

Riverfest 2019

FOLAR hosts 5th annual festival celebrating nature's beauty

By Sean Jones

Staff Writer

DINWIDDIE — The banks of Appomattox Riverside Park were alight with parents, children, music and nature-focused activity this past Saturday for Riverfest 2019. Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR) hosted its 5th annual festival April 27 at the park to celebrate the beauty of nature.

“The park is at a nice central location so we could include as many people as possible,” said Wendy Austin, executive director of FOLAR. “It’s all about helping people love the river and the natural surroundings and support the river, keep it clean. It’s about educating folks about the river.”

The park lies just inside Dinwiddie County, at the meeting point of Petersburg, Dinwiddie and Chesterfield County at Matoaca. The historic park was once known as Ferndale between 1901 and 1932 when it had attractions like a bowling alley, merry-go-round and a shooting gallery when the trolley lines once ran to the park.



Dinwiddie resident and blacksmith John Bottoms demonstrates his craft, creating small iron crosses at the FOLAR Riverfest on April 27, 2019. [SEAN [JONES/PROGRESS-INDEX.COM](http://SEANJONES/PROGRESS-INDEX.COM)]

Jeremy Crites and his son Jaxton kayak on the pond at Appomattox Riverside Park during FOLAR’s Riverfest on April 27, 2019. This was just one of numerous activities hosted near the water to promote the outdoors. [SEAN [JONES/PROGRES-INDEX.COM](http://SEANJONES/PROGRES-INDEX.COM)]

“[The park] was very big during World War I, there were lots of troops at Fort Lee and the trolley would bring them out here,” explained Dolores Lee, a historian at the festival.

Almost 30 groups showed up for the 2019 festival to display their crafts, educate guests and have a fun-filled day.

The pond and old canal which connects to the Appomattox River, played host to water events like

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trails and 11 riverside parks.

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Susan Watson of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries shows families a king snake, known for eating other species of snake. [PHOTOS BY SEAN JONES/ PROGRESS-INDEX.COM]

kayaking and fishing. Two exhibits from local groups gave people an up-close experience with animals and insects that often live in rivers.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries was on hand with a number of live animals, the most popular being a king snake, known for eating other varieties of snake in the wild.

Susan Watson, representing Game and Inland Fisheries said, “We have a variety of snakes today. We want to teach people that they aren’t scary and they’re actually good to have around. They’re good for the environment and they eat unwanted animals.”

Among the numerous exhibits and activities available for Riverfest attendees, Fort Lee provided an obstacle course, the Virginia Department of Forestry talked about forest fires, the Kiwanis Club of Dinwiddie held a river rock painting activity, and RVA Goats and Honey displayed an exhibit on all things bees and honey, with goats for rent.

FOLAR is a nonprofit organization that works with localities along the Appomattox River in the Tri-Cities region, including Dinwiddie, Petersburg, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, Chesterfield and Prince George. The group maintains over 22 miles of river trail that includes seven boat access points, 12 miles of walking riverside

Festival-goers enjoy the dock by the pond at FOLAR’s 5th Riverfest at Appomattox Riverside Park on April 27, 2019. Fishing workshops by FOLAR provided poles and lures to hopeful outdoorsmen and women.