

Published: Tuesday, Jan. 04, 2011 / Updated: Tuesday, Jan. 04, 2011 06:50 AM

Former Fort Mill festival gives \$33K for veterans park, schools, adult day care

Andrew Dys - Columnist

FORT MILL -- Festivals usually give smiles and maybe some indigestion from too much cotton candy or funnel cakes.

Fest-i-Fun - the defunct spring festival in Fort Mill that lasted a quarter century until 2006 - is now giving far more - \$33,000 in cash.

And Fort Mill's veterans, schools and adults with special needs will reap the benefits.

Slideshow

« Prev 1 of 3 photos Next »



JIM STRATAKOS - jstratakos@heraldonline.com - - The Fort Mill/Tega Cay Adult Day Care received \$5,000 in leftover funds from the former Fort Mill Fest-i-Fun event. Phillip Neal and center director Samantha Kriegshauser were at the center on Monday.

Fest-i-Fun was held in early May each year until 2007. That year, on the eve of the Saturday event, a fire at a downtown pizza shop forced its cancellation.

Fort Mill turned in 2008 to a strictly town-sponsored festival and last year replaced that with the S.C. Strawberry Festival. Fest-i-Fun's run was ended - but \$33,152.86 was left over.

The committee that ran the non-profit festival had money left over from past years when money raised through selling vendor space was kept for emergencies and to put on the next year's event.

The group gave:

\$23,152.86 to help build the Fort Mill Veterans Park at the corner of S.C. 160 and Main Street at the foot of the downtown hill across the railroad tracks from Confederate Park.

\$5,000 to the Foundation for Fort Mill Schools

\$5,000 was donated in honor of the Campbell family, longtime festival volunteers, to the Fort Mill/Tega Cay Adult Day Care Center.

"What a blessing!" said Frieda Price, administrator of the non-profit day care.

Those who put on the festival for so long wanted the money to help the people of the Fort Mill area, said former Mayor Charles Powers, who helped start the festival and led the committee that ran it.

The veterans park is scheduled to start construction this spring and open this summer. It is a town project with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion assisting the town on the \$200,000 project, said Town Manager David Hudspeth. He praised the donation as a gracious gesture to benefit the public and honor veterans.

Veterans groups have pledged tens of thousands of dollars for the park and are aiming to raise more money by selling name-engraved paving stones to be placed at the park and other donations. Any extra money would be used to enhance the park.

"This really was a great Christmas present for us," said Nat Helms, chairman of the town's veterans park committee. "This donation is a big step toward honoring veterans and making the park even nicer.

"Fort Mill is a patriotic place - this is a patriotic gesture."

The schools foundation offers small grants to innovative teachers in the district and scholarships to students. The \$5,000 is a big boost to continuing to reward excellence that the people of Fort Mill have come to expect, said Allen Tate Realtor Martha Kinard, the foundations' volunteer executive director and former school board member.

The \$5,000 given to the adult day care will be used to build a quiet area for patients with dementia. The day care center serves as many as 50 disabled and special needs people at any given time.

The Campbell family, which runs Fort Mill's AME Inc., an industrial contracting company, was instrumental in the annual set-up and running of the festival, providing volunteers, trucks to set up stages and more.

The adult day care was also a favorite of the family patriarch, the late P.M. Campbell, and his son, the late Ronnie Campbell, so the committee decided to offer the donation in honor of the Campbell family.

"We were proud to help out for years and proud to help the day care here that does so much for so many," said Gregg Campbell, president of AME.

For Powers, 71, mayor 24 years until his defeat in 2007, the donations officially close the book on a festival he had a hand in from the beginning.

Never again would there be the Fest-i-Fun posters, artistic keepsakes that adorn walls in Fort Mill schools and other public places in the community.

In 1994, as the world watched, Powers even presented then-President Bill Clinton a framed Fest-i-Fun poster when Clinton stayed overnight in Fort Mill.

The leftover posters were donated to the Leroy Springs recreation complex.

"Fort Mill was a lot smaller when the festival started," Powers said. "We put on a good time through the years.

"We just wanted to give something to the people who gave so much to Fort Mill and still do - our veterans, our kids and our adults who need a hand."

Andrew Dys 803-329-4065 adys@heraldonline.com