



Portage to celebrate summer with 3-day fest

— BY RUTH RICE

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The 16th annual Portage Area Summerfest will be held today through Sunday at Crichton-McCormick Park. Johnstown Classic Rockers will kick off the weekend with a Rock 'n' Roll Oldies Dance Party tonight at the Royal Ballroom on Main Street in Portage. The event is sponsored by the Summerfest committee.

Doors open at 8, and the party begins at 8:30. The rockers will play oldies dance music until 11:30.

"We used to have a Summerfest Ball with big-band music, but that was discontinued," said Joe Gribbin, a Summerfest committee member.

"We decided to start again with the Johnstown Classic Rockers."

Guests are encouraged to bring their own food in tailgate-party style. The Summerfest committee will have beverages available.

Tickets for the dance party are \$10 per person, and tables for up to 10 people may be reserved for an additional \$20.

All proceeds will be used to support Portage Area Summerfest.

The three-day event will end with two shows by the Fabulous Hubcaps, an oldies band from Washington, D.C., from 6 to 7 and 7:30 to 8:30 Sunday.

In between the two bands, there will be food and activities.

Saturday's highlights include a parade at 2 p.m. co-sponsored by Portage Volunteer Fire Company, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and a Portage-style fireworks display at 10 at the football stadium.

Gribbin said the display will include a Mustang salute in honor of the undefeated Portage Mustangs and a special set honoring the returning Army Reserve 876th Engineers.

Sunday will begin with a church service in the park, followed by a pancake breakfast at 8 by the Portage Rotary.

The 10th annual Summerfest Golf Outing will begin at 9 at Maple Crest Golf Course.

The Portage Area Cruisers Car Club Car Show, which will have more than 250 classic cars, will be held at 10 at the park.

The Summerfest Idol Talent Show will be held from 1:30 to 3:30.

On a more serious note, a special exhibit on the 1940 Sonman Coal Mine Disaster will be held from 1 to 5 p.m. on all three days of the festival at Portage Station Museum, 400 Lee St.

The exhibit will feature an extensive photo collection by Robert Sease and the 30-minute video "63 Men Down."

"Summerfest is always held the second full weekend in August," Gribbin said.

"It started in 1990 to celebrate Portage's centennial. We plan all year for this event."

There will be more than 25 food booths, 50 craft booths, a variety of musical entertainment, wood-carvers, blacksmiths, a fishing demonstration, pony rides, petting zoo and children's rides.

Spit-roast turkey and a pig roast will be available Saturday and Sunday.

There will be no pets, bikes, skateboards or Rollerblades allowed in the park during the festival.

Lawn chairs are suggested because seating is limited.