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BORCHERT'S BENCH: a place to rest and reflect

By Jenny Kirk

More than 60 family members, friends and former students and athletes gathered together on Friday at Eastbay Park in Balaton to dedicate a brand new bench in memory of the late Ron Borchert.

The dedication was part of a legacy gift initiated by members of the Balaton High School Class of 1969 two years ago when they came together to celebrate their 50th class reunion during the 2019 Fun Fest weekend.

"Things seldom get done as a solo effort, unless of course, you're on the golf course, then it's a solo effort," said Brad Knudson, legacy gift organizer and Class of '69 graduate. "Our activities over the past couple of years for the Class of '69 were certainly a team effort."

Knudson explained that he and his classmates talked first about honoring the six class members who had died and that the legacy gift concept grew from there.

"On the far corner of the park here, there's four memory trees

planted, and we'll be planting two more for the six classmates that have passed," he said. "The other piece of our legacy gift is to plant (a total of) 48 trees amongst the parks in Balaton. And then we also have the memorial bench for Coach Borchert, which is certainly a very powerful memory."

Borchert was a longtime teacher and coach at Balaton High School. He died at the age of 86 on Dec. 13, 2019.

Borchert
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JoAnn Borchert sits with her great-grandchildren on a new bench dedicated in memory of her husband, Ron Borchert, who was a longtime teacher, coach and friend in Balaton. The dedication ceremony took place on Friday. Photo by Jenny Kirk



Sylvia Avila and Braxden Marron were crowned the 2021 Lit'l Miss and Lit'l Mister Balaton representatives at the 11th annual program on Thursday evening at Victory Church. Photo by Jenny Kirk

New Lit'l Miss and Lit'l Mister Balaton crowned

By Jenny Kirk

Ten courageous and talented individuals vied for the Lit'l Miss and Lit'l Mister Balaton titles on Thursday night, kicking off the 2021 Balaton Fun Fest celebration.

Emcee Lexi Erickson introduced the seven girls and three boys to the large audience gathered for the 11th annual program held at Victory Church in Balaton.

"I'm excited to be here and excited to kick off Fun Fest," Erickson said. "Thank you guys for coming and supporting these kiddos."

After announcing the judges, Sara Bauler, Tami Nelson and Taylor Kass, the candidates took turns coming out of the back room and onto stage for the question/answer segment, followed by the talent segment and "Yankee Doodle" group song.

At the end of the program, 6-year-old Sylvia Avila was crowned Lit'l Miss Balaton, while 6-year-old Braxden Marron was crowned Lit'l Mister Balaton.

"I felt like it went really well," organizer Chelsea Trump said. "The kids were so brave and did great with their talents."

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People put the "fun" in Fun Fest



Ann Hively grins as she eats a bomb pop after the kiddie parade on Saturday during Balaton Fun Fest.

By Jenny Kirk

There was a lot to see and do for people of all ages this past weekend during Balaton's 2021 Fun Fest celebration.

Much of the activity centered around Legion/Lions Park this year, so people seemed to congregate there before, during and after specific events, allowing camaraderie to blossom.

Having spent hours at the park on Friday as well as on Saturday, Balaton resident Shirley Wilson said she was having the best time.

"It's like a good old-fashioned picnic," Wilson said. "People can visit, and the kids can run around. This is great."

Balaton Area Chamber of Commerce Treasurer Marla Anderson said 60 children had gotten bracelets to play on the inflatables at the park on Friday. There were many more that enjoyed the inflatables on Saturday as well.

The Balaton Area Community Foundation had its annual burger feed, followed by music from "Red Hat Gypsy" and "Redwood River Boys" on Friday at Legion/Lions Park. Several kids ran barefoot through the park, while their parents chatted with friends, family and community members.

Vendors sold a variety of refreshments, meals and treats throughout the weekend. Besides various vendors and the BACF burger feed, Balaton Bay Clubhouse served pulled chicken on Saturday. Lingen Dairy also served shakes, cones and bowls of ice cream at the park.

A flurry of activities took place on Saturday, beginning with the Fun Run. The 30 participants took off on the typical route starting at 8 a.m. By then, the Chamber was serving breakfast sandwiches, rolls, coffee and juice. The golf tournament had also started at Balaton Bay Golf Course.

It wasn't long before several basketball players began hitting the courts for the 3 on 3 tournament. Families then loaded up their kids and headed to Lakeview Senior Housing, where the kiddie parade took place at 10 a.m. This year, a lot of kids were driving small, motorized vehicles, oftentimes alongside each other as they slowly cruised around the drive at Lakeview, drawing smiles from all of the onlookers, including the residents and staff at the facility.

The grand parade was a huge hit this



Ralco representative Lou Galbraith, whose late husband, Bob Galbraith, founded the thriving business 50 years ago, serves as the Grand Marshal in the parade on Saturday in Balaton. She sits alongside driver and Ralco employee Brad Klukas. Photos by Jenny Kirk



Above: Luna Starr waves during the parade. Below: Dawn, James and Noah (front) Wee provide interactive communication during the parade.



Friends (from left) Kenley Chandler and Avery Fricke hold hands as they walk toward Lakeview Senior Housing to register for the kiddie parade.

year as countless people lined the streets to wave at everyone in the parade and to wait for candy or souvenirs to be given out. Smiles were infectious from all directions.

Lou Galbraith, whose husband, Bob, founded Ralco 50 years ago, served as the 2021 Balaton Fun Fest grand marshal. She was driven by Brad Klukas, a Balaton native and events coordinator for Ralco.



Several fire departments and ambulance crews also took part in the grand parade, as did Mayor Lonnie Lambertus. Horns honked, music played and cheers rang out, all of which were music to the ears for a lot of people, especially after having been cooped up for so long due to COVID-19.

"I think everything is going well," Chamber President Julie Erickson said on Saturday afternoon. "We didn't know what

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BACF serves 400 at Fun Fest burger feed



Several volunteers helped out during the Balaton Area Community Foundation's burger feed on Friday night at Legion/Lions Park in Balaton. Pictured (from left) are Brita Fricke, Madison Timmerman, Teri Hively, Mary Timmerman and Monica Misjak serving the Pagel family. Photo by Jenny Kirk

By Jenny Kirk

Balaton Area Community Foundation board members were extremely pleased with the turnout for its annual burger feed during the Fun Fest celebration on Saturday.

"I would say we fed close to 400," organizer Mary Timmerman said. "That's counting the hotdogs. I think the turnout was great. Some years, people would come and

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The Gifford family watches the grand parade on Saturday in Balaton. Pictured (from left) are Hadli Ohme, Craig Gifford, Julia Ohme, Ann Gifford and Leah Ohme (holding Augie the doggie).