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27th Annual Duck Race flying to East Peoria this year

EAST PEORIA — There will be a new slip and slide at EastSide Centre on Aug. 29, but it will not be a part of Splashdown Water Park.

Rather, the new 750-foot slide will be for the 27th annual Duck Race, the largest fundraiser for the Center for Prevention of Abuse in Peoria.

During a news conference Wednesday at EastSide Centre, Carol Merna, the prevention center's new executive director, said normally the event takes place along the banks of the Illinois River in Peoria, but because of excessive rain and the swollen river, the Duck Race will be held at EastSide Centre in the parking lot.

"The move from the Peoria riverfront to this new location was prompted by the floodwaters along the Illinois River this year," Merna said. "The river has gone down the past few weeks, but it was incumbent upon us to make a decision so that the move could come quickly and easily, and there is a possibility that more rain and a flood would come again and we just could not risk our biggest fundraiser."

Merna said when the center began looking for a new location for the Duck Race, East Peoria officials and the East Peoria Chamber of Commerce stepped up to help.

"Mayor Dave Mingus and the rest of the great people in East Peoria have always been supportive of the center in the past, and they showed that support once again by welcoming us with open arms," she said.

"This is an honor. We're very excited to have the Duck Race here in East Peoria," Mingus said. "Things are difficult in the state right now, and certainly this very important event for The Center for Prevention of Abuse ... we're here to support them."

The center serves more than 5,000 people a year and raises about \$133,000 from its Duck Race to support its programs. Programs help those affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual abuse and elder abuse. The center also offers prevention education. Merna said 57 percent of the center's funding is affected by the state.

"We're living off a few reserves for some programs now," she said.

About the race

The annual fundraiser for The Center for Prevention of Abuse is moving to East Peoria this year. The event begins at noon with the race at 2 p.m. Aug. 29. The 30,000 ducks, which can be adopted for \$5 each, will be persuaded down a slip and slide created on the street leading down to EastSide Centre with the help of a firetruck hose. Ducks are plucked from the water, and each duck has a number on the underside. A different duck number will be assigned to each duck adoption that corresponds to the person's name on the entry form. There is a \$5,000 grand prize.

To purchase a duck, or for more information, visit duckracepeoria.com.



PHOTO/ TING SHEN/JOURNAL STAR

FILE - Thousands of rubber ducks float on the Illinois River on Aug. 23, 2014, during the 26th Annual Duck Race to raise funds for the Center for Prevention of Abuse at Riverfront Marina in Peoria.

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