

NISKAYUNA

Niska-Day a fiesta to remember

Large crowd turns out for 35th annual celebration

BY INDIANA NASH
Gazette Reporter

All Martha Kerr knew 12 years ago was that this day was moving day.

As she tried to navigate through the Niskayuna streets with a few moving trucks filled with her family's belongings, she found that she couldn't even get to the street of her recently purchased home.

This was her first brush with Niska-Day.

"At first I had no idea what was going on but then I thought, 'That's kinda nice that this town does something like this,'" Kerr said.

The following year, her children marched in the parade, and she has come out to watch the procession almost every year since.

The tradition of Niska-Day, sponsored by the Niskayuna Community Action program, began 35 years ago as a way for the community to join together and to create a sense of identity for a growing town. This year, the day was celebrated with a fiesta theme, "Niska-Day 35 — Let's Have a Fiesta." Fair-goers carried maracas and donned sombreros. Food trucks featured tacos and lime fizzes. Alex Torres and his Latin Orchestra performed in the evening.

But for many, Niska-Day is not just



RYAN ZIDEK/FOR THE DAILY GAZETTE

Dana Birk of Niskayuna takes a photograph of her daughter Lucy and son Wyatt with their father, Justin, at the fiesta-themed Niska-Day 35 festival Saturday. See more photos on pages C2 and C3 and view a photo gallery of the event at dailygazette.com.

about the parade or the fair or the performances.

Along the parade route on Nott Street, one Niskayuna family sets up a tent in front of their house every year to give away cotton candy. Well before the parade starts in the morning, kids are lined up to grab a sample

or two.

"We've been in the community for the past 33 years, but we built this house about six years ago and we had the equipment, so we decided to make it and just give it away," Patty Serowick said. "We'll have people in the parade try to run out to us and

grab some. But we're also trying to run some samples out to them."

This sense of community is what brings so many residents out for Niska-Day.

Even for those who had never previ-

See **NISKA-DAY**, page C3

Images from Niska-Day 35



RYAN ZIDEK/FOR THE DAILY GAZETTE

Parade marchers play music in keeping with the fiesta theme on Saturday.



RYAN ZIDEK/FOR THE DAILY GAZETTE

Mark Meshkov, 2, of Niskayuna enjoys a pony ride alongside his mother Varvara, left.



RYAN ZIDEK/FOR THE DAILY GAZETTE

Two-year-old Jack Keis of Niskayuna feeds animals at the petting zoo with his mother, Lisa.



INDIANA NASH/GAZETTE REPORTER

Merdwin the Mediocre performs a magic trick and poses with a young fair-goer at Niska-Day.



INDIANA NASH/GAZETTE REPORTER

Maren Daly, Ryan Daly and Kaitlin Neugebauer pose before the Niska-Day parade Saturday.



RYAN ZIDEK/FOR THE DAILY GAZETTE

From left, Marvin Michael, Kaysen Shirley and Danielle Michael race to collect candy at the Niska-Day 35 Parade.

Images from Niska-Day 35



INDIANA NASH/GAZETTE REPORTER

The winning float in the Niska-Day parade was created by St. George's Episcopal Church in Schenectady. Runner-up honors went to the Girl Scouts' float, seen below. View more photos at dailygazette.com.



Niska-Day

Continued from page C1

ously gone to the celebration, the fiesta spirit reflected what they already knew about the community.

"I moved to the area a little while ago, and I just wanted to come check it out because the Niskayuna community is just really friendly," Lisa Hamilton said. "I've lived in other towns in the Capital Region, and no one says hello to anyone else. But here, everyone says hi to people."

While kids milled about the fair, getting their caricatures done or riding the carnival rides, parents mingled and caught up with each other and other community members.

At the caricatures tent, there was an ever-present line of people watching or hoping to catch artist Phil Singer in a free moment. One of them, Niskayuna resident, Linda Turner, has been taking her daughter Natalie to Niska-Day every year, even before the family moved into the com-

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LISA HAMILTON
Niskayuna resident

munity several decades ago.

"I have been getting her caricature done here every year since my daughter was 18 months old and now she's 30 and we're getting her daughter's done," Turner said.

As Ashlyn Peterson — Turner's granddaughter and a third-generation Niska-Day attendee — posed with her freshly painted caricature, Natalie sat for her portrait.

"It's just a great tradition," Martha Kerr said. "With all of the changes in this life, it's nice that this has stayed the same."

She has no plans to move any time soon.