

July 4th in Ramona: Eggcellence

Small town draws 2,000 people for festivities

By DAVE ASKINS
Staff Reporter

Tuesday's full day of July Fourth festivities in Ramona answered the classic chicken-egg question. The eggs came first, then the chickens. But before the eggs came a 5K race and a 1-mile fun run, followed by a parade down Main Street, viewed by an estimated 2,000 people. The evening concluded with fireworks set off just beyond the outfield fence of the Oldham-Ramona School ball diamond.

Seventy runners participated in either the 5K or 1-mile races — which were fund-raisers for Camp Patriot, headquartered in Montana. The organization is dedicated to thanking wounded and disabled military veterans by helping them to participate in outdoor programs.



Photo by Dave Askins

KAYLA KENNEDY did not win this round of the water balloon toss at the Fourth of July festivities in Ramona. She's from Vermillion, but her boyfriend is from Ramona.

took runners south of town and returned them north along 450th Avenue, past the St. William's Ramona Protestant cemeteries to 225th Street, then west to Railway Street to the east end of Main Street.

Retracing a part of the 5K route before the start of the parade was the Ramona Fire Department. Just as its trucks were lining up, a call came in about a brush fire in the ditch across from the cemeteries, which had been started by fireworks.

According to Ramona Fire Chief Myron Nagel, the call came in at 12:41; a pumper was on the scene at 12:44 and back in the parade lineup at 12:59. The fire was put out by eight Ramona firefighters with an assist from Madison firefighter Jade Drause.

With the fire doused, at 1:30 the hour-long parade started rolling west-to-east down the roughly 1/3-mile Main Street. Entries included fire trucks from surrounding departments, antique tractors, race trucks, riders on horseback and floats. One of the floats — a giant pie — was sponsored by Pies Plus, located right at the end of the parade route.

Another float, sponsored by the local post office, featured Betsy Ross stitching a flag and a sign that read: "What

did Betsy Ross say when George Washington asked her if the flag was done yet?" The back side of the sign, visible to parade watchers after the float had passed, provided the punchline.

After the parade, two hours of games, emceed by Ramona Fire Department President LD Henrichs, took

place in the block of Main Street just in front of the post office. The games included several rounds of water balloon tosses where pairs throw a water balloon back and forth, increasing the distance on each successive try, until it finally breaks.

Henrichs sometimes toyed with the players — asking them to hold their balloons up in their hands where he could see them, then instructing them to switch hands for the next toss.

After the water balloons came several more rounds of egg tossing — the same concept as water balloons but with eggs. The water balloons and the eggs were prepared by Henrichs's daughter, Carly Wettlaufer. In the culmination of the tossing games, she offered herself up as a target toward which a crowd of kids could aim their eggs. The initial barrage left her relatively unscathed; the eggs all landed well off the mark.

But then, from a distance of about 30 yards, a solitary white orb arced through the thick 90-degree air; its course unaltered by the 16-mph southern wind, and smashed into the top of Wettlaufer's head, delivering its goopy yellow payload squarely on target. (It was O-R fifth-grader Clay Misar who scored the lucky shot.) Though she might have been briefly shell-shocked, the cigar in Wettlaufer's mouth was not dislodged.

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Photo by Dave Askins

LUKE RIEDEL did eventually catch a chicken, but not the one shown here.

What's the South Dakota connection? Serving on the board of directors of the nonprofit is Jeff Lembcke, who was born and raised in Ramona, graduating from high school there in 1971. Lembcke moved to Washington state in 1978 but was in Ramona on Tuesday to run and to hand out awards.

Winning the 5K was Oldham-Ramona track/cross-country coach Chad Trigg. O-R student Will Matson won the mile run. The 5K route



Photo by Dave Askins

TAYA WETTLAUFER of Ramona won her round of the pie-eating competition. She also won her division of the 5K run, for which she had actually trained. (She said she did not train for the pie-eating contest.)

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Wettlaufer was, in any case, undeterred from her duties involving another egg-related task later in the evening — helping her dad set out some chickens on the O-R ball diamond for the "chicken catch." A chicken catch is pretty much exactly what it sounds like: Chickens are turned loose, then children pursue and try to catch them.

O-R School Board member Bryan Jaton said he remembered running after chickens, and catching them, when he was a kid back in the early 1990s.

This year, too, all the chickens were caught in the end.