

A star-spangled banner day

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Freeman Staff and

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WAUKESHA — Hundreds of local residents lined the roads from Maple and Wisconsin avenues to Main and Baxter streets for Friday's Fourth of July Parade through downtown Waukesha.

The annual event featured marchers and performances from a wide array of local organizations, schools, clubs and other groups.

One of the musical entertainers was the Greater Milwaukee Fire & Police Pipe and Drums, a bagpipe and percussion ensemble that was formed in 2000. Pipe major and music director Dan Schmerse said the group — comprising a mix of current and retired police and firefighters, as well as some civilians — was created to provide appropriate honors at no cost for their brothers who have made the ultimate sacrifice. "While there are a lot of pipe bands in southeast Wisconsin, none of them were doing memorials and funerals for fallen officers and firefighters," he said. "So we (were) founded, principally with members of the law enforcement and firefighting communities for that purpose and that is our primary mission."

Schmerse said the group does nearly 100 performances each year, and while only a handful are at parades, they will always make time for Waukesha.

"We love Waukesha's parade," he said. "The route is an appropriate length and it is lined with people from end-to-end and they are all appreciative. Waukesha always gives us a terrific reception, so this is our favorite parade."

A family tradition

Waukesha's parade marks a strong Fourth of July tradition for many families, both local and from out of town.

Sue Roe of Waukesha said she attends the parade every year. She brought her mom, who's visiting her from New York, to this year's event. Roe was looking forward to seeing the high school bands.

"My daughter was in the band at North, so we always like seeing them," she said.

The Liebherr's begin their Fourth of July tradition by staking out a few yards of sidewalk to watch the parade.

After enjoying the parade, the family of 15 goes back to their parents' house to play horseshoes and four square. The Liebherr's have a traditional family cookout and end their day by watching and enjoying the fireworks.

The family members are happy to have each others' company, but are sad to be missing a member who is serving as a drill sergeant in Kentucky this year and could not join them for the Fourth of July.

Jay Keskitalo has enjoyed the Waukesha parade with his children for about the past decade.

Keskitalo and his daughter, Olivia, were not sure what their plans were for the rest of the day, but they would definitely catch the fireworks later on Friday night.

Ashlin and Abby Adsit from North Prairie came into downtown Waukesha with their family for the parade.

Ashlin said her favorite part of the parade was the cheerleaders, while Abby said she liked the dojo fighters. Both girls were happy to leave with two bags full of candy and could not wait to see the night's fireworks.