Small town, but a BIG BASH

From water fights to mermaids, Erath can throw a Fourth of July party

By Lynda Edwards
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Every sweltering July 4, Acadiana firefighters put on their heavy gear, drive their trucks to downtown Erath and have a ferocious yourself to entertain the crowds, especially kids.

Tallahassee won. We lost again," Delcambre firefighter Travis Mestas said as he and his buddies collected their jackets and boots.

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Members of the Henry Volunteer Fire Department play in the hose Friday at the LeBlanc Volunteer Fire Department while competing in the annual Fourth of July water fight.

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Erath may be a small town, but it knows how to blowout a huge Fourth of July celebration. In addition to the annual water fights, parade, dessert-baking and barbecue competitions, watermelon-and-ice cream sandwich-eating contests, it seems as if every block is having more than one party.

Bungalows and cottages were adorned with red-white-and-blue bunting. Tents covered grills and folding tables covered with food. Several yards featured inflatable water slides taller than a two-story building.

A Ferris wheel stretched upward against the sky as the downtown carnival set up. Although the rides wouldn't be open, residents enjoyed taking a stroll past the merry-go-round, food trucks serving fried alligator on a stick and red velvet funnel cakes, and a rollercoaster with seats inside a purple-green-and-gold dragon.

"A world of oddities" was created with colorful signs and statues of blonde mermaids. The signs promised turtles with multiple heads, a live mermaid and some sort of mermaid fossil.

Sideshow and CajunNation were the bands on the live music playlist for the evening.

A visitor strolling through the residential street was invited by six different homes to join their front yard parties. Erath's website lists every parade grand marshal from Billy Cannon in 1975 to this year's Elwood LeBlanc. Two additional photos of men believed to have been grand marshals were posted even though no one knows the years they served.

Erath couldn't bear to leave anyone out.