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The cool crisp morning and frost on the pumpkin can only mean one thing, Autumn in here! The leaves are beginning to give us their beautiful show of changing colors and residents are beginning to prepare for the upcoming holidays. The change of the season also means it is time to celebrate Bethlehem.

The 20th annual Autumn on the River Festival will be held this weekend, October 20 and 21, in historic Bethlehem. In addition to the festival local residents will be encouraged to help celebrate the 200th birthday of the historic little town of Bethlehem.

"The excitement of the birthday celebration and Autumn on the River is growing," stated David Abbott, Sr., co-chair of this year's Autumn on the River Festival. "The committee has been busy planning the celebration and birthday party all year. We are looking forward to this weekend."

The committee will celebrate the birthday of Bethlehem with a birthday cake. The birthday cake for everyone to enjoy will be located inside the old school house. The cake will be offered in the Seminar Room along with a meet and greet area. You will need a ticket to receive your free piece of birthday cake. Tickets will be available at the Information Booth. The birthday cake is sponsored in part by The New Washington State Bank and Historic Bethlehem. Volunteers will begin serving the cake at 10 a.m. on Saturday and will serve the cake til it is gone.

This year's Autumn on the River Festival will feature some of the great activities and entertainment local residents have come to love. The ever popular band, The Marlinaires will again bring their talent to Bethlehem, along with The Joymakers and Under Construction. The musical talent will have a brand new stage to perform on this year. A stage has been constructed by volunteers readying for this year's entertainment.

"We always had to rent a stage for Autumn on the River's live entertainment. Several volunteers spent a recent Saturday working to construct the stage. Many donations were received from local businesses and residents to cover the cost of construction," Abbott stated.

If live entertainment wasn't enough for you, then you are sure to find the deliciously yummy festival food like funnel cakes, roasted corn on the cob, popcorn, fish, cakes, pies and persimmon pudding. The Clark County Cattlemen will also be on hand serving up their delicious and ever popular ribeye steak sandwiches.

If you want to take a break and enjoy lunch or dinner you should visit the schoolhouse's basement. Volunteers will be serving up beans and cornbread and steamboat stew for a nominal fee.

"They are bringing back Steamboat Stew! I know you know what I am talking about. Nothing like a big bowl of Steamboat Stew!," Abbott grinned.

Before the kick off auction, you may get your energy with a delicious breakfast. The breakfast will be offered by Historic Bethlehem.

The festival will kick off with their annual auction on Saturday morning at 10 a.m. Donations for the auction will be accepted right until the time the auction begins. If you would like to make a donation to the auction please contact Dan Waterfill at 812-786-5950.

"The auction brings in a lot of money for the committee. It is very exciting because a lot of people love the auction," stated Abbott. "Dan has really worked to organize the auction this year. He has worked on the committee for years and has so much knowledge of the entire festival."

Bethlehem's Got Talent show will be held from 12 noon to 2 p.m. on Saturday. The show spots are full but residents are encouraged to come and be entertained by their friends, neighbors and

family members as they determine who has the most talent in Bethlehem. Prizes will be awarded to the first, second and third place winners. Winners will receive a gift certificate to 62 Twist. The event is sponsored by Hoopsters Sports Bar & Grill and The Ivy Vine Florist. Tracie Madera has organized this event for the festival.

A Veteran's Tribute will be held at 2 p.m. The tribute is hosted by David Broughton and will feature the Color Guard from the American Legion Post 335.

"David really jumped in and supported Autumn on the River and other events we have hosted in Bethlehem. He has done a great job," Abbott praised.

The parade will have people lining the streets ready for the excitement and thrill of a parade. The Grand Marshal of this year's parade will be John Cable. He has been the Postmaster for the Bethlehem Post Office for the past 12 years. He recently retired from the job. The parade will begin at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday. The parade has been organized by Rick Roehm. If you would like to participate in the parade or need more information please call Roehm at 812-293-3183.

The Marlinaires will conclude the excitement of the festival on Saturday. They will perform on the stage from 3 to 6 p.m. For more information on The Marlinaires please visit their website at www.themarlinaries.com.

During The Marlinaires first scheduled break at 4 p.m., there will be a Dessert Auction. All proceeds from the dessert auction will go to benefit the victims of the March 2 tornadoes in the local area. The dessert auction will feature pies, cakes and cookies. Donations of sweet goodies will be taken until the time of the auction. For more information about the dessert auction please contact David Abbott, Sr., at 502-931-4669.

Sunday will kick off with live entertainment from The Joymakers from 12 noon to 1 p.m. Be sure to like them on Facebook and for more information.

Under Construction will entertain the crowd from 2 to 3 p.m. on Sunday. You can also like them on Facebook for more information.

The Marlinaires will conclude the festival's live entertainment on Sunday as they perform from 3 to 5 p.m.

"My co-chair, Andi Oles, has taken the reigns of the entertainment and done an amazing job. If it wasn't for Andi I don't know what we would do. She is definitely the backbone of the festival and jumps right in to get things done. She is truly the best co-chair I have ever worked with," Abbott stated with a proud smile. "She just makes the festival planning and event as smooth as anyone could as for."

The festival will also feature over 65 vendors lining the school ground. Vendors will have a wide array of items including handmade crafts, purses and lots of one of a kind items. There is sure to be something for everyone.

"We are expecting a great year for the vendors. I know we are excited about this year's vendors and I know they are excited about spending the weekend in Bethlehem for this year's festival," Abbott added.

According to Abbott, the festival committee is also offering a weekend getaway for camping enthusiasts.

"We again will offer the opportunity to come spend the weekend in Bethlehem. We will have RV parking available and they can come down early and spend the weekend with us. It could be a last camping outing for the year. I would love to see people take advantage of the RV parking and have easy access to all the festival offers," Abbott explained.

The annual car and tractor show will again be held this year. For more information about the

car and tractor show please contact Dan Waterfill at 812-786-5950.

"Many people like to come and stroll through the car and tractor show. We always have lots of people walking through and enjoying that part of the festival," Abbott said.

A flag display will also be available for viewing during the festival. Over 5,000 flags will be set up representing those soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Bill Hostetler, of the Clark County Sheriff's Department Inmate Program, has organized the display again this year.

"Bill has done a fine job over the last several years. He is continuing his tradition this year. It is always something to see when you look at all the flags so perfectly placed and then to realize what they represent," Abbott added. "I also want to thank Bill for his continuous help in bringing the inmate program to help with the set up of tents, booths and decorations for the festival. They also walk New Washington/ Bethlehem Road and clean the road frontage so it is a beautiful drive for those coming to visit Bethlehem. Thank you to Bill and Danny Rodden and the Clark County Sheriff's Department."

A silent auction will also be held during the two day festival. Donated items for the silent auction include: a television donated by Clark County Sheriff Danny Rodden, a DVD player donated by Kevin Vissing, a $25 gift certificate from Tractor Supply from Jack Coffman, $25 gift certificate from Rick Stephenson, Graf Hauling donated two yards of hardwood mulch delivered within a 20 mile radius of Sellersburg, Dan Cristiani and EarthFirst donated two gift certificates for one yard of hardwood or colored mulch each, you must pick up, Indiana Pacer tickets and an autographed football by Indianapolis Colts Wide Receiver Austin Collie.

If that wasn't enough to keep you busy for the weekend, you can also visit the restored old Bethlehem School house. Inside the building are many school pictures, a tribute wall to Veterans, genealogy records, Bethlehem Township Church information and records and historical items from Bethlehem. Author Dana Olson will also be on hand to share his study of the pre-history of the area and his book on Prince Madoc. The Clark County Homemakers will raffle a quilt.

A scavenger hunt, "I Spy Historic Bethlehem" will also be held. More information regarding the scavenger hunt will be available at the Information Booth.

"I definitely encourage everyone to grab the kids, grandma, grandpa, aunts and uncles, and head down the hill to Bethlehem for this year's festival. It will be a great weekend to make lasting memories. You will sure see old friends and make new friends. I love to see people sitting around on the hay bales enjoying the music and enjoying seeing old friends. This is one of the best weekends of the year," Abbott smiled. "I am amazed every year how the people come out for the yard sales and how they pop up all throughout New Washington into Bethlehem."

He added, "The planning committee has worked hard to bring the festival together and their hard work is paying off. We are all excited and can't wait to celebrate the festival and Bethlehem's birthday! There is a lot to celebrate this year! Let the fun begin!"

Abbott concluded, "This is just like a big family reunion every year. Friends meet here every year and catch up and even make new friends to meet up with next year. It is always great to see everyone just sitting around enjoying the music and food, just hanging out having a fun and relaxing time. Andi and I just really want to see everyone having a good time. Our main goal is for everyone to enjoy the festival. They can come and hang out listening to music and get something to eat without putting a big crunch on the wallet. I am truly looking forward to this weekend."