

Founders foray



Cone alone: Elise Caruso, 3, of Livonia cools off with some ice cream Thursday. The Founders Festival opened under sunny skies and temperatures in the 80s.



Sounds good: At left, Sisai, a traditional South American Indian group performs Thursday during the festival opening. In the photo below, Andrea Rattliff, left, celebrates her 7th birthday with her sister Hannah, 5, on the Moonwalk Slide, one of several rides in the parking lot of the Downtown Center Mall.



Stepping out: The Wild West Dancers perform in the Downtown Center parking lot Thursday as the Founders Festival gets under way.



Festival-goers find their way through to food, good fortune

From lugging heavy wooden birdhouses to chewing on cotton candy as light as a feather, the full weight of the Farmington Founders Festival was on the shoulders of downtown.

On Thursday and Friday, the annual event opened on a high note with sun-soaked sidewalks being patrolled by numerous people radiated by the sound of music and the smell of food, and a good bargain.

At \$15, a woman figured a compact disc by the Andean music group, Sisai, was a steal. A gathering listened to the group's wafting mixture of acoustic strumming and breezy whistles as it performed in the Downtown Center lot.

Debra Linenger of Farmington Hills was transfixed. She had to buy a CD for her 8-year-old daughter.

"I'm looking to give her something other than the Spice Girls," Linenger said. Spice of another type was on the minds of festival-goers: the Great Wall's "bows."

The dough rolls filled with barbecue pork and sauce repeatedly sold out. The restaurant sells anywhere from 300-350 a day during the festival.

"People say they have to have them when they come to the festival," said the Great Wall's Jessica Lum.

While stomachs were getting filled, wallets and purses were getting lighter.

Apparel outlets such as Dress Barn, Clothes Encounters and Dots bludgeoned prices by up to 50 percent in some cases.

Audrey Thompson had only begin to delve into the Dress Barn's 50-percent offerings outside. "It gives me something to do on my lunch hour," Thompson said. "And I spend a lot of money."

Borders Books and Music Outlet had titles going for as low as a buck. Granted, the latest tome from John Grisham or Patricia Cornwell couldn't be found in the dollar bin, but no one was complaining.

Besides, who knows when a copy of "Danny Sheridan's Fantasy Football 1995" might come in handy?

Fanny Golden and Louise Conway perused the display with only casual interest.

"I like the food," said Golden, placing torn pieces of cotton candy into her mouth. "They don't seem to have as many booths as last year."

Without Clint Eastwood prodding them, festival-goers also felt lucky.

People from Farmington Area Lions to the Cloverdale school sold raffle tickets to raise money. Cloverdale raffled off a Princess Di Bearie Baby bear.

Victoria Demay of Farmington was filling out a \$5 raffle ticket from the Novi Rotary Club. First



Baby boogie: Dalton Korczyk, 13 weeks old, dances in his stroller as he keeps cool Thursday.

prize is a candy red 1959 Corvette.

"Of course, after he sold this ticket to me, he doesn't have to sell anymore because he just sold the winning ticket," Demay said self-assuredly.

The man selling the tickets, Floyd White, begged to differ. Proceeds from the raffle go to numerous charities.

Last year, the Rotarians sold 17,000.

Within earshot, Demay said "P.S. I did buy the winning ticket and I look good in red."

A few booths down, Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce sold tickets for its Corvette raffle. The drawing is Sunday night.

By Friday afternoon, nearly half of the 1,000 tickets were sold. This year, the winner had a choice between having the sports car on a two-year lease or taking \$30,000 cash.

Previously, the ticketholder could own the Corvette outright but many winners still preferred the currency, which prompted the lease arrangement.

"We've gotten some comments from car enthusiasts. They want to own it," said Carleigh Flinarty, chamber president.

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