IRON COUNTY—The Fourth of July will be celebrated next Wednesday, July 4, in Iron County with special events planned in Iron River, Alpha and Amasa.

Iron River

Iraq war veterans and their families will get special honors during Iron River's Fourth of July parade.

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The West Side Veterans Council is dedicating the parade to the Iraq vets and their families "for their victory in the Iraq War, 2003-2011."

All Iraq War vets are encouraged to either ride in the parade or march in either military or civilian attire.

"We encourage everyone in the community to come out and shoe their respect to our war veterans and their families for their sacrifices."

The West Side Veterans Council also noted that Afghanistan War veterans will be honored in a future Fourth of July parade.

Parade registration starts at 8:30 a.m. on the west side of West Iron County High School.

All units are asked to use Garfield Street (between the school and Kermit's Bar) as the main entrance to the parking lot.

Members of the Auxiliary units of American Legion Posts 17 and 21 and VFW Post 3134 will help register parade entries. The parade will form on the high school's south parking lot.

It steps off at 10 a.m., and goes north on Washington Avenue, down Stambaugh Hill to Genesee Street and then turns west on Genesee through the downtown area to Fourth Avenue, where it disbands.

Due to the construction project and detours, the Iron River Police Department has announced no parking will be allowed on Washington Avenue, Lay Avenue or Genesee Street during the parade.

Officials from the West Side Veterans Council will lead the parade, which will also include the Michigan Army National Guard, U.S. veterans, Boy Scout and Girl Scout units, antique vehicles, decorated floats from area organizations and businesses and trucks from local fire departments.

All servicemen who served in Iraq, Afghanistan or during the War on Terror—active, inactive, Guard or Reserve—are encouraged to march in uniform in the parade.

After the parade, veterans riding on transports will be dropped off at the Iron County Armory.

The reviewing stand is in the downtown area. Prizes will be awarded to participants in a number of categories, including adult/youth organizations, commercial, organization or group, comic, antique vehicles, individual horses and saddle clubs.

After the parade, the West Iron County Fire Department will host children's races outside the fire hall on Ninth Avenue, a few blocks north of U.S. 2. The firemen will also give out ice cream bars.

As daylight fades away, crowds will gather for the annual fireworks display, which starts at about 10 p.m.

The West Iron County firemen launch the fireworks from the north end of Stambaugh Airport, and there are plenty of great places to enjoy the show.

The West Side Veterans Council pays for the fireworks show. Because of rising costs for fireworks and insurance, the vets need donations from the public to keep the tradition going.

Anyone wishing to make a donation towards fireworks should mail it to West Side Veterans Council, P.O. Box 433, Iron River, MI 49935.

Donations can also be made to any of the veterans groups. Along the parade route, West Iron County pom dancers will carry buckets to collect fireworks donations.

In case of inclement weather, the fireworks show will take place at 10 p.m. on Thursday, July 5.

Alpha

In Alpha, a flag-raising ceremony starts the Fourth of July program near the Village Hall at 9 a.m. The Alpha-Mastodon Fire Department raises the flag as the Forest Park Marching Band plays.

The parade starts at 9:30, and all children taking part will win a cash prize. Top prizes go to the best trimmed bikes and best costumes. After the parade, free ice cream cones and Crackerjack is available to everyone, and concessions will be available at the pavilion, located in the park north of the Village Hall. Brats, hot dogs, soda and beer will all be available.

The pavilion will be the site of many events all day, including a coin scramble at 11 a.m., kids races at 1 p.m. (wheelbarrow, sack, three-legged and egg races), and an egg toss for those 12 and over at 3:30. Cash prizes go to the winners.

The winner of the “cruise raffle” will be drawn between 11 a.m. and noon at the pavilion. Tickets are $20 each, and funds raised will be used for the Alpha village and fire department centennials, both taking place in 2014.

Tickets will sold until the drawing. The prize winner will get either a Caribbean cruise, an all-inclusive stay at a Mexican resort or $2,000 in cash. Depending on ticket sales, it could be a 50-50 raffle instead.

During the afternoon, three bands will be performing at the paviliong: Crossroads, Jim Sundquist and Stager.

Elsewhere in the village, a pasty sale and pie social will be held at the Alpha Senior Center starting at 9 a.m., and Forest Park’s pom danz team will have a bake sale. The Alpha Museum holds an open house from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

It’s always a busy Fourth of July in Alpha, and the celebration ends with a spectacular fireworks display at dusk, hosted by the Alpha-Mastodon Fire Department’s trained and certified pyrotechnics team.

Amasa

In Amasa, Fourth of July events start at 9 a.m. with an ecumenical hymn sing at Grace United Methodist Church.

The flag-raising ceremony at Hemlock River Park, just south of the downtown area on Old 141, takes place at 10 a.m., followed by the kids parade and games at the park. At 10:30, a flea market and estate sale will start at Grace United Methodist Church, under the tent.

Lunch will take place at noon at the fire hall, served by Bethany Lutheran Church and the firemen, including ice cream and Crackerjack. Cotton candy and snow cones will be available at the museum, and museum tours will also be available during the day.

The annual softball game starts at 2 p.m. at the old school yard. All are welcome to take part.