



VillageFest

An Overview

- **1996:** Prairie Village celebrates its 45th anniversary! Parade Co-Chairpersons Trinda Elsloo and Diana Ewy Lamberson more than double the number of entries as compared to previous anniversary parades. Residents turn out in the thousands to participate, view, and celebrate together.

Mayor Taliaferro and the City Council decide to place \$10,000 in the 1997 budget for an undefined community wide event. Typically, funds were budgeted for a community wide event every five years to celebrate the City's anniversary.

Trinda and Diana want to plan another city event. Diana drafts a plan based on her childhood 4th of July celebrations in the small beach community she grew up to include a parade, citywide band/choir, music, food, and public displays from City Hall departments.

With the strong support of Mayor Taliaferro and Council Member Steve Noll, who had chaired the 45th Anniversary Celebration, the Council approved the idea.

A committee of volunteers was put in place. Many of those members had been in the City's Citizens Police Academy with Trinda and Diana and agreed to join in the planning.

- **1997:** The committee spends seven months planning for the City's first 4th of July daytime event. In years past, the City had provided an evening firework display which was discontinued in the 1980's following an accident during the display. VillageFest was created to offer residents a way to spend the day. Naysayers were concerned that most residents were out of town for the holiday and/or busy with other activities and would not attend.

City staff was critical to the success of the first celebration. Serving on the committee were Barbara Vernon, City Administrator, Bob Pryzby, Public Works Director, and Police Chief Charles Grover. In addition, Consolidated Fire District #2 had a liaison participating in the planning.

Prairie Village received a great deal of press leading up to the first VillageFest. Unfortunately, just prior to the event, the City Council made the decision to remove funding for a community wide event in 1998. This decision, naturally, inspired the committee to produce an event that would bring out the residents.

- **July 4, 1997:** The first VillageFest was held from 10:00 am-5:00 pm on the Prairie Village Municipal Campus. Trinda Elsloo and Diana Ewy Lamberson were the Co-Chairs. Steve Noll served as the City Council Liaison. The City allocation for the budget was \$10,000.

The "VillageFest Choir" performed during the Patriotic/Ecumenical service. Forty five Prairie Village residents made up the choir which provided the audience with patriotic songs.

A separate evening concert was held on July 13th in conjunction with VillageFest. "Tops in Blue", a U.S. Air Force performing company, entertained about 500-700 people at Shawnee Mission East Auditorium.

Attendance was estimated at 5,000---a huge success for the first time effort! Prairie Village received television and print coverage of the event.

The City Council, following the high number of residents attending the event, re-considered the 1998 budget item and agreed to support VillageFest '98.

A formal thank you party, hosted by Mayor and Helen Taliaferro and the City Council, was held for the committee and staff members.

- **VillageFest '98:** The second VillageFest was expanded from 10:00 am-9:00 pm, with an evening ice cream social with a ragtime band. The attendance during the day activities was even higher than the first year with estimates around 7,000. However, the evening event was poorly attended and the committee agreed at that time not to try another evening event without a firework or laser display. Event Co-Founder Trinda Elsloo, Wendy Burton, and Karen Szczepanski were the Co-Chairs. Diana Ewy Sharp was the City Council Liaison. The City allocation for the budget was \$10,000.

One of the highlights of the celebration was a mock rescue of Mayor Taliaferro from the roof of City Hall. A surprise guest, Kansas First Lady Linda Graves, arrived at the event and agreed to also be rescued. The rescue was coordinated by the PV Police and Public Works Departments along with Consolidated Fire District #2 and Johnson County MedAct.

The VillageFest Choir nearly doubled with about 80 members performing during the Patriotic Service.

An attempt to hold a crafts fair was not well received. Approximately 15 vendors set up in the Council Chambers.

A volunteer thank you barbeque party was held at the Harmon Park Pavilion, followed by a private pool party at the Municipal Complex.

- **VillageFest '99:** The third VillageFest was co-chaired by Trinda Elsloo and Wendy Burton. Diana Ewy Lamberson served as Council Liaison. The City allocation for the budget was \$10,000 with attendance estimated at 5,000-6,000.
- **VillageFest 2000:** The event was held from 10:30 am-4:00 pm with a regional country band from Nashville, South Sixty Five, headlining the event. Attendance was estimated around 5,000-7,000. Trinda Elsloo and Wendy Burton were the Co-Chairs of the committee. This event was designated a KC150 event in conjunction with Kansas City, Missouri's 150th Anniversary celebration. KBEQ carried a live broadcast from Noon-4:00. The City allocation for the budget remained at \$10,000.

A new addition is a pancake breakfast, hosted by members of the Old Mission Lodge #153 from Prairie Village. It was extremely well received.

- **VillageFest 2001:** The fifth anniversary of VillageFest coincided with the City's 50th Anniversary celebration. Trinda Elsloo and Wendy Burton served as the Co-Chairs for the final year. Attendees were asked to bring items for placement in the City's 50th Anniversary time capsule. The City allocation for the budget was increased for the first time to \$15,000.
- **VillageFest 2002:** Ann Lilak is announced the Chairperson. Diana Ewy Lamberson was the City Council Liaison. The event was scheduled to be held from 8:00 am-3:00 pm, with the Rain Dogs as the headline band. A rain/wind storm forced the first cancellation of the afternoon activities. The City allocation for the budget remained at \$15,000. Attendance in the morning was strong and estimated at 3,000-4,000 before the event cancelled.

Worth noting is the increased sponsorship dollars the event was able to raise for the celebration.

- **VillageFest 2003:** The event was held from 8:00 am-4:00 pm with the headliner band "The Uprights", the 2003 Rockhurst Battle of the Bands winner, performing. Ann Lilak agreed to serve as the Chairperson again. Diana Ewy Sharp was the City Council Liaison. The City allocation of the budget was \$15,000.

New this year was the *Taliaferro Community Spirit Awards* to recognize citizens and business leaders that help to improve the high quality of life experienced in Prairie Village. Mely Ballard was selected as the business owner recipient and Andy Peterson was honored in the Youth category for his work with the Adhoc SkatePark Committee. Over 5,000 attended the celebration.

The VillageFest Choir was much smaller as in years past. The committee agreed to disband after this year and showcase soloists during the Patriotic Service.

Corporate sponsor dollars increase.

- **VillageFest 2004:** The Eighth Annual VillageFest was held from 7:30 am-2:30 pm. The committee determined the crowds begin to wean mid-afternoon and decided to begin earlier and wrap it up earlier. Ann Lilak served as the Chairperson with Diana Ewy Sharp serving as the City Council Liaison.

Spontaneous Combustion was the headline band. VillageFest Community Spirit Awards were presented to Marcia Jacobs and Marilyn Heley. Mrs. Jacobs was recognized for her numerous years of volunteer service to the community as a Council Member, Fire Board Member, and Municipal Foundation Member. Mrs. Heley was honored for her years of service as a volunteer to the Corinth Library. The City allocation for the budget remained \$15,000. Attendance was estimated at 7,000-8,000.

One of the new highlights was the performance by the Marching Cobras which brought out the largest number of people for one particular event. Thousands lined the Campus Drive as the performers "taught" Mayor Shaffer and residents how to dance "Cobra" style!

- **VillageFest 2005:** The Ninth Annual VillageFest began at 7:30 am and wrapped up at 2:30 pm. Ann Lilak served as the Chairperson and Diana Ewy Sharp was the City Council Liaison. VillageFest Community Spirit Awards were presented to the family of Jeanne Pryzby and James Klamm. Jeanne was honored posthumously for her volunteer work with VillageFest. Jeanne was

the wife of Prairie Village Public Works Director Bob Pryzby and spent many volunteer hours by his side taking care of Prairie Village. Out of town family, along with Bob, attended the ceremony to accept the award on her behalf. James Klamm, a dedicated community volunteer, was recognized, in particular, for his selfless giving of his time and talent beautifying City islands.

An afternoon concert with "Brewer and Shipley, was the highlight of the celebration. Brewer and Shipley are probably most known for their hit, "One Toke Over the Line" from the 1970's. Attendance was estimated at 6,000-7,000.

An increase to \$20,000 from the City for the budget included an offset for expected sponsorship dollars.

- **VillageFest 2006: It's been ten years!** The City Council increased the event budget (\$25,000) to allow for a larger celebration for the 10th anniversary. Ann Lilak agrees to serve one more year as Chairperson. Diana Ewy Sharp remains as City Council Liaison. The event is held from 7:30 am-2:30 pm.

Efforts to collaborate with Meadowbrook Country Club for a joint firework display failed. It is agreed by the committee to have a community orchestra formed. A 45 piece orchestra, "Americana" comes together under the direction of Jim Funkhouser, Overland Park Symphony Directory. Sousa type music is performed and well received by the crowd.

Ida McBeth, Kansas City Jazz Soloist, is the headline act. The Marching Cobras again bring out thousands of residents to watch them perform and lead the Childrens' Parade.

VillageFest Community Spirit Awards are presented to Deanne LeTourneau, longtime Aquatics Program volunteer, and Outgoing VillageFest Chairperson Ann Lilak, for her five years of volunteer service to the committee.

An event postcard is mailed to all Prairie Village households and is credited with increasing attendance numbers to approximately 7,000.

A train show is added to the event and is well received. In addition, a blood drive is handled during the event by the American Red Cross.

10th Anniversary blue foam "Star of Kansas" shaped stars are dropped from the Consolidated Fire District #2's ladder truck. Mayor Shaffer and Chris Andrews with the fire department toss them to residents below. Some of the stars are coded for a prize giveaway.

- **VillageFest 2007:** Long time VillageFest committee member Bob Pisciotta is appointed by Mayor Shaffer to serve as Chairperson for the 11th Annual VillageFest. Diana Ewy Sharp will be the City Council Liaison. The City allocation for the budget is \$15,000 with expected additional revenue of \$5,000 from sponsors.

Police estimate attendance at 8,000-10,000 throughout the day. Pool attendance is over 2,200 people. 1,165 pancake breakfasts are sold, an increase of 400 plates.

Corporate sponsorships are at an all time high of \$8,005.

Highlights include returning the "Americana" orchestra for the headlining act, the participation of The Elite Frogs, a parachute team of mostly former Navy Seals, and the Marching Cobras. A survivor from the WWII "Bataan Death March, Billy Templeton, spoke during this year's patriotic

service. The Marching Cobras continue to bring out thousands of residents to watch them perform. A strong military presence included a Chinook helicopter which landed during the morning and was available for tours by Army personnel. Consolidated Fire District #2 participated again and offered a fire muster which was extremely popular with lines of residents waiting for a turn. The bike rodeo, sponsored by the "Headstrong for Jake" Foundation, was equally as popular and over 400 bike helmets were given away free to residents.

VillageFest Community Spirit Awards are presented to Jim Hanson, longtime city committee and homes association volunteer described by one of the judges as the personification what we would like all PV residents to be, and Bill Brazeal, neighborhood community volunteer involved with 13-15 year old boys each summer teaching them science in the Community Center and serving as their baseball coach. Kevin Euston, Euston's Hardware, received the Business Community Spirit Award, as a mainstay business in the Village and particularly for their efforts aiding residents in their home remodels thus keeping residents here in Prairie Village!

- **VillageFest 2008:** Bob Pisciotta agrees to serve as Chairperson for the 12th Annual VillageFest. Diana Ewy Sharp returns as the City Council Liaison. The City allocation for the budget is \$16,000, an increase of \$1,000 from City funds, with expected additional revenue of \$5,000 from sponsors.

Attendance was estimated at 5,000-6,000. Event hours were 7:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m.

For the first time, the YMCA was involved with a wellness zone for children 2-8. In addition, they provided a few volunteers to assist with our needs. Their activity was well received.

VillageFest Community Spirit Awards were presented to Sally Holmes who was instrumental with this year's Earth Fair, and serves as the student representative on the PV Park and Recreation committee, providing input from a younger perspective to our City's committee, longtime PV resident Randy Kronblad was honored because of the number of hours this man has dedicated to our City's Arts Council serving as Chairperson and Planning Commission. His willingness to accept appointments to City sub-committee was to be commended according to the judges. In addition, Environmental Committee Chairperson Margaret Thomas was selected and was described in her nomination as "an activist and environmentalist whose actions bring full meaning to those titles". Finally, a new category was established this year: Lifetime Spirit. The recipient for this year was Ben Munday for his many years of service as a City Council Member and the Parks & Recreation committee chairperson.

- **VillageFest 2009:** Longtime VF committee member, John Capito, steps us to chair this year's event, the 13th Annual VillageFest! Diana Ewy Sharp continues as City Council Liaison. The City allocation remains at \$16,000, with expected additional revenue of \$6,000 from sponsors. The committee established Friends of VillageFest through the PV Municipal Foundation to raise additional support.

Attendance remained high with estimates of 6,000-7,000 throughout the day. The event hours were 7:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Introduced this year were two popular children's amusement activities: a climbing wall and a kiddie ferris wheel. Both had long lines throughout the day. The Prairie Village Police Department Color Guard participated in the Patriotic Service and a community sing-along was also included. A Benjamin Franklin re-enactor provided the keynote remarks. Environmental friendly tote bags were designed and sold this year. Nearly \$800 was raised in Friends donations this year with final revenue at \$23,175.

VillageFest Community Spirit Awards were presented to Longtime City Council Member Nancy Wallerstein was presented with a Lifetime Community Spirit for her many years of service to the community. The Citizen Award was presented to longtime PV resident Chuck Dehner for his willingness to offer his time & talents in his neighborhood. His nomination stated, "Whenever something needs to be done, they call Chuck!" Brighton Gardens Retirement Community was honored with the Business Award for opening their doors to local groups needing space for events & meetings.

A surprise Lifetime Community Spirit Award was given to VillageFest Co-Founder Diana Ewy Sharp from Mayor Shaffer & the committee for her many years of service as a City Council Member, VillageFest member, and longtime Parks & Recreation Committee Chairperson.

▪ VillageFest 2010

John Capito agrees to serve one more year as the event chairperson for the 14th Annual VillageFest! Diana Ewy Sharp continues as City Council Liaison. The City allocation remains at \$16,000, with expectations of raising an additional \$8,000 from all sources. Discussion ensued regarding the 4th being on a Sunday again. Committee members voted overwhelmingly to keep the event on the 4th of July regardless of the day of the week.

Despite early morning rain conditions, crowd estimated at 4,000-5,000. Event hours remained from 7:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

New this year was the sale of VillageFest t-shirts to the public. This year's headliner band, Kokomo, was well received with hundreds listening to the concert. A VillageFest Facebook page was created to aid with the marketing of the event in conjunction with yard signs. Fox4 News Anchor Susan Hiland served as the emcee for the Patriotic Service.

VillageFest Community Spirit Awards were presented in two categories this year: Lifetime Spirit and Business. Pat Roberts, Co-Owner of Johnny's Tavern, was presented with the Business Spirit Award for his generosity to our City through their efforts towards the betterment of our community---a true commitment to this City they serve. Johnny's has been involved with our City since they first opened in PV. In addition to the numerous schools and organizations, they assist so freely, including VillageFest, this business has also had a very unique relationship with our community's police department. For the past four years, this business has partnered with our department to raise awareness and much needed funding for the Special Olympics.

A Lifetime Spirit Award was given to longtime City Council Member Marilyn Uppman who also was the founder of the Municipal Foundation. She initiated the Foundation to raise funds for our parks when city budget was limited. Marilyn was described as "an inspiration with her warm and loving personality, intelligent analysis of issues, dedication to a cause, and her gentle way of getting her well thought out points across" The judges were particularly impressed with this nomination because of its numerous support statements.