

Cardboard boat race kicks off United Way campaign

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AURORA — If you're looking for longevity, cardboard is perhaps not the best material you could use to make a boat. But if all you want is a weekend morning of fun, it's exactly the right stuff.

For the seventh year, the Fox Valley United Way will kick off its annual campaign with the What Floats Your Cardboard Boat Race on Saturday.

The event takes place on Mastodon Lake in Phillips Park, and according to Deborah Collins of the United Way, it will include 23 cardboard boats of various shapes and sizes, all vying for the top prize.

Actually, make that top prizes. There are awards for coming in first, second and third in the race, and seven divisions will compete for those. But there's also a judges' award and a people's choice award, for most creative boat design.

And this year will see some competition in that category. Collins said there are boats this

year designed to mimic emergency response vehicles, fire boats and the Beatles' Yellow Submarine. There's even one named Sully, built as a mock-up of the "Miracle on the Hudson," the emergency landing of US Airways flight 1549 on the Hudson River in January. (The boat is named after the pilot, Chelsey "Sully" Sullenberger.)

There's also an award for most spectacular sinking, and Collins said some contestants have told her they're aiming to win that one.

The event also will feature appearances by former Chicago Bears Calvin Thomas, Ray McElroy and Bobbie Howard, as well as Ozzie the Cougar, clowns, face painters and food vendors.

Collins said the idea of the boat race is to raise awareness of the United Way's upcoming campaign.

The Fox Valley United Way provides financial and other support for more than 50 social service agencies in 14 communities. The boat race is free and open to the public.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the races kick off at 10:30 a.m.