

## SARATOGA CELEBRATES THE 4TH WITH A BIG PARTY

By BRIAN BABCOCK

Mothers, fathers, children in strollers and even pets showed up at Azule Park on July 4 to participate in an old-fashioned Independence Day celebration.

"I hope people [enjoyed] the hometown event," said Vice Mayor Chuck Page, who organized the day. "It doesn't have to be huge to be fun."

National pride and a celebration of American freedoms were on clear display at the Fourth of July event. Page highlighted that by reading a patriotic poem written by 14-year-old Saratoga resident George Ellenikiotis.

There were also speeches by Brian Knysh, a Canadian immigrant, and Ellis Hung, a Chinese immigrant, who gave different stories with a similar theme.

Both chose to become American citizens because they wanted to become a part of the political process of electing officials to represent them, Page said.

Page said he asked both men to speak at the event so Saratoga residents could hear what American freedom meant to those born outside of the country.

"We live in a part of the country that has a diverse group of people," Page said. "We have the opportunity to learn from our neighbors who are not exactly like us."

After the speeches the 300 attendees marched around the park and afterward were treated to ice cream.

The event went smoothly because members of the community stepped up to make the celebration special, Page said.

"It makes you proud to be a Saratogan," he said.



There was plenty of patriotism to go around when folks gathered in Saratoga's Azule Park to celebrate the Fourth of July. Above, Daphne Chen hands her son, Edmund, a small American flag for him to wave during the festivities. At left, World War II veteran, and Saratoga historian, Willys Peck marches in the parade all decked out in his 1940s uniform. Below left, the Saratoga Village Band plays a Sousa march, and below, Wally Cool hands Dexter Hermstad an American flag as he arrives for the day of events.

