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## Cardboard Boat Regatta ready to set sail

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When more than two dozen boats take the water Saturday to race, those watching from the shoreline should not be surprised if some end up sinking.

The 2010 Cape Coral Cardboard Boat Regatta, hosted by the Rotary Club of Cape Coral and sponsored by Olin Hill & Associates, will be held from April 24, from 9 a.m to 3 p.m., at Four Freedoms Park, located at 4818 Tarpon Court. About 25 boats and 15 teams are participating, according to event chairman Bob Gaglio.

"It's a very inexpensive way to have a very good time looking at the boats and watching the races on the water," he said.

The event is free and people can park at the Farmer's Market at the Club Square in downtown Cape Coral. A shuttle will run between Club Square and the park, with various stops along Cape Coral Parkway. There is also some parking along the parkway, and handicap parking will be available.

Bleachers and folding chairs will be set up at the park, but visitors are welcome to bring chairs. Food and drinks will be available for purchase. The entertainment will be provided by the Cape Coral High School Band and Irish dancers, and a giant slide and playground will be available for the children.

The event kicks off Friday, April 23, with a "Meet the Boat Builders" party from 5-10 p.m. at Four Freedom Park. There will be live entertainment by Under the Sun and Southern Express, two bands, and a dance floor. Food and refreshments will be available for purchase. The night's highlight though will be the boats.

"All the boats will be on display," Gaglio said. "Meet the boat builders and talk to them about how they built their boat."

The winners of the Bell Tower Shops Patron Award will be announced Friday. This is the first year that the award is being given. An event was held at the mall Friday where all the boats were on display for shoppers to vote on their favorite. First place is \$500, second place is a \$250 gift card and third place is a \$100 gift card. There are three, \$50 gift cards for honorable mention.

According to Gaglio, many of the boats have themes. One boat is crafted as a spaceship from "Star Wars" and another is "Puff the Magic Dragon." One group built its boat and named it Two Step after a former member who recently died. There is an octopus boat, and a few 13-man boats for the first time.

"There's a couple of large boats this year that have more than 12 people in them," he said.

One boat that is not a 13-seater is the cardboard kayak built by Luca Mele and his 7-year-old son, Dylan. The father-son team entered the event for the first time this year, though they tried to get in last year but were too late.

"We just like it," Mele said of the regatta. "My son liked the idea to actually build the boat and the actual race itself. It's fun."

They started building the boat two weeks ago and it took about 10 days to put together. They used carpenter glue, liquid nails, a lot of masking tape and other adhesives to hold the cardboard together. They decided to go for the kayak over a "Harry Potter" theme to keep their first attempt simple.

"It's the first year, we didn't want to get too fancy," he said.

On Thursday, they were putting the finishing touches on their boat.

"He is very excited," Mele said of Dylan. "He likes to paint and help us glue the boat, and now he's excited to see how the boat performs."

Mele recommended that other families participate next year.

"It's just a nice, fun, family thing to do. I'm enjoying the whole experience," he said. "And there's a little competitive edge because it's a race."

Mele owns Applestitch, an embroidery and screen printing company located at 413 N.E. Van Loon Terrace, Unit 103. Applestitch printed the T-shirts for the event for free, but the organization did have to purchase the T-shirts.

Two new races have been added this year. The Citizen's Challenge Race lets visitors test their paddling skills by racing one of the premade boats that will be available Saturday. People simply sign up at the regatta. The races will be held in between the category races throughout the day, according to Gaglio.

### Fact Box

To Go
What
Cardboard Boat Regatta
When
Saturday, April 24, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Where
Four Freedoms Park 4818 Tarpon Court

"We thought it would be neat for people who come that day to participate," he said. "So all they have to do is show up."

The Pet on Board race was also added. Racers will have to paddle their boats with their pet on board.

"Everybody loves pets," Gaglio said. "We'd love to see cats, love to see parrots - we'll see what happens."

Along with the races Saturday, the boats will be awarded first, second and third place in the following categories: Best Original Design, Best Decorated, Best Construction, Best Team Effort and People's Choice. They are divided into two groups for this: clubs and organizations, and family, youth, etc.

According to Gaglio, the Lee County Elections Office will have voting booths on hand Saturday for visitors to cast a vote for the People's Choice award.

"So people can vote for their favorite boat," he said.

Regular favorites among the public are the boats built by the Merry Mariners Boat Club. Stephen Warner, the club's commodore, said the group has taken part in the regatta at least for the last five or six years. Last year, they put together the Lotus from James Bond, which took first for People's Choice.

"I think it's the fact that we've got such a good little boat club," he said. "They are so enthusiastic to do this. In fact, sometimes too enthusiastic."

This year, the club is entering an X-Wing Fighter from the first "Star Wars" movie. It is a two-man boat with a droid fighter on the back, explained Warner. They started building it at the end of January, working on it three days a week in teams of up to 15. They clocked about 980 hours and spent about \$350.

It has LED lights and moving parts, and dry ice will play a role Saturday.

"We're got a spectacular amount of bits and pieces," Warner said

There will also be first place awards given to the Most Whimsical boats in the two groups. An award for the Shortest Boat, the Longest Boat and the Most Spectacular Sinking will be announced, picked out of all of the boats entered.

According to Gaglio, the first regatta was held in 1995 at the Cape Coral Yacht Club. Now in its 16th year, the event has been promoted by the Rotary Club for about six years. Over the years, the regatta has moved from the yacht club, to the R/Sea Hawks Air Park, then to Four Freedoms Park.

This is the second year that Olin Hill & Associates has sponsored the event.

Olin Hill III, owner of Olin Hill & Associates, an independent insurance agency in Cape Coral, said one reason that they sponsor the regatta is because the event is tied into the Rotary Club, "which does so many good things locally and around the world."

"And it's a fun thing, it's something that kids like to watch, grownups. It cuts across a lot of demographics," he said. "It's also here in Cape Coral."

Proceeds from the regatta benefit the Rotary Club of Cape Coral Foundation.

"Which supports projects like the dictionary project, where we give dictionaries to third-graders in Lee County, Rotary Park and the Urban Forestry Program," Gaglio said. "And there's various other scholarships and things that we do," he said.

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