Oyster Festival marks major milestone in return for 40th year

By Chase Wright

NORWALK — The festival that marks the official end of summer marks its own anniversary this September. The Norwalk Seaport Association’s Oyster Festival celebrates 40 years when it returns Friday, Sept. 8 through Sunday, Sept. 10.

The outdoor festival, held at Veteran’s Memorial Park, provides three days of fun and enjoyment for the whole family during the weekend after Labor Day. First County Bank is back as the Presenting Sponsor of this year’s festival for the seventh time.

“We’re very excited to get back to a three-day festival with the same hours as in the past,” said Norwalk Oyster Festival Chairman Mike Reilly. “Come join us for our 40th festival, another great year of entertainment, live music and just plain good family fun.”

The festival will feature live music from dozens of bands on multiple stages. Friday night’s musical highlight on the main stage is the Billy Joel tribute band, Mike DelGuidice & Big Shot. 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 ’40s jazz and swing ’50s jump blues, and their own swing-influenced music, will hit 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.

Attendees will also enjoy these other festival entertainment and attractions, 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, an oyster slurping contest, and more.

Children will have plenty to entertain them. In addition to amusement rides, there will be live children’s 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 favorite characters from today’s most popular movies and TV shows on Saturday and Sunday. Special family and children's packages for entrance, rides and meals are available on Sunday, Family Day.

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The Norwalk Seaport Association and its volunteers are solely responsible for organizing and financing the Oyster Festival. The nonprofit organization was founded in 1978 to preserve and maintain the historic Sheffield Lighthouse, as well as educate and raise awareness about Norwalk’s maritime environment and history. The Norwalk Seaport Organization will commemorate the lighthouse's 150th anniversary in 2018 with a variety of celebrations. 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. The lighthouse and grounds are also available for private and corporate functions.

Festival hours are Friday, 6-11 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. 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. In addition, for those who want to take the train, Metro-North offers discount packages. For tickets, visit www.seaport.org or call 203-838-9444.