

# Festival promoter says he's happy with event

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Some are grumbling about last week's Farmington Area Family Fest, but its promoter said he is satisfied that the now-look event is on the right track.

"There were a lot of families out there and that's what we were looking for," said Mike Watts of Watts Up Inc. "From what I saw from last year to this year, we wanted this festival to appeal to families and I never thought I'd see so many kids out there in strollers. It was heartwarming."

Watts saw other pluses to this year's festival, the second to take place under his watch but the first where he had a full year to organize it.

He thought going to a "street art fair look" in the Downtown Farmington Center parking lot was a good move.

To achieve that, the large yellow circus tent was replaced by smaller white tents.

"Entertainment was a plus," Watts continued. "And the move of Kids Day to Thursday boosted attendance and kept people in

town all day. I also thought the parade (on Saturday) went well," highlighted by a streamlined parade route.

Watts said he did not yet have actual attendance figures for the three-day event, which was moved to late June for the first time.

In the past, the Founders Festival (its former name) took place in July. But the date was changed to avoid head-to-head competition with similar festi-

vale where arts and crafts vendors participate. This year's festival did coincide with the Livonia Spree, which is more of a carnival-type event.

This year also marked the introduction of a free shuttle between downtown and Farmington High School.

Still, Watts is aware of complaints, such as: decreasing festival business; mixed reviews about physical changes (the vendor tents, for example); lack of

promotions and advertising (which were reasons given for the \$50 participation fee); and some opposition to increased participation fees for merchants and vendors, needed to offset festival costs.

## Time to tweak

Watts said promotions were adequate, with various media advertisements and large banners hanging over Grand River. But, he stressed,

"We can only submit the information (to publications). It's up to them to print it."

It is probable that Watts and the festival board (Farmington Area Family Festival, Inc.) will eventually hold a meeting with merchants and citizens to discuss the various issues.

"But I'd like to have some time to think it over," Watts said. "I don't think there's any need for wholesale changes."

This year's parade was also

the subject of controversy surrounding the Shriners' cowboy-and-Indians routine.

The Farmington Area Multicultural Multiracial Community Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills requested the Shriners tone down their act, in order to be sensitive to the needs of Native Americans.

The Shriners - a parade staple - considered pulling out, but wound up making their annual appearance.

## POLICE/FIRE NEWS

The following reports were filed with the Farmington Hills Police Department in the past week:

### FIRE

Hills firefighters from Stations Four and Five were called to an apartment on Sierra Pointe Circle Saturday evening and found a plastic basket on fire in a hall next to the kitchen. The resident had left a basket with groceries and kitchen supplies on top of the stove when she returned home from the store. The estimated loss is \$10,000.

### DISORDERLY CONDUCT

A former employee of a business on Grand River was arrested Friday after a dispute over his final paycheck. Police were called when the 18-year-old Detroit man refused to leave the premises. A search of his car revealed a 12-gauge shotgun with one spent round in the chamber and five additional rounds of ammunition. The gun was taken for safe-keeping.

### VANDALISM

A homeowner on Albion told police a garbage truck ran into a fencepost on his property while trying to turn around on a dead end street, and the driver didn't stop. It's the second time this year the post has been damaged, the man said.

Two minivans parked in the 22000 block of Ontaga Street were damaged sometime Friday afternoon. The driver said doors were scratched on a 1993 Plymouth Voyager and a 1998 Mercury Villager.

A car on Colwell and a home on Roosevelt were pelted with eggs sometime Friday night or early Saturday morning.

### FIREWORKS

Police have received several complaints about fireworks in the areas of Farmington Mobile Manor, Orchard Lake and Trestain, Truck and Ambeth.

### ANIMAL CRUELTY

While on patrol, an officer was approached by someone who believed dogs were being left alone in a house on Middlebelt. Based on a description, the officer found the home and heard dogs barking inside. A neighbor said the house had been vacant since the owner died a month ago and gave officers the name and number of the owner's daughter.

### ACCIDENT/ARREST

A man involved in a car accident at 13 Mile and Orchard Lake roads late Friday night aroused the suspicions of an officer when he appeared very nervous and couldn't produce a driver's license. Police said the 21-year-old West Bloomfield man said they could search his car, in which they found a .25 caliber pistol wrapped in a towel, five rounds of ammunition, a folding knife and lock pick set.

A check with the Secretary of State showed the car's license plates belonged to a vehicle in Utica. The cadet who searched the car also found the man's wallet, with his suspended license inside, and another license plate. The car was impounded; the suspect was arrested and booked into the Hills lock-up.

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