

# Smooth sailing in Capitola

Begonia Festival

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

The Capitola Begonia Festival peaks Sunday with the nautical parade. The "Pirates of the Caribbean" float by the T-Stock group is shown at left and "Lightning McQueen" is at right.

## Weather perfect for 54th annual begonia festival

By JENNIE TEZAK

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

CAPITOLA — Sunshine, blue skies and just a hint of a cool breeze greeted participants Saturday at the 54th annual Capitola Begonia Festival.

The festival began in the 1950s when begonia growers in Capitola and Santa Cruz used the begonias as a way to extend the late-summer coastal tourist season. The community and cool climate have been eminently hospitable to the tuberous flower, according to the festival program.

The festival, which this year featured the theme "Capitola Goes to the Movies," ran from Friday through today. Some of the events included a movie screening on the beach, a sand sculpture contest, an event featuring art by young students in the area, a concert in the park, rowboat races, a nautical parade and a volleyball exhibition.



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Watsonville firefighter John Martorella (left) joins others members of the Riverview Rascals on Saturday in assembling their "Lightning McQueen" float entry.

# FESTIVAL

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"I think it's great, it's one of the few family-oriented events," said Julia Garcia, a festival volunteer. "Everyone always seems to be in a good mood and the setting is nice."

On Friday night, Kitchen and Lighting of Scotts Valley sponsored a showing of "The Princess Bride" on the beach. Families sat on the beach with picnic dinners and blankets to watch the film.

"Last night was wonderful," said Cathie Dominguez, volunteer secretary for the festival. "There were over 300 people. It was fabulous."

Meilia Watkins, of Santa Cruz, 14, painted a picture of a begonia using acrylics, that was featured in the budding artists event from 9 a.m. to noon at Esplanade Park.

Watkins said that art is an enjoyable activity for her.

"It's fun and it brightens up the world," she said.

Elsewhere, sand artists turned sand into sculptures. Andrew Krasts of Los Gatos, 14, was participating in his fourth sand sculpture contest and, with the help of his father, constructed a huge dog modeled after his golden retriever. He was working on a second canine.

"I have a golden retriever at home," Krasts said. "I'm a dog person."

Ben Irao of the Capitola Police Department said the sand sculpture event was one of the most popular events and that the festival was running smoothly.

"For the sand sculptures it's smooth sailing," Irao said. "And we haven't had any drunken rowdiness today."

Groups of friends and family basked in the sunshine along Soquel Creek as they layered begonias in bright shades of pink, red, white and yellow onto floats for the nautical parade.

Watsonville firefighter John Martorella said he and family members have taken part in the festivities for the past two years.

"It's about the kids and it's about everyone getting together and having a lot of fun," Martorella said as he fastened begonia blooms onto the "Lightning McQueen" float with about 25 family members and friends. "Some of these folks have been doing this for over 20 years, like Nels and Susan Westman here — they're just out here to have a great time."

Maureen O'Malley-Moore and her team, "Maureen's Marauders," laughed and talked as they worked on their float, called "Capitola Queen," a reference to the movie "Showboat." The first, second and third winners of the float contest received money that was donated



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A pair of women wear begonias on their hats Sunday.

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— participant Susan Westman

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to the charity of their choice.

"We have a big party down here," said O'Malley-Moore, a Capitola resident. "It's the best community event we have."

An awards ceremony was held Sunday for the best floats. In keeping with the movie theme, a float named "Cinderella" took first place

and "Pirates of the Caribbean" placed second, while "Lightning McQueen" came in third.

Christy Chiaramonte of Capitola said she has attended the festival since she was a child.

"I have three kids with me," Chiaramonte said. "I let the kids enjoy the activities so they can be in-

involved in the fun."

"I think the parade took a step up this year," said longtime participant Susan Westman. "There were more entries and more enthusiasm this year. I like that."

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Staff writer Tarmo Hannula contributed to this report.