

RIVERFEST

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and Rotary took over the planning process, it was uncertain what kind of profit would be made.

“Truthfully, we realized we had a late start on the project and we didn’t know if we’d make a profit the first year,” he said.

And while the groups “pretty much broke even,” Merrill said organizers are not discouraged.

“We made a three-year commitment to this and that is still the intention,” he said.

Comments made on The Journal’s website and Facebook page prior to the July 20 event were not in favor of the concert’s headliner band, Arch Allies. In the previous two years, Arch Allies opened for Loverboy

and 38 Special, respectively. Merrill said Arch Allies was familiar with the venue and gave organizers “a good package deal,” which contributed to why they were asked to front the concert.

“We realized we’re not going to have Arch Allies again next year,” Merrill said.

Robin Bjorkquist, event coordinator at Backus, said the public is being asked for its input on what people want to see on the main stage.

“We need to know what the public wants,” she said. “We’re looking at all genres of music.”

She stressed that when people make suggestions, they need to mention specific band names. Ideas can be given to Bjorkquist at 285-7225, via email at backusab.org or on the organization’s Facebook page.



FILE PHOTO

Riverfest 2013 drew about 1,000 people. Here, concert goers show their appreciation to one of the four bands that performed. Plans for Riverfest 2014 are underway.

Merrill said with limited finances available to put into the event, it would be difficult to secure “expensive, big name bands.”

“We want people to keep in mind that the purpose of Rotary and Backus doing this is to provide a quality

community event and raise money for youth programs,” he said. “Whatever we do make on the event, we will put back into the community in youth programs.”

Organizers are hoping to tie in the community’s Fourth of July festivities

SHUTDOWN

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“They will be letting everyone know who is trying to call or contact them that they have been furloughed and will be back when the budget is passed,” he said. “They will have time to take their plants home, get their food out of the refrigerator and that kind of thing.”

He said part of the process of shutting down the park is making sure all employees receive and understand a furlough notice.

“We’re hopeful they get this resolved over the next couple days,” said Ward of the shutdown.

As for pay, Ward said “nobody gets paid, or we all get paid retroactive, but they will have to decided that with the budget. If we go past two weeks, there are several folks who will file for unemployment.”

The timing of the shutdown makes completing seasonal work within the park difficult, Ward said. Work normally handled at this time of the year includes winterizing wastewater systems at facilities such as Kettle Falls Hotel, removing docks and navigational buoys from the lakes in the park, among other details.

“We normally have about 30 people doing that and now there will only be five or six

doing that,” he said. Buoys are normally removed from the lakes around Oct. 15 of each year, he said.

While the number of people camping and recreating in VNP is normally low at this time of year, he said the next phases of a shutdown would include the enforcement rangers visiting campers and asking them to pack up and leave.

“They will get direction from the director of the park service (should the shutdown continue into the next phase) and there is one lead (staff) staying behind and will get the message that says continue to move people out,” said Ward.

Because VNP can be entered from many directions by water and has no central gate, closing it is difficult, he added. However, he said all visitor centers will be closed and barricades will be placed at the entrance to each of the centers.

Ward said the rangers will leave docks in the water at the centers for now to allow people in the park to load their boats onto trailers and leave.

“Some people have boats out, so we will be flexible and make sure there is time for them to get out,” he said. “There’s not much we can do about that.”

Meanwhile, Ward said many park workers are very frustrated by the shutdown.

“This is a really tight time of the year for us,” he said. “We have a lot of projects going on — for the IJC (International Joint Commission), wolf collaring and typically closing down of the park in preparation for the winter season. And not knowing what’s going to happen maybe for a long period of time causes even more frustration. Nobody is really excited about having days off.”

And, he said, a loss of pay adds to the frustration.

“A lot of folks with us live paycheck to paycheck and they are very worried,” he said. “It’s not a pleasant situation at all. These folks are really proud of their jobs and work extremely hard and kind of feel like they’ve been kicked in the gut.”

The impact of VNP staff furloughs reaches outside the park’s boundaries.

“I can’t even think of how many meetings I have scheduled over the next couple weeks with outside organizations and, technically, I am not supposed to go to them.”

He said he was to travel to St. Paul Tuesday evening to assist Koochiching County Commissioner Wade Pavleck with testimony supporting state funding that would help install sewer collection systems in communities adjacent to the park.

Now, said Ward, he will attempt to write a letter that

Pavleck could read on his behalf about the benefits of the funding for the system.

Ward said in previous threats of federal government shutdowns, lobbying groups used the media to send the message that the elderly may not get their Social Security checks and people would get enraged and Congress would reach a compromise.

But it this case, U.S. mail will keep being delivered. Social Security and Medicare benefits will continue to flow, though new applications for benefits could be delayed. Air traffic controllers will stay on the job, as well as the airport screeners that keep flyers moving through security checkpoints.

While Ward said visitors to Voyageurs may be minimal at this time of the year, other national parks and park units across the nation are extremely busy. He pointed to places that draw many to view the changing colors of the leaves, the homes of presidents where many school tours are taken and the Capital Mall in Washington.

Theresa Pierno, acting president of the National Parks Conservation Association said the shutdown hurts local economies, families and the nation’s heritage.

“The National Parks Conservation Association is deeply disappointed that

with Riverfest, as was done during the first two years.

“We want to avoid conflicting events like Moon Dance and We Fest,” Merrill said. “We are certainly trying to avoid every conflict we can with local events.”

On the same note, Merrill said the date isn’t set in stone and is contingent on securing a band.

“If we can get a bigger band here but not until the weekend after July 5, we will take that into consideration when setting the date,” he said.

The organizer said the two groups have thrown around the idea of another financial partner. He said cash up front is needed for a down payment on a band and both Rotary and Backus will increase financial commitments for next summer.

“Engaging in a third partner will give us more cash up front for a bigger name band,” Merrill said. “It is definitely an idea.”

Merrill concluded that no big events spring to life overnight and Backus and Rotary are looking to build on what was done the first year to weed out mistakes and emphasize on what was done right.

“We’ve taken all the comments we’ve received to heart, both positive and negative,” he said. “I think people will be impressed with what happens next summer.”

A website has been created where community members may keep updated on the progress of Riverfest 2014 and, eventually, be able to buy tickets for the event when available. For more information, visit [www.riverfestifalls.com](http://www.riverfestifalls.com).

Congress and the President have failed to reach agreement on a budget deal that consequently has forced the federal government and our 401 national parks to shut down indefinitely,” she said in a statement. “The closure of America’s crown jewels threatens the livelihood of park businesses and gateway communities; the more than 21,000 National Park Service staff we expect to be furloughed; and countless American families and international visitors who rely on national parks being open for business to enjoy our national heritage.

Meanwhile, federal court-houses including those in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth and Fergus Falls would continue normal operations for approximately 10 business days into a federal shutdown. The U.S. military’s 1.4 million active duty personnel worldwide would stay on duty, but their paychecks would be delayed.

On Monday, Minnesota U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan, DFL-Minn., introduced the “No Government — No Pay Act” of 2013 — which would require lawmakers to work around the clock without pay to resolve future budget crises.

“It’s time for Congress to start living in the real world — where you either do your job, or you don’t get paid,” he said in news statements.

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., last week urged compromise.

“The American people are sick and tired of poison pill partisanship that keeps us lurching from crisis to crisis,” said Klobuchar in a statement. “Right now we need to find common ground, not battlegrounds. We need to focus on real solutions that move our country forward. That means keeping our government open so we can work on forging a long-term, balanced plan for deficit reduction.”

U.S. Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., issued the following statement after voting Monday with a majority of Senators to reject the latest spending bill from the House of Representatives:

“Minnesotans do not want a government shutdown. They want us to get things done,” said Franken. “Republicans in the House continue to insist on holding our economic recovery hostage while they refight the same political battles over and over again. The Senate passed a bill to keep the government running, and it’s time for the House to act responsibly and prevent a government shutdown. We need to get back to doing what we were sent here to do: put people back to work, improve education, and strengthen our economic recovery.”

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Garage Fire  
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Dane Handled,  
Mike Assisted  
THANK YOU!  
YOU ARE  
MY HERO'S!  
PROUD OF YOU!

2

**MITCH  
AND TROY,**

Thank you  
for your help  
ON THURSDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 5, 2013

3

**MITCH,**

Thank you for  
driving by on  
SATURDAY  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2013  
At about 3:20pm

4

**DANE,**

Thank you for  
FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2013  
Vehicles going  
40/30  
Excellent job keeping  
my streets safe!  
YOU ARE AN  
EXCELLENT  
POLICE OFFICER!  
YOU DO AN  
EXCELLENT JOB!  
I AM PROUD OF YOU!  
YOU ARE MY HERO!

IF YOU DROVE BY  
ON SATURDAY  
AUGUST 24, 2013

Thank you!

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