

kicks off Thursday in Civic Center Plaza

Mankato summertime tradition continues

By Sam Fischer

Special to The Free Press

For the past seven summers, Greater Mankato Growth and Xcel Energy have provided a place for area residents to add some groove to their grub by holding its outdoor summer concert series during lunch time at Civic Center Plaza.

Continuing the Mankato tradition, the eighth-annual Songs on the Lawn kicks off Thursday.

Every Thursday from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in June, Songs on the Lawn will give attendees a chance to come together to celebrate summer with local music, food vendors and interactive family activities presented by regional organizations, such as the Mankato Family YMCA and the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota.

"It's definitely a community event and summertime tradition," said Greater Mankato Growth Special Events Director Liz Sharp.

The featured bands will perform music ranging from Dixieland jazz to acoustic to rock. This year, the series will add two bands new to Songs on the Lawn. Newcomers Blue Ox Jazz Babies and The DW3 will play June 23 and June 30, respectively.

"I'm excited to play for the people of Mankato at a great summer event," said Dan White, guitarist for The DW3. " We're honored to have the opportunity and are looking forward to being the soundtrack of a summer day. Our music will hopefully put a smile on your face and make you forget you to have to go back to work at one."

Also featured are veteran performers The Divers June 2, The Ride June 9, and Dazy Head Mazy Acoustic Duo June 16.

" The event produces a nice variety of bands," Sharp said. " We try to have a good mix."

In past years, Songs on the Lawn has seen hundreds of event-goers and the number only continues to climb.

" We've seen a really good following," Sharp said. " The number definitely seems to grow."

Event attendees are also encouraged to come hungry to experience the broad selection of food vendors who will be selling everything from Angie's Kettle Corn to Pub 500's pulled pork and pulled turkey. Others include Buffalo Wild Wings, Culver's Frozen Custard, Dino's Gourmet Pizzeria, Hy-Vee, Number 4 American Bar & Kitchen, Olives, Sodexo, Tavern on the Avenue and the Loose Moose Saloon.

" Whether people try the wide variety of food or pack a lunch, this is a great summertime event," Sharp said.

As for the kids' entertainment, the Mankato Family YMCA and the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota will offer interactive activities, face painting and different traveling exhibits each week.



File photo

The eighth-annual lunchtime tradition, Songs on the Lawn, kicks off Thursday.



Photos courtesy of Greater Mankato Growth

The Divers are a Songs on the Lawn staple. Five bands, including two newcomers to the series (DW3 and Blue Ox Jazz Babies) will perform during this year's June series.



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