

## All splash, no rain: Wagoner Family Fun Day shows community a rocking free time

Raindrops weren't the only thing making a big splash in Wagoner last Saturday.

The Wagoner Family Service Council hosted the annual Family Fun Day at Maple Park on Saturday, and approximately 900 people attended the event, which exhibited a staggering amount of free entertainment for the entire community.

The "Do More For Kids" dunk tank drew a big crowd as different community members and individuals took turns being knocked into the cold water amid roars of laughter from the audience and squeals of excitement from the children.

Nancy Thomasson, Wagoner County Launch member, said she was excited to see the park full of clean, family fun and said she believed this was good for the community.

"I think this will help people get linked together," Thomasson said. "This makes information available to Wagoner citizens and will create awareness of organizations they may not realize even exist."



Mike Davis splashed his way into the heart of Bella Hardcastle, with a little help from her mom Jessica Hardcastle at the "Do More for Kids" booth at Family Fun Day.—Charity Muehlenweg/Tribune Contributor

Thomasson said this was the first year she and her family had attended this event and that they really enjoyed spending this time together with fellow citizens of Wagoner.

Spending time together was the theme for the day as children and adults milled around the park for hours petting the ponies and goats brought in by the Cowboy Church, devouring food and drinks until their bellies ached, holding the snakes brought in by the Three Forks Nature Center and visiting the many booths and activities that were scattered throughout the park.

Heather Johnson said she was glad the weather cooperated and that the event didn't get rained out.

"The kids have had a blast!" Johnson said. "They loved the face painting and the bounce houses."

This was the Johnson's first year to attend the event but she said they will definitely be coming back again next year.

"Everyone did a really good job with all of the activities for the kids and the adults," Johnson said. "I'm proud to live in a town that will do this type of event for the community."

Thomasson also said they were impressed with the town of Wagoner and how welcoming and friendly the town as a whole has been to all of her three children and especially to her daughter Chloe, who is a wheelchair user.

“Sometimes Chloe gets left out of things like this because of her disability,” Thomasson said. “It’s exciting to look around and see a lot of activities that she can participate in.”

Chloe’s face beamed as she showed off the stuffed animal she had won and the yellow visor she had made before she and her family raced off to the next activity.

Don Neal said he loves it when the town of Wagoner comes together for gatherings like this.

“It’s awesome to get families together in a fun, low cost atmosphere,” Neal said. “The kids love Family Fun Day and look forward to it every year. They woke up this morning and were so excited!”

Neal said he and his family have been to Family Fun Day every year and it just seems to continue getting better.

“I remember growing up in this town and Wagoner did these kinds of events,” Neal said. “As years went by it kind of faded out but it’s starting to come back around and it’s good to see that. I’ve lived in Wagoner my whole life and I stay here because of things like this.”

Neal and his daughter Jordan were even more excited later in the afternoon when her name was drawn as a prize winner and she walked away with a spring in her step...and with a new bike.

Jordan wasn’t the only winner that day — prizes were given out to surprised adults and excited children every 30 minutes throughout the entire event, including many fishing poles, gift cards, bicycles, tricycles and a little red wagon. The clouds and the breeze were a perfect complement to the sunshine keeping everyone (except those in the dunk tank!) cool and dry throughout the event.

Louise Micolites, one of the Wagoner Family Service Council members, said she was nervous about the rain but was very pleased that the clouds dissolved and that people got out and were able to enjoy the day.

Micolites works for the state health department and focuses on health improvement within the communities. She said she works with coalitions to identify the issues within the community and to formulate a strategy to address those issues.

“My niche is in the health and improvement committee,” Micolites said. “That committee is working on a process that will do a full assessment of the entire county. I am doing a survey today to collect public opinion and the committee will look at all the data and statistics. By the end of the process, we will have a comprehensive health improvement plan for the entire county.”

Micolites said health improvement is a vital part of every community.

“We’ve seen a lot of families come through today who have four or five children,” Micolites said. “For them to have something free to come out and do is a really big deal for most of them. Even if they don’t have a need themselves, there is probably going to come a time when they have a family member or friend that needs help. We want them to remember these organizations and be able to point those people to someone who can help them.”

There were over 20 churches that had joined the event and had set up a booth or game as well as many other agencies within Wagoner. Micolites said she was excited to see so many different organizations come together.

“I love to see families finding out about different churches,” Micolites said. “It’s important for them to know that if one church isn’t right for them, there’s another one that might be.”

She said the churches were able to give out information about their summer events and vacation bible school programs, which are other free activities for children to engage in over the next few months.

The Wagoner Family Service Council would like to send out a special thank you to Do More For Kids, Men in Unity Bible Study, Wagoner Chamber of Commerce, Tommy Biffle/Zebco, United Methodist Men, Creoks, Cherokee Nation and several other private donors from the Wagoner community for their support of this event.