

## **Midnight Sun celebrations brighten Fairbanks landscape**

*June 2010 – Heather Bryant – Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*

FAIRBANKS - Every summer the axis of the Earth tilts the northern hemisphere toward the sun, resulting in the longest days of the year. The sun will rise at 2:58 a.m. June 21, but it won't set until 12:48 a.m. the next day.

That makes for 21 hours and 50 minutes of daylight, plenty of time to have some fun.

And on this solstice the midnight sun will be shining on the largest celebration Fairbanks has ever seen, according to Amy Geiger, development director with the Downtown Association of Fairbanks.

This year's festival, covering portions of Second, Third and Fourth avenues south of Cushman Street, includes more than 180 booths of food and shopping as well as live performances all day long.

"It's a huge entertainment fest, and everything is free," Geiger said. The Midnight Sun Festival is Alaska's largest single day event, she added.

Opening ceremonies start at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Moose stage as Julie Engfer sings the Alaska state song, "Alaska's Flag," while Gov. Sean Parnell and Sen. Joe Paskvan look on.

In a new solstice celebration twist, artists can reserve spots to paint during the event. On the following First Friday, July 2, they will show and sell the finished works at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center.

While downtown Fairbanks is hosting most of the celebrations, the solstice spirit is alive and shining all over town. The historic and world-famous Midnight Sun Baseball Classic will pit the Goldpanners against the Heroes of the Diamond, a military team made up service members from all branches.

“It’s no surprise people have come around the world with this (game) as the highlight of the trip,” says Todd Dennis, who’s been involved with the team for many years. This year, the Midnight Sun Game made ESPN’s top-10 list of baseball events to see this summer.

New to the festivities is the Midnight Sun Cruise-In at the Fountainhead Antique Auto museum. This classic car show with an expected 200-plus vintage autos will feature cruises around town and a Stanley Steamer demonstration.

Additionally, Dennis Gage of the Speed Channel will be recording interviews to be aired on the “My Classic Car” television series.

Other weekend events include the Alaska BBQ Association Throwdown in the Downtown Solstice Competition, Foodstock at the Howling Dog Saloon in Fox, the annual solstice concert at The Blue Loon (this year with 311 and Presidents of the United States) and the Friends of Creamer’s Field Summer Solstice Walk.

A favorite of many, the often costumed Midnight Sun Run will start at the parking lot of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Patty Center at 10 p.m. on June 20 and end at Pioneer Park.

With an array of activities for the family, ranging from pony rides to classic cars, barbecues to break dancing, there are many choices to celebrate the longest day. The question is, what to do first?