

For Immediate Release

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Walleye Weekend 2018: Co-chairs lead 40th year of fundraising and fun

FOND DU LAC—Holly Luehring and Molly Jaster have stepped forward from their festival board roles to co-chair Walleye Weekend 2018. The duo are using their marketing communication skills—Luehring is director of marketing communications for Michels Corp. and Jaster is the director of development and annual giving for Marian University—to boost awareness of the 40th anniversary of Fond du Lac's free family festival.

"I like what Walleye Weekend represents to Fond du Lac," said Jaster, who had a unique childhood view of the festival from the vantage point of her father's then-business—a bar and liquor store—located just outside of the park. "I grew up seeing the excitement of Walleye Weekend. I have attended my whole life. It has grown with the community, and has significance. People grow up, move away, and come back for Walleye Weekend."

The 40th anniversary event will hold more music and outdoor tournament fun than ever: there will be a new fourth music stage and the featured June 9 performance of Geoff Tate's Operation: MINDCRIME, and tournament events top more than a dozen, including the annual and ever-popular Mercury Marine Family Fishing Tournament, Mercury Marine National Walleye Tournament, and Agnesian HealthCare Walleye Run Walk. Food vendors throughout Lakeside Park will continue to serve a wide variety of crowd-pleasing food. (See www.walleyeweekend.com for details.)

"Forty years ago, Fond du Lac had the vision to start a festival like this," Luehring said. "The community can be proud of supporting it for 40 years. It's for families."

Both co-chairs are looking forward to the Friday afternoon opening parade, featuring the UW-Madison marching band and a procession of boats. The parade will originate at the FDL Aquatic Center on Ninth Street at 2:30 pm and head north up Main Street ending at Fives. Jaster encourages workplace teams to take an hour out of the office to kick off Walleye Weekend by watching the parade and celebrate this big part of Fond du Lac.

Beyond the festivities, both co-chairs also stressed the financial importance of the festival to non-profit organizations throughout the city.

"People don't always know about how the money raised goes back into the community," Jaster said. "Non-profits run the food and beverage stands, and the sales go back into the very non-profits that make the festival a success. We utilize more than 1,600 volunteers over the weekend, so putting funds back into the community is critical."

In 2017 alone, the festival generated \$230,000 for non-profits. Since Festival Executive Director Leanne Doyle began tracking concession sales in 2013, the festival has generated more than \$1.2 million for local non-profits.

"It's not only about the music or a fishing tournament," Luehring said. "More than 40 non-profits are affected by the proceeds."

Festival parking is not the problem it sometimes is rumored to be. "I want to erase that misconception," Luehring said. "It's not a hassle; that's not true. We have so many shuttles, and there is quite a bit of parking around the festival grounds."

Jaster noted that she always makes an opportunity to use a golf cart shuttle herself to take a drive through the festival and observe all of the attendees having fun.

"I commit a lot of my personal time to the community, so I make a point to step back and observe," she said. "I just love Walleye Weekend so much. It is a unique and really diverse event –music, good food, Family Land, the strongman competition. You can drive up in a car; you can show up in a boat. Walleye Weekend has something for everyone."

For complete details of Walleye Weekend festival events and schedules, including tournament registration information, go to www.walleyeweekend.com.

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