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Neighborhood fun on the Fourth

By John T. Miller



Photo John T. Miller

Organizing a Fourth of July neighborhood block party has become a popular way to commemorate our nation's independence, and one of the most long-lasting and popular gatherings in the Lamorinda area has been the Ponderosa Lane Block Party in Saranap, which just celebrated its 40th annual bash this year.

An estimated 150 neighbors, family members and friends attended the event, which was also noted for having a fourth generation of children in attendance.

The event featured a long list of traditional events that the young people look forward to, including a parade, games, treats, a barbecue and potluck dinner and a pin?ata.

The parade staging area is under a tent on one of the neighbor's driveways. Red, white and blue trimmings are provided and children decorate their bikes, scooters, skateboards, strollers and wagons. They can also have

their faces painted in patriotic fashion. In some years, the "Dad Brigade" decorates their lawn mowers and brings up the rear.

Games include a dunk tank, bobbing for apples, and a balloon toss. Dave and Kristen set up a sno-cone station, and Tim and Michelle's driveway serves as the refreshment stand and barbecue pit, grilling about 200 hot dogs for lunch and plenty of chicken to accompany the potluck dinner.

With no cars on the street, the children enjoy the freedom of roaming up and down the lane all afternoon on their many wheeled devices.

After dinner, the same sycamore tree has served as host for the pin?ata for the last 40 years. This is one of the kids' favorite activities. They line up from shortest to tallest, and each set of whacks gets more and more forceful until the pin?ata spills its guts on the lawn and a loud, collective squeal comes from the onrushing children.

One of the more recent homeowners on the block, Beth Kring, said, "We're so happy we found this neighborhood. It's like a throwback to another era, where neighbors know each other and children can play in the street."

Some families and friends retire to their front yards and continue to visit, while others drive to watch the fireworks in Moraga, Diablo Valley College, Martinez, or elsewhere.

The next morning, the dedicated residents clean up the street and count another Independence Day party a rousing success.



Photos John T. Miller



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