

Founders Festival parade brightens Saturday

BY CASEY HANS
STAFF WRITER

It was a just short jaunt to Grand River on Saturday morning for the Nash family, but the Founders Festival Parade and beautiful weather made it worth the trip.

"We just moved into the neighborhood — this is our first parade," said Graham Nash, who was sharing a curbside seat with his wife, Kim, and children Graham and Lauren. They walked to the festivities from their house on nearby Valley View Circle.

"We moved here from Livonia, and we love it," he said.

Hundreds lined the parade route, which stretched from the Target store in Farmington Hills west to the city center at Grand River and Farmington Road, where longtime community activist Russ Tuttle and festival chairwoman Jody Soronen offered a running commentary for parade-goers.

The parade, which began at 9:15 a.m. in downtown Farmington, had 69 entries, including the Shriners. The Shriners sponsored 20 units of clowns, motorcycle drill teams and other activities that traditionally delight the crowds.

This year's festival theme — Farmington Celebrates 125 Years of Friends, Family and Community — could be seen among floats and parade entries, including one from the Downtown Farmington Business Association. The business association had a covered wagon float encouraging people to "Come Home to Shop in Downtown Farmington."

The parade was sponsored by Botsford General Hospital.

Becky and Joe Belanger have been bringing their three sons to

the festival for the past three or four years and said they wouldn't miss the parade. "We bring the kids — they enjoy it," Joe said. The Union Lake residents also got a chance to visit with Joe's mom, Kathy Earle of Farmington, who was also watching Saturday's event.

Many visitors came early Saturday to watch this year's fourth annual Festival Bed Race, which benefits the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Reigning champs are the members of the Farmington Hills Fire Department. They beat out teams sponsored by the Radisson Suites Hotel and the Civic Theatre to win. The firefighters won last year and had placed second in the first two

years of the races. A "very light" Jill Marinucci, 10, daughter of fire chief Richard Marinucci, was a last-minute recruit to ride in the bed.

Also entering the race was a team from Effective Mailers.

The Civic Theatre team required a pit stop after the first heat when they defeated Effective Mailers because of a broken wheel. Lots of hammering and a roll of duct tape later, the Theatre team was back at the starting line.

Team member Raffi Bogosian said they decided to enter the race two weeks ago but built their bed in just two nights.

Asked if they had similar problems with the bed wheels during practice, he replied, smiling, "what practice?"



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LE MIN



Special hello: Martha Turner of Farmington Place (above) waves to parade-goers Saturday from the Kiwanis float. Scout leader Joe Lenze (left) kept the thirst quenched for the kids of Pack 235 from St. Fabian. Here he gives Cub Scout John Shea a squirt.



First parade: Seven-month-old Nick Luria (above) enjoys his first Founders Festival Parade Saturday with his mom, Janet Loesche, a former Farmington Hills resident who now lives in Brighton. Jason Walsh (right) works quickly to hammer together the Civic Theatre team's broken bed between heats of Saturday morning's bed race.



Parade passing: A large crowd gathered under the trees along Grand River in front of Farmington Place to watch Saturday's parade go by.

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