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Many free outdoor events and activities planned for summer! - by Frank Picozzi

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Frank Picozzi

As the country continues to emerge from the months-long confines of the pandemic, we know that so many people are beginning to reconnect with family and friends and are taking part in activities that they haven't been able to since the world turned upside down. With that in mind, I invite you to enjoy some summer days right here in Warwick – we have a host of free, outdoor, family-friendly activities planned well into the autumn months.

After a year's hiatus, our popular summer concert series, sponsored by our Parks and Recreation Department, is back in full force. Performances will be held on various evenings and afternoons throughout the summer and feature a myriad of musical selections, from a regionally-popular blues band, to classic country hits and a Fleetwood Mac cover band, traditional American and Celtic folk and percussive dance, to an eight-piece band, a local father-and-son harmony performance, and other groups playing a wide range of popular hits from yesteryear to today. Bring a blanket and a cooler full of snacks and enjoy some time at our beautiful parks, most of which offer tremendous views of our breathtaking Bay.

This summer, Warwick will also “be jamming with food trucks.” Our food truck/marketplace events will offer shopping, food trucks and entertainment from 10 a.m to 4 p.m. on July 10 and August 7 at our iconic Rocky Point Park. The 123-acre park also offers great opportunities for hiking, biking, walking, birdwatching, fishing and picnicking. While you're there, be sure to take a look at interpretive signage installed throughout the property that explains the history of the various sites and attractions, like the saltwater pool, Shore Dinner Hall, and Skyliner, that once stood proudly within the former amusement park.

In addition, food truck/beer garden nights will be offered on July 29 and September 2 from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. along the Oakland Beach seawall, and food trucks will be on-site at the Norwood Gazebo on July 14 and August 18 from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. Be sure to stop by and enjoy a great variety of terrific options offered by our local vendors. Oakland Beach is also the place to be on August 3, when National Night Out will be held, offering safety demonstrations, seminars, and youth events

from 5 to 9:30 p.m. Our always-popular fireworks display provides a perfect ending to this family-friendly, community-oriented annual event.

It wouldn't be summer without the Oakland Beach Cruise nights, which are sponsored by the non-profit Greater Warwick Lions Club and held Tuesdays from 4 to 8 p.m. through September 14. Come on down by the seawall to enjoy displays of classic cars and listen to oldies music provided by DJ Johnny Nardo. There's also a 50/50 raffle and a Car of the Week award. There is a modest \$2 gate fee or a \$15 season pass to enter, and walk-in spectators are free. All proceeds support the Lions Club's good work. While you're there, why not cap off the evening with some clam cakes and chowder or other delicious seafood and classic American fare at one of our local seaside restaurants?

The Gaspee Days celebration has been a part of the fabric of our community for over 50 years, and I'm pleased to announce that the Gaspee Days Arts and Crafts Festival will again be underway. Normally held over Memorial Day weekend, this year's celebration was delayed until September due to COVID-19 restrictions. On September 11 and 12, visitors will travel along Narragansett Parkway to enjoy a day of shopping, eating and music outside. The fun begins at 10 a.m. both days and concludes at 5 p.m. on Saturday and 4:30 p.m. on Sunday.

As summer gives way to fall, the Rhode Island Masonic Youth Center, a sprawling property overlooking the Bay, will be the site for the RIAFAS Antique Fire Truck Show. The Ocean State Vintage Haulers, Military Vehicle Collectors Club, and a Fire-matic Flea Market are all slated to be part of the fun. Hot dogs, hamburgers and refreshments will be available and Joe Vingi of Pleasure Sounds Unlimited will be on hand to provide music. Entrance is free, but the RIAFAS will be collecting new, unwrapped toys that will be distributed to those in need if you'd like to make a donation.

Of course, you don't have to plan just a day trip to our city. While our recreational facilities, shopping opportunities, restaurants, theater and museums offer plenty of attractions right here, with 16 hotels offering a wide range of accommodations and prices, you can stay conveniently in Warwick and see all that Rhode Island has to offer as well. Log on to visitwarwickri.com for information about lodging options and all the events mentioned here. You'll also find an interactive guide to all of Warwick's restaurants as well as a host of other information about what to do, see, and experience while you're here.

Best wishes for a safe and memorable summer. We hope to see you here soon!

Frank Picozzi is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

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