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Beach house grand opening draws crowds

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MATTHEW PUTNEY / Courier Photo Editor

People gather in the food line at the Island Park Beach House grand opening Saturday in Cedar Falls.

CEDAR FALLS — The return of a community institution was celebrated Saturday at the new Island Park Beach House grand opening.

Music, food and bouncy houses drew a crowd whose vehicles filled the parking lot to overflowing. The city-owned concrete building, which actually opened last October on the north bank of the Cedar River off of Center Street, replaced a primarily wooden structure that had stood 90 years until it was destroyed in the 2008 flood.

Mark and Wendy Speckerman of Cedar Falls came to the festivities with their friend Rob “Sparky” Clayton, all of whom were glad to see a new facility at the location.

“I just think they’ve done such a nice job with it,” said Wendy Speckerman. She recalled, “We had friends who had wedding things here. It’s a place that was missed.”

The Island Park Beach House was a favorite Cedar Falls location for wedding, anniversary and birthday parties. Rentals are available again and plenty of reservations have already been made, according to the city.

Its biggest renter, the North Shore Boat Club, is back using the space, as well. A portion of the building is reserved 50 dates a year for the club’s meetings, potlucks and socials. The group raised nearly a third of the \$650,000 needed to rebuild the beach house.

“We’re really happy that it’s up,” said Dennis Kolpek, the club’s commodore, or president. “It’s so neat that Cedar Falls has this to use now.”

Craig Uhlenhopp, who was the club’s commodore when the floods hit in 2008, was glad to have the space back, as well, noting the group “has called it home since 1955.”

Nonetheless, “the building isn’t about the North Shore Boat Club. It’s a building for Cedar Falls. Certainly we have a sweet spot for it,” he said.

Dave Krejchi, another past commodore for the club and a member of the committee that jointly manages the facility with the city, remembers an anniversary celebration for his parents in the old boat house as well as graduation parties for his wife and sons.

"It was a like a hole in your heart when it wasn't here," he said. During the years that plans were being worked out to rebuild, "we just kept pushing forward." Eventually, that led to another enclosed facility designed to be "floodable," he noted, so it would withstand the waters.

The 4,500-square-foot building can host both small and large events. "It'll fit anything — anything you want to do — and you can enjoy that beautiful view," said Krejchi, gesturing to the nearby river.

"I'm glad it's here," added Uhlenhopp, to carry on the 90-year legacy of the original beach house. "I'm sure this one will survive a lot longer."

MORE INFORMATION



Cedar Falls christens new beach house Saturday

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