

Spirits high for Aromas Day



Amanda Schoenberg/Register-Pajaronian

Jaco Fajnor, 6, walks his dog Marshmello during the Aromas Day parade Sunday.

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Thousands of visitors turn out for parade, pancakes, yard sales

By AMANDA SCHOENBERG

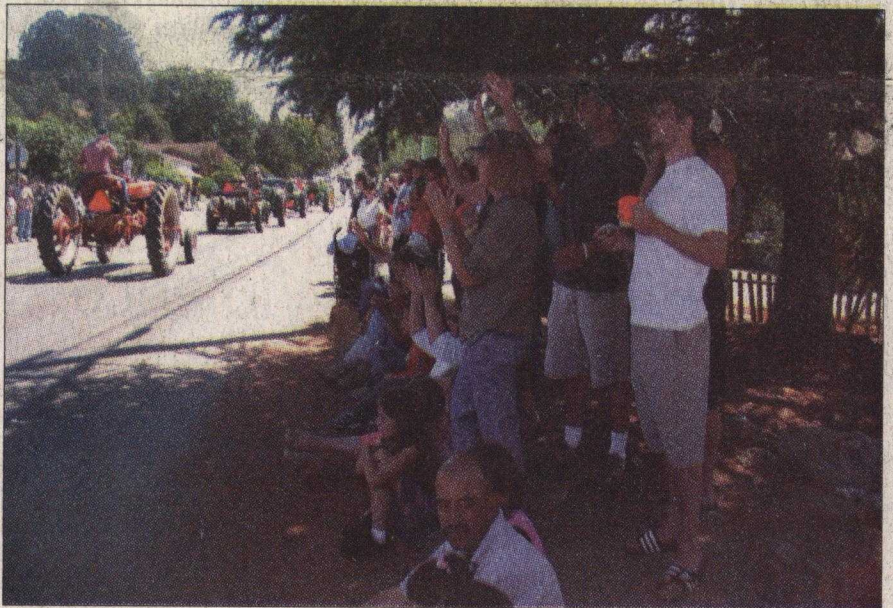
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

AROMAS — From parade fans and music lovers to yard sale junkies, thousands of people turned out for the annual Aromas Day festivities Sunday in the tiny community of about 3,000.

Aromas Day committee member Chris McDougall estimated that several thousand people joined the festivities, which included live entertainment, a pancake breakfast at the Grange Hall, a scarecrow competition, a climbing wall for kids and the annual parade.

"This is the best year yet," McDougall said. "This is such a cool little town."

"A lot of people have been doing this their whole lives," added committee chairman James Kmetovic. "(Aromas Day) closed down for a couple of years, and people are just so excited to have it back."



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Onlookers cheer as a line of antique tractors drive past in the annual Aromas Day parade on Sunday in Aromas.

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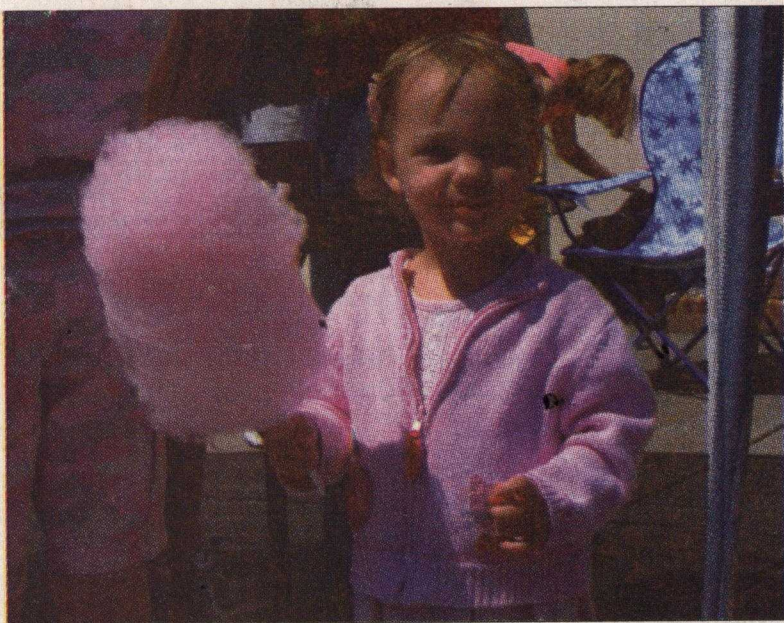
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"I think it's great," said Bridget Higgins as she watched her daughter Brielle Higgins, 2, nibble on a mound of cotton candy. "I'm getting ready to watch my older daughter in the parade."

As for her favorite Aromas Day fun, Higgins said, "We did the pony rides — you've got to do that, right?"

During the parade, antique tractors and cars came out in full force alongside school kids and horses, while grand marshals and longtime Aromas residents Carol and Glenn Hardy waved to the crowd.

For 6-year-old Pacific Collegiate School student and Aromas resident Jacob Fajnor, this year's festival was his fourth time in the parade. He led his dog, Marshmello, although considering the dog's size, it may have been the other



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Brielle Higgins, 2, samples some cotton candy Sunday.

way around.

"It was fun," Fajnor said. "The only negative part was the sweat that came off me. It makes me feel

happy to see this place hustling and bustling."

After the parade, many onlookers roamed the Art in the Park booths hosted by members of the Aromas Hills Artisans. Printmaker Katherine Stutz-Taylor of Royal Oaks said she had sold prints to people from as far afield as Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay area and New Jersey. But most of all, she appreciated the chance to educate the public about her traditional woodcuts and etchings, she said.

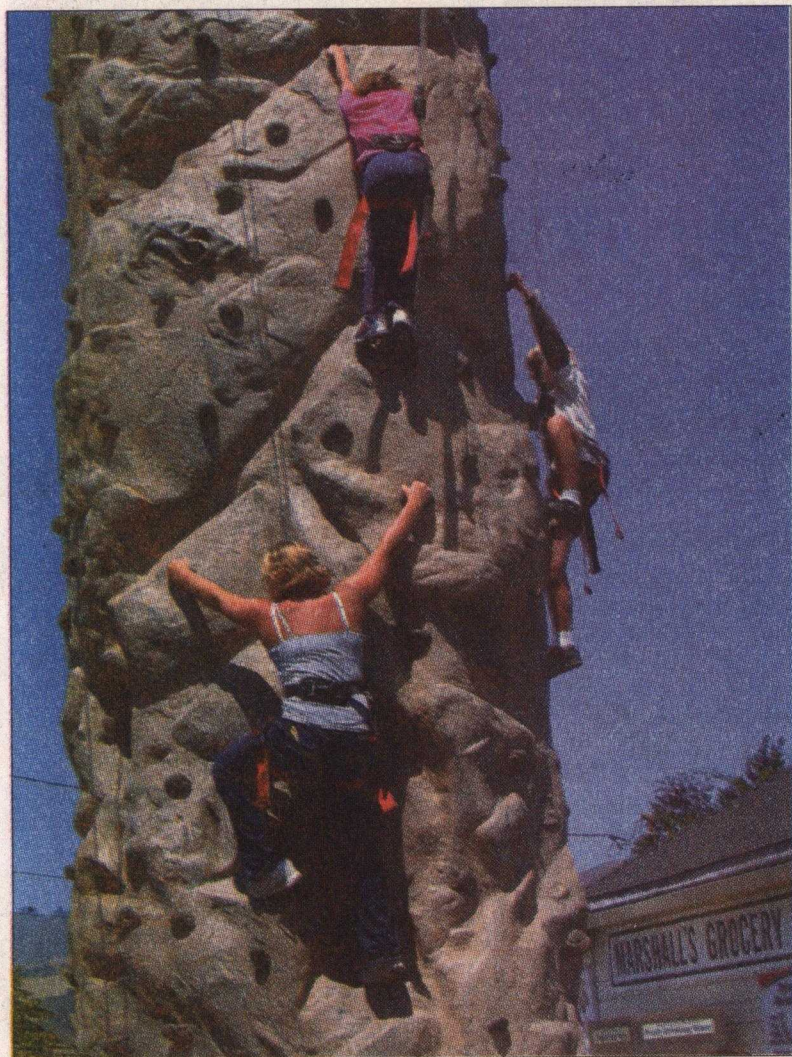
Locals also took advantage of the crowds to haul out old goodies in about 50 yard sales all over town.

Karen Leyenberger watched the parade while hosting a yard sale in front of her home, where the biggest sellers were furniture items.

But the real draw was her sister's pet goose, Beaky, who watched the parade from a child's stroller because of a broken leg. For Leyenberger and her daughter Jillian Hitchford, who moved to Aromas from Prunedale three years ago, Aromas Day showcases what makes their town unique. They jokingly refer to Aromas as Stars Hollow, the colorful and fictional Connecticut town in the WB TV drama "Gilmore Girls."

They like the safety and get a kick out of the small-town politics that erupt every now and then, Leyenberger said.

"I like that I have freedom here," said Hitchford, who started seventh grade at Aromas School last week. "Here, I can walk to the store by myself."



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Kids scale a popular climbing wall during the annual Aromas Day festivities Sunday.