

Market Street Community Block Party and Health Fair brings together several parishes for a day of free family fun

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON – Something truly magic happens when several groups from different creeds and upbringings join together to celebrate their community.

Around six different parishes and dozens of other sponsors and groups did just that this **Saturday** between **11 a.m. and 3 p.m.** with their annual **Market Street Community Block Party and Health Fair**. This completely free event celebrated faith, fun, food and community through dozens of activities for folks of all ages.

Melonee Johnson, the event’s volunteer coordinator, was overwhelmed with the amount of support that the community has given throughout the years.

“It’s awesome,” she said. “I love seeing all of the people and all of the kids. They’re really excited to be here.”

Guests at the block party had the opportunity to enjoy bounce houses, arts and crafts, face painting, carnival style games, obstacle courses as well as chow down on some hot dogs, chips, popcorn, ice cream, cookies and drinks all free of charge. **The Equestrian Center at Beverly Farm** offered free pony and horse rides for children ages five and up.



In a compassionate move by local churches, organizations and businesses, these groups joined together to allow block party coordinators to stuff around 500 backpacks with school supplies to be handed out to children at the party for free.

“We want the community to come together and worship together,” Johnson said. “We get bigger and bigger every year.”

Inside one of the sponsoring churches, several groups had set up shop indoors for the Health Fair. Health Fair Coordinator **Amy Bohn** is overwhelmed with the support coming from various routes in the community.

“As far as testing goes, we have Lewis and Clark Family Health Clinic doing glucose and cholesterol testing. We have Southern Illinois Healthcare doing blood pressure and helping with insurance. We have HIV private testing downstairs with onsite results. Outside, we have the Safari Dental group. It’s all contained with cleanings, screenings and helping out with school forms. American Red Cross is asking for donors for platelets and all that stuff. We have about 25 other vendors as well.

“This is a great way for kids to get their health education in one room. They can get school forms taken care of absolutely for free,” she said. “I just hope that more people become aware of their health, their diet and exercise.”

