Bridge Day 2023, the 44th incarnation of the largest one-day festival in the state of West Virginia, officially kicks off at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 21 and runs until 3 p.m. Read inside to discover a timeline and more on some of the events packed into Bridge Day.
Welcome to Bridge Day 2023

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

7:00 AM: Route 19 Closes to traffic. Detour Begins
7:00 AM-8:00 AM: Active SWV’s Bridge Day 5K Run Racers arrive at designated pickup spots
8:15 AM: Buses begin transporting 5k racers to starting line
8:30 AM: Shuttles begin at designated lots
8:45 AM: Bridge Day 5K Race begins
9:00 AM: Bridge Day Begins
9:00 AM: Into The Gorge bus rides start (pre-sold tickets only)
1:30 PM: Into The Gorge bus rides end
3:00 PM: Bridge Day chili cookoff in downtown Fayetteville
3:00 PM: Bridge Day ends
5:00 PM: Route 19 re-opens. Detour ends

SHUTTLE BUS INFO:

$5 per person. Cash ONLY.

- SOUTH - FAYETTE LANDING (NEW RIVER HEALTH)
  411 MALL RD OAK HILL
  Handicap accessible shuttle stop.
- SOUTH - FAYETTE TOWN CENTER (WALMART)
  204 TOWN CENTER ROAD FAYETTEVILLE
- SOUTH - FAYETTEVILLE PK8 SCHOOL
  515 W MAPLE AVE FAYETTEVILLE
- SOUTH - FAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
  100 N COURT ST FAYETTEVILLE
- NORTH - SMALES BRANCH ROAD (LIGHTHOUSE WORSHIP CENTER)
  1175 SMEALS BRANCH RD HICO
  Handicap accessible shuttle stop.
- NORTH - MIDLAND TRAIL HIGH SCHOOL INTERSECTION OF ROUTE 19 & US ROUTE 60 HICO

These businesses welcome you to Bridge Day.

Philip J. Tissue
Wills, Trusts, Powers Of Attorney, Deeds, Title Exams
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Attorney At Law
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Weekend Appointments Available
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Communication, cooperation drive Bridge Day success

By Steve Keenan
THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

Editor’s note: The following story is reprinted from The Register-Herald’s Yearbook section on Sept. 30.

It takes a village to raise a Bridge Day.
Becky Sullivan, chair of the Bridge Day Commission and executive director of the New River Gorge CVB/Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, says the success of the enduring event boils down to a simple concept.
“The people and our love for celebrating our state, especially our little piece of Almost Heaven,” she said recently.
But, there’s more. Much more.
What has kept the massive Bridge Day undertaking going all these years?
“Pulling off an event of this size with good communication and safety and security for all of the spectators and attendees (is critical),” Sullivan said. Monthly planning meetings of the supervising Bridge Day Commission iron out most of the behind-the-scenes details which the public might not even consider, she noted. Also, social media accounts are engaged in reaching out to and interacting with the public about the event. “Good communication is key for an event of this size.”
Tim Naylor, executive assistant of the New River Gorge CVB/Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, said...
he has tried to embrace some more of the Bridge Day work for the three-person CVB staff recently. One of his main areas of focus is coordinating the vendors who line the crowded pathway selling their wares or offering information or activities on Bridge Day.

“We’ve got a lot of new people this year; probably 35 to 40 percent are new,” said Naylor. “I think the national park designation brought the word out to people who had never really heard about Bridge Day before.”

Over 200 vendors are registered for the 2023 event, and there is no more room in the inn, he said.

“It’s challenging,” Naylor said. “I tried to get a head start on it this year.” Directing returning vendors to their normal spots is a priority, he noted.

“I think the biggest challenge is making sure we don’t have too many food vendors across from each other that clog the walkways, ... and also making sure you don’t have two of the same type of vendors real close to each other, so everybody has a fair opportunity.”

BRIDGE DAY SUCCESS 5

Have a Happy & Safe Bridge Day 2023!

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Bridge Day 2023

BRIDGE DAY SUCCESS
FROM 4

Naylor says the vendors are very important to the success of Bridge Day. “The majority of the people are coming to see the BASE jumpers, and the vendors are just an added bonus. But, from a behind-the-scenes standpoint, without the vendors buying their spaces and paying for their booths, we don’t have the money to pay for law enforcement, gas for the shuttle buses, etc. So I think the vendor booths are what really finance Bridge Day more so than anything else.”

Dave Williams, Rte. 19 supervisor for the West Virginia Division of Highways, is in his first year of being the WVDOH representative on the legislative-mandated Bridge Day Commission. He has been with the DOH for 19 years and has overseen U.S. Rte. 19 operations for the past five years.

He opines that “just everything” makes Bridge Day tick.

“People like to get out,” Williams said prior to the Aug. 16 BDC meeting. “It brings tourism, especially now that it’s a national park. It highlights the community.”

While folks like to walk across the bridge, Bridge Day is not a walk in the park for the DOH crew, Williams admits.

“Yeah, it’s a lot of work for us,” he said. “Usually at the beginning of October, we start preparation, making sure it’s cut, that the roads are fixed and everything, cones set up and traffic control. But mostly our main work is the day of Bridge Day when we do traffic control, moving the trash (and other tasks).”

The Bridge Day Commission is the mastermind for planning the event each year. It involves representatives from several local agencies, as well as advisory personnel. There are six voting members: chamber of commerce, county commission, sheriff’s department, State Police, WV DOH and Fayetteville. Six advisory members represent the National Park Service, rappel, BASE jumping, vendors, emergency services and regional tourism.

In addition to the BDC, law enforcement agencies have their own committees and communicate year-round about the event, Sullivan said. “Everybody’s got kind of their nuts and bolts of their duties for Bridge Day.”

Sullivan says her volunteer email list includes about 80 people, and that includes individuals who set out roadway markers and flags, give out directions for parking and shuttles, volunteers at vendor parking lots (starting at 5 a.m. Saturday) and volunteers at the chamber of commerce’s retail Bridge Day booths which feature official Bridge Day souvenirs.

“So we kind of have volunteers kind of spread out throughout the whole event.” Active Southern West Virgin- ia also has volunteers, as well as other organizations.

“Bridge Day is definitely a community-wide supported event,” Sullivan said.

Keeping the bridge and event attendees safe and traffic flowing as reasonably as possible, law enforcement personnel from WV State Police, Town of Fayetteville and Fayette County Sheriff’s Department numbered 88 in 2022, Sullivan said.

In addition, fire departments, river rescue, vertical rope rescue, emergency management and ambulance services and emergency medical personnel are among the others that have a large presence adding to the safety factor.

The FBI and National Park Service also have a Bridge Day presence.

Benjy Simpson, the longtime director of the Bridge Day rappel and high line, stepped aside prior to Bridge Day 2023 and is bring replaced by his son, Benjy Simpson III, and Cindy Martel, as they will guide this year’s rappel activities.

The engineering marvel that is the New River Gorge Bridge itself is the centerpiece attraction, the elder Simpson says, and the annual Bridge Day festival branches out from that. “The bridge brings people,” said Simpson, who began overseeing the rappel in 1992 with his company,

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The New River Convention Center is conveniently located just minutes from the New River Gorge Bridge and all of the local outdoor attractions, cafes, shopping and historic towns busy with things to do. We have 40,000 square feet of hall/ballroom space divisible into 4 rooms, and a grand entrance function gathering space for any and every event; Wedding Receptions, Meetings, Celebrations, Parties.

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**Official Bridge Day Vendors**

**North Side**

1-2 — NRG Arts  
3 — Coal Miner Beef Jerky  
4 —  
5 — WVU School of Pharmacy  
6 — Monterey Makers  
7 — Summersville CVB  
8 — Peace and Love  
9 — Save the Children Action Network  
10 — Evergreen Studios  
11 — J Gray Woodworking  
12 — Libertarian Party of WV  
13 — JHG Trucking Inc.  
14 — Dave’s Famous T&L Hot Dogs  
15 — Greene Street Cannabis Co.  
16 — L&C Fudgery  
17-18 — The Haines Company of Keyser, LLC  
18 — Bass Pro Shops/Cabela’s  
19 — Glen Elk Boys  
20 — National Parks Conservation Association  
21 — Eastern National  
22 — Sites Events Co. LLC  
23 — Hidden Gem Jewelry  
24 — Almost Heaven Hemp Farms  
25 — Catari  
26 —  
27 — Dina Coladas  

**South Side (Shoulder)**

1-5 — Monster Energy  
6-7 — BASE packing  
8-10 — Adventures on the Gorge  
11 — Sign/water  
12 — Big Al’s T’s  
13 — Nature Valley/Nikon  
14 — Hampton Farms  
15 — Community Connections  
16 — Moving Mountains Recovery  
17 — 22 Jumps/Cohen Biocience  
18-19 — Kettlecious Kettle Corn  
20-21 — The West Virginia Company  
22-23 — Wild Mountain Soap Company  
24 — Mountain State Montessori  
25-27 — U.S. Army  

**South Side Median**

130 — Enel Green Power  
131 — Made By Meish  
132 — U-Haul Company of West Virginia  
133 — 2 Daughters Concessions  
134 — Molly Wolff Photography and Art By Meghan Fisher  
135 — Holy O’s Mini Donuts  
136 — United Mine Workers of America  
137 — Robinson Insurance  
138 — The Hive  
139 — Plateau Medical Center  
140 —  
141 — Serendipity LLC  
142 — Cardinal Creek  
143 — Anita’s Authentic Mexican Street Food  
144 —  
145 —  
146-147 — The Sugar Shanty, LLC  
148 — Big Jim WV  
149 — Tumble’s and More  
150 — Jehovah’s Witness  
151-152 — Kobe Asian Fusion  
153 — The Summit  
154 — WV Public Broadcasting  
155 — A Ramsey Creative Emporium  
156 — Columbia Care  
157-159 — Tito’s  
160 — Kona Ice of NW Kanawha County  
161 — Parties And Peonies  
162 — SunTan Swine BBQ  
163-164 — Mount Olive Correctional Complex  
165 — Appalachian Lemonade  
166 — Good Things Come Cheap Boutique  
167 — Appalachian Ice  
168 — Triple E Bowtique  
169 — Sugar Bottom Farm  
170 — Enjoyed Again  
171 — LA Rustic Designs  
172-173 — Shady Side Market  
174 — Owl Mountain Farm  
175 — Moon Flower  
176 — Snokrazy Snoballs & Extreme Funnel Cakes  
177-178 — HypesCo.  
179 — WV Chapter 82nd Airborne Association  
180 — Lisa’s Jars Of Love  
181 — Wild & Wonderful Paint Parties  
182 — Hackworth’s Wood and Steel  
183 — TMT Custom Barn Wood Designs  
184 — Sassy Gals Gourmet  
185 — Pinky’s Hempire  
186 — Cabela’s  
187 — Curbside Concoctions LLC  
188 — The Happy Hound  
189-191 — NRGRDA
ACTIVE SWV OFFERS COMPLIMENTARY BICYCLE VALET

Active Southern West Virginia is offering a complimentary bicycle valet station at the south end of the New River Gorge Bridge for Bridge Day on Oct. 21 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Located at Studio B parking lot, 309 Keller Ave. in Fayetteville, this service aims to enhance visitors’ experience by allowing them to skip the parking hassle.

Volunteers will be onsite to securely receive and store your bike for the day, allowing you to fully immerse yourself in the festivities of Bridge Day without the inconvenience of searching for a parking spot as bicycles are prohibited on the bridge. The valet station will be situated in the parking lot of Maggie’s Pub and Studio B, just south of the bridge.

Although volunteers will supervise the bike racks, you are welcome to bring your own lock for added security. While donations are not mandatory, they are appreciated and contribute to supporting Active SWV’s mission.

Simplify your day by utilizing our bicycle valet and embrace the excitement of Bridge Day without the parking challenges. Join us and enjoy a seamless experience.

Thousands of people from around the country and from many nations around the world flock to Fayette County, West Virginia on the third Saturday of each October to enjoy the only day extreme athletes can legally BASE jump into a national park from the 876-foot high New River Gorge Bridge, the area’s fall foliage and the natural beauty of the New River Gorge, good food, great vendor sales, rappellers ascending and descending from the undercarriage of the bridge and much, much more.

Welcome to the 44th Annual Bridge Day!

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A state knows for its coal mining, West Virginia and the United Mine Workers (UMWA) share a meaningful connection.

In the 1970's during a push by the UMWA to improve the access to and quality of health care for its members, New River Health was one of the organizations which was founded.

Opening in a former store front in Scarbro, WV, with less than five full-time employees, NRH soon moved into a larger clinic facility on the Old Scarbro Rd.

Many of the founding fathers and mothers of NRH worked for the organization and/or served as Board members to insure business expansion. Dr. Daniel Doyle, a graduate of Harvard Medical School, and his wife, social worker Linda Stein, joined Craig Robinson, a former VRSTA volunteer who moved to WV, and UMWA members as the NRH central force.

Although NRH started serving patients for urgent care and general medical conditions, the business of health care evolved to include services audio-pulmonary rehabilitation, chiropractic, women’s health, prenatal care and children’s health, management of chronic diseases, Black Lung services, pharmacies, counseling, dental health, in-school health centers, and medically assisted treatment (MAT).

Today, 175 NRH staff members serve patients in locations in Fayette, Nicholas and Raleigh Counties main locations with pharmacies, dental offices, several school health sites, as well as numerous collaborations and partnerships with other quality health care entities in WV.

During the two years of the pandemic, NRH opened two new full-service sites: Summersville and Smithers. Summersville, located on Fairview Heights Rd., welcomes patients of all ages, and offers medical and dental services. Smithers, located in the Gateway Center, also welcomes patients of all ages, including staff and students from Valley PreK-R, and offers medical and dental services and a pharmacy.

Undoubtedly NRH’s most comprehensive will be the fall opening of the multi-million dollar wellness complex in the former Kmart next to Krogers in Oak Hill.

Expanstive, updated and addition services will be offered including a drive-thru pharmacy. Several other businesses will lease space to enhance the experience for patients. A versatile meeting center with varied space options, a catering kitchen, and digital services is also part of the complex.

NRH strives to be an active community partner, and sponsors events and activities which promote physical fitness, wellness, and education.

CEO John R. Schultz describes NRH as a hometown oriented business, where patients know the staff and feel for them holistically. Entire families come to New River Health throughout their lives. And, many of our staff retire from NRH.

“We look forward to continuing to serve this area as we grow to meet the needs of all patients,” said Schultz.

New River Health offers medical, dental and behavioral health services to residents and staff in several schools in Fayette, Nicholas and Raleigh Counties. Some services on this campus, other care within five school health centers and services help patients on time away from school for appointments, and other health care related effectively for patients in these locations.

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BRIDGE DAY SUCCESS
FROM 5

Passages to Adventure. “Anybody associated with West Virginia has heard or seen or driven the bridge, and everybody knows about it.

“It’s the main thruway between Toronto and Miami. Everybody comes through here. ... Direct shot, come through West Virginia. And I think that’s a boost for us. And I think that’s something we should be proud of.”

“It (the success of the event) is really individuals coming together and doing their part to the best of their ability and pulling it off,” Simpson said. “One person doesn’t make it happen, and they can’t.

“They need people coming in.”

Simpson also said that the overall community has seemingly embraced the event more than in the past. “Since the bridge is here, we should accept what it can do for us,” he said.

According to Sullivan, the chamber of commerce receives grant funding from the West Virginia Division of Arts, Culture & History in the amount of $23,762 annually. Funding to cover the expenses for Bridge Day comes from sponsorships, Into the Gorge tickets, vendor booth registrations, BASE jumper registration and shuttle parking lots.

“Once all Bridge Day bills are paid and if there is a profit, the Chamber shares a portion with the non-profit organizations who help Bridge Day with set up and parking lots,” Sullivan said.

Expenses include safety, security, sanitation, transportation, equipment rentals, advertising, signage, event materials, operating office equipment, insurance, permitting fees and more.


Tabitha Stover, executive director of the Historic Fayetteville Convention and Visitors Bureau, says, “I don’t think any other place could pull off Bridge Day like our community because we are so tight knit and folks are so dedicated to it. What an incredible undertaking and mass-sive community effort.”

Stover’s CVB annually operates the Bridge Day Chili Cook off on the Saturday afternoon of Bridge Day. “We are only a tiny mechanism of Bridge Day with the cook off,” she said. “Becky at the Fayette County Chamber and NRG CVB, along with her team, pull the event off like a fine- oiled machine.

“It’s kind of mind blowing all the different organizations that come together to pull off an event of that magnitude, but Becky Sullivan is the captain of that ship and she does a wonderful job.”

The Taste of Bridge Day, which occurs on the Friday evening before Bridge Day, has long been a staple of the larger overall event and contributed much to the festival’s success.

According to representative Mandy Wriston, the event is coordinated as a group effort by the Canyon Rim Rotary Club. “This is our largest fundraiser that, in turn, supports in large part the Fayette County Toy Fund,” Wriston said. “The event works very similar to Official Bridge Day. That is, all volunteers, community members and businesses.

“The chamber office gives us permission to hold the event and to piggy back off of the Official
Active SWV's Bridge Day 5K to be biggest yet

By Steve Keenan
THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

Hey, those folks are headed the wrong way! Since 2016, Bridge Day has featured the Bridge Day™ 5K RUN, an event coordinated by Active Southern West Virginia with the aid of many volunteers and organizations.

According to Melanie Seiler, event director for Active SWV, a pre-race goal of 500 registrants was achieved for the 2023 incarnation of the race. “We did reach our goal of 500 registrations and hopefully the majority of them show up on Saturday,” said Seiler. If they do, that would make it the largest race yet.

Competitors begin at 8:45 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 21 and run across the New River Gorge Bridge’s south-bound lanes just ahead of the bridge officially opening up to pedestrian traffic on the northern-bound lanes at 9 a.m. for the 6-hour Bridge Day event.

BRIDGE DAY SUCCESS
FROM 12
Bridge Day website, PR and marketing, and the use of the name. Our club’s part is to solicit food, arts and craft vendors as well as judges.” Adventures on the Gorge has always been our gracious host,” she added. “AOTG donates the use of their facilities. Their staff also lend a hand leading up to and the day of the event. We have volunteers who help with on-site ticket sales, parking, questions, set up and tear down. Other members of the community donate monetarily and with services (sponsors).

“In short, what makes the event work is the community working together as a team.”

“Bridge Day is successful for the same reason, the volunteers and the community,” Wriston, herself a former Fayette chamber/New River Gorge CVB staffer, explained. “When I worked at the chamber from 2012-2019, there were only two full-time employees who coordinated Official Bridge Day. Now there are three.

“Most people don’t realize that. A lot of people assumed we were this huge office like the state tourism office or the lottery office. During the months of September and October, we worked as hard and fast as we could and some days that still wasn’t enough.

“Official Bridge Day has a multitude of moving parts. It’s too much for one person or one organization. It takes every single person represented on the commission as well as community volunteers, National Park Service, board of education, and the BASE and rappel communities to successfully pull off the state’s largest one-day festival. Those are just some of the big players.”

Eve West, chief of interpretation, visitor services and cultural resources for the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, Bluestone National Scenic River and Gauley River National Recreation Area, echoes some of the same sentiments on why Bridge Day continues to be the success it is.

“The area itself and time of year, when the foliage is typically at its peak, brings people in. I feel sure, but I think the uniqueness of the event itself is a huge draw,” she said. “The fact that out-of-state visitors are attracted to and fascinated by the event make it something recognizable on a national and international scale.

“And it’s, of course, the only place and time you can legally BASE jump and land in what is now a national park.”

“Bridge Day is not our event, but we are heavily involved in that we issue the special use permit that allows jumpers to land in the park,” West continued. “We also serve as non-voting members on the Bridge Day Commission during the days leading up to it.

“As an event itself, it gives us, like everyone else who’s working it, the opportunity to interact with a lot more visitors in a concentrated space and time, and introduce any first-time visitors to one of the richest natural and cultural spaces in the U.S.

“Interestingly enough, we’re actually busier in the Canyon Rim Visitor Center the days leading up to and the day after Bridge Day than we are on the day itself, when everyone else is watching the jumpers.

“It also kind of unofficially marks the end of the busy season for us, although we still get a fair share of visitors in the weeks after, especially around the holidays.”

“Bridge Day is indeed a hectic day for National Park Service employees, as it is with many others.

“I’m not sure of the exact number but most of the front-line staff work that day in all work groups, maintenance, resource and visitor protection, and interpretation,” West said. “Duties change a little in that we’re more focused on the bridge with river patrols underneath, public information officers stationed below at Fayette Station and on top at Canyon Rim, security staff scattered around the site.

“And then, of course, we still have the rest of the park to run also so staff working at Thurmond, Grandview and Sandstone. It’s a busy day, and a long day, but a fun day. Except for some who aren’t morning people who have to get up and around to their duty stations before the bridge closes, of course.”

For more on Bridge Day, which is a registered trademark of the Bridge Day Commission, visit www.official-bridgeday.com.

Email: skeenan@register-herald.com; follow on Facebook
22 Jumps “Parachuting With Purpose” at Bridge Day

By Steve Keenan
THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

The 22 Jumps team will once again be a part of Bridge Day™ in 2023.

An organization aimed at spreading the word about traumatic brain injury and its effects, as well as raising funds to support research and Veteran suicide prevention, 22 Jumps was founded by Tristan Wimmer.

In a post-Bridge Day YouTube video in 2022, Wimmer said, “I started 22 Jumps in 2020, as a way to honor my late brother (Kieran Wimmer). We were both Marines. He suffered a massive traumatic brain injury in Iraq in 2006, and his quality of life diminished over the next nine years, and he ultimately took his own life in 2015.

“I saw it as an opportunity to get closer to him. We had both had some pretty formative experiences in the Marine Corps, and I knew that he was dealing with the traumatic brain injury (and the associated effects), so 22 Jumps started as a way to raise money for traumatic brain injury research using BASE jumping.”

“The 22 Jumps team is excited to return to Bridge Day this year,” Wimmer said in an email late last week. “This year, seven jumpers will be making a total of 22 BASE jumps in honor of the estimated 22 veterans and service members who take their lives each day.

“Every jumper on the team is personally connected to this mission and it’s an honor to be invited back to Bridge Day after our enormously successful first appearance at the event in 2022.”

“Our goal is to raise $22,000 in order to deliver on our mission of supporting cutting-edge research and development of testing and therapeutics for traumatic brain injury (TBI),” he added.

“22 Jumps could not have been more thrilled about our inaugural appearance at Bridge Day in 2022,” Wimmer continued. “The people of Fayetteville and Fayette County welcomed us like family and the organizers of the event gave us the honor of doing the opening jump for the event.

“That was touching on its own, but the opening jump just so happened to be the first legal BASE jump in a national park in 42 years. We were even allowed to hang the 22 Jumps banner on the jumping platform, which amplified our brand and our message tremendously. To have that kind of support for our mission while also making a little bit of history, as well as some lifelong friends, was incredibly touching and something we will carry with us forever.

“The enduring and popular Bridge Day event allows 22 Jumps to give its mission a bigger footprint.

“Events like Bridge Day are enormously important to 22 Jumps and our mission,” Wimmer said. “BASE jumping can feel inaccessible and reckless to many people. Being able to interact with hundreds of people throughout the day gives us the opportunity to not only share our stories and our mission but also demonstrate that BASE jumpers are just regular people and that the spirit of the sport can be harnessed for the greater good.

“Our fundraising campaigns are grassroots and our marketing is organic, so the more hands we can shake and the more people we can engage the better.”

The 22 Jumps organization is a registered 501(c)(3) public charity, and 22 Jumps is a registered trademark.

For more, visit 22jumps.org. For more on Bridge Day, visit www.officialbridgeday.com.

Email: skeenan@register-herald.com; follow on Facebook

Bridge Day shuttles provide key service

By Steve Keenan
THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

While motorists park their vehicles along portions of U.S. Rte. 19 south and north of the New River Gorge Bridge in 2022 during the first BASE jump for the annual event, Wimmer and the 22 Jumps organization will return to Bridge Day in 2023.

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Email: skeenan@register-herald.com; follow on Facebook

BRIDGE DAY SHUTTLES 16

BRIDGE DAY 5K FROM 13

Racers finish in downtown Fayetteville.

According to Seiler, the youngest entrant is three years old and from a “local family who knows the course well.”

The oldest will be a 79-year-old from Michigan.

The racers are 60 percent female and 40 percent male.

The top three finishers in 10-year age groups will be recognized, as 48 medals will be handed out at the awards ceremony on the historic Fayette County Courthouse steps.

“This race started in 2016 as the largest fundraiser for Active SWV and continues to grow,” Seiler explained this week. “Proceeds from this event support year-round free community programs with Active SWV.

“This year alone, we have on-boarded 50 volunteer community captains, have 17 elementary schools with a Kids Run Club program this fall, worked with 11 businesses to implement workplace wellness programs, and have the support of over 150 venue partners offering free space for our community captain programs across six counties (Nicholas, Fayette, Raleigh, Summers, Boone and Kanawha), and more.”

“Tae Bridge Day 5K RUN is my favorite of the many races we host,” she added. “The early day with thousands of people descending on the area creates an atmosphere with a lot of energy.”

“This race would not be possible without dynamic volunteers, Becky Sullivan, Tim Naylor and Megan Weatherford with the Fayette County Chamber, the board of education, and our city, county and state law enforcement escorting our runners every step of the way,” Seiler concluded.

Finishing results and photos will be posted to Facebook at Bridge Day 5K RUN — https://www.facebook.com/ASWVB5K

For more on the myriad of activities offered by Active Southern West Virginia, visit www.activeswv.org.

For more on Bridge Day, visit officialbridgeday.com or call 304-465-5617.

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Bridge Day 2023

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Simpson continuing father’s tradition in BD rappel

By Steve Keenan
THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

Bridge Day has been in Benjy Simpson III’s blood for a majority of his life.

That continues this year, but with some added responsibilities as he’s replacing his father as rappel coordinator for the 44th annual Bridge Day, set for Saturday, Oct. 21.

Simpson’s dad, Benjy, allowed him to begin experiencing all that is involved in Bridge Day at an early age. The elder Simpson served as the event’s rappel coordinator from 1992 until stepping down after last year’s event.

“I grew up in the area with my dad running Passages to Adventure, a company that offered whitewater rafting, rock climbing, rappelling, tyrolean traverse and caving tours,” Benjy III said. “So, while my dad took over as the Bridge Day rappel coordinator in 1992, I was exposed to many of the fun activities West Virginia has to offer at a much earlier age — and I remember being terrified the first time I did a rappel or walked the bridge.

“The first time I crossed the bridge end to end (on the catwalk under the span), there was not the safety system and guided tours that Bridge Walk offers today. It probably took us about two hours to get across because I was using lobster claws around the rail — essentially wrapping a rope around the rail, and walking until I hit a support and having to unhook myself and connect to the next 20-foot rail section.

“It was not quick. But Dad continued to be patient and give me exposure to these things. Pushing a bit, but allowing me to do things at my own pace. That was Dad’s thing. He was...
Bridge Day 2023

SIMPSON RAPPEL FROM 16

excited about giving people the opportunity to do things that they would not normally have the opportunity to do so.

“He loved Bridge Day because he was able to see so many people that shared his vision, but also that he could help others come do an event (they) never normally would have. He’s done that with rafting, rappelling and now he’s come full circle to helps others walk across the bridge on guided catwalk tours through Bridge Walk, allowing others like me as a child to experience something new, see a structure unique to West Virginia, and perhaps conquer some fears along the way.”

That treasured time as he grew up led Simpson to take over the responsibilities his father embraced and nurtured for three decades.

“That is why I took over as rappel coordinator,” he said. “Bridge Day is one of my favorite days of the year. Helping in some small part to help support Bridge Day and allow people to come together and experience new things is a great and rewarding feeling.

“I’ve now started the tradition of bringing my kids, and I hope I can help to make sure they can continue to enjoy it for years into the future.”

Bridge Day 2023 will feature 20 teams of approximately 260 rappellers, safety and highline members. Those teams assume anchor spots on the bridge’s underbelly and perform both descents and ascents during the 6-hour window Saturday.

“We will also be running a highline on Bridge Day to allow 60 spectators the chance to do a speed-controlled zip line of sorts off the bridge,” Simpson said. “Finally, there will be tours heading out every half-hour to do Bridge Walk tours on the catwalk.”

“I encourage everyone to come celebrate a fantastic event,” Simpson said. “We’re very lucky to have this in our backyard.

“Come make some memories.”

Email: skeenan@register-herald.com; follow on Facebook

WIDE VARIETY OF VENDORS ABOUND

Happy Faces LLC was among the vendors in place during Bridge Day 2022. Bridge Day 2023 features an eclectic group of vendors. For a complete list, see page 7.
Bridge Day 2023

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