

## Of black flies, big rocks and other delights

We are besotted daily here at camp from what spring brings to northern Maine. I'd like to say we are intoxicated from the fragrance of the bright pink azalea bush that draws the hummingbird.



**Barbara Parent**  
Commentary

And, I'd like to say the sky blue heads of forget-me-nots that blanket the yard bring a headiness no glass of wine would. Ah, the wonders of spring in Northern Maine, sipped slowly during our first few days at Cross Lake. Black flies. We forget from spring to spring the viciousness of their onslaught. They swarm eagerly, dine at our foreheads and necks like hungry patrons at an all-you-can-eat buffet. They leave welts mosquitoes would envy and leave us groping in the night for a bottle of Witch Hazel. We want to scrawl, "Help" but there is no shore to write out the message in shale. And who would rescue us? Maine's Black Fly Season is in full swing. Most Mainers are too busy scratching.

We have no shore because Cross Lake is as high as the first of the seven steps leading down from our yard to the lake. We gauge the height of Cross Lake by our steps and the "Big Rock." Our history with the "Big Rock" began in 2001, the fifth summer we were at Cross Lake. "Big Rock" came into our lives because of the boat, a 19-foot Maxim we bought during a weak moment at a Hartford boat show.

"When you live on a lake, you need a boat," was all Ron said. Yet, he and I are not boat savvy. We knew we had to get the Maxim into the water and because our lot does not slope nicely to the lake, we have to launch seven miles away at the public boat launch. Ron built three sections of wood dock at our camp. The plan was to trailer the boat to the boat launch, Ron would get it into the water and I would drive the Maxim the seven miles on Cross Lake back to our camp while he drove the truck back to help me dock. This may sound all light and breezy but believe me, it was not. I did not relish being alone in the middle of the lake at the helm of a power boat.

I'd like to think the gods saw Ron and me through most of our maiden voyage, but finding themselves bored threw in the "Big Rock." After all, my seven-mile journey proved uneventful and even I was loosening up as our camp came in view and Ron's reassuring presence on our 24-foot dock. As the Maxim neared the dock, the scrape of its hull was our introduction to just how shallow and rocky Cross Lake is at its shores. There we were, boat stuck on something. It is times like this when one marvels at the bravery of sailors who navigate the Atlantic or cross the Pacific and here we are, just 24 feet from shore, the water perhaps up to my knees but my arms are shaking.

The "Big Rock" is the culprit and eventually it gets hauled out of Cross Lake to shore with a come-along. The "Big Rock" is not huge, measuring two feet high and maybe three feet wide, but it's substantial. The grandkids get photographed standing on it, catch minnows from it and we use it to gauge how high the lake is.

As for the day the Maxim got stuck, Ron just disconnected the first section of dock from the shore to the further end of the dock and with a few pushes, the Maxim glided into place. The "Big Rock" was part of the docking problem but the depth of Cross Lake near the shore would prove another.

Eighty-eight feet of aluminum dock and a few thousand dollars later makes for a less stressful docking. The story doesn't end there, of course. It never does. At summer's end the dock has to be disassembled and taken out of the lake. The sections are brought, one at a time to shore on our paddle boat. For years, Ron carried each of the 11 dock sections from the shore up the steep bank of our lot. Last summer we bought a utility trailer and ramps that reach the shore so that the sections can be loaded onto the trailer and pulled up the bank by the Jeep Wrangler.

The saving grace, by then? The black flies are gone.



Ken Hays, the founder and director of Gathering of the Vibes, created the music festival to honor Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead after his death in 1996. In 15 years, the event has grown to welcome more than 20,000 people a year.

Courtesy of Akmi Entertainment

### Fast facts

**What:** Gathering of the Vibes Music Festival.  
**When:** July 21 to 24.  
**Where:** Seaside Park in Bridgeport.  
**Tickets:** \$45 to \$75 for single day passes and \$205 for camping.  
**More info:** [www.gatheringofthevibes.com](http://www.gatheringofthevibes.com).

## Vibes festival keeps Dead alive

By **Stephanie A. O'Connell**  
Record-Journal staff

Ken Hays attended more than 350 Grateful Dead shows, so when lead singer Jerry Garcia died, it was only natural that he attend as many memorial concerts that he could.

After a planned memorial New York City was canceled, Hays stepped up and planned his own at the State University of New York's Purchase College in 1996. Nearly 4,000 "Deadheads" showed up at "Deadhead Heaven: Gathering of the Tribe." Since then, the event has transformed into Gathering of the Vibes, a weekend music festival at Seaside Park in Bridgeport attended by more than 20,000 people a year.

Three stages are set up at the waterfront location along with concession tents, vendors and camping spots. Many festival-goers choose to camp out for the entire weekend to soak up the music and events that fill the day.

"When the New York memorial was canceled my friend and I were like 'let's do this' and we planned the show at SUNY Purchase," Hays said. "The following year we went to another park because we outgrew the first location. Now, in our 16th year, if we continue to sell tickets at the pace we are, we will be sold out of camping spots well in advance and we will have a great festival."

With an expected record number of people planning to gather, Hays plans to deliver a record number of performances. In the past, Gathering

of the Vibes has featured Crosby, Stills and Nash; all the living members of the Grateful Dead; the Allman Brothers Band; James Brown; George Clinton and P-Funk; and Bruce Hornsby.

This year, Jane's Addiction, Phil Lesh & Bob Weir and Elvis Costello will headline the weekend of music, with more than 30 acts from across the country.

Hays starts setting the lineup for the festival almost immediately after the previous year's festival is completed.

"We get over 2,000 band submissions so there is a process we have to go through," Hays said. "Some of the smaller and mid-size bands send us their demos and we have to listen to those and decide if they are a good fit. The larger bands that having booking agents and management, we go directly through them. I was so thrilled with the lineup we got for this year, especially Elvis Costello."

Costello shared Hays' sentiments in an interview with Billboard magazine, telling the magazine that "any event that embraces the spirit of the Grateful Dead in the former home of P.T. Barnum has got my vote." Barnum donated 35 acres of land for the creation of Seaside Park.

The McLovins, a group of Connecticut teenagers who have performed at the Meriden Daffodil Festival, have been moved up from the Green Vibes Stage where the younger crowd hangs out to a spot on the main stage.

"It hasn't really hit us yet that we are playing

on the big stage," said Jake Huffman, of the McLovins. "It is really going to be an incredible experience for us. It's daunting task but we are up for it and hopefully we can meet with some of the other groups and pick their brains a little and get some advice."

Hays is excited to hear Moe, the Tedeschi Truck Band and, of course, Costello.

"If I could plan the perfect musical lineup I would have Eric Clapton, Jerry Garcia, the Rolling Stones, U2 and the Who," Hays said. "Clearly that would be a dream lineup."

Every morning, before the music starts, campers gather on the waterfront for a yoga session and can visit the sustainability village, an area set to educate festival-goers on alternative energies and what can be done in everyday lives to help the environment.

The Teen Scene, a stage dedicated to the younger masses, has been given a size upgrade and will feature more acts than previous years. More than 3,000 kids under 12 are expected at this year's festival.

"We make it a point to have something for everyone, to really make this a family event," Hays said. "The Gathering is an opportunity for people to take a step back from the insanity of everyday lives and spend time with family and friends."

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## Boy bands begin the summer at Mohegan Sun

By **Jocelyn Proto**  
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Let the battle begin. Are you a fan of New Kids On The Block? Are you a fan of Backstreet Boys? Well, the two boy bands got together last week as they began their summer tour with a stop at the Mohegan Sun Arena.

Kicking off the evening was "American Idol" season six winner Jordin Sparks. She came out with a short but sweet set of her hits, including "No Air," "S.O.S (Let The Music Play)," "One Step At A Time" and "Tattoo," which featured a medley of Beyonce's "Irreplaceable," Pink's "Perfect" and Black Eyed Peas' "Where Is The Love," before finishing with "Battlefield" and her newest single "I Am Woman."

After a short break, it was time for the boys to hit the stage. The stage was set and after a short video introduction the curtain fell and the show began with the boys on a platform that was raised and then slowly retracted to the ground.

They began with all nine guys performing what they are calling a mashup of "Single/The One" which had a mix of Coldplay's "Viva La Vita." The boys alternated throughout the night, performing hit after hit. NKOTB started with "Summertime," "Dirty Dancing" and "The Right Stuff," then Backstreet followed with "The Call," "Bye Bye



Bye" and "Larger Than Life". NKOTB began to show their softer side for a few tracks returning to the stage in black suits and top hats to perform "Didn't I (Blow Your Mind This Time)," "Valentine Girl," "If You Go Away" and "Please Don't Go Girl."

Backstreet followed with "Show Me the Meaning of Being Lonely," "10,000 Promises," "I'll Never Break Your Heart," "Inconsolable," "Drowning" and "Incomplete."

It was NKOTB's turn to bring back the dance party with "Step By Step," "Cover Girl," "My Favorite Girl" and "Games" before heading out to the crowd to perform

"Tonight." They headed back to the stage while Backstreet made their way through the crowd performing "Shape Of My Heart," "As Long As You Love Me" and "All I Have To Give" mixed with "Raspberry Beret" by Prince, "If You Stay" and "Quit Playing Games With My Heart."

The main stage filled with fog and five white stools while the New Kids returned to the stage in white suits to perform "I'll Be Loving You Forever," followed by Backstreet's "I Want It That Way."

They all returned to the stage to thank the crowd for their many years of support and continued with

Members of New Kids On The Block and the Backstreet Boys pose for photos after they performed on the NBC "Today" program Friday in New York. From left: AJ McLean, Brian Littrell, Joey McIntyre, Jordan Knight, Nick Carter, Jonathan Knight, Donnie Wahlberg, Howie Dorough and Danny Wood.

Associated Press

their new single, "Don't Turn Out The Lights."

Backstreet returned for an encore first with "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)" followed by the New Kids return to the stage in their beloved Celtics jerseys for the mashup of "Hangin' Tough/We Will Rock You" while introducing basketball star Ray Allen to the stage.

The boys ended the party with a mashup of "Hangin' Tough/Everybody (Backstreet's Back)," dueling it out in the center of the arena. They were having a blast performing together and their high energy got the crowd on their feet all night. They looked and sounded great.