

Visitors experience life on the river at Annual Grafton Towboat Festival

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
August 1 2015 9:08 PM



GRAFTON – The **Annual Grafton Towboat Festival** hit the shores of Grafton on Saturday. **The Twyla Luhr**, a towboat that frequently hauls barges up and down the mighty Mississippi, docked right next to **Grafton's The Loading Dock Bar and Grill**.

Beginning at 11 a.m., at the extremely low cost of \$1.00. visitors were led by the boat's actual crew members to see what life is like when you work on the river. Little children were amazed when one of the ship's two pilots let them pull the famous horn, a noise

that echoed along the bluffs, and shocked several of the visitors waiting in line for the next tour. Each of the vessel's cabins felt surprisingly like home, and contained comfortable furniture and a kitchen, complete with a chef who creates a lot of the meals from scratch. These finishings allow the crew to feel a little bit more at home while they are away. The captain's quarters are even tricked out with a 55" flat screen TV with a satellite receiver.



The workers explained that they spend six hours working, followed by six hours of rest. During rest periods, they are allowed to eat, get some sleep or take advantage of the vessel's various lounge areas. The work-rest cycle continues every day for 28 days; after that, the workers receive two weeks off to spend time with friends and family.

The Twyla Luhr is named after the Luhr brothers' mother, who passed away in 2010. Although the ship has been in operation since the early 1980s, one would think that it is a brand new ship. This is a testament to the hard work that the crew does to ensure that the ship is habitable and pristine at all times.

The guts of the operation lie beneath the ship's main deck, where the two humongous diesel-powered engines are located. Without proper maintenance, these engines would

not provide the adequate horsepower necessary to haul the barges and all of their contents. The ship's two engineers explained that they are responsible for making sure every thing in the ship is working at its best potential every day.



After the tour, children were welcomed to get their face painted for free by volunteers. **The Grafton Chamber of Commerce** sold t-shirts with the event's excellent logo. Food and drinks were also available for \$1.

Chamber Alderman Flo Rowling said that the first day of the festival seemed to be a great success. "The line just keeps getting longer and longer," Rowling said, "and we have another day tomorrow (Sunday)."

Rowling anticipates another busy day today until 4 p.m. when the event finally concludes. After the last tour ends, the crewmembers must wrap up, separate from the dock, and go load up for their next job.



CLICK ON GRAFTON TOWBOAT FESTIVAL GALLERY BELOW: