

Ripon's Father Wally is honored Saturday

by Ian Stepleton

He's brought water to the thirsty, roads to remote towns and schools to children.

And, in the midst of his hectic schedule, Father Wally Kasuboski finds time to shepherd numerous churches.

Father Wally's hometown will pause Saturday to honor — and help — one of its busiest sons, the Capuchin priest who continues to transform lives in rural Panama.

"He's not just a priest," said Bonnie Brooks, an organizer of the event. "I like what he's doing — the humanitarianism."



FATHERWALLY Kasuboski is a Ripon native. *RCP file photo*

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The day will include a Walk for Wally, brat fry and a presentation by a band comprised of local youth, Burly Ben and his Band of Men, at the Village Green. Events start at 10 a.m.

Father Wally Day comes just a couple months after numerous residents returned to Ripon from visiting and aiding Father Wally.

While students from Ripon College, as well as current and former city residents, comprised the most recent trip, the Rev. Jack Kraaz visited Father Wally as well, just a few weeks earlier.

"Jack came back bursting with enthusiasm about doing something for Father Wally," Brooks said. "So we decided to attempt to do a Walk for Wally."

The event begins at the Village Green, where City Administrator Steve Barg will say a few words.

Laurie and Peter Kasuboski, Wally's brother, will be on hand as well.

That will be followed by the core of the event: the fund-raising walk.

"People then will take off and walk as far as they want to," Brooks said. "Some want to walk five miles."

Pledge sheets have been circulating around the community; for more information on donating, call Brooks at 748-9234.

Dollars raised through the fund-raiser will go toward a project to construct a dam at Rio Arriba Sabana outside Torti, Panama.

This jungle river supplies the water to more than 1,000 residents whom Father Wally serves in rural Panama.

Water is plentiful in the region during the wet season, but the river — and consequently the fresh water supply — can dry up during the five-month dry season.

If a dam can be constructed,



FATHER WALLY GIVES a woman of Torti, of St. John of God, held in March. Panama, a blessing during the celebration

RCP file photo

a more consistent water supply would be available to residents of the region.

Cost to build the road to the dam as well as the dam infrastructure, has been estimated to be about \$500,000.

Ripon Rotary is aiming to raise at least \$50,000 to offset that cost.

Money raised through the Walk for Wally will be funneled through Ripon Rotary, via Rotary International and a Panama City Rotary club, to ensure it reaches Father Wally.

"I just want it to be successful, so at the end, Father Wally says how this has done a tremendous amount of good," Brook said.

While the project is thousands of miles from Ripon, it aids Father Wally's mission — which has captivated the hearts of many in Ripon, such as that of Brooks.

"I thought, 'If I ever get an opportunity, I would like to do something for this man,'" she said of why she is helping organize the event.

It hasn't taken her long to get the event off the ground.

"Within a week, or less [it developed]," Brooks said. "I went to Steve Barg and asked him if the

city would support something like this, and he said, 'Of course. Go for it, Bonnie.' From there I started contacting people, and it's fallen into place. I think there truly is community support for this."

She also hopes the event will capture the attention of all ages.

"We hoping to attract a lot of youth for this," Brooks said.

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