

# Annual Festival Brings Best of Jersey Shore

By Kelley Anne Mc Gee

Come see Crab Races, Crafts, Food, and the Floating Device Competition! On your mark, get set, ready, go, and may the best crab win. At a lovely waterfront location known as Sunset Park, in the quaint shore community of Harvey Cedars on Long Beach Island, they host a great day of family fun annually with blue claw crab races, a crafts show and food, and a self-made floating device competition.

This year, the events will take place on Saturday, August 18, starting at 10:00 a.m. No admission fee to walk the grounds, see crab races, floating competition, or visit crafts show. Definitely great summertime fun and the Jersey Shore at some of its best.

According to master of ceremonies for the annual Blue Claw Crab Race, Chuck Sahlberg "The longtime and popular event seems to just keep growing, getting bigger and better every year. Adults and kids especially look forward to it. It's a lot of fun and we have loads of laughs, as usually something funny and unexpected happens involving one of the crabs and our contestants or volunteers. I myself have been pinched more times than I like to recall," the MC jokes.

For some, the annual crab race signals the end of summer sadly drawing near. But for others, it's a great summertime tradition at the Jersey shore, and one they just love. People come from all over to either just enjoy the day-long events themselves, or to participate and enter their crab in the race.

The race is open to both children and adults, and consists of 12 separate laps among 12 blue claw crabs. The blue claw crab is used to represent the event and in the actual races for several reasons. A favorite seafood staple at the Jersey Shore, which when translated from its Latin name (*Callinectes sapidus*) means beautiful swimmer, crabbing for blue claws is considered a great recreational pastime here as well. In fact, so popular is the crab here, a local baseball team's even been named in their honor, the Lakewood Blue-Claws, and folks along the Jersey shore often fly symbols of this crustacean on their flags or banners.

Each crab is assigned a number on their back with a marker, then placed in a slot for which they'll eventually crawl down, with some gentle encouragement of course. The winner is declared when the first crab reaches the homestretch.

All winners from each race are awarded a small prize, and winners from all 12 races then proceed to compete in a grand finale race, in which winners are



awarded for first, second and third place, and go on to receive even bigger prizes. For instance, free tickets may be given away to a nearby amusement park, or for a free game of miniature golf, or for free food at a local pizzeria.

Contestants may bring their own blue claw crab to enter the contest, or may purchase one at the event for a small fee. The crabs are generously supplied by local shellfishing companies. After the races, contestants may keep their crabs, or release them.

The annual Blue Claw Crab Race is sponsored by the local PBA175. Contestants must register by 10:00 a.m. There's a small registration fee, and races begin at 11:00 a.m.

For those who may not be interested in the crab races, you can enjoy a crafts show here instead. Between 50 and 60 vendors gather to show off their wares including many items of interest to children. Also, a local first aid squad (Barnegat Light), supplies casual food at reasonable prices such as hamburgers, hot dogs and more, for those who work up an appetite, especially after seeing all those crabs.

Later, at 4:00 p.m., another competition happens known as the Anything Floats Race. In this particular competition, participants are asked to create a floating device, but it cannot contain a motor or engine, and it must be self-propelled. For instance, last year, someone used a rubber raft propelled by water bottles to help keep it afloat, along with a hamster like wheel that helped to cycle it through water. The floating devices will also race on water to a finish line.

The competition's open to adults and teenagers at least 15 years old. There's no entry fee, and awards such as trophies and/or ribbons are given out for various categories including both junior and senior. No registration necessary.

Nearby municipal parking is available at Sunset Park, located at W. Salem Ave. Sunset Park is a municipal recreational park and facility, which offers breathtaking views of Barnegat Bay, a basketball court, baseball field, playground, and fishing pier. For additional information, please contact Phone: 609-361-7990 or visit website: [www.harveycedars.org](http://www.harveycedars.org).

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