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HOT

Dawg Days to turn Old Town into a wonderful world of wieners

By BRIAN BREHM The Winchester Star
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Friends of Old Town is busting out the buns.

The nonprofit's inaugural Dawg Days of Summer event will be held from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday throughout Old Town Winchester. The fundraiser for the nonprofit Friends of Old Town will feature a self-guided tour of downtown, where 11 participating businesses will be serving unique and creative versions of the all-American hot dog.

"We just wanted to create something that was fun and ridiculous, but also could still kind of tie in the real economic development purpose behind it," Friends of Old Town Executive Director Brady Cloven said this week.

Dawg Days will last for six hours so people will be able to space out their 11 hot dog tastings. When not eating, Cloven said he hopes people will use their time to explore Old Town.

"We want them discovering a store they've never been in, ordering a drink somewhere, sitting down for a while — really just getting the Old Town experience," he said.

Tickets to Dawg Days cost \$30 each and have already sold out, but Cloven said he hopes to make the hot dog hoopla an annual event.

"For your \$30, you get one hot dog at each of the 11 stops and a free beer from Winchester Brew Works, who will have their beer tent set up at the Taylor Pavilion [on the Loudoun Street Mall]," Cloven said.

While it's too late to snag one of the 250 tickets that will allow people to chow down on frankfurters, other activities associated with Dawg Days will be open to the public at no charge.

"We'll have a band (the Gulley Jimson Quartet) at the Taylor Pavilion starting around 6 p.m. and they'll go until 8:30 [on Saturday evening]," Cloven said. "We'll also have some face painting and some temporary tattoos."

If temporary tats aren't enough to showcase your love of hot dogs, Friends of Old Town has also partnered with Dark Nature Tattoo of Winchester to offer a more permanent display.

"They're going to have a flash sheet of real tattoos that are hot dog-themed," Cloven said.

For \$120 apiece, customers will be able to choose from one of six comical tattoo designs featuring hot dogs. All tats will be black and white only and cannot be inked onto a person's ribs or neck.

"I will be getting one," Cloven said.

The 250 ticket-holders to Saturday's Dawg Days of Summer will be asked to rank their favorite hot dogs. Some of the contenders for the crown will be:

- Billy Sous for its Billy's Baba Yaga Dawg — a quarter-pound hot dog with house-made chili, cheddar sauce, smoked pork barbecue, pickled jalapeños (optional), barbecue sauce, buttermilk ranch dressing and crushed Doritos.
- T.T. Walls for its IBC Root Beer BBQ Dawg — a hot dog with white cheddar cheese, pickled jalapeño chow-chow and crispy fried onions.
- Hideaway Café for its Victoria's Eastern Carolina Full Dressed Dawg — a hot dog with white wine sautéed onions, mustard, chili and sweet coleslaw.
- 50/50 Taphouse for The 50/50 Dawg — a hot dog with beer cheese, bacon, sautéed onions and mushrooms.

Additionally, Paladin Downtown will offer a veggie hot dog made from carrots and jackfruit. Credit for that goes to Cloven's vegetarian wife, Faye.

"My wife was like, 'Who's gonna do veggie dogs?' And I was like, 'Well, it's not a veggie dog competition or a veggie dog crawl. It's a hot dog crawl.' And she was like, 'Right, but I don't eat meat,'" Cloven said. "But Paladin was nice enough to create one because they didn't want to leave anybody out."

When Dawg Days ends at 6 p.m. Saturday, Cloven said organizers will start tallying up the ballots for best hot dog and present the winning business with a golden trophy to keep until a new winner is selected at next year's frankfurter festival. Saturday's Old Town Top Dog champion will be announced following the Gulley Jimson Quartet's performance at the Taylor Pavilion.

Cloven said he's pleased that Saturday's Dawg Days has already sold out and, now that he knows people are supportive of the fundraising effort for Friends of Old Town, he hopes more businesses will be whipping up wieners at next summer's celebration.

"It's a pretty simple assignment — you know, make a hot dog — but in true Old Town fashion, the businesses have taken that very seriously but in the least serious way possible," Cloven said.

To learn more about Friends of Old Town and Saturday's inaugural Dawg Days of Summer festival, visit friendsofoldtown.org.

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