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Mount Clemens fireworks, concert fly solo this year

Final year for Oakland University alumni to party on top of parking deck

By Mitch Hotts, *The Macomb Daily*

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People coming to the summer fireworks display in downtown on Friday night might notice something's missing.

For the first time in recent memory, there is no multi-day festival sandwiching the fireworks and concert.

City officials decided against bringing back the Summer Magic Festival and instead will focus on a concert by the popular retro band Magic Bus and the annual fireworks show taking place over the Clinton River.

“The city has made the decision to go back to the traditional Fourth of July celebration with great entertainment followed by the fireworks,” said Michelle Weiss, retail coordinator for the Downtown Development Authority.

“We won't have any festival closing the entire downtown, so it will be a lot easier to get into and out of town. And all of the bars and restaurants expect to have a good night,” Weiss added.

The city has hosted a fireworks show for years, and then added the Stars & Stripes Festival for the holiday weekend in 2006. But when Stars & Stripes organizers moved the event to Freedom Hill County Park in Sterling Heights, Mount Clemens lined up promoters to bring in a midway, amusement rides and live music to supplement the fireworks.

Last year, Shelbyvision Presents LLC put on the Summer Magic Festival. But with stormy weather and low attendance, the festival never got off the ground.

Mount Clemens officials then decided to go back to the basics for this year.

There will be the Riversight & Sound Concert series featuring Magic Bus at the gazebo near City Hall at 8 p.m. followed by the Independence Day Fireworks presented by the Wayne & Joan Webber Foundation at dusk.

Magic Bus is a band that puts on a “musical trip back to the Woodstock era,” according to its Facebook page. They present the look and sound of 1960s hits that have been well received by the Mount Clemens crowd.

Patrons are welcome to bring coolers packed with their own food and beverages to enjoy the night. Thousands are expected to take a seat on the grassy knoll between the river and Macomb County Circuit Court for a great view of the festivities.

This is also the last year for Oakland University's party on top of the county's parking structure, which is scheduled to be demolished in the fall.

OU, which has about 20,000 alumni residing in Macomb County, put on the celebration for the past three years.

They regularly have about 400 alumni and their families in attendance enjoying catering and entertainment from Orleans Sports Cafe, ABC Magic and Seeburger's Cheeseburgers.

Julie Dichtel, executive director of Oakland University's Macomb County Outreach, said the university received support from the Macomb County Executive's Office, Mount Clemens Mayor Barb Dempsey, the DDA and the Joan & Wayne Webber Foundation.

"This has been a true partnership that has allowed OU alumni who live in Macomb County to have an amazing opportunity to engage with their university right where they live and work," Dichtel said.

OU has not made any decisions regarding plans for next year, but Dichtel said "we will be exploring our options."

The parking structure on Market Street will be closed for good at summer's end as a new one is under construction next to the county Administration Building on Main Street south of Cass Avenue.

Plans call for the two decks to remain open simultaneously until after Labor Day to give the users a chance to acclimate themselves to the new facility, said Mark Deldin, Chief Deputy County Executive.

"In the fall we will have the structure demolished and for now, we will restore it with grass into a passive area," Deldin said.

The county-owned 2.3 acres of property will be fenced off and secured until a final determination is made on what -- if anything -- to do with the property, Deldin said.

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