



Another beautiful day as the Vibes winds down

Sean Spillane And Scott Gargan, Staff Writers

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The 15th annual Gathering of the Vibes ended Sunday just as it began three days earlier, under clear blue skies with light, refreshing winds blowing in off Long Island Sound.

It was almost the exact opposite of last year, when heavy rains on the first day gave way to oppressive heat the next day, dangerous lightning on the third, and more rain on the last day that cut short the much-anticipated performance by Crosby, Stills and Nash.

Vibes owner Ken Hays was easily the most relieved person at the site at this reversal of fortune.

"This is the finest weather we've had ever," said Hays, a Greenwich native. "The last couple of years have just been brutal, but it's been an amazing, inspiring weekend."

Ryan Montbleau has performed at the last six Vibes and he said he was "shocked when I heard that it was sunny and beautiful all weekend at the Vibes."



Ryan Montbleau performs at the Gathering of the Vibes music festival at Seaside Park in Bridgeport on Sunday, August 1, 2010. Photo: Brian A. Pounds / Connecticut Post

"We had the heat last year, the year before was a torrential downpour and the year before that was some of the worst weather I've even encountered," he said. "But I love playing the Vibes. I'm always happy to be here. I just wish I had time to come (earlier in the week) because I always love to hang out and listen to the music."

There was rain in the forecast for Sunday, which may have deterred some day-trippers, but the sun-soaked festival grounds were filled with revelers determined to get as much as they could from the festival.

Dean Pelligra took it all in with his wife, Carrie Boriss, and their 3-month-old daughter, Sally, during the set by The Ryan Montbleau Band Sunday. A four-year member of the Vibe Tribe, Pelligra said it was the music and the atmosphere that lured him to the Vibes Sunday.

"We think it's a great thing for this community and the surrounding area," said Pelligra, who books musical acts at the Redding Roadhouse.

At first, Pelligra was unsure if he should come -- based on the weather predictions and the logistics of bringing a baby to such a freewheeling festival. However, he wanted to support the Vibes in the hopes of it returning "year after year."

Boriss also had her doubts, but she ultimately decided to make a day of it.

"It's a great place to hang out with your family," she said. "It's perfect."

That sentiment was echoed by Guilford resident Matt Coleman, 27, who was taking in his 10th Vibes. "There's always been a real sense of community here," he said. "They call it the Vibe Tribe, and it really feels like that. Everyone has been friendly -- especially so, this year. We definitely had neighbors that became friends; they weren't just the people camping next to us."

"It's great to have the festival back in Bridgeport. There's nothing like it in Connecticut.

"Nicole Alberino, 29, a New Haven native, and Christopher Peterson, 32, formerly of Danbury, were celebrating their recent engagement during a set by reggae legend Jimmy Cliff on the Main Stage. The couple, who now live in Richmond, Va., met while they were working at the Gathering of the Vibes in 2004 when the festival was situated in Mariaville, N.Y.



The hula hoops were out in force at the Gathering of the Vibes music festival at Seaside Park in Bridgeport on Sunday, August 1, 2010. Photo: Brian A. Pounds

"When you work 14 hours together every day, it's bound to happen," said Alberino, holding up her hand to show off her ring, which she had tried out for the first time that day.

Alberino and Peterson are part of a much larger group that all met while working at the Vibes. They get together every year and camp out together. Peterson spoke of "the little moments" that make the Vibes so special.

"Whether we have a moment just to chill with our friends, stay up for late-night chat sessions or just hold hands -- that's what we're here for," he said. "I can leave here saying I had a great weekend."

SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER: Among those with smiles on their faces by late afternoon were a group of volunteer firefighters from the Valley who were collecting money in big, rubber fireman boots for the fatherless families of Bridgeport Fire Lt. Steven Velasquez and Firefighter Michel Baik, killed battling a house fire July 24.

By Sunday afternoon, they had broken their goal of \$20,000 in donations, just from the pocket change and bills of people entering through the festival's main gates, and gained an additional \$500 from the vendors.

"You are the most wonderful people in the world," Bridgeport Fire Department pumper engineer Tim Richmond told the crowd at the main stage, after Little Feat concluded their show. "I want to thank you one and all for your generosity."

INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS: In efforts to correct some issues accompanying past Vibes, city police and festival organizers worked together and more local police were hired to work inside, as well as outside the fence.

This year, there were numerous arrests for drug possession, sales and other misbehavior, as well as several overdoses reported.

But Jonathan Lobdell, Vibes communications director, said the crowd overall had "been very well-behaved -- good-natured, fun-loving -- and the artists as always have come with their A-game. The people who come here are true music fans who love the peaceful nature of this event."

Lobdell said he wouldn't know how many people attended the festival until Tuesday.

Come Monday, he said, festival staff will already be "trying to figure out how to make it even better for everyone involved."

Staff Writers Brittany Lyte and Noelle Frampton contributed to this report.