

Plans for downtown summer festival unveiled

By Dan Daly

Journal staff

1-24-08

The Leadership Rapid City Class of 2007 unveiled its plans Wednesday for a summer festival every Thursday night in downtown Rapid City.

The event — Summer Nights on the Plaza is the working title for now — will include live music, artists at work, food vendors, a farmers market, an art walk and entertainment for children, according to Jeff Carsrud, a member of the leadership group.

Members outlined their plans during the Rapid City Downtown Association mixer Wednesday at Prairie Edge Trading Co. & Galleries. It's one of several projects under way to create more entertainment and activity in downtown Rapid City.

Carsrud said the summer event would begin June 12 and run every Thursday night through the end of August.

Carsrud said the festival would likely be staged in an area by Sixth and Seventh streets, and St. Joseph and Apolda streets. (Apolda Street is commonly known as Rapid Street.) The streets would be blocked to automobile traffic in much of the festival area. However, Carsrud said, organizers hope other parts of downtown, including the Dahl Arts Center on Kansas City Street, would also participate in the event.

Plans call for dividing the farmers market into three areas: organic food, local fresh food that is not organic, and food from outside the area. Children's entertainment would include clowns, magicians, face painting and jump-

ing castles. The Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce's Cultural Affairs Committee will sponsor the Art Walk.

Leadership Rapid City is working with the Rapid City Downtown Association, the Rapid City Police Department and the Rapid City Department of Fire & Emergency Services to organize the event. In addition, the group is recruiting corporate sponsors for each of the Thursday night festivals.

Leadership Rapid City, sponsored by the Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce, is a 12-week training program designed to introduce future leaders to the community's infrastructure, its resources, people, problems and decision-makers.

It has been operating since 1981, and more than 500 people have graduated. Each class

picks a public-service project to help improve the Rapid City community.

The annual Festival of Lights Parade at Christmas in downtown Rapid City began 10 years ago as such a project, and Carsrud hopes the Thursday night summer festival will become an equally successful annual event.

The Summer Nights on the Plaza name reflects the influence of consultant Roger Brooks, who has been hired by the Rapid City Convention & Visitors Bureau and several local businesses to help the city create a "brand name" for Rapid City.

During a recent meeting, Brooks suggested that downtown Rapid City create a downtown plaza area where locals and tourists alike could find entertainment and things to do.

Actually, Brooks' suggestion was more ambitious: He suggested building a downtown plaza, perhaps from a vacant lot, and anchor it with a large fountain or water feature. The Summer Nights program wouldn't involve major construction, but it would fit with his suggestion to create more of a nightlife atmosphere downtown.

Bob Fuchs of Sports Rock and Firehouse Brewing Co., two downtown restaurant/taverns, is also involved in planning for the festival. He said recently that the event would be similar to other Alive After Five events in places such as Boise, Idaho, and Missoula, Mont.

For more information, call Carsrud at 484-3990.

Contact Dan Daly at 394-8421 or dan.daly@rapidcityjournal.com