



Photo by Gagandeep Sarangal

Firefighter Jim Donovan shows Alora Riga and Kaiya Witty how to use a fire hose at the Kids' fun day event at the Belleville Firehouse. The event was held for the Christmas Sharing toy drive.

Fun day for kids at fire station

By Gagandeep Sarangal

Belleville firefighters got together with EB Games Canada on Saturday to organize a special kids' fun day.

The Belleville Fire Department has been doing a toy drive charity for a long time, so this year they wanted to make it fun for kids.

The event was held Sept. 21 at the fire station on Bettes Street across from the Via-Rail station Belleville. The purpose of the event was to connect kids with the firehall. The charity event for the toy drive has been converted into a get-together of kids to connect them to the firehall. Because it was a charity event, many were involved.

"A little bit of everybody is involved: the fire department, the chief and deputies who approved it, also the crew that actually run this," said firefighter Ryan Turcotte.

"We run the toy drive charity, which is separate from the department, but it's a more personal initiative for us." The toy drive charity has been running since 1940 and has run continuously. Firefighters give toys to families for kids. It's an opportunity for families who aren't doing well, and they can register for the program. As its held in December, the gifts are given to the parents on Christmas holidays in a toy basket that they can then give to the kids.

The kids' fun day event is new this

year. It started after the fire department received an offer from EB Games Canada about having a video game event for kids where they could also get to know about firefighters and the firehouse.

Eb Games does a lot of charity across Canada. "Make a wish" is one of their primary charities and they also like to support the local community and its stores. After being by the firehouse, they decided to help out and donate prizes to raise money for the toy drive.

"Kids seems to like our family friendly games, the switch and consoles. The event went really well," said advertising director Stephany Dossantos.

As well as the charity, the event was held to introduce kids to the fire-

fighters and the firehouse. The event included many kid-friendly games in a games room made by EB Games Canada. Kids got to learn about firefighters practice drills like dummy drags and water throws. Kids were allowed to get into the fire trucks and try on firefighters' uniforms to have a full experience of what working as a firefighter is like.

"It is a great opportunity to get the community connected to the fire hall," said Turcotte. "To get kids a little less afraid of firefighters and when they will see a red truck on road, they know it's us, the firefighters. This is the first year and we are hoping to do it every year. We'll be doing this again and it will get

better over the years." Children seemed to have fun as they received goodies from the firefighters as well as enjoying a free snacks stall. Kids were enjoying the games rooms, along with their parents who were also trying the hands on firefighter practice drills.

After donating toys, they left the firehouse with smiles on their faces because they had a fun time talking with the firefighters and experiencing the firehouse.

"As a volunteer with the firefighters Belleville toy drive, it's an important asset for Belleville to have committed firefighters who are serving to protect us. I thank them for serving," said volunteer Paul Reesor.

Drag races an arm-dropping event

By Damon MacLean

The road was lined with cars, as if the parking went all the way down the street.

This was an hour before the doors even opened for the September version of Arms Drop Picton.

The crowd of spectators slowly filed into the venue, through the pill booths and women collecting cash. Driving an array of vehicles, sports cars, muscle cars and even tractors, those attending showed an obvious love for the day's event.

A modest attendance continually comes out to support Arms Drop, a reoccurring drag race at the Picton airport. This weekend's event was no exception, despite having August heat in a second wave of summer, everyone showed up dressed in typical September wear to enjoy the races and food for the day.

Despite the sweltering weather, the announcer explained the rules over the megaphone and it spread from speaker to speaker, across the field of weeds and grasshoppers.

"The rules are fairly straightforward," Jim Toye announced. "If you are doing a pass, make sure windows and sunroofs are closed. When the light goes on, you are staged. Do not go forwards or backwards. Follow the instructions of the guide. It is called arms drop for a reason. So, when their arms drop, it begins."

The day began with a pass from an old police vehicle to initiate the upcoming races. Vehicles of all makes and models blew smoke as they ran their engines in anticipation of the arm drop.

"12.33 for the green Mustang" was announced one minute, then, "Next up, Chevelle X's and a Buick. 11.13 for the Buick."

An orange flag was gripped tightly as the smoke from burning rubber filled the nostrils and eyes of the crowd. The engines roared and the flag dropped as the light changed and off the cars zoomed towards the horizon, a repeated activity that many feel can never become old.

Safety is a priority in the racing community. There is a police vehicle that works as a moderator to make sure all of the rules are being met and that the racers and the audience remain safe. A constant blaring reminder of "windows up" would be repeated by the announcer.

A white pickup truck had an oil leak at the end of the first hour. The races were put on hold while a team of volunteers and the truck driver pushed the truck off of the track. The volunteers cleaned up the oil spill and ensured the track was prepared for other races. Local vendors sold hot dogs, hamburgers and merchandise.

"If you like hot dogs, we got hot dogs!" the announcer exclaimed. An old firetruck was converted into a food truck rolling dough and making savoury pizza over a wood fire stove. A knowledge of cars is not required to enjoy drag racing.

The event attracted people of all ages and walks of life to come and experience the day for the first time, or the 100th time. Awards were given out by Bill Samuel of Quinte Cars for multiple titles.



Photo by Damon MacLean

Mandy Mae Douglas goes by the pseudonym Miss Mandy 'Mae'. To her, Mae means mayhem. Douglas put the name of the event to work by being the Arms Drop woman for the event. For more photos, see page 2.