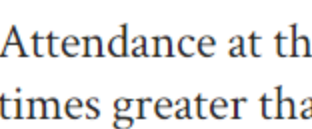




Entertainment

Passion for parades pumps up organizer

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So the four-day festival is much too big for a single parade.

For at least half of the show's 102-year history, organizers have presented seven parades -- and Jim River is in charge of them all.

He didn't necessarily mean to be, but, in a city where even schools close for the show, the dentist needed another job for the week.

"During the Pumpkin Show, it's pretty tough to get people to go to the dentist," said the 65-year-old, whose practice is on Main Street.

"I thought, if I can't practice dentistry, then I'd just go and help."

A show volunteer for 31 years and the head of the parade committee for 20, River enlists his office staff to help him register the hundreds of parade entries for the 1-mile route.

Then, on the Tuesday afternoon before the show, he closes his practice to get ready for the next day's start. He stays downtown up to 13 hours a day.

"For four days, I just kind of live down there."

His schedule:

He kicked off the parade agenda yesterday with the Little Miss Pumpkin Show procession, featuring about 170 first-graders.

The grown-up version last night, the Miss Pumpkin Show parade, featured a junior and a senior from each of six high schools.

This afternoon, the baby parade will feature as many as 300 participants -- pretty much every baby in Circleville, River said.

Tonight, he'll organize the parade of 24 high-school bands.

Come Friday afternoon, River will arrange animals in a pet parade -- consisting, typically, of dogs and cats, although a potbellied pig, a llama and an ant farm have made appearances.

Cars, firetrucks and ambulances will take up most of the Friday night parade of lodges and civic and fraternal organizations -- plus floats, as with the other parades (except the lengthy Little Miss).

His duties will end on Saturday night when more than 30 queens in the Ohio Festivals and Events Association parade represent a hometown festival's animal, vegetable or mineral.

"It's rather interesting that a small town the size of Circleville can pull this thing off," River said.

The Pumpkin Show, dubbed "the greatest free show on Earth," does so with as many as 300 volunteers, including 28 who work on his parade staff.

Among them is Bill Stout, a 30-year veteran who helps string together the participants. River arranges them on the fly, selecting a float, a band, a car, another float and so on from three lineup areas.

"He'll make it look like it goes very smoothly," said Stout, 75. "But it's basically organized chaos."

Other committee members patrol the sidelines, ready to push broken-down cars or enforce the no-candy-throwing rule.

For 17 years, Tom Egbert -- in a clown face, an orange helmet and green tights -- has skated through parades as "the Pumpkin Man."

"I just share my enjoyment of the Pumpkin Show with everybody," said Egbert, 63.

"The first time a kid sees you and their face lights up -- that's why you do it."

Aside from an occasional wipeout by Egbert, River insists that nothing too disastrous has happened in the 133 parades he has overseen.

He has had to turn away some participant wannabes, including protest groups and the owner of a boa constrictor.

Otherwise, concerns have been few.

And running parades, he said, is just show business.

"That's what we do: We put on a show seven times, and those shows are called parades."

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

The Circleville Pumpkin Show continues through Saturday in downtown Circleville. A sampling of the contests, entertainment and other events:

TODAY

MAIN STREET STAGE

- 12:30 *p.m.* Studio One music students
- 2:30 Michaela Williams (country-pop)
- 4:30 egg toss
- 6 *p.m.* Ashley Everts
- 7 *p.m.* Side by Side (gospel)
- 9 *p.m.* Mother Hubbard (classic rock)

PINCKNEY STREET STAGE

- 1:30 *p.m.* Big Wheel race

WEST PINCKNEY STREET STAGE

- 6:15 *p.m.* Marion-Franklin High School band
- 7 *p.m.* Beechcroft High School band

VISITORS PAVILION

- 2 *p.m.* Charmion Performing Arts Center dance demonstration
- 4:30 Circleville High School jazz band

PICKAWAY-FRANKLIN STREET STAGE

- Noon Reflections (acoustic)
- 4:30 *p.m.* baby-parade winners
- 5:15 YMCA dance academy
- 6:15 Logan Elm High School band
- 7 *p.m.* Westfall High School band

FRIDAY

MAIN STREET STAGE

- 11 *a.m.* Stand Up 'n' Sing finals
- 2 *p.m.* youth band Bronson Bush & Youngblood
- 5 *p.m.* singer Don Ervin
- 7 *p.m.* Timothy Paul (country)
- 9 *p.m.* After Midnight (rock)

VISITORS PAVILION

- Noon giant-pumpkin sculpting
- 1 *p.m.* Columbus Zoo and Aquarium show
- 4:30 Patsy Mayo (gospel)
- 6 *p.m.* Pumpkin Show band
- 7:15 Graham School of Irish Dance

PICKAWAY-FRANKLIN STREET

- Noon Presbyterian Handbell and Chime Choir
- 4:30 *p.m.* pet-parade judging
- 5:45 Bronson Bush & Youngblood

SATURDAY

MAIN STREET STAGE

- 11 *a.m.* Michael King (country)
- 12:15 *p.m.* pumpkin-pie-eating contest
- 1:30 Jacked Up (country rock)
- 3:45 Rewind (country rock)
- 5:30 hog-calling contest
- 7 *p.m.* Simba Jordan (country)
- 9 *p.m.* Arnett Howard and Friends (jazz)

PINCKNEY STREET STAGE

- 6:15 *p.m.* Dynamic

Mention percussion

WEST PINCKNEY STREET STAGE

- 1 *p.m.* Kingston Kickers

VISITORS PAVILION

- Noon giant-pumpkin sculpting
- 1 *p.m.* chicken-wing-eating finals
- 3 *p.m.* Christina Barth & Ohio's Youth Entertainers
- 5 *p.m.* Presbyterian Handbell and Chime Choir
- 6:15 Pickaway Brass
- 7 *p.m.* Adelphi Community Band

PICKAWAY-FRANKLIN STREET

- 10:30 *a.m.* jazz guitarist Fred Norman
- Noon Bronson Bush & Youngblood
- 1:45 *p.m.* Fred Norman
- 3 *p.m.* Mark Wood Fun Show
- 5 and 9 *p.m.* open-mike karaoke

Source: Circleville Pumpkin Show



Multimedia

Audio Slide Show: See and hear from the biggest pumpkin winner

Parade lineup

Everyone, it seems, wants in on the parade route at the Circleville Pumpkin Show. On the heels of the Little Miss Pumpkin Show parade and Miss Pumpkin Show parade yesterday, these processions are scheduled:

TODAY

- 3:30 *p.m.* baby parade
- 8 *p.m.* bands and youth organizations

FRIDAY

- 3:30 *p.m.* pet parades
- 8 *p.m.* lodges and civic and fraternal organizations

SATURDAY

- 8 *p.m.* Ohio Festivals and Events Association queens

Starting on E. Franklin Street at Pickaway Street, the parades proceed west to Scioto Street, north to Pinckney Street, east to Court Street, south to Main Street and east to Pickaway.

Source: Circleville Pumpkin Show