

Ozona's first annual July 4th Celebration

By Barb Haley

When three Ozona neighbors decided that it was time for their community to have a "Fireworks Extravaganza", they took action at the annual Ozona Village Improvement Society membership and election meeting held April 23rd. Larry Guilbault and Ed Schmid approached the VP of OVIS, Brian Smith and asked to announce the fireworks event. Together with John Andreopoulos, they formed the "Ozona Neighborhood Fireworks Fund, Inc" a non-profit organization.

The group asked the membership for their participation and assistance in spreading the word and help in collecting money. As it turns out, the size of the bang does indeed depend on the bucks. The amount collected, nearly \$9200, bought approximately 15 minutes of pyrotechnic dazzle and delight; a great inaugural success thanks to everyone involved.

On the heels of the Fireworks proposal, a now enthusiastic few in the audience, clamored for a golf cart and bicycle parade to precede the fireworks. Three friends (Susan White, Merideth Grannan and Barb Haley) were determined to organize a parade, asking for Ozona's participation via e-mail and flyers. While riding on the trail of the Fireworks Fund, the resident's volunteered and with just six weeks remaining, the community managed to pull it together.

Additional volunteers: Lisa and Mike Anstett, Stuart and Diane Williams, Larry Guilbault and Bobbi Clarke, Sally Caron and son's, Ric Clark, Bob Fortner as Master of Ceremonies, and Terry Fortner assisted with the registration of the bicyclists. Certificates were given to the children who decorated and rode their bikes, scooters, trikes and sometimes mom & dad's backs in the parade.

Beginning at the intersection of Tampa Road and Orange St. at 11:00 A.M., the Parade opened with a recitation of the "Pledge of Allegiance" followed by a rendition of "God Bless America" sung by the crowd. The event was then dedicated to our Armed Forces serving overseas and the Parade was off.

Vendors offering wares, set up in the tents, which were supplied by Ric Clark and Jill Howard (The Speckled Trout), and added to the sense of community, sure to make the parade a success for years to come.

The Parade of bikes and golf carts, led by Dean Shelley to the rousing refrains of classic patriotic marches proceeded north along Orange St., turned around on Orchid Dr, then returned south on Orange to Bay St. and west on Bayshore, then proceeded to Shore Dr. and back on Orange St., ending in old downtown Ozona.

"Beach Tree Restaurant" provided free ice cream to delighted children as well as adults. Susan White created a fun time for the kids following their participation in the parade, by

assisting the youngsters in the creation of a flag fashioned from bamboo rods, torn sheet's and red and blue paint.

Ozona businesses: Ozona Pig, Molly Goodheads, Orange Street Cafe, Beach Tree Restaurant and The Ozona Seafood Company offered special menu items for the Independence Day event.

The professionally managed fireworks were truly spectacular; Americana at its true bluest highlighting the parade and the spirit of "Small Town America." Thank you to all the businesses and individuals who donated their time, energy and financial support and to those great participants, particularly the Parade Kids.

To see a video of the fireworks display, go to:

<http://mysite.verizon.net/res8qqrw/ozonaneighborhoodfireworksinc/>

produced by Dean Shelley. To view the photos submitted by Lisa Johnson, Larry Guilbault and Diane Williams go to www.ozonafi.com. Thanks Ric Clark who masters this web site.

And, congratulations Ozona on your first annual 4th of July, Independence Day Celebration.