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RICK HOUCHIN/Tribune

George Anderson Monday hand paints letters to finish signs and boards for the world's largest Kool-Aid stand for this weekend's Kool-Aid Days.

Countdown to Kool-Aid Days

Event marks second year in beverage's hometown

REBECCA OLTMANS
Hastings Tribune

It's beginning to look a lot like Kool-Aid Days. The World's Largest Kool-Aid stand is under assembly.

Employees at the Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History are putting the finishing touches on Kool-Aid displays, including donated items from Kraft Co., which owns the rights to Kool-Aid.

Across Hastings, a variety of businesses are decorated in their best Kool-Aid fashion. Prizes and commemorative items are piled to capacity at the Adams County Convention and Visitors Bureau, where Kool-Aid Days organizer Anne Rohan is hopeful people are making costumes, writing jingles or planning for numerous other games and activities of the day.

The second annual Kool-Aid Days festival takes place Saturday on the museum grounds from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The huge Kool-Aid stand serves as a focal point of the celebration, serving visitors 14 flavors of the drink, which was invented in Hastings in 1927.

This year, the stand will be 64 feet long and is expected to serve about 500 gallons in seven hours -- about one gallon every minute.

Monday, the stand was in sections in the driveway of George Anderson of Hastings. It is as bright as it is big, decorated in vibrant colors to match flavors such as ice blue raspberry and new flavors Mandarin Tangerine and Kool-Aid Fruit Ts.

The stand is built in eight detachable sections, each with its own header to proclaim flavors.

Anderson is building the stand as a representative of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Hastings. The organization also will supply volunteers to help serve at the stand Saturday.

Anderson said his reasons for making the stand are a mix of nostalgia and a love of children.

Anderson has lived in the house on North Kansas Avenue off and on since 1951. In his youth, he made his own Kool-Aid stands in the driveway and nearby street corners.

He said he remembers how a friend's father displayed his vintage car to lure people to one of the stands.

Kids need simple times like that, he said, and Kool-Aid Days can be a part of that.

"Anything we can do for kids in Hastings is great," he said.

The stand will be assembled Friday with the help of Shannon Fowler and Pat Hinrichs, two employees at Gessford Machine, the business Anderson owns.

With all the activity on the museum grounds, visitors won't want to skip a stop inside the museum. There they will find a historical Kool-Aid display as well as the celebrity smiles display. State and national celebrities ranging from Jeff Foxworthy to Barbra Streisand provided autographed photographs and Kool-Aid packets for the display in the East Gallery.

The showpiece of the Kool-Aid exhibits is one of the first Kool-Aid Man costumes created. The fiberglass pitcher suit was made famous by the 1970s commercials where the Kool-Aid Man breaks through a wall to quench a thirst.

The temporary exhibit is on display until Sept. 12.

Hastings businesses are helping to celebrate the annual festival with special displays in place. The list includes AAA Travel Agency, Ben Franklin/ Sherry's

Hallmark; Bert's Rexall Drug; Big G Ace Hardware and Big G Appliance Center; Blue Moon Coffee Co.; Eake's Office Plus; Eileen's Colossal Cookies; Hastings Public Library; Imperial Jewelers; Jacobi's Carpet One; The Kensington; McKinley and Lanning Inc.; South Central Taekwondo; Hastings College Perkins Library; Hastings Museum and Imperial Mall.

Two other community events go along with the day.

The downtown Hastings Farmers Market opens at 8 a.m. and the Boy Scout Soap Box Derby takes place on the old U.S. Highway 281 overpass.

Rohan pointed out a few items Kool-Aid Days visitors won't want to miss:

n The costume contest and parade starting at 10:30 a.m. She is hopeful a variety of entrants take part in the Kool-Aid themed children's contest and parade.

All ages can prepare a jingle for the 1 p.m. KHAS Radio jingle contest. Entry forms are available at the Visitor's Center or KHAS. The rules are simple, she said: The song should be three minutes or less and portray Kool-Aid positively. The songs can be original works or take-offs of existing songs.

n Food vendors will be on the grounds Saturday. A number of non-profit groups will provide pizza and nachos, snow cones, ice cream, hamburgers and sloppy joe's.

n A postal cancellation takes place from 1-2:30 p.m. at the festival.



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