

Tomato Festival busy until end

By [Barry Eberling](#)

[From page A3](#) | August 18, 2014 | Daily Republic



Miss Solano 2014 Olga Lechuga gets dunked in the dunk tank during the 23rd annual Tomato Festival downtown, Aug. 17, 2014, in Fairfield. (Steve Reczkowski/Daily Republic)

FAIRFIELD — Come 4:30 p.m. Sunday, the two-day, 23rd annual Tomato Festival on downtown Texas Street had reached its last gasp.

Only a half-hour remained for a festival that totaled 13 hours on Saturday and Sunday. The tomato-eating contest, the tomato costume contest, the Folklorico dancing had ended several hours earlier.

Yet, in its twilight, the festival remained alive with activity.

Crystal Thomas, of Fairfield, had been there only 20 minutes or so. She came in part so 18-month-old Cateleya could go on the pony ride and the Zippy Pets, which looked like battery powered stuffed animals on wheels and carried both adults and youngsters.

“There’s never anything here in town to do, so it’s nice when they have these events like this,” Thomas said.

Jorge Reyes, his wife, Kiane Reyes, and eight-year-old son, Keanu Reyes, walked past the various craft booths on a closed-down section of Texas Street. Highlights for them included Keanu Reyes going on a ride that allowed children to enter plastic, see-through water orbs and float in a large wading pool.

“Pretty good,” Keanu Reyes said.

It’s like a hamster in a ball, Jorge Reyes said.

Jorge Reyes found something that he liked, as well. He held a plastic cup from the nearby Starbucks.

“We’ve got to support the local businesses,” Kiane Reyes said.

Jorge Reyes rides his bicycle from his Suisun City home to downtown Fairfield on a regular basis. He sees a change for the better happening along Texas Street.

“They’ve got a lot of new businesses going in downtown,” Jorge Reyes said.

In keeping with the spirit of the Tomato Festival, the Reyes hit on the idea of buying some tomatoes and making fried green tomatoes. It will be a new experience, Jorge Reyes said.

By 4:55 p.m., people were disassembling various crafts booths and other booths that lined the middle of Texas Street.

A couple of children still navigated one wading pool in water orbs, but a man stood amid the deflated remains of a second wading pool and pushed out water with a broom. The water ran along Texas Street past the now-closed Zippy Pets.

The band Rhythm Method 4 at 5 p.m. ended their show on the stage at Webster and Texas streets with Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin’.” A couple of dozen people listened from under a large tent in the intersection, drinking margaritas and other beverages.

Down the street, the salsa band Sapo Guapo kept playing on the stage at Madison and Texas streets past the festival closing time. They wrapped up at 5:15 p.m. with a loud, fast guitar solo backed by drums, bass and keyboard. Several people danced on the stamped concrete crosswalk.

With that, the massive, downtown party ended and the 23rd annual Tomato Festival called it quits. All that remained was the cleanup so downtown Texas Street could reopen to traffic.

The Fairfield Main Street Association puts on the festival. Executive Director Margaret Manzo said an estimated 25,000 people usually attend and this year looked typical. Last year’s Sunday was really hot, she said, but this year’s Sunday high temperature topped out at about 90 degrees.

“We saw a lot of smiling families and that’s why we do it,” Manzo said.

The Fairfield Main Street Association also puts on the Tomato Festival to support local businesses. As the festival wound down, people could be seen entering the stores that were open and eating at restaurants.

“The bottom line is we’re a business association and every single business is full. We couldn’t be happier,” Manzo said.

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