Afro-American festival keeps tradition alive

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Staff Writer

BREAUX BRIDGE — Crawfish lovers going to Breaux Bridge this weekend may end up eating crawfish at two different festivals.

And, organizers of the Afro-American Association’s 2002 Crawfish Festival say that’s perfectly OK.

“People attend both festivals,” David Thibodeaux, president of the Afro-American Association. “It’s not like we are trying to segregate. You can have fun at both festivals.”

“We work together every year to promote each other’s festivals,” said Donna Richard, director of the Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival. “It’s been a good working relationship.”

The Afro-American Association’s festival, once called the Crustacean Festival and at another time the Creole Festival, will be Friday through Sunday. The Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival will run at the same time.

“Since 1959, there has been a Crawfish Festival, and there’s always been a black festival and a white festival,” Thibodeaux said. “It has been a tradition in the African-American community, and we are trying to keep it alive.”

Thibodeaux said 10,000 to 15,000 people attend the Afro-American festival every year. The site is the Louisiana National Guard Armory, 601 W. Bridge St.

Separate admission fees are charged at both festivals.

In years past, because of heavy traffic flow and security, the City Council contemplated asking both non-profit organizations to integrate, said Mayor Jack Delhomme.

“What happened was, it was beginning to get expensive for the city to provide security, and the city council brought up the idea of one festival,” Delhomme said. “A lot of communities frown at Breaux Bridge for having two different festivals, but the African-Americans wanted to preserve their culture and have their own festival.”

Festivalgoers can come to enjoy the music, eat crawfish and just have fun. Fourteen bands have signed up this year and will play throughout the festival.

New this year is a zydeco dance contest that will take place Sunday afternoon. A time has yet to be announced, Thibodeaux said.

“Our music differs from the festival at Parc Hardy (site of the Breaux Bridge Festival) in that we have mostly zydeco and rhythm and blues,” Thibodeaux said.

Food booths will serve boiled crawfish, crawfish étouffée, fried crawfish tails, crawfish boudin and several other Cajun and Creole dishes.

Additional information:
This year, the Afro-American Association’s 2002 Crawfish Festival music schedule can be viewed online at the festival website, www.kingcrawfish.com, or call David Thibodeaux at (337) 332-5633.