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Concert to benefit Riverton memorial

FRONT ROYAL — A benefit concert to raise funds for a memorial to those who drowned near the Riverton Dam is set for Saturday at the Lucky Star Lounge on Main Street in Front Royal.

By The Northern Virginia Daily
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Show set for Saturday at the Lucky Star Lodge, Main Street in Front Royal

By Ben Orcutt-borcutt@nvdaily.com

FRONT ROYAL — A benefit concert to raise funds for a memorial to those who drowned near the Riverton Dam is set for Saturday at the Lucky Star Lounge on Main Street in Front Royal.



Republicans in Utah Pissed About These Kickbacks

Town resident Wanda Messer is the primary organizer of the event that she said Wednesday is “for the people who lost their lives at the Riverton Dam and for their families.”

Messer, 55, first got involved with the effort following the June 29 drowning of 9-year-old Ryan Warner of Bunker Hill, W.Va. The boy fell into a deep hole at the north end of the dam after slipping on some rocks, according to authorities. The Warren County Sheriff’s Office ruled the death accidental.

During a July 6 meeting, the Town Council voted unanimously to try to expedite the dam's removal, which was slated for September. It took longer to get everything lined up, however, and the dam was demolished earlier this month by Atkins Excavating Inc. of Greenville.

According to a news release issued by interim Town Manager Steven M. Burke announcing the dam's removal schedule, the structure was built by the town in 1906 for hydroelectric power generation. Power was produced at the dam until it was decommissioned in 1930, Burke says.

Burke went on to say that by working with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the town was able to obtain grant funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to demolish the dam so that fish passage would be enhanced and boating opportunities would be increased.



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Mayor Timothy W. Darr has said that the boy's drowning and that of Mark D. Grand, 51, of Linden, on April 7, prompted town officials to make an effort to have the dam demolished as quickly as possible. Prior to that, Thomas William Walker, 36, of Warren County, drowned May 19, 2002, after his boat overturned while he was fishing near the dam.

"Those are the three that we know about now," Messer said. "I think it's being researched to find out if there were any more that actually lost their life there. I have encountered a few people that have told me of some pretty close calls that they've had down there, but as far as the actual deaths, those are the only three that we have right now."

Messer said she's in discussion with Keyser Memorials about how the memorials will look. "I'm talking with Arlene Keyser, and her and I are going to be working on setting up a memorial, maybe two benches and a table or something," Messer said.

Messer said Shortness of Breath, a local band, is donating its pay on Saturday toward the memorial fund, and the concert is slated to get under way at 9 p.m. with no cover charge.

“We hope that they will all come and donate,” Messer said of area residents. “We’re going to have information about the families. We’re going to have actual family members of each one of them [the victims] there, even the mother of Mark Grand is going to be coming. She’s in from Georgia and is going to be able to attend.”

Messer said she hopes to have photos on hand to show patrons what the memorials will look like. For those who are do not attend the concert, they can call Messer at 636-1297.

“If they have donations they want to make, I will actually come and pick them up,” Messer said.

Donations can also be made to: Memorial Bench Fund, City National Bank, P.O. 1579, Inwood, WV 25428.



**Republicans in Utah
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