

BV celebrates Fourth

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Allie Naumann, 4, twinkled like a little firecracker at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum on Saturday.

Her rosy cheeks, flushed by the 98-degree heat, matched her red blouse. Her blond hair sparkled in the sun.

Straggling slightly behind her parents and four siblings, she took a moment to look at all the red, white and blue banners and seven waving American flags spotlighting the museum's entrance. She finally got closer to her family and scurried inside the building.

"It was a good day to come out and show respect and admiration to our country," said her mother, Laurie Naumann, while cooling off inside the museum's exhibit "Beyond the Moon: NASA's Continuing Mission."

In honor of Independence Day, the Naumanns and about 10,000 other people visited the museum's "I Love America" annual celebration.

Main attractions included an Elvis impersonator, Jason Adams and the Texas Unlimited Band and a display of military trucks provided by the Museum of the American G.I.

The day concluded with a 15-minute fireworks display, which was accompanied by music from the Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra.

The Brazos Heritage Society also celebrated the birth of the nation, traveling back in time to the year 1776 by transforming Heritage Park into a Colonial town filled with pint-sized Thomas Jeffersons and Uncle Sams.

Wearing a green toga and a tiara made from a green paper plate and holding a torch made of cardboard and tissue paper, 12-year-old Macey O'Brien was the spitting image of Lady Liberty.

"It means we're free from England," Macey said of the meaning of the Fourth of July. "It means we're a unique country. And it means we're not communists."

The celebration began with the raising of the flag by the Brazos Valley Sojourners, who were dressed in Revolutionary costumes. Visitors were entertained by the musical group Proud Country and were given complimentary hot dogs and lemonade.

More than 300 people attended the celebration. About 75 children participated in the bicycle and wagon parade around the gazebo.

"I think it [went] quite well. We are very pleased [with the turnout]," said Ulrike Smith, executive director of the Brazos Heritage Society. "A lot of children dressed up, and it's great that so many people showed up in this kind of weather."

Those who couldn't take the heat celebrated indoors at the Veterans of Foreign Wars' old-fashioned Fourth of July Barbecue.

"It's too hot out there," said Boy Scout Trevor Jay while manning the cake wheel station. "I come out here every year. I really like it."

More than 400 plates filled with hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad and baked beans were sold. Complimentary lunches were given to Bryan firefighters who were on duty Saturday.

VFW Post 4692 Commander John Velasquez served in the military from 1966 to 1968. Velasquez said the nation should continue to pay tribute to those fighting to keep our country free.

"I get angry sometimes because people only see the Fourth as a three-day holiday," he said. "They forget the true meaning. Our forefathers fought to keep us free, and throughout our generation, during World War I, World War II and the war right now in Iraq, people are fighting to maintain the freedom that you and I enjoy today. We should pause and give them thanks."

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Site's annual Fireworks on the Brazos also attracted many visitors Saturday.

Events included children's activities and performances by the Western Entertainers, who did trick-roping with Texas longhorn cattle.

The Navasota Theatre Alliance presented excerpts from the musical *We the People*, and headliners Tubie & the Touchtones took the main stage at 6 p.m.

The event concluded with a 15-minute fireworks display accompanied by patriotic music.

Other area events included festivities in Wheelock, Navasota and Chappell Hill.