

Central Agency Fair dazzles during Saturday parade

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CHINLE, Ariz. – The time to find your spot for the the 32nd Central Agency Fair held in Chinle, Ariz., Aug. 26, was not on Saturday, the day of the parade. Rather, it was the day before, on Friday.

Actually, for a great spot Friday you needed to get there in the early afternoon, but if you didn't at least get there by Friday night anything resembling a decent spot was gone, with tents lined up alongside the road saving spaces for family and friends.

Eva Silversmith of Chinle said, "we learned from past years not to be on the side with the sun right in our eyes."

The festivities started off with Daren the D.A.R.E lion, who was giving hugs and encouraging kids to say no to drugs. Adrian 12, Jayden 9, and Adranna, 5, with big smiles, lined up for hugs from Daren the Lion.

Daren first appeared in the 90's as the face of the D.A.R.E program, and he is just as popular with the kids today as he was back then.

Next came what may have been the highlight of the day with Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez handing out much needed umbrellas for protection from the blistering heat.

They were also handing out bottles of water, which in addition to its usefulness in drinking also inspired several little girls to douse their parents with water, with the delighted squeals heard far down the street.

Apparently, nobody informed one of the little girls, 3-year-old Grace Ann, that her parents had water too, and her parents caught her later and made sure she got a good soaking. When asked about it, Grace Ann said in a conspiratorial tone "daddy doesn't know it but that felt so good."

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The Navajo Nation Band was also there showing off their spectacular, traditional colors. According to the band's website, the band was formed in 1938, and the band continued through WW II, until with the retirement of Charles Addington.

Birley Gardener directed it for the next 10 years. Gardener promoted the colorful Navajo style uniform and well-rounded repertoire of marches and concert music. His efforts with the band were so successful that the band has become a widely-traveled band appearing in many public events coast to coast. These tribal musical ambassadors have even marched in three United States Presidential Inaugural parades, as well as the Rose Bowl Parade.

Near the end of the parade route, Tex Nelson with Betty Ann Lee sat under a creative updated Chaha'oh (Navajo sun shade). A nearby bystander, Lena Romero, was taking pictures and was heard cooing "Oh, I can make that kind by myself. What a good idea."

The Chinle's Potters House also entertained the crowd with some high energy praise music and cooled everyone off, giving out frozen ice pops. (Pretty much anybody with something liquid or cold was a guaranteed hit).

It was a beautiful day full of goodies, entertainment and gratitude. Queens ranging from toddlers to Miss Navajo Nation, Code Talkers, Chinle Fire Department, Navajo Police, the Navajo President, and hundreds of interested spectators all came out to say Ahéhee' to law enforcement.

By Jonathan Gregg

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