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# Berry Fest Gives LaSalle Another Reason to Party

Story & Photo by Cindy Kavanaugh

## Star County Reporter

LASALLE - This town finally has something to celebrate.

The fourth annual Strawberry Festival was bigger and better, organizers said as the town of LaSalle continued to celebrate its new town status.

"With us becoming a town it's the LaSalle Festival," festival chairman Judy Recker said Sunday "The theme this year is LaSalle-a-bration"

LaSalle, formerly Sandwich West Township, officially became a town June 1 and celebrated the following day with a barbecue.

Friday, fireworks streaked the sky and the Fabulous Fakes, starring Barry Manilow, Tina Turner and Elvis Presley lookalikes, entertained a crowd of at least 5,000 at Front Road Park.

The three-day event attracted about 20,000 people, organizers said.

"I can't believe this weekend," Recker said, standing among the 129 craft and food booths.

Nearly 7000 anglers entered Saturday's fishing derby, which Dorothy Pemberton won by landing a 79.3 cm gar pike.

And 71 Cars rolled in for a car show. The people's choice award went to Jeff Adams for his 1968 Hemi Roadrunner.

Saturday night festival-goers tried their luck at a Monte Carlo night and enjoyed a steak barbecue.

Firefighters served up about 8,000 bowls of strawberries and ice cream at their booth over the three days. Of their profits, \$4,000 will go to pay for Friday night's entertainment, with the rest being donated to local

Girl Guides and the Metropolitan General Hospital burn unit.

LaSalle native Kate Brunet, a 21-year-old University of Windsor student, sold 240 pints of fresh berries and 500 chocolate covered strawberries. She's hoping to raise about \$8,000 to fund a fall regional conference for the Association of International Students of Economics and Commerce (AI-SEC).

"I've never seen this many people in LaSalle," Brunet said.

About 100 people - mostly kids - ate about 1,200 of the delicious red berries smothered in whipped cream in a strawberry-eating contest.

First-place winners included: Raymond Bondy, 5; Ryan Montgomery, 8; Dawn Diotte, 10; Gerry St. Pierre, 14; and 33-year-old Doug Jones.

The winners ate their berries in record time. But when the judge went to put whipped cream over Raymond's berries, he said "i don't like whipped cream."

To compensate, he had to two extra berries. "They're good," Bondy said after swallowing the last of 12 strawberries. "They're berry goo," he added with a grin.

Next year's festival promises to be even better, organizers said.

"We've got to have more for the younger children," said Councilor Ron Arkell. A small carnival is in the works for next year's festival, but a deal hasn't been completed, he said.

Continuous entertainment is also planned for next year, said Debbie Boose, a co-chairman of the event.



ERIN MUELLER, 11, gets a mouthful during strawberry-eating contest during the weekend activities in LaSalle.