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As Gallup works to bounce back from two years of COVID-19 limitations, key summer events look to be on track but some may have a few modifications.

It’s still difficult to predict what direction the pandemic may take, so this year’s events still come with the caveat that another wave could spoil the best-laid plans.

“There’s been a pattern with COVID, when the restrictions are relaxed, nobody wears a mask and then they go out and party and everyone gets infected again,” Gallup Business Improvement District Executive Director Francis Bee said.

But his biggest worry for the summer season is rain, which can spoil outdoor events.

Barring catastrophic weather or intrusive health measures, the shows will go on. A couple of events, like the Native tribal dances, may show up in new locations pending city approval.

The monthly Arts Crawl is set to start in April and run 7 pm to 9 pm every second Saturday night through October, Bee said. Parts of it may have to shift over a block from their usual spot later in the season, but officials won't be sure until there is a construction schedule for a Coal Avenue public works project that might overlap part of the crawl zone.

The Freedom Ride, Flight & Cruise event is set to return from a two-year hiatus July 22 to 24. So far the balloon lift and motorcycle ride are expected to come back at full strength, Gallup McKinley Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Bill Lee said.

Longtime car show sponsor Steve Gurley is unable to produce that event this year, so Bee is working to put on a scaled-down car show in a different location, possibly the courthouse plaza parking area where the Gallupfest will take place later in the day. The event takes a lot of logistical planning and coordination with multiple public safety agencies, so any site would need city approval.

"The only difference this year is that Steve's show had a high measure of cachet to it," Bee said.

Gurley was able to use his connections to the collector car community to bring in spectacular show cars.

The Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, which came back as a hybrid event last year, is coming back to Red Rocks Park in full force Aug. 7-15 for its centennial event. The two groups that were managing indoor and outdoor events separately last year are working together this year.

“We know we want to go big. It all comes down to the dollar,” Executive Director Kyle Tom said, adding that inflation, supply chain issues and world turmoil are making budget projections a challenge. “Everything is going to be so expensive come August. Our budgets now are looking good, but as things go on it might be more expensive.”

The arts exhibit hall will reopen for visitors, and this year the ceremonial will award $100,000 in prize money across categories, up from $40,000 last year. The prize pot gets support from the Centennial Club, in which companies or families pledge an annual amount for a few years until each has contributed $1,000.

Tom also hopes to revive some old-time events from the days before the ceremonial moved to Red Rock Park, and said staff has been reviewing old history books, newspapers and videos for ideas.

“This truly is not just an event, but for people it’s really part of their families and part of their lives that they look forward to every year and it has been for generations. Whether they come for the art show, the powwow, the rodeo or the parade,” Tom said. “If we can deliver those like we normally do and find ways to make it a little bit better and really worthy of 100th, that’s our goal.”

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