

5/17/2006 9:43:00 AM

Community makes difference with annual Kids Fest event

A guest column

By **BILL RINEHART**



Guest Writer

Sometimes we hear about how things do not get done in our community because no one works together. This may be true on occasion, but I saw an example recently that contradicts this statement.

A recent Saturday brought the ninth annual Kids Fest. What a fabulous example of how a community can work together and make something bigger than all of the parts. I have been lucky enough to have worked with Kids Fest from the beginning, when we had a small tent at the Foods Plus parking lot and 15 booths to the phenomenal success that it is today.

How does something like this happen? I will tell you this — even though I work on the boards of Child Care Network and the Seymour Noon Lions, the two primary agencies driving Kids Fest — the real reason the festival is so successful is the community.

Don't get me wrong. Both the Lions and Child Care Network truly back this event and it is at the top of the list of projects for both organizations. But the success is bigger than both of these organizations. It is driven by commitment of great community-minded folks who want to make a difference in kids' lives.

The committee that organizes the event works all year long to produce one of the best annual events in Jackson County. They all come with great passion and brainstorm ideas that truly end up as a great activity and great service for families.

Many on this committee first became involved through Leadership Jackson County, which has helped with this project on and off since its inception. After working on the project, it is difficult to walk away.

I also would be wrong for not giving credit where credit is due — Janice Read — executive director of Child Care Network. She is the backbone of the event, organizing committee meetings, talking to booth participants, hunting for funds to work with and being a cheerleader for all involved.

We have had great participation from all parts of the community — Schneck Medical Center has many booths every year with exciting things for the kids to do while mom and dad are learning about valuable services. The Tribune sponsors our T-shirt contest where kids in the community draw designs to match the year's theme, which was this year "Cheer for Kids Fest 2006." The Pardieck Law Firm sponsors the bike rodeo by providing helmets for participants and this year



Misty Stahl, 30, of Seymour and her three children, from left, Sydney, 6, Sophie, 4, and Saige, 18 months, visit with a chick at the ninth annual Kids Fest on April 29 at the Indiana National Guard Armory in Seymour. The event brings the community together to share information. (Tribune file photo by Aubrey Woods)

About the writer

Bill Rinehart lives in Seymour. He is a member of the Seymour Noon Lions Club.

partnered with Officer Greg O'Brien of the Seymour Police Department as they always do and with B2 Bikes and Boards and the Jackson County Bicycle Club to provide classroom training on bicycle safety as well as hands-on riding experience.

We have all of the United Way Agencies that deal with youth participating as well as Jackson County Public Library and the Agribusiness Committee from the Greater Seymour Chamber of Commerce, which this year had a small animal zoo that the kids absolutely loved. And how can I forget the city of Seymour's help from the park and recreation department workers bringing tables and the police and fire departments helping with the bike rodeo and bringing out the fire house. Public works was also there to teach our youth about the importance of recycling.

Comcast was on hand to do digital fingerprinting and Seymour Family Dentistry gave out tooth prints. The Community Foundation of Jackson County also provided grants to help with bicycle education and funding of portrait artists, exposing the kids to a form of art that is both interesting and different.

Throw in booths from WIC, La Paz de Cristo, local churches and Indiana Childcare Association as well as a school bus safety program and bus from Brownstown Central Community Schools and it truly was a well-rounded event. Any time we have service clubs, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Community Foundation, local churches, city of Seymour and businesses working together, great things can happen. Thanks to all for their great support, and we look forward to 2007 and our 10th annual Kids Fest. A special thanks also to our great committee who every year does a little more than the year before.