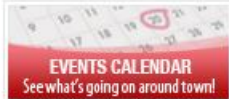


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QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What do you think about GSACRD's plan to partner with Sturgeon Schools to offer secular education in Morinville?

- It sounds like a good plan
- It could work, but needs some tweaks
- It sounds like a bad plan

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Kids of all ages take in fest



JUNE 10, 2011

GLENN COOK

Children of all ages flooded downtown St. Albert last week for the 30th annual International Children's Festival, and organizers couldn't be happier with how it went.

Festival director Nancy Abrahamson said the 2011 edition of the festival was one worthy of their third decade and of the city's 150th anniversary.

"It was very exciting, very fitting. I think everyone had a really good time," she said.

In fact, Abrahamson said, the main stage ticket sales were up over last year, finishing at 85 per cent capacity over the five-day festival compared to 81 per cent for 2010.

That included numerous sold-out performances of *Viaggio* by Il Circo, a group of acrobats and gymnasts coming together from many corners of the world.

"Il Circo was 100 per cent sold out," she added, "and that, to us, was very important, because that's above and beyond what we normally do. I think we always go above and beyond, but the cirque really drew in people that probably wouldn't have come before."

Although that was taking place indoors, much of the festival was held outside, and for the most part, Abrahamson said, the weather co-operated nicely.

"The weather co-operated except for Friday and Saturday, but I was quite surprised at how many people were down here, because they already had tickets for the main stage," she said. "And Albertans know you can't guarantee the weather; you just dress properly."

Still, rain or shine, the festival wouldn't happen without the help of volunteers, and Abrahamson said St. Albert stepped up to the plate once again this year.

"We were upwards of 900 volunteers this year. Last year was 750 or 800, but this year, it was 900 volunteers," she said. "It does not happen without the incredible volunteers, and they were amazing this year. I got comments from school teachers, comments from the public, how amazing our volunteer team was this year."

As amazing as this year was, though, Abrahamson is already looking ahead to next year.

"We're meeting next week to plan next year, if you can believe it," she said. "No rest for the weary."

But all the planning is worth it, she said, to see the looks on children's faces during the festival.

"There was one peaceful moment where I just got to walk through and it was really quiet, and there were site performers and the kids were laughing and people were walking along, and I just thought, 'This is what it's all about — bringing the community together in such a culturally rich atmosphere,'" she said. "It truly was beautiful."



Ian Kucerak

Dan the One Man Band looks to be having an argument with himself on the Enmax Outdoor Stage outside St. Albert Place during the International Children's Festival.

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