand picked and hired by Billy Joel himself, and is currently on tour with Billy Joel playing rhythm guitar and vocals, along with other members of Big Shot, Reilly said.

Saturday’s entertainment will include Latin Rock Santana tribute band, Sacred Fire, and Desert Highway, a band celebrating the music of the Eagles.

On Sunday, Eight To The Bar, a colorful mix of forties jazz and swing, fifties jump blues, and their own swing-influenced music, will perform on the main stage.

Other musical acts during the weekend include Ripchord, of the Connecticut National Guard 102nd Army Band, singer/songwriter Alex Shillo, the VMI Commanders Jazz Band, and Funky Dawgz Brass Band.

Entertainment includes The Paul Bunyan Lumberjack Show, the Nerveless Nocks Thrill Show with motorcycle acts and other daredevil stunts, a craft beer tent with more than 40 beers, an Arts & Crafts Pavilion with items from more than 100 artisans and crafters, and an oyster slurping contest with local dignitaries.

Food will be on sale by local nonprofit organizations.

For children, there will be amusement rides and live entertainment at the Kid’s Cove all weekend with circus acts by the Seaport Circus featuring clowns, jugglers, magicians, acrobats and hula hoops artists under the big tent.

There will also be meet-and-greets with characters from movies and television shows on Saturday and Sunday.

Special family and children’s packages for entrance, rides and meals are available on Sunday, Family Day.

Reilly said that when weekend weather is good, weekend attendance at the festival exceeds 40,000.

The weather hasn’t always cooperated for the outdoor event. In what may be the most memorable cancellation, rain and wind knocked down tree limbs and tents at the 2014 festival, causing the Joan Jett concert to be canceled.

The festival hours are 6 p to 11 p.m. Friday, Sept. 8; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 9; and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 10.

Through a partnership with the Norwalk Parking Authority, attendees can save \$2 off parking at any on-street parking meter or outside lot just over the bridge in South Norwalk using the [Parkmobile app](#) on their cell phone with the code: oyster2off. MetroNorth is offering discount packages.

For more information and tickets go to www.seaport.org or call 203-838-9444.

First County Bank is the presenting sponsor of the festival for the seventh time. The nonprofit Norwalk Seaport Association was founded in 1978 to preserve and maintain the Sheffield Lighthouse, as well as educate and raise awareness about Norwalk's maritime environment and history.

In addition to the Oyster Festival, the Norwalk Seaport Association offers trips and tours to Sheffield Lighthouse, harbor cruises, special events, maritime education programs and habitat restoration projects with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.