

Duck Derby a sell-out in its 13th year

By Tracy Overstreet

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It was a duck sell-out for the 13th annual Duck Derby for Leadership Tomorrow.

“We’ve never sold out before,” said Leadership Tomorrow Program Chairman and Duck Committee member Jack Sheard.

A total of 7,000 yellow rubber ducks were dumped into the Lazy River at Island Oasis Water Park to race to the finish. The first 17 resulted in prizes.

Sheard said he believes the sell-out occurred because the community truly supports the mission of the leadership training organization and what it does for the community.

“Leadership Tomorrow supports so many different organizations in Grand Island and Hall County,” he said. “So many people are affected.”

The program offers nine monthly sessions for adults and seven monthly sessions for youths who are exposed to community needs and trained in specific leadership skills, said Executive Director Brenda Branstiter.

That exposure allows Leadership Tomorrow and Youth Leadership Tomorrow participants to identify a community need and develop their own interests to help serve that need.

“We have a great community and Leadership Tomorrow helps other organizations to meet their goals and get there,” Sheard said.

Ducks were sold at \$5 apiece or at slight discounts for purchases of multiples. The more than \$27,000 that was raised with the 7,000 duck adoptions goes toward keeping the program tuition down, Branstiter said. Tuition for the adult program is \$550, while youth tuition is \$250.

The Duck Derby isn’t just about fundraising, though. It’s also a community celebration and educational event.

“It’s a fun event for kids to get involved and for families to get involved,” said Duck Derby co-chairwoman Morganne Manivong, who helped organize kids’ games before the 10 a.m. race.

Grand Island Little Theatre offered a tattoo station. Stuhr Museum had pioneer games, while the YWCA handed out bracelets and goodies.

The Youth Leadership Tomorrow group ran a pop toss, bean bag toss, ladder golf and inflatable jumping station.

Just outside the Island Oasis gates, Grand Island Police officer Wendy Piercy handed out junior officer badges and backpacks.

Grand Island firefighter Tanner Greenough took kids through the fire safety house and explained the importance of staying calm if a home smoke detector activates, how to check for fire, and how to crawl and stay low to exit from a window. He also talked about home exit plans and having a place outside the home for a family to meet before calling 911 to report a home fire.

Roy's Grand Dodge donated a Jeep Wrangler to be won if a duck with a predetermined number came across in the first 17 ducks. The Jeep went unclaimed, but the duck committee praised Roy's generosity, along with CNH Industrial, which provided the \$5,000 grand prize, as well as the other 16 prize donors.

"We want to thank everyone that purchased a duck," Manivong said. "Buying a duck helps make our community stronger."