



**JEREMIAH WILSON/SPECIAL TO SCRIPPS TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS**

**Charles and Jean Baldwin of Port St. Lucie walk hand-in-hand through a row of vendors Saturday afternoon during the Port St. Lucie 50th Anniversary Celebration at the Port St. Lucie Civic Center. The celebration featured music, food, arts and crafts, a parade and a fireworks finale.**



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**Jeff Werry of Port St. Lucie lifts his son Matthew Werry, 4, to better see the engine of a Chevrolet truck on Saturday afternoon during the Port St. Lucie 50th Anniversary Celebration.**

## **Thousands have fun Saturday at Port St. Lucie's multicultural festival**

By Cathy Reeder

Saturday, April 30, 2011

PORT ST. LUCIE — Port St. Lucie wrapped up its 50th Anniversary Celebration week with a lively multicultural festival with bands, dancing, a parade and show-stopping fireworks that organizers say drew more than 6,000 people to the Port St. Lucie Civic Center throughout the afternoon and evening.

"The fireworks are almost as good as Disney's," said Joe Kisler, 60, as the crowd oohed and aahed and gave a big round of applause for the big finish of the 20-minute sparkling show.

Kisler, a Fort Pierce resident, once worked for General Development Corp., the developer of the city of Port St. Lucie in 1961. "You know, I built a lot of the earliest houses here," he laughed.

Earlier events in the week showcased the city's history. Saturday was all about having fun.

The parade showcasing the city's cultural diversity drew a large crowd, which lined the streets in front of the Civic Center. The participants showed a wide range of races, ages, ethnic groups and interests.

"I agree there's diversity – Germans, Irish, botanists," quipped one observer in the crowd as those parade units marched in front of him.

Nearby, an older woman watched hip hop dancers, followed a bit later by a Norwegian group dressed as Vikings, and a bit after that by the Phillipino-American Association of the Treasure Coast.

Sandra Forbes, 42, of Port St. Lucie brought seven family members and friends out for a full afternoon and evening. They came at noon and stayed through the fireworks.

"I'm getting every bit of it," she said as the adults rested just after the 7:30 p.m. parade. Like many attending the event, she said there was a lot to do.

Jahnosha McDowell, 9, was with Forbes' group and had enjoyed a full afternoon of eating and playing in the children's area provided by the city's Parks and Recreation Department. A third-grader at Manatee Academy in Port St. Lucie, her favorite was the big blue slide.

"The scariest of all was the big yellow wall, like a rock-climbing wall," she said. "I made it about four steps up and came back down again."

Five-year-old Genevieve Zerga was mesmerized by the bearded jester with the jingle bells on his pointy hat who could bend long balloons into pretty shapes.

"She's been so patient," her father Michael said as they waited in a line five-deep for her turn. "She's foregoing cupcakes for this."

Bands kept music going constantly on the built-in outdoor stage at the Civic Center, and food and other vendors gave the crowd plenty of reasons to eat and shop.

