

Children take part in Lantern Parade through City Park in Reading

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Reading Eagle

READING, PA

Continuing a tradition that dates to the 1930s, Reading children carrying lanterns paraded through City Park in celebration of summer.

The Reading Recreation Commission's annual Lantern Parade brought together about 300 children from eight neighborhood playgrounds and camps.

It also brought many parents and community members together Wednesday evening to celebrate the accomplishments of the youngsters.

The Lantern Parade marks the end of the commission's summer playground season.

Prior to the parade, which began at sunset, a carnival was held at the park playground.

For the parade, children carried lanterns that they crafted from milk jugs, 2-liter soda bottles and other containers.

Camille Stock, the recreation commission's chief development officer, said that the parade is one of her favorite events all year.

"It's just really special because the kids take so much time and energy to create their lanterns," she said. "When we gave the kids glow sticks to light up their lanterns at sunset, it was just a really beautiful event."

Each of the playgrounds also designed and created a banner for the competition.

Hillside Playground won this year's best banner competition. Its banner had a Hollywood theme and earned the playground a Rita's Italian Ice party.

Stock explained that the summer playground program includes fitness and nutrition classes, sports programs and leadership training.

"Our recreation services bring people together and make our community stronger," she said.
"Positive recreation experiences help to build stronger communities and improve lives."

The nonprofit commission is a partnership between the city and the Reading School District. In addition to playground programs, it operates the Third & Spruce and Eleventh & Pike streets recreation centers.

Wednesday's lantern event also featured a "POUND" aerobics class, a fitness style that incorporates drum sticks and rhythm into exercise routines.

Erica Mietelski has been visiting each of the playgrounds this summer to teach classes to the children, but this was the first time she performed the class for parents.

"We want to be teaching kids good nutrition and fitness, but we also want them to be taking what they learn home," Stock said.

The night also included a dance contest, won by 11th & Pike playground's Autumn Topur, 11. Stock said the commission plans to continue holding the Lantern Parade every year as a way to unite the community.

"It's a great way to celebrate what the kids have been doing all summer," she said.

Photo Gallery - **Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty**



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | Yadiryza Nives, 8, of Reading and Willow Yoder, 7, of Mohnton inspect a lantern after the Reading Recreation Commission's annual Lantern Parade in City Park. The two participated in the Pendora Park art camp, which made lanterns with an Alice in Wonderland theme.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | Youngsters take part in the Reading Recreation Commission's annual Lantern Parade in City Park.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | Lanterns made by youngsters at the Pendora Park art camp had an Alice in Wonderland theme.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | Moses DeLeon, 12, of Reading sits on the ground with his lantern the Reading Recreation Commission's annual Lantern Parade in City Park.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | A lantern made at the Pendora Park art camp features an Alice in Wonderland theme.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | Yadirytza Nives, 8, of Reading carries her lantern during the Reading Recreation Commission's annual Lantern Parade in City Park. She and the other youngsters who attended art camp in Pendora Park created lanterns with an Alice in Wonderland theme.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | A detail photo of lanterns held by participants in the Pandora Park Art Camp, which made lanterns with an Alice in Wonderland theme. At the Reading City Park Bandshell Wednesday evening August 3, 2016 for the fourth Annual Lantern Parade put on by the Reading Recreation Commission. Approximately 200 participants from 8 different playground and camp programs made lanterns, paraded around the bandshell, and up onto the stage. The Rereation commission has 300 participants registered for their camps. Photo by Ben Hasty