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Was that the city's best street fest ever?

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You heard the same jubilant remarks I did at Sunday's turn-of-the-century dress-up party, Jules Verne-like railroad handcar races and celebration of creative impulses at Santa Rosa's Railroad Square.

What a huge, wonderful, inclusive crowd. So much to see and do. Maybe the greatest public happening ever to happen downtown.

"I think what I'm happiest about is that mix (of people) that you saw," Great Handcar Regatta co-founder Ty Jones said Monday.

Yes, the food and drink ran out. But who could have anticipated that so many people would rush at the chance to go downtown and play together on the railroad tracks?

Jones, co-creator Spring Maxfield and their elated, bleary partners already are looking to next year and, possibly, to a two-day regatta. You can go to www.handcar-regatta.com to join the mailing list or inquire about the '09 event.

By the way, the prize for the fastest handcar Sunday went to Sebastopol musician-inventor Andy Graham and the two Tyvek-clad crewmembers on his zippy, recumbent pedal-car.

Graham's rail racer and the trophy will be on display this week at crewmember Alexis Bauer's coffee stand, My Friend Joe, in front of Andy's Produce on Gravenstein Highway North.

For Graham, an entertainer who loves railroads and inventions, the regatta was a dream come true.

"I knew it was going to be a success," he said, "but I had no idea there would be that many people."

KRISTOFFERSON ON FIRE: After Kris Kristofferson takes his bow Saturday at the benefit festival at Glen Ellen's B.R. Cohn Winery, he'll make for the ranch he owns near Elk on the Mendocino Coast.

And on Sunday afternoon, Kristofferson will be at the fairgrounds in Ukiah to headline Lightning Jam, a concert that will raise money for Mendocino County volunteer fire companies.

It was Congressman Mike Thompson who invited Kristofferson to come jam at the Jam, a community thank-you to all the Mendo volunteers who battled as champions against more than 100 lightning-sparked fires in June and July.

Sunday looks to be a hot time in Ukiah.

NIGHT, CAPTAIN: It was nearly time for Petaluma Fire Capt. Chuck Goucher to leave for work Sunday morning when the city's classic 1937 American LaFrance pumper pulled to the curb in front of his house.

Coworkers of Goucher, Petaluma's second longest-serving firefighter, weren't about to have him drive to work on the last overnight shift of his 28 years with the city.

Goucher said Monday there's plenty he'll miss about his job. But after waking with a start and bounding out of bed at all times of the night for all those years, he is ready to sleep on through, as normal people do.

FOLKS IN BLOOMFIELD would be pleased for you to stop by the next time you're in the vicinity of Valley Ford and Bloomfield roads, and behold their beautified Town Hall.

Nobody in Bloomfield calls it that, despite the wording on the building's proudly restored sign: "Bloomfield Town Hall, 1860."

To everyone in Bloomfield, it's the Firehall. Volunteers with the fire company meet in the fine old structure and on occasion it fills up with a community potluck.

The \$25,000 paint job and sprucing-up was an all-town effort financed by plant and T-shirt sales and fire dues.

Jean Matteri said that even before the work was done on the Firehall, tourists would regularly stop and snap pictures of it.

"Now," said Jean, "they will really have something to show at home."

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