

Ross maps out 2021 to Rotary Club members

By Nathan Havenner
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While Owensboro has been facing frigid temperatures and ice, the freeze on community events caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is starting to melt, Tim Ross, director of public events for the city of Owensboro, said Wednesday.

Ross told members of the Owensboro Rotary Club during its weekly Zoom meeting that his office is gearing up for a busy 2021 event season, with many of the city's signature events returning after a one-year hiatus.

Perhaps most notably, the Owensboro Air Show and the Owensboro Hydrofair boat races will be held on back-to-back weekends. The air show is currently scheduled for Aug. 13-15, while the Hydrofair will be Aug. 20-21 at the riverfront.

Ross said the Blue Angels will be headlining the air show this year after participating in 2018.

"We had 70,000 folks plus that came to our show the last time," he said. "They were here and they will be back again."

Ross said the Owensboro Air Show will be the only show of its kind this summer within a five- to six-hour drive from Owensboro. The air show is also one of only about seven shows the Blue Angels will be participating in this year that is classified as a "remote show."

While the U.S. Department of Defense makes the Blue Angels jet team available to cities throughout the country, only 20% of its show season can be what is classified as a "remote show," meaning an airshow that does not take place near an airport that the team would use for takeoffs and landings.

"Competing with Chicago, Seattle, Ft. Lauderdale and Pensacola Beach, where they are based out of, and the international stuff that they do, it is pretty significant that 12 months after they were here they had called back and said, 'Hey, we want to come back.' "



Tim Ross

Other signature events also returning for 2021 include the International Bar-B-Q Festival, which Ross said has historically signaled the start of the summer event season. The festival will be May 7-8 this year, but Ross said it will have a different look than in years past.

"Bar-B-Q Fest is one that my office works with quite a bit and they have an announcement next week about that for 2021," Ross said. "It is not going to be the same festival in 2021 due to numerous crowd issues related to the virus, but yet they still want to recognize barbecue and they have a pretty cool concept that they planned that we have been working with them on."

New for this year will be Owensboro serving as an overnight stop during the Hemmings Motor News annual Great Race. The event features antique and classic cars in a rally-style race that begins in San Antonio, Texas and concludes in Greenville, South Carolina.

"They have more than 100 teams participating," Ross said. "They will come rolling into town on Veterans Boulevard on June 23, which is a Wednesday."

"We will close Veteran's Boulevard and they will have their finish line there and they will line up these old vintage classic cars."

Ross said live music, food trucks and displays will create a street-party atmosphere community members can enjoy alongside the drivers.

While the events will still be in keeping with COVID19 mandates and regulations, Ross said statistics are showing that more and more Americans are becoming comfortable again with traveling and attending public events, due in large part to the COVID-19 vaccine and new scientific data.

"Here in Owensboro we have already seen signs, just in the last few weeks, of things starting to pick back up a little bit which we were excited about," he said.

Rotary Club President Debbie Zuerner said that while Owensboro had been chosen to host the annual Rotary District 6710 conference, it will now be a virtual-only event.

"(The Rotary) has really done some hard work in planning this," she said.

"We have asked, and we have accepted to do the opening ceremonies for that, albeit virtual."

"We can still do something special as we had talked about."

In other Rotary Club news, Zuerner said there is currently a discussion about clubs potentially having small numbers of individuals who want to meet in small groups do so at a location where they can safely practice social distancing.

"We are working through all of those details," she said.

The Owensboro Rotary Club will next meet via Zoom at noon on Feb. 24.

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