

Faurot Park fun times

July 4 brings fun and games to kids

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LIMA — Hundreds of Lima children took joy in the pleasures of childhood Saturday at the Star Spangled Spectacular in Faurot Park.

The children got to make arts and crafts, like keychains, jewelry, crowns and sand art. Balloon animals were available along with free rides and a petting zoo.

Sue Wagner, vice president of the accounting department at Superior Federal Credit Union, volunteered at the Kids Zone.

"It's fun and the kids enjoy it; they get a kick out of it and are very creative," Wagner said.

Mark Kotarba, a balloon animal aficionado, entertained the crowd with his creations. Lines of children

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eager to take an animal home were long. He's been making balloon animals for the past 20 years as a hobby.

"It's a fun, good time here and the crowds are really appreciative," Kotarba said.

Embarq hosted Kotarba as their entertainment. Claude Cliborne, public affairs manager at Embarq, said the animal balloons are extremely popular.

Kurt Neep, chairman of this year's Star Spangled Spectacular, said he wanted to offer families more options this year.

New this year was the petting zoo and a magician. Neep also said there were more rides than ever before.

"We want people to take advantage of these opportunities," Neep said. "We want to showcase Lima and all it has to offer; that way people develop more pride for the city."

Mike Hemmelgarn, comedy juggler and ventriloquist, performed for audiences Saturday evening. He's been a performer for 15 years and has visited Lima many times.

"I like Lima, it's a great experience," Hemmelgarn said. "I like the creative aspect, it gives you a sense of satisfaction when you create something that everybody loves."

Hemmelgarn makes animal balloons, juggles bowling balls, does comedy acts and ventriloquism.

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ABOVE: Antrell Blissett, 11, stands in line Saturday and waits for a balloon animal.

LEFT: Bob Schroeder performs with the band Exploit in Faurot Park during the Star Spangled Spectacular.

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