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EVENTS

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PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY CHUCK WOCKEN, STEARNS COUNTY PARKS

Garrison Keillor waves as he arrives on a bike from West Union.

A pretty good trail connection celebrated by several communities

About 1,000 people, including Garrison Keillor, attend festival

Submitted by Chuck Wocken
Stearns County Parks

On Aug. 26, Garrison Keillor ventured to the suburbs of Lake Wobegon. He joined six counties, 17 cities and 1,000 people to celebrate a pretty good trail connection: the linking of the Lake Wobegon Trail to the Central Lakes State Trail.

The August completion of the Forgotten Four segment of the Lake Wobegon Trail from Sauk Centre to the Todd County line created a 125-mile blacktopped bike trail that spans half the width of Minnesota.

Dozens of local organizations worked together to coordinate the festival. The Gordon Mens Chorus, Skilly & Duff, the Acoustic Cats and Jazz Dot Combo provided hours of music for the celebration. The city of Osakis closed its downtown streets and put stands on the sidewalks for every kind of food a Minnesotan craves during fair time, plus Roloids.

Keillor and 70 other bikers rolled in from West Union for the party. Local elected and state officials joined Rep. Collin Peterson and Keillor in cutting of the ceremonial duct tape for the two trails. A green railroad spike was driven in the trail as a sign of peace between two warring cultures, the Norwegians from the resort community to the west of the trail and the hardworking Germans near Lake Wobegon on the eastern end of the prairie.

Keillor referred to the trail as a paradise in



Sen. Tarryl Clark, DFL-St. Cloud, (left) and Stearns County Board Chairman Don Otte cut the ribbon.

Central Minnesota. He added that much of the gloom of life can be dispelled simply by getting on your bike and going for a ride. He encouraged all to take advantage of the trail.

At the end of Garrison's monologue about life, bikes and the European herring famine in the 1870s he led the audience in the singing of "America the Beautiful."

It was an electrifying experience with the crisp blue autumn sky out on the edge of the prairie with 1,000 other people singing. Some were brought to tears as Keillor recalled all that there was to be grateful for and all those half-way across the world fighting for it.

For more information about the Lake Wobegon Trail, go to www.lakewobegon-trails.com.



There was a rhubarb pie-eating contest.

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