



STUDENTS gather in a parking lot behind student housing along East Street during the annual Bloomsburg University Block Party on Saturday. More photos, pages 1 and 6.

Party neighbors are friendly, but watchful

By PETER KENDRON
Press Enterprise Writer

BLOOMSBURG — Angela Jones got an afternoon of “good music” for free. Jones lives with her four children and husband on East Street across an alley from the largest party of Block Party weekend.

When Saturday turned out to be sunny and warm, she wanted the children, ages 3 to 10, to enjoy the day, but said she was a little concerned about the language they would hear.

As it turned out, “this band is pretty good,” she said as son Charlie bounced to the music.

She said she had called her brother and held out her cell phone so he could hear a song by Phish.

Jones said her family is on good terms with their neighbors, who are university students.

When one of her boys hits a Wiffleball over a fence in the yard, “They’ll throw it back,” Jones said. “And they’re always polite.”

But Jones said she and her husband, Tim, would also be keeping a close eye on their cars, which were vandalized last year during Block Party weekend.

Anthony Cedor, a senior citizen living on 429 Chestnut Ave. across a narrow alley from the day’s largest party on East Street, said that he didn’t mind it.

“They never give us trouble. They’re good kids,” Cedor said.

In the past, the students had asked for permission before holding a party.

And they know Cedor well enough that they sometimes ask to borrow a wrench to fix their car.

“Having this for one day doesn’t disturb me in the least,” he said.

Ruth Burt of East Street looked at the students passing by with bemusement.

“It seems like a lot of wasted energy to

Car owner: Man urinated in tank, stalled engine

BLOOMSBURG — A man urinated into the gas tank of car parked along Chestnut Avenue on Saturday afternoon, but police quickly caught him, said the car’s owner.

“He must have gotten a lot in there,” said Jess Bower of East Third Street, because her car stalled near the intersection of Fifth and East streets, before she could reach A&A Auto Parts to buy dry gas. The car had to be towed from the intersection.

Bower, the wife of Eric Bower, who runs the Web site bloomtoday.com, said they have surveillance cameras monitoring their cars in the parking lot, and those had caught the man in the act.

Police on bicycles had told Mrs. Bower they had seen the man urinating in the gas tank of her Ford Fusion and had chased him.

They caught him quickly, she said. No information was available from police Saturday evening on the man’s identity.

By Peter Kendron

me,” Burt said. “But I guess I’m of the old school,” the 83-year-old added.

She said she saw more drinking earlier in her neighborhood this year than in the previous six years she’s lived on East Street.

Start ‘We want everybody to be safe’

Continued from page 1

When asked why the drinking started so early, senior Rich Hill responded “Why do you wake up early on Christmas to open presents?”

Cywinski said he and the fellow revelers were trying to fill their stomachs for a full day of partying. “We want everybody to be safe.”

Wiest said he actually set his alarm to wake up at 8:30 a.m. Saturday to make sure he “got up and got started.”

“But I was up before that anyway.”

And Wiest said it seemed other people had been up before him.

“A guy just walked by with one shoe on and a dirty shirt, limping along,” Wiest said. “It seemed like he had a rough night.”

By Peter Kendron

Party

Continued from page 1

said one of the Greek organizations hosting the party had asked for help clearing its property after a band had stopped playing.

He said that he did not know why the man had been arrested.

But Sokoloski said that, as of 6 p.m., it had been a smooth Block Party. “We haven’t had too many problems.”

By 9 p.m., the police had begun cleanup work, shutting down a number of parties because of noise complaints and too many people. At 14 Ridge Ave., a crowd broke up quickly when police arrived.

Shutting down Fetterman

For the entire morning and large portions of the day, heavy policing kept Fetterman Avenue — a trouble spot in the past — virtually empty.

While some porches on Light-street Road hosted parties in the morning and afternoon, it was a shadow of the sidewalk-filling crowds of last year.

At one house on Fetterman, junior Barry Franklin said that police in groups of four and five had maintained a constant watch on the alley, keeping it clear.

A little later in the day, Dan Bello, who graduated last year, pointed at three vehicles parked on Fetterman and asked, “When’s the last time you heard of a Block Party where someone parked here?”

In 2006, a woman who mistakenly parked her SUV on Fetterman Avenue saw it pelted with beer bottles, shattering its rear window as she inched it through a crowd.

‘Drink, puke, do it again’

For the most part, the partyers out Saturday were determined to drink and have a good time.

Asked how he planned to pace himself through the day, Scott Ricard said, “Drink, puke, do it again.”

He had played some horseshoes and beer pong, a game where opponents try to throw a ping pong ball in each other’s beer glasses to make them drink. He planned to spend most of the rest of the day doing the same, although the shirtless Ricard was worried that Dollar General had run out of sunscreen.

Students living at 398 East St. had hung a sign out front: “You Honk. We Drink.” And each time someone passed by, they lifted their glasses

and chugged.

“We can’t disappoint our public,” joked senior Dan Kelly. The group of 20 outside was also taking turns at beer pong.

A block away from the main East Street party area, Kelly said the police presence had been light and “friendly” at their party.

“The cops they warned us a few times to not block the sidewalk,” Kelly said.

“And we listened to them. We know they don’t want any more problems than they already have.”

A broken tape

But it seemed the steps taken by Greek Life to control who could get into parties weren’t effective on East Street.

Police tape had marked off the party zone, but it was quickly ripped down. At one point, some women tied the yellow tape around their heads and shoes. By the end of the East Street party, a long strip of it flew like a flag from a fire escape.

While bracelets were supposed to be required for anyone to get into the area, large portions of the crowd at its peak didn’t have them.

‘So far, I’m happy’

Mayor Dan Knorr, reached around 8 p.m., said he was happy with the way that the Block Party had turned out so far.

“It seems as though it’s going as well as can be expected,” Knorr said. “The town is very bustling. But people are not being violent, or just wantonly destructive.”

“For a day like this, which is gorgeous, to have an event that has gone off as relatively safely as this, so far, I’m happy,” Knorr said.

BU President David Soltz, seeing his first Block Party since taking office, had similar feelings.

“It’s obviously a big drinking party,” he said. But in talking with Sokoloski, he said, it seemed the parties had “spread out more this year,” making the event a little easier to control.

He also credited the town’s permitting system with controlling the size of parties. It seemed there were many parties of about 50 people, rather than much larger parties, Soltz said.

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STUDENTS pet the horses and take photos of a mounted State Police unit at a Bloomsburg University Block Party area behind student housing along East Street in Bloomsburg on Saturday.



MOUNTED STATE POLICE prepare to move students from a Bloomsburg University Block Party area behind student housing along East Street. PHOTOS BY BILL HUGHES