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Food, music to highlight Main/Wall festival

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NORWALK

By ROBERT KOCH

Hour Staff Writer

Main/Wall Street Festival '08 will get underway this coming Saturday afternoon with food, music, artwork, children's activities and the biggest turnout to date, according to its organizers.

On Saturday, June 7, from 3 to 9 p.m., Main Street will be blocked off, from Hoyt Street to Wall Street for the annual street festival, which is aimed at drawing interest to what's already in the Wall Street neighborhood and what promises to be through sweeping redevelopment.

"The response from the local community has been enthusiastic," said Lorraine Gimblett, spokeswoman for POKO Partners LLC, the city's selected developer for the Isaacs Street portion of Wall Street and a key organizer of this year's festival. "Local business owners and community organizations are excited about the revitalization efforts, and this festival and its expansion is a tangible result of that positive forward momentum. So far, 83 businesses and organizations are participating in the festival."

Add to that six bands playing through out the day on two different stages, a look at the present and future of downtown Norwalk, restaurants dishing up food, a stilt walker, magician, balloon twister, puppet show, face painting, tattoos for kids, fashion shows, plant potting, and many demonstrations.

Live music is scheduled for throughout the day. Bands will include PJ Pacifico, Smackin Abner, Silver Streaks, Jazz by the Jim Clark Group, and Bad Reps, a band led by state Rep. Christopher R. Perone.

Shakespeare on the Sound will perform classic music. The Norwalk Symphony will offer an instrument "petting zoo", where the public may try different instruments.

The Norwalk River Rowing Club, meanwhile, will offer 30-minute rows to the public. Look also for floral arranging demonstrations by The Silk Touch, karate demonstrations by Karate Universe, yoga demonstrations by Nu Yoga, massages by Dorr Way to Health, fitness demonstrations by Norwalk YMCA, dog training demonstrations by PAWS of Norwalk, ballroom dancing pointers from Fred Astaire Dance Studio, and free foot scanning Dr. Harris Greenberger.

Aitoros, Chocopologie, B.J. Ryan's, Bella Luna and La Paella will be among

the restaurants dishing up food for the street festival.

Mayor Richard A. Moccia, who helped launch the festival three years ago to draw attention to the future of the Wall Street area, said the event has grown year-by-year -- and will do so again.

"I think we're going to have a larger crowd, and more people are going to be there to see the businesses that are currently there, and then hopefully, continue to look forward and see what (the Wall Street area) is going to look like in a few years," Moccia said.

Last year's Main/Wall Street Festival, held on a hot Thursday afternoon in August, drew about 70 businesses and roughly 2,500 people to Main Street.

Organizers of this year's festival are shooting for a crowd of 5,000 people. Planning for the festival was well underway in March when upward of 80 people attended an informational meeting put on by The Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce at Merchants Bank building on Wall Street.

Dozens of businesses and community groups on now on board.

POKO Partners, Aitoros Appliance & Electronics, Christofor Realty, Crosskey Architects, Devine Brothers, Lillian August, Redniss & Mead, Robinson & Cole, Stanley M. Seligson Properties, Wells Fargo Bank, Wesley Stout Associates and the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency are among the local businesses supporting this year's festival.

Community groups include Lockwood Mathew Mansion, the International Fashion Council, Stepping Stones Museum for Children, Grace Episcopal Church, Norwalk Land Trust, Star Inc. Lighting the Way, the Norwalk Human Services Council, Norwalk YMCA, Norwalk Preservation Trust and The Norwalk Historical Society.

Tad Diesel, the city's director of marketing and business development, believes all the effort and planning will pay off on Saturday.

"This year, we've gotten professional advice and assistance," Diesel said. "It's not a tiny street fair. I'm just convinced that this year it will knock the socks off anyone who has any second thoughts about whether Wall Street has a future."

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