

Reporter names Fiesta at 50 winners

By Diane Barney
Editor

Seven students — ranging from fourth-grade through high school — have claimed news writing and photojournalism honors in The Reporter's "Fiesta at 50" competition, an extension of the newspaper's annual Campus Star student journalism competition.

Today and next Thursday, The Word page will feature their winning entries.

About 25 students attended one of two press briefings sponsored by The Reporter in May, and then a number of them went on to compete in news writing and photo competitions, all focused on covering Vacaville's historic 50th Fiesta Days, which was May 21-28.

Winners featured the celebration's parade, onion-eating competition, diaper derby, queen pageant and more in their stories and photographs.

Taking grand prize for best photograph in the competition was Clay Smeback, who was a fifth-grader in Ed Finkas' classroom at Browns Valley Elementary School in Vacaville at the time of the competition. Now a sixth-grader, Clay also earned first-place honors for the best photo entered in the 5-6 grade division.

Ironically, the subject of Clay's grand-prize photograph is also a winner in the competition and a fellow classmate. Mayra Flores was depicted taking part in the onion-eating competition that earned Clay his grand-prize award. Clay's first-place honors was given for a photograph of a 14-year-old boy performing rope tricks in the Fiesta Days Parade.

Mayra took both second- and third-place for her entries in the 5-6 grade division. Her second-place photo was of a group of young women about to compete for royal honors in

the Fiesta Days queen competition. Her third-place winner was an image of young hula dancers preparing to take the stage for a performance.

First-place winner in the 3-4 grade division was Veronica Meredith, who was a fourth-grader in Mrs. Johnson's classroom at Browns Valley Elementary School at the time she entered the competition. Now a fifth-grader, Veronica earned her award for a photograph of a boy carrying an American flag in the Fiesta Days parade. Veronica also earned a first-place award in the news writing competition for a piece on Fiesta Days competitions.

Dominating the news writing competition was Will C. Wood High School student Taylore-Marie Sogge who claimed both grand prize and second-place in the high school division for her entries. Her grand-prize winner

was a story on the Budweiser Clydesdales, while her second-place feature was on the queen pageant.

Taking a first-place in the high school grade division was Wood High senior Sabrina Muerle for her story on the diaper derby. Earning third-place honors in the high school division was Vacaville High School sophomore Joel Cribb for his story on the Fiesta Day carnival's Vaca High night.

Earning a first-place in the 5-6 grade division for news writing was Cheyanne Solis, a student in Mr. Connor's class at Grace Academy in Fairfield at the time she entered the competition. Her story also focused on the diaper derby.

Grand-prize winners will receive \$50, plus coupons and goodies for their efforts. First-place winners will take home \$25, second place receives \$15 and third place receives \$10. Awards will be handed out during a ceremony this month.



Clydesdales literally huge hit with fans

By Taylore-Marie Sogge
Grand Prize, News Writing

These Fiesta Days participants are huge, actually gi-normous. They drink 24 to 30 gallons of orange Gatorade mixed with their water daily. Twenty quarts of grain twice a day and 50 pounds of hay satisfy their nutritional needs. Feet span 8 to 9 inches across, and their shoes are humongous.

The smallest Clydesdale stands 17.1 hands tall and the largest 18.2 hands. That is a far jump up to ride one of them. There are 12 of them weighing 2,200 pounds each, and, all are bay colored with two white socks, a white blaze down their face, and either a black or gray mane and tail. They range in age from 9 to 16 years old.

I am talking about the traveling Budweiser Clydesdales, which travel on the road six to nine months a year. They travel in three 30-foot gooseneck trailers attached to a large semi-truck. One tractor-trailer carries six horses, another carries four horses plus stalls, and a third carries two horses and stalls as well. A crew of eight handlers accompany the horses along with two Dalmatians. Their traveling company is based out of San Diego.

Eight Clydesdales are hitched up to the 1903 Studebaker wagon, and lined up according to size. The larger Clydesdales are placed in the back because they do the majority of the work; the small ones are placed in the front as they are more agile. Their

names from smallest to biggest are Bernie, Pete, Leo, Ernie, Pops, Andy, Bob, Major, Pops, Billy, Buddy, D.J. and Derke. By tradition, two Dalmatians, Dotty and Rino, travel along as well.

There are six hitches, or bases, across the country for the Clydesdales. These hitches are in San Antonio, St. Louis, Mo., Merrimack, N.H., Menifee, Calif. and San Diego, with a stationary base in Orlando. San Diego is the breeding farm. Menifee is the West Coast's full-time hitch. Fort Collins is the training facility.

Clydesdale horses travel and are featured in a variety of events and are accustomed to large crowds of people, noises and distractions. Blinders are placed over the horse's eyes to ensure they pay attention and focus. Manes and tails are braided for shows and for safety the horses' tails are cropped short. Ringo, the mascot Dalmation rides on the wagon and is trained to be well balanced and not disrupt the focus of the horses.

The Clydesdales are quite a sight to see. I had the opportunity to ride one several years ago and it was an extraordinary experience. They are quite calm, and riding on one feels as if you are floating on a cloud. These amazing horses should always be part of our Fiesta Day celebration.

The author is a junior at Will C. Wood High School.

Vacaville High gets into the spirit with a carnival

By Joel Cribb
Third Place, News Writing

Loud, proud, and spirited was the atmosphere on May 24 at the Fiesta Days carnival's Vaca High night.

Lasting throughout the night, Vacaville High School put on a special event on the playground side of the Andrew's Park stage.

The area was decorated with the school's black and orange colors in the form of waving ribbons and floating helium balloons.

"(That was) an awesome idea! Whoever thought of putting my teachers in a dunk tank was a genius!" said Vacaville High sophomore John Wyma.

The creative genius behind the dunk tank also had some action in another one of the events that school faculty must

have enjoyed: a whipped cream pie-toss.

"Yeah, that was 'fun,'" commented English teacher Rachel Dutra.

Among the mirth, carbonated drinks, and tennis shoe scuffles, there floated a wondrously loud soundtrack to this spirited party. Live performers, such as Vacaville High regulars 20 Boyz, and senior classmate Tim Wilkins gave performances throughout the duration of the carnival.

"As a parent, I love to see our youth involved in such positive community events like this," says Vacaville High parent Stacey Hobbs.

The author is sophomore at Vacaville High School.

Onion overload?



Contest pushes limits of good taste

Mayra Flores sticks out her tongue in a grimace as she competes in the Fiesta Days onion-eating competition. This photograph earned grand-prize honors for Mayra's fellow classmate, Clay Smeback of Browns Valley Elementary School.

Event's competitions are Hot! Hot! Hot!

By Veronica Meredith
First Place, News Writing

On May 27, after Diaper Derbies, Youth Golf Tournaments, singing and dancing, crowds gather again. Why? To see tongues burn and eyes water. It's time for the onion- and jalapeño pepper-eating contest! An hour-and-a-half delay did not cool the competition.

A bright sign claims, "Reigning Champ Dave 'Hot Stuff' is on fire!" Signmaker Adriana Forshay describes Dave Graves as the jalapeños-eating champion from last year. What will he do this year?

Dave is a native of Vacaville who has

been crunching jalapeños and onions for six years at Fiesta Days. Dave says, "It is hard to compete. The most important thing is not to do it on a full stomach."

With the support of his mother, Nathal Ramirez and about 15 friends, he headed to the contest. First up, the onion-eating challenge. The contestants' goal was to devour a large white onion first. Dave cleaned his plate and beamed happily when he was presented with the winner's trophy.

The announcer asked if anyone from the crowd wanted to join the jalapeño-eating contest. A few brave people from the audience accepted and came forward. The race to eat the

most jalapeños was on! A large crowd circled the table and cheered for the competitors. Jalapeño juice soaked the fingers and some contestants dropped out quickly. Despite great effort, Dave lost his title of jalapeño champion to Francisco Ruiz, a 12-year-old who gulped down 10 jalapeños.

As the crowd dispersed, the competitors proudly shook hands.

Congratulations, Dave, on the title of onion-eating champion. Better luck next year on the jalapeños.

The author is now a fifth-grader at Browns Valley Elementary School in Vacaville.



Ropin' in the spectators

Cesar Contreras, 14, performs rope tricks while participating in the Fiesta Days Parade on May 26 in downtown Vacaville. This photograph, taken by Clay Smeback, earned the Browns Valley Elementary School student a first-place honor in the 5-6 grade division in The Reporter's "Fiesta at 50" journalism competition.