



More winning entries

Today The Reporter presents more winning entries from our "Fiesta at 50" competition for young journalists. The seven winners ranged from fourth-graders through high school. Grand prize winners were Will C. Wood High School student Taylore-Marie Sogge for newswriting and Browns Valley Elementary School student Clay Smeback for photojournalism. Other winners included Mayra Flores, Sabrina Muerle, Joel Cribb, Cheyanne Solis and Veronica Meredith.

CAMARADERIE SHINES AT PAGEANT

A nervous but fun competition

By Taylore-Marie Sogge
Second Place, News Writing

Silence fills the air as racks filled with sparkling and shining costumes are lined up everywhere awaiting this big night. Make-up boxes line the mirrored dressing tables waiting to be opened, and make-up will be applied and perfected many times throughout the evening.

Contestants for the Fiesta Days pageant wait quietly but nervously in the wings of the Vacaville Performing Arts Theater. The first dance number to the "Greasy Melody" is costumed with pink shirts with black sequined skirts.

After the dance number, contestants hurry backstage to change into evening dresses, high heels and jewelry. Touchups on hair were very minimal at this point, but face powder was liberally applied to cut through the shine.

As contestants filed back in line ready to enter the stage in evening gown attire, the backstage becomes quiet and empty. Quick changes between numbers must be fast and there is no down time or chatter.

Backstage a mother waits quietly behind the scenes in case her help is needed. Contestants usually help

each other backstage during quick costume changes.

I had an opportunity to obtain a backstage perspective from Christina Corsello, Miss Vaca Valley 2004. She provided insight on how the pageant works. She said there is a lot of stress on pageant night. Interviews fill most of the day going from 2 to 5 p.m., followed by dinner for the contestants and then the pageant begins at 7 p.m. There is heavy competition at this point and the judges pay close attention to not only how you walk and dress, but also how well you interview. Although the pageant is stressful, contestants help each other and have fun competing.

Christina is now one of the organizers. There is stress during the first day of the pageant, not only for the contestants, but also for the organizers. They decide on what dresses the contestants wear during each event. Christina enjoys doing the backstage organization and maintaining a smooth-flowing event. This year 26 contestants participated in the Fiesta Days pageant. These girls meet once a week every week, for two months to train, meeting with current queens, receiving advice and asking questions.

As for me, observing backstage pro-



Sparkles and smiles

A group of girls dressed in costumes are waiting for the annual Vacaville Fiesta Queen competition to begin in this photo by Mayra Flores. Mayra won second place in The Reporter's photojournalism contest for a special "Fiesta at 50" theme.

vided a different perspective of the pageant. It really is a team effort with all the girls rather than a competitive rivalry. The spirit, camaraderie, and positive outcome is a direct result of Carole Warren's leadership. Carole Warren has been the director of the pageant for 23 years. She sets the tone

and mood for the pageant and the girls follow. This is not your usual "beauty pageant," but rather a positive and enriching experience for all the contestants.

The author is a junior at Will C. Wood High School in Vacaville.

Patriotic parade

A boy walks down Vacaville's Merchant Street with an American flag during the Fiesta Days Parade on May 26, in this photograph taken by Veronica Meredith, who was a fourth-grader in Mrs. Johnson's classroom at Browns Valley Elementary School when she submitted this entry. It earned her first-place honors in the 3-4 grade division of The Reporter's "Fiesta at 50" student journalism competition.



Derby crawling with tots

By Sabrina Muerle
First Place, News Writing

Early in the morning of Sunday, May 27, the serene silence was broken by the electronic beeps of toys and clanging of keys. Entering the Georgie Duke Athletic Center, children and young babies could be seen racing across the mat.

The Diaper Derby has different events ranging for the younger, crawling participants to toddlers already running. The children are separated by gender and age into categories such as "Tippy Toes" and "Rugrats." One person goes to the starting end of the mat with the child, while another person goes to the other side to coax the child to come to them when the command is given.

Parents bring different tools to help in the desperate attempt to grab their children's attention. They often bring the child's favorite toy, such as singing caterpillars and singing dogs. Balls, keys and bottles also tended to be a common choices for the parents.

When the races began, all of the parents tried swinging and shaking the items in hopes of their child racing toward them. Sometimes it worked ... A few youngsters headed off track and instead went to a different adult. Some children would go all the way with a grin on their face, or stay put, mesmerized by all the different noises.

Some kids thought they had the idea and raced halfway on the mat, and then simply stopped, refusing to go any farther.

This year, some of the younger participants came up with a new racing technique. Instead of crawling, these children would simply start in a sitting position and pull themselves along using their feet and hands. Sometimes these children even won their races.

After the races, the winners' families were happy. The children happily drank their milk or played with their toys as parents beamed with pride at the trophies. Little Carson Childers won first in the 14-month division, but left his trophy hand loosely at his side while he focused on drinking his milk.

Before his race, Brandon Deybowski seemed ready to go, trying to wiggle out of his mother's arms to run around. But when "Go!" was shouted and he was free to run as fast as he could, he instead threw himself on the mat and covered his head. Futile attempts by his mother, Brandy, to push him toward the other end only led Brandon to curl up more.

The races were exciting and all the participants went home happy, furthermore continuing the joy of the Diaper Derby competition, and even more so, Fiesta Days.

The author is a senior at Will C. Wood High School in Vacaville.

Little hula dancers ready to take the stage

The Hula Halau O Ku'ulei performers await their turn on stage during the Fiesta Days celebration in Vacaville in this photograph taken by Mayra Flores. It earned the Browns Valley Elementary School student third-place honors in the 5-6 grade division of The Reporter's "Fiesta at 50" student journalism competition. Mayra was a fifth-grader in Ed Finkas' classroom when she submitted this entry into the photojournalism competition.



Parents lure babies to the finish line

By Cheyanne Solis
First Place, News Writing

The 50th annual Fiesta Days Diaper Derby kicked off at Georgie Duke Sports Center early Sunday morning. The Diaper Derby was full of babies and tippy-toe toddlers racing to their moms, dads and grandparents.

There was no limit to the crying, giggling, kissing, and diaper bags! Some of the mini-stars had their own trial runs before the race had started; everyone was so pumped up with Diaper Derby fun!

Mother of baby Kaylee, one of the participants, thought that she had a good chance to win in the 5 to 10-month-old girls category. She didn't practice with Kaylee before the day of the races but believed that with her secret weapon, a bottle, she wouldn't have a problem.

With one parent or grandparent at the starting line, and the other at the finishing line with objects such as bells, keys, and stuffed animals, the excitement and tension was overwhelming! The races started out with 5 to 10 month-old girls. Hold your diapers and keep your bottle in hand because the race started and they were off!

One participant was speeding forward. Others just sat at the starting line. It was the first race, so who wouldn't be a little confused? A little time later the winning baby crawled across the end of the mat and was

Bottles, key chains, toys draw diaper set

the winner, but she posed for a picture before crossing the finishing line!

The next race was between 5 to 10 month-old boys. The participants were divided because there were so many crawlers.

Cell phones, bouncy balls, and giggly faces waited at the finish line when the first round began. Lots of the kids started to cry or crawl sideways. A Superman-caped baby was getting help by his big brother but didn't succeed. Super baby just didn't have it in him.

In the second round of the divided 5 to 10 month-old boys, a crawler started out faster than all the others. About 3 feet from the finish line, the baby in the lead suddenly stopped. The crowd's cheering quickly faded when the crawler turned around to start over! Then cheering was exchanged for laughter!

Many other participants went off course while others stayed in the middle of the mats, pulling each others' hair or poking one another's eyes. The two first-place winners of the 5 to 10 month-old boys were next to fight for the sole Diaper Derby championship of their division, but they apparently felt that they had done their crawling for the day and stayed at the starting line. It took a while for

one of them to even move. But a few moments later, one of the first-prize winners got to his feet and started off walking. He walked to his mother and was pronounced the winner.

Another one of the races was against tippy-toe girl toddlers. Now it was time for the participants to compete on their feet. Some girls started to walk slowly but when one little girl saw her mom holding a dollar bill at the finish line, she kicked up the speed. With the boy division of the tippy-toe toddlers, the competition was as harsh as a brand new tooth. There was a rough push by a baby determined to win.

The next race was for girl toddlers around 2 or 3 years old, but only one little girl was there to compete. The race started anyway, and she was the automatic winner, but was having second thoughts while three quarters of the way there. It took her a while to finally cross the finish line. It looked like she was breathing in the moment.

Fiesta Days' annual Diaper Derby was definitely a hit. The trophies were baby-sized and there were red and yellow Fiesta Days shirts for the participants. This event was great for a good laugh!

The author was a sixth-grader in Mr. Conner's class at The Grace Academy in Fairfield when she submitted this entry.