



**ABOVE.** "High Tech Safari," a begonia-covered float by the Riverview Rascals, earned first place Sunday in the nautical parade during the Capitola Begonia Festival.

**LEFT.** The Tasha Silva group's float named "Jungle Love" came in second place.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

# Begonia Festival dazzles with color in Capitola

By TARMO HANNULA

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

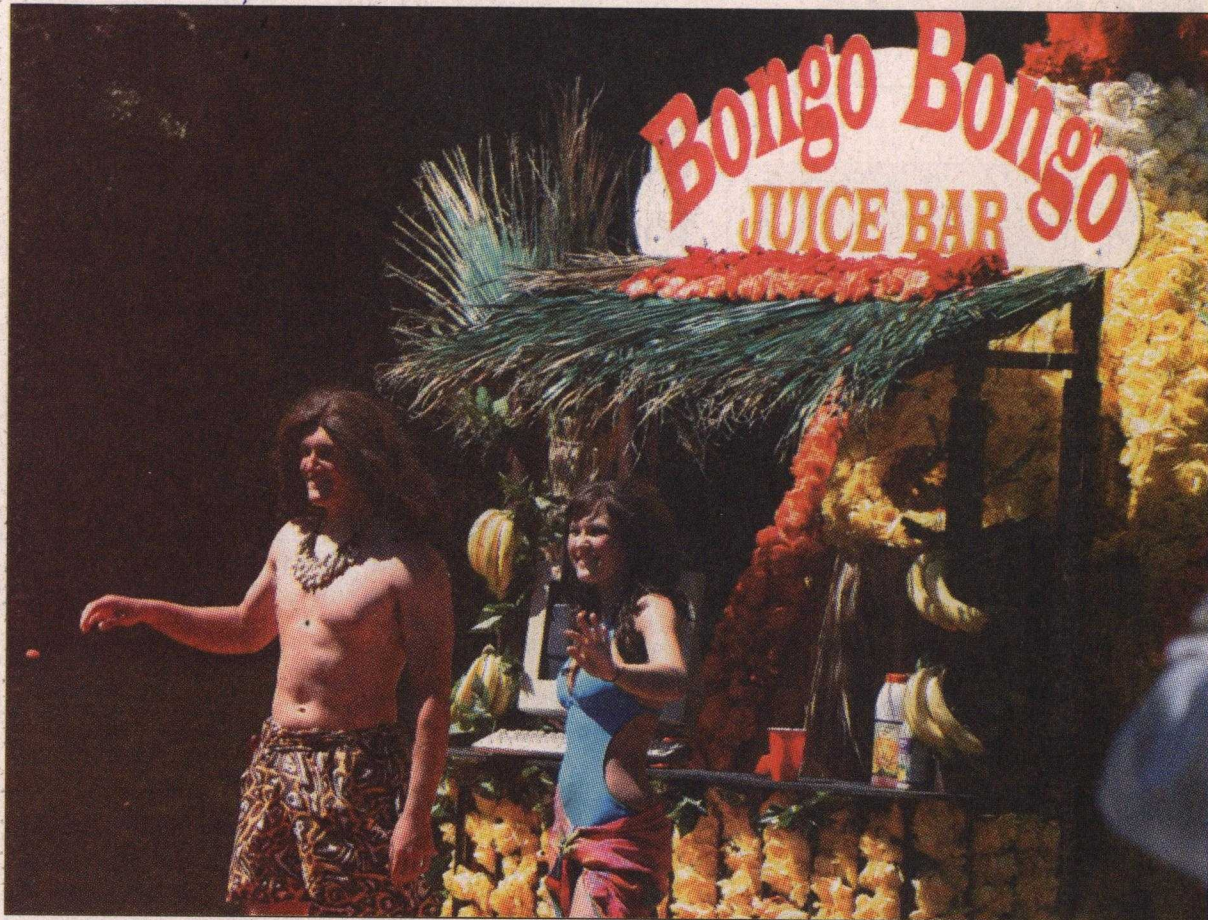
**CAPITOLA**— The 55th annual Begonia Festival filled Capitola with dazzling colors, huge crowds and a host of outdoor events over the Labor Day weekend. Thrown into the mix of a sand castle contest, horseshoe throwing games, rowboat races, live music, art exhibits, a fishing derby and a volleyball tournament, was a

dose of brilliant sunny weather and toasty summery conditions.

The four-day event, splashed across the streets of Capitola, on the Capitola beach and along the waters of Soquel Creek crests with the floral explosion of the nautical parade, a unique phalanx of original floats coated with fresh begonia blooms. This year's theme, "Capitola Jungle Safari," drew a host of diverse themes, from a

towering giraffe, peering from a four-wheel drive jeep, to a volcano gushing a stream of clear water from its spout. Thousands of spectators clung to the Stockton Street Bridge, dangling their legs over the railroad trestle and lining the shores of Soquel Creek for a glimpse of the floating flowery parade that kicked off at 1 p.m. Sunday.





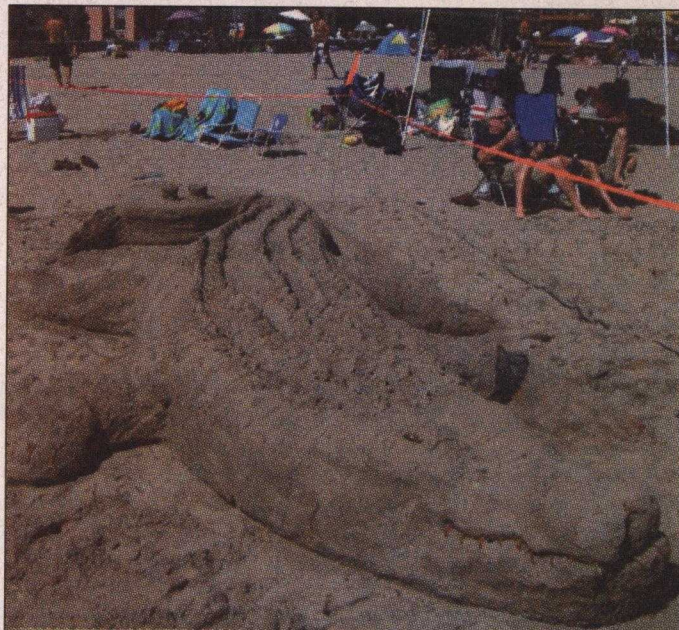
Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

**LEFT. "Tarzan & Jane at the Internet Cafe," by Joe Sutton and the Cherry Street Gang, was awarded third place at the Begonia Festival in Capitola.**

**ABOVE. Andrew Westman lends a hand to Zachary Proctor, 8, in constructing the begonia float "Hightech Safari" Saturday along Soquel Creek.**

**A sand castle titled "Gaiter the Waiter," by the Gallzos and Fisher families, claimed first place in the large group category of the sand castle contest Saturday.**

Tarmo Hannula/  
Register-Pajaronian



## FESTIVAL

From page 1

"It's about people coming together and having fun," said Nels Westman, who has been a key player in the Begonia Festival for the past 20 years. "I think the Begonia Festival is one of the most positive events in Capitola. It's such a wholesome, kid-oriented get-together. Everyone has a good time."

Westman was part of the group Riverview Rascals that built a float titled, "Hightech Safari," which was voted first place. Last year the same group came in third.

Of the eight entries this

year (two groups canceled), the Tasha Silva group came in second place with their entry, "Jungle Love." Joe Sutton and the Cherry Street Gang earned third place with their begonia float, "Tarzan & Jane at the Jungle Internet Café."

Westman said the Riverstreet Rascals float called for more than 8,000 begonia blooms. All day Saturday, the south bank of Soquel was abuzz with huge clusters of people fastening begonias to wood and chicken wire contraptions moored to the shoreline. The festivity, long-steeped in a family-oriented tradition, takes on a serious tone — laced with humor — over the course of the day.

Ursula Feusi of Switzerland said Sunday's nautical parade was her first such event.

"I think it was wonderful," she said. "I've wanted to come to this for so many years, and finally I could make it. It's hard to compare this to anything I've ever seen. It was very beautiful."

John Martorella, part of the Riverstreet Rascals, piloted the first-place float Sunday. Along with a first-place plaque, the Riverstreet Rascals were also awarded a \$1,000 check, which they, in turn, donated to a local charity to help the blind.

"It's all about fun," Martorella said. "We had a blast."