

Festival replacing river race

April 9, 2016 –

by Luke Marshall, Staff Writer

NAUGATUCK — The Naugatuck Valley River Race hasn't been held the past two years, but those looking to celebrate the Naugatuck River can do so during a new event at the end of the month.

The first Naugatuck River Festival and River Run will take place from 12 to 3 p.m. April 30 at Linden Park.

The event will feature a variety of vendors, environmental displays, safety demonstrations, seminars, and a noncompetitive canoe and kayak "fun run" down the Naugatuck River to Beacon Falls.

The event, which is being held as part of the Housatonic Valley Association's Source to Sound paddle trip, comes after the end of the Naugatuck Valley River Race. The race was unable to run the past two years due to the water level of the Naugatuck River.

"Now that the Naugatuck Valley River Race series has concluded we still wanted an event that celebrates the great strides that the Naugatuck River has made in just one decade of people caring enough to physically come down to the river and help clean it up," said Dave Faber, owner of Connecticut Outdoors, who is organizing the event.

Faber said the festival will be different than the river race because it is not just based in the river.

"I see it like a day with a chance of a shower, but in our case it's an environmental festival with a chance of a paddle. And if that doesn't happen we'll have fun anyway," Faber said.

Since the event is primarily land-based, Faber said everyone will find something they will enjoy.

"...The paddling community will get to spend an afternoon together enjoying the environmental displays and festival with their families where non-paddlers and environmentally-conscious folks are sharing their ideas and skills with the visitors," Faber said.

Registration for the paddling portion of the event will be from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. and the River Run will start at 2 p.m. There is a \$4 fee to participate in the River Run.

Anyone interested in paddling down the river needs to have a lifejacket and a helmet, and be an experienced paddler, Faber said.

“The trip is very scenic trip to Beacon Falls and gives folks a whole different impression of the once heavily-polluted Naugatuck River. Mild to wild, all depending on the water level and it can be very challenging. It will be a group paddle with all participants are expected to help with safety if able even if it’s just keeping a good eye on their fellow paddlers and indicating if there is a problem,” Faber said.

Faber said the hope is to make the event an annual occurrence.

“We are expecting a great event but with anything of this type we are hoping to have positive family friendly vendors and the community’s participation to make it great, and hopefully an annual event,” Faber said.