

Thanks for the Fond(y) Memories: Share a favorite memory from Walleye Weekend for a chance to win a free vacation in Mexico

Walleye Weekend offers both variety and tradition—a combination of festival events that makes for poignant and powerful memories. As the community prepares to celebrate Walleye Weekend’s 40th anniversary June 8-10, sharing a fond memory from Fond du Lac’s free family festival could result in winning a trip to the beautiful [Riu Yucatan](#) resort in Riviera Maya, Mexico, and the creation of new vacation memories.

“We are inviting our community to really celebrate this anniversary event together,” said Fond du Lac Festivals Executive Director Leanne Doyle. “This festival is Fondy’s annual summer kick-off and I hear, again and again, how much fun people have had at Walleye Weekend over its 40 years. Heading into our 40th annual weekend of outdoor fun in Lakeside Park, we want to collect and archive those memories. And, one lucky person who shares a memory will win a trip for two to the beautiful all-inclusive Riu Yucatan resort, courtesy of [RIU](#), [Apple Vacations](#) and [Fox World Travel](#). Locally, you can hear more about the contest on the radio, in a promotion sponsored by [Tundraland](#).”

To enter the contest, go to www.fdlfest.com between May 7 and May 17, 2018, and share a favorite memory. The winner will be selected by random drawing from all entrants on May 18 for the free trip for two adults, valid through Dec. 10, 2018.

The winner will be publically announced onstage at Walleye Weekend after the June 9 performance finale of former Queensrÿche leader singer Geoff Tate’s Operation Mindcrime on the Mercury Marine and 96.1 The Rock Point Stage. Selected photos submitted via the contest website will be shown in a slide show while Tate sings the Queensrÿche hit single, “Silent Lucidity.”

Weekend of Destiny

It’s not an exaggeration to say Walleye Weekend changed the life of Radio Plus President and local radio personality Terry Davis: his connection to the festival led him to his career and his wife.

“I met Gregg Owens and Warren Krech broadcasting for WFON at their tent,” Davis recalled of his pivotal 1983 visit to the festival. “I chatted with them for awhile and told them of my desire to get into radio. Krech was nice but wanted to pack up and get out of there, because it was the last day of the festival. Owens did give me the time of day—probably because I was helping him take the tent down and pack up—and told me to come into WFON and talk to Warren: ‘He might have a little something for you, part-time; it doesn’t pay much, but you might get a little beer money.’”

Davis applied at the station the following week, interviewed a few weeks later, and was hired by Krech. Thrifty-five years later, Davis continues to work in broadcasting with Owens. He also maintains a deep connection to Walleye Weekend—through his radio work and his personal commitment as a volunteer board member for Fond du Lac Festivals, Inc.—the event that shaped his life twice.

While working at WFON, Davis met Jennifer Lucas at UW-Oshkosh. She went on to become the executive director of Fond du Lac Festivals, Inc., under the leadership of Jo Ann Ward from the local convention bureau in 1992, the same year the couple became engaged.

“So, I guess you could say that, in 1994, I married the festival director,” Davis said of his wife, who held the directorship until 1996 when they became parents. “I went to Walleye Weekend for fun and, while at the festival, I landed my dream career job. From my job, I found my dream partner and wife.”

Weekend of Gratitude

The volunteer and fund-raising focus of Walleye Weekend created the fondest memory for Fond du Lac Public Library Director Jon Mark Bolthouse. Fundraising for local service organizations and area non-profits is at the heart of Walleye Weekend every year. Many organizations benefit from funds raised by tournament fees and by their members working at food stands.

“I was surprised and pleased for the library to be the first winner of the Grand Giveback in 2014,” said Bolthouse, “because it meant that a community organization like CitizensFirst cared as much as we do about promoting reading for our children during the summer.”

The \$1,000 Grand Giveback prize money was used to enhance the library’s Summer Reading Program, which annually works to mitigate the “summer slide”—the term for the loss in reading skill that happens when children don’t read during their summer break from the classroom. The effects of not reading during summer are cumulative, and children can find themselves more than a year behind their peers academically.

Verve, A Credit Union (formerly CitizensFirst), sponsored the Grand Giveback for three years in alignment with its commitment to the Cooperative Principles that govern financial organizations like credit unions, and include community support.

Weekend of Relationships

For Executive Director Doyle, the best festival memories feature the many people who contribute their time and energy to the event.

“This is a true community festival, and community members make it happen,” she said. “This festival is about people and relationships—especially all of the people working so hard for their non-profit organizations.”

Her fondest personal memory is a recollection of the late Mel Birschbach, who was in charge of the building and grounds from the first day of the first festival in 1978 and continued in that role for 38 years.

“Two weeks before the 2016 festival, Mel came to my office to chat,” Doyle recalled. “He had just come back from an Honor Flight for veterans and was so happy. He sat in the ‘princess’ butterfly-shaped chair in my office—and I took a picture of him in it. A week later, he had pneumonia and passed. That was probably the last photo taken of him and it was used at his visitation. We lost him right before the festival. He was an unsung hero—he had such commitment to our community.”

Both stories and photos are welcome at the www.fdlfest.com website. Photo submissions selected for use will earn submitters a \$5 food token for use at any of the Walleye Weekend concession stands. For entry details and exclusions, see the registration form.

–*Monica M. Walk*

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