

Family fun at county fairgrounds

Familypalooza raises money, awareness for Child Advocacy Center

By MARK KINSLER

E-G Correspondent

Published Monday, May 12, 2008

LANCASTER - It was indeed a Familypalooza at the Fairfield County Fairgrounds this past Saturday. Favored by fine weather and a good cause, dozens of families and hundreds of children scampered among antique automobiles with their hoods open to display pristine restored engines. They ran over, under, around and through serious-looking fire equipment, ambulances, police cars and the county's hazardous-waste cleanup vehicle. They climbed up into giant earth-moving machines to push levers and honk the horn incessantly. They bounced - shrieking - in big inflatable kid-bouncing chambers.

Lancaster Police Chief Dave Bailey sat near the city's elderly paddy wagon and relaxed, listening to energetic DJ Stan the Man conduct a continuous stream of lucky-ticket drawings for door prizes. Stan the Man played selections from his oldies music collection, engaged in general banter and kept the crowd moving the whole day.

Meanwhile, Bailey seemed to have nothing further to prove, having come in third in the golf-cart race and finishing as the co-winner in cow bingo, a dignified game of chance that relies on the random behavior of the bovine digestive system. City Law Director and Children's Advocacy Center official Terre Vandervoort bid on a few of the police-pound bikes at the auction, buying and then presenting them to children who'd been outbid. As the afternoon wore on, the silver and blue pinwheels began to appear. Familypalooza volunteers Mary Jo Fox, a caseworker for Fairfield County Jobs & Family Services, and Cody Hilyard, a JFS intern from Muskingum College, stooped again and again to plant some 1,600 of them along hundreds of yards of the Fairgrounds' pedestrian pathways. Each pinwheel represented an abused child from Fairfield County - a child abused harshly enough to have his case reported to the very authorities present this day.

A gentle breeze set the pinwheels spinning and sparkling in the lowering sun, and then there was a low rumble from the east. It grew louder, and still louder, and finally the first motorcycle appeared, back from a poker run to benefit the CAC. Then another appeared, and another, riding between the rows of spinning silver pinwheels, joined in a single thundering roar against the treatment of every one of those kids. Families and officials applauded.

There were more ceremonies and a poker-run dinner for the bikers, and then the festivities were complete for another year.