

Burlington County Times

Burlington County towns celebrate National Night Out

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Posted Aug 7, 2018 at 9:15 PM

Neighbors and officers alike took part in a slew of activities that lasted throughout the night, which is held on the first Tuesday in August across the county.

Towns across Burlington County celebrated National Night Out and thousands of neighbors took part in the festivities Tuesday night.

Delran joined the event this year and held its inaugural Delran Night Out in honor of the community-building campaign that brings residents and local police together.

Held on the first Tuesday in August across the county since 1984, the program is designed to enhance the relationship between residents and law enforcement and bring back a sense of community, according to natw.org.

“It’s good for the community, it brings us together to enjoy each other and spend time together,” Delran resident Maria Czum said.

Of all the events, Czum’s daughter, Mila, had a clear favorite: “face painting!”

While teens posed for quirky pictures with the Chick-Fil-A cow, children bounced between inflatable castles as their parents mingled nearby with balloon animals in tow.

Residents were especially excited for the groundbreaking of Jake’s Place, an inclusive state-of-the-art playground with a South Jersey theme complete with a Jersey Turnpike that will be unveiled in October. [Build Jake’s Place](#) received a Green Acres \$200,000 grant from the township and the remaining \$425,000 was raised by the community.

The nonprofit is inspired by the memory of 2½-year-old Jacob Myles Cummings-Nasto, who was born with half of a heart. He used playground time as physical therapy after open heart surgeries, but was often unable to use most of the equipment.

“It’s going to be a great benefit for Delran because in all of South Jersey, according to the New Jersey census, one out of 10 families is affected by a disability,” said Jim Cummings, Jacob’s grandfather. “In most cases children that have disabilities go to special classes and they’re often segregated. In some cases, you’ll find parents that have disabilities and they can’t take their children to a playground. Jake’s Place will solve that in both cases.”

Unlike your typical groundbreaking, the children were the ones wielding the shovels, representing the thousands of children of all abilities that will soon be able to play on the playground.

The rest of the evening featured live music by the Legacy Band, mechanical bull rides, and the chance to explore public safety vehicles such as police cruisers and fire trucks where children extinguished pretend fires with a real fire hose.

“It’s just important to have the community see the police at a different angle than maybe at a car stop,” Delran police Detective Frederick Irons said. “(I hope) that they will have an understanding that we are about the community, and for the kids to see the police in a more positive light than they may have seen otherwise.”

In Westampton, the event draws around 5,000 annually, making it one of the largest National Night Out crowds in the county, according to Westampton police Sgt. Andrew Brewer.

Children were blown away when an Army National Guard helicopter landed on site during the celebration.

Residents of all ages watched live law enforcement K-9 demonstrations, tried on SWAT team and firefighter gear and met crime scene investigators and Westampton police officers.

Officers roamed around, greeting and giving high-fives to residents. The night ended with a spectacular firework show, capping the township's fifth annual event with a bang.

But the fun was not exclusive to Delran and Westampton, as several other towns in the county held events this week.

“What’s most important with having this event, and being involved and interacting with the community that come out, is having that bond and the perception that people have when they see a police officer and realize that we’re ordinary people, and that we care about them,” Brewer said.