Keeping the raging Rock at ba

By Jason Francis
Reporter Staff

With the flooded Indianford Park on one side, a flooded home on another and the raging Rock River continually challenging his back-yard, Weylin Stripling's home is connected to dry land only through its frontage on Riverside Drive.

"I've got my own little island," he said as he continued to survey the river's activities around his property Wednesday.

Yet Stripling stays intensely connected with the rest of his neighborhood, which has formed a symbiotic relationship much like other communities on the river and Lake Koshkonong in the wake of record flooding.

"It's been great how everyone's been helping each other," Stripling said.

The neighborhood is continually on watch, inspecting the sandbag walls, repairing levy breaks and making sure water pumps continue to operate.

"It's hard to sleep," said Stripling, who worries about the pumps stopping at night.

But the solidarity is evident not only on his street, but throughout the Edgerton community, as dozens of people have showed up daily to lend hands – and meals. Dishes are passed and area businesses have been offering food at a discount price to the workers.

"Everyone is working together," said another man from the area who said his name was not important. "As long as the dam don't go, we'll be fine."

The man, a lifelong Indianford resident, said he's never seen flooding close to what is occurring along the river.

Starting two doors down the street from Stripling is a three-home spread where an estimated 9,000 sandbags combined had been used for fortification purposes within the five day span ending Wednesday, June 18.

Jason Clark, who lives in one of the three homes, said nine full dumptruck loads of sand had been utilized.

He estimated the water had risen up to ten feet higher than normal in his yard. A retaining wall – that once stood several feet above the river in his back yard – was well under water.

A Rock County crew worked Wednesday on removing debris along the bridge near the Indianford Dam. The biggest catch was this boat lift, which took nearly a half hour to be dislodged from under the bridge and and untangled from a line of buoys running parallel to the bridge.

The height differential between the lower land on one side of the sandbag walls on Clark's property and the river on the other gives one an eerie feeling that the river is just one giant, dangerous above-ground pool.

"I would have never dreamed it would come up this high," Clark said.

The flooding has prompted many curious onlookers to drive through their neighborhood. One man in the neighborhood requested that the such people stay away so as not to clog up the narrow Riverside Drive, particularly when dumptrucks need to get in and out and when work is ongoing.

As a reporter watched Wednesday afternoon, Clark and a neighbor, Gloria Anderson, tended to the water pumps together, wading through the unhealthy water. The pumps were sorely needed as springs of water continued to pop up from under the sandbags and through the saturated ground in the relatively dry portions of their yards.

Anderson estimated that 50-80 people helped sandbag at threatened homes on the street the previous Friday and Saturday. Maintenance on the walls has also been gruelling, as 1,500 sandbags were filled and stacked Tuesday, June 17, alone.

"Every day you get up, there is a new challenge," said Anderson.