

## National Night Out brings community together

By MICHELLE KINSEY • mkinsey@muncie.gannett.com • August 4, 2010

MUNCIE -- Dave Garrett had perhaps the best seat in the "house."

In the dunk tank.

"I volunteered for this!" he said with a laugh just seconds before Jerron Norris, 2, knocked him into the water -- with a little help from a nearby adult.

The dunk tank was just one of the activities offered Tuesday during the free National Night Out in Millennium Place's Thornburg Park.

Last year, rain postponed the Night Out the first time around, then forced it into an inside location on the new date.

This time, the rain stayed away.

"But now we've got to deal with all this heat," said Amber Shaffer, fanning her face. "But it's worth it, though. This is a good thing."

A good thing that, by early estimates, drew nearly 400 people.

Mayor Sharon McShurley kicked off the event at 6 p. m. by reading a proclamation declaring Aug. 3 "National Night Out Day." Then Muncie Police Chief Deb Davis offered some advice for those in attendance. "Get to know your neighbors," she said. "Get involved in your neighborhood."

Emma Price agreed.

Price, who is known for her efforts to keep Millennium Place safe, said she couldn't stop smiling as she walked through the growing crowd. "I think this is the best thing we can do for the neighborhood," she said. "This is all about getting together with your neighbors, helping your neighbors, respecting your neighbors."

That neighborly attitude is one of the main goals of the event, in fact. Organizers also hoped to increase

awareness about drug and crime prevention.

Streets surrounding the park were blocked off, making room for info booths, the DJ and the Cha-Cha Slide. Kids lined up by the dozens at the climbing wall, "bouncy houses," face painting booths and games.

Armoni Taylor, 2, was getting her fingernails painted electric blue at one of the tables. Her grandfather, Darryl Athalone, looked on. "I just thought it was important to come out and support the community," he said. "And do a little mingling, too."

Ja-laina Burrell, 5, didn't care about the bouncy houses, or even the fishing game. "I can't keep her out of the fountain," her mom, Elaine Burrell, said with a laugh.

"I'm having fun in the water," Ja-laina said during a brief break between sprints through the blasts, her flower and heart face paint running down her cheek.

Her mom said that seeing her daughter have fun was reason enough to come out on this hot night. "It's good to see so many kids out here having a good time," she added.

Candis Brooks and her husband, Michael, brought all three of their kids to the event -- Jayna, 8, Jacquelyn, 5, and Cage, 6. They were busy grabbing up handfuls of posters, stickers and magnets from the Muncie Fire Department's table.

Advertisement

USA TODAY  
**AutoPilot**   
The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®  
Presented by:   
SEE HOW IT WORKS >>

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

"On the fire truck, I got to sit up really high," Jayna said. "And in the police car, I could push all the buttons and turn on the sirens."

When asked why she thought the fire trucks and police cars were there, she paused.

"It's so we can get to know the police and the fireman so we know that they are our best friends," she said, looking up at her mother.

Her mother grinned and nodded.

"We really enjoy coming to events like this, taking to people about fire safety," said Chief Fire Investigator David Miller and he organized the stacks of giveaways on the table. "Most of the time, people only get to interact with us when something bad happens."

Jayron McGee, 10, was soaking wet (yes, he, too, loved the fountains) and waiting in line for his slice of pepperoni pizza. The pizza (125 of them were ordered in all), breadsticks, chips and beverages were given away free. "This is pretty cool," he said of the Night Out before shoving the pizza into his mouth and heading off toward the games.

In the middle of it all -- literally as he stood in the center of Thornburg Park -- was Guillermo Rodriguez, executive director of the Muncie Housing Authority, one of the organizations that helped put on the Night Out.

"This is outstanding," he said. "This is much bigger and better than last year. I love seeing the kids having so much fun."

He scanned the crowd.

"Now this really looks like a community," he said.

- Contact reporter Michelle Kinsey at 213-5822.



Purchase this Photo

Jessie Goodwin dances during National Night Out at Millennium Place Tuesday evening. The goal of National Night Out is to heighten awareness for crime and drug prevention, generate support for anti-crime programs, strengthen neighborhood spirit and community partnerships and send a message to criminals that neighborhoods are fighting back. (Chris Bergin / The Star

Advertisement

**Mom Dilemma #36:**  
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike.me.com  
where Local moms meet

The advertisement features a young girl with blonde hair wearing a white princess crown and a white dress. The text is in various colors (black, pink, green, orange) and includes two buttons for user interaction. The logo for 'momslike.me.com' is at the bottom.

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™