



CORY BYKNISH | Herald

L.D. Williams of Dragonfly Balloons in Harrisville hands a goldfish balloon animal he made to Olivia Metz, 10, of West Middlesex.

Fire in the sky – and a hot time below

Buhl Park crowd for Sunday event exceeds expectations

By MICHAEL ROKNICK
Herald Business Editor

HERMITAGE – Wiping sweat off his forehead with one hand, Daniel Weaver used his other to flick on a fan that inflates his carnival bounce house for kids.

Scanning around Buhl Park at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, it was a half hour before the official start of Light up the Sky. With temperatures exceeding 90 degrees, he gave a prediction.

"It probably won't get busy

until the sun starts going down," Weaver said.

And one hour later he was proved right as families and kids began to fill the park.

Hosted by the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by local businesses, the evening event featured food vendors, live music, games and activities. As its names suggest, the finale was a large fireworks show at dusk.

Last year the event drew 10,000 people.

"And that's what we're expecting today," said Sherris Moreira, the chamber's executive director, at 6:30 p.m.

Later, just before the fireworks show began, Moreira

acknowledged she was wrong. "We feel very comfortable in saying we have 15,000 people here," she said. "We're packed, absolutely packed. People didn't want to come real early because of the heat. But they sure came now."

Linda Evans, Buhl Park's interim executive director, was on hand to help along with other park staff members.

"This is about the best, coolest, fun thing I've ever done," she said while talking with Moreira.

A large part of the crowd found shade beneath the lush canopy of trees at the park's

See FIRE, page A-2



Guests walk down the main food-vendor row before the start of the Light Up The Night firework show at Buhl Park. Organizers say the crowd for the fireworks was about one and a half times greater than last year's turnout.

CORY BYKNISH | Herald



CORY BYKNISH | Herald

A rainbow of pyrotechnics lights the Kite Field at Buhl Park to conclude Sunday's Light Up the Sky.



MICHAEL ROKNICK | Herald

Artist Brian Pullock sketches a caricature of Lillian Greemann, a first-grader in Hermitage School District, during Light up the Sky at Buhl Park on Sunday.

Fire

Fire in the sky
– and a hot time below

FROM PAGE A-1

Performing Arts Center amphitheater to listen to 2nd Avenue Project, a local band.

The nine-member group plays in 20 different venues during the summer months, said Buddy White, the band's unofficial manager. Playing outdoors at special events, private parties and other galas has become the group's bread-and-butter. Tougher drunken-driving laws has made people think twice about the club scene, he added.

"The nightclub business is nearly dead," White said. "There's very few clubs offering live music now. But we really like playing here. There's such good audiences here."

Solid support from volunteers has allowed the



CORY BYKNISH | Herald

Sophia Emmorey, 11, of Hermitage holds sparklers before the Light Up The Sky fireworks show began.

She event to remain popular, Moreira said.

"There's just no way we could pull this off without them," she said.

The Hermitage Quota Club was among the volunteers who oversaw a booth, handing out goodies such as sweets.

"This is what we do," said club president Rosemarie Janosko. "We want to give back to the community."



MICHAEL ROKNICK | Herald

Megan Schreiber, of Greenville, receives a order of hot dogs for herself and daughter Carly from the Cafe Cabin, Buhl Park's new concession stand. Hot dogs were the best-selling food item for the cafe Sunday.

This was the first Light up the Sky event for the Cabin Cafe, the park's newly built concession stand, which opened last year. Selling drinks and munchies, park board member Courtney Costa, who volunteered to work at the cafe on Sunday, didn't have to pause when asked what was the cafe's best-selling item.

"Hot dogs," Costa said. "Nothing even comes close to our famous Buhl Park hot dogs. Every penny we make here goes back to the park."

Dragonfly Balloons was a vendor that saw lines form early during the evening. The full-time business is run by L.D. Williams of Harrisville and his fiancée, Mandy McDonald. Pumping up small balloons, they create items such as a sword, hats and their marquee creation – a goldfish in a bowl.

"People don't mind waiting in line because we entertain and talk to them," Williams said. "This is really a great event."