



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: October 24, 2007
TO: Park and Recreation Commission
FROM: Recreation Division, Parks and Recreation Department
SUBJECT: Children's Fiesta Parade

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission hear a report from staff regarding the history of the Department's Annual Children's Fiesta Parade and the planning required to organize this community event held each August during Old Spanish Days; and recognize several of the community volunteers which have contributed to the success of the event.

DISCUSSION:

History

Seventy-eight years ago, in 1929, the first Children's Parade or "EL Desfile De Los Niños" was held on the morning of Friday, August 16th. Thanks to the work of a committee of volunteers led by Mr. and Mrs. John Sesma and City Recreation Director Bertha Rice, the event was created to provide an opportunity for children to officially participate in Old Spanish Days. During those first five years of Old Spanish Days Fiesta, the event was strictly for adults with no children participating. During that time, Mr. and Mrs. Sesma had been busy organizing neighborhood "Mini Fiestas" for the local children. Because of the Sesma's hard work and enthusiasm, they were asked to help form a Children's Fiesta Parade event to augment the El Desfile Histórico, the celebration's large equestrian parade. The Sesma's work, along with the City Recreation Director and numerous volunteers, helped create what has remained a wonderful program of the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department for more than three quarters of a century.

That first parade consisted of a short march from Plaza Del Mar, along Cabrillo Boulevard to Chapala Street and back. Horses, ponies, goats and animal drawn vehicles were placed in the first section of the parade and were followed by groups of marching children, all in costume. Many of them carried pets or walked them, just as they do today. While the parade route has changed over the years, with State Street now hosting the parade, the spirit, tradition, and charm of the event has remained the same.

This last August 2007, the 77th Anniversary of El Desfile De Los Niños was celebrated. The event has continued to be one of the highlights of Old Spanish Days Fiesta. Part of the

charm of the event is that the majority of the children participating have parents and grandparents who have very fond memories of participating in the parade as children. Families are excited to pass this tradition on to their children. Other parade entries include a variety of talented local dance, gymnastic and drill team groups and entries representing local daycare programs, non-profit organizations and churches. All parade entries spend much time and effort creating their costumes, decorating their floats or wagons and/or practicing their dance routines.

Planning

The Cultural Arts Section of the Parks and Recreation Department has the responsibility for planning and organizing this event. Planning for each parade begins in late spring when parade materials are updated and distributed to a mailing list of past participants. The parade office at the Cabrillo Pavilion stays very busy with telephone calls and walk-in customers who come to get an entry form or have questions about the parade procedures and policy.

Staff orders porti-potties and tables and chairs for the event along with t-shirts for staff and volunteers. Staff also works very diligently to recruit staff and community volunteers to work parade day and provide an orientation for parade staff to be held the week before the event.

As the parade entries are submitted, staff creates the parade lineup and writes the parade script. With more than 100-125 entries including more than 2,500 participants, this is often a time consuming task. 6-8 community members are recruited to serve as parade announcers for the day. Many of these announcers have continued to return year after year to participate. They spend much time reviewing and practicing the script prior to the parade to ensure the parade's success.

Thanks to the generosity of the Old Spanish Days organization the Department is able to utilize the organization's parade sound systems for the day at no cost. Marborg Industries sponsors the ice cream and both groups provide volunteers to help distribute the ice cream to all parade participants at the end of the parade. Their sponsorship and volunteer assistance is greatly appreciated.

Staffing for Parade Day

Staff from the Parks and Recreation Department, other City Departments and a number of community volunteers come together on parade day to ensure a safe and fun activity for all who participate and those who come to the parade as spectators. In total, more than 50 people are needed parade day. Staff is actively recruiting parade workers up to parade day. Parade staff is responsible for a variety of duties: first aid, parade lineup, crowd control, information booth, announcing, or manning the ice cream station at the end of the parade. The time commitment for most parade staff and volunteers is an hour of training and four hours on parade day. Most find that it is a small amount of time to give for the many rewards

of working with the children and their families in this event so full of rich family tradition and fun!

The Department would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers who have worked so diligently on parade day to provide a safe and fun parade for all the families who have participated.

Budget

Since its inception, the parade has been provided at no cost to parade participants. The basic costs for parade supplies does not vary much from year to year; the largest cost is staff time- staff who plan and organize the parade and City staff who work the day of the parade. The cost to the Department to run the parade varies each year from approximately \$6,000 - \$8,000 depending on the numbers of staff working versus the number of volunteers who have donating their time.

SUBMITTED BY: Judith Cook, Recreation Programs Manager

APPROVED BY: Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director