

INFORMATION BULLETIN

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SUBJECT: Calais/ St.Stephen Community

SOURCE: Telegraph-Journal

Sitting in folding chairs, clutching dogs by the leash and hoisting their children up onto their shoulders, people filled every sidewalk in downtown St. Stephen on Saturday afternoon, waiting for the sound of the bands to signal the start of the parade.



Mary-Ellen Saunders/Telegraph-Journal

The St. Andrews Department of Fisheries Biological Station won the prize for best overall float during the 35th annual International Homecoming Festival parade held Saturday afternoon. The float featured a gigantic whale that blew water onto the participants on the float.

St. Stephen and its neighbouring community of Calais, Maine, celebrated the 35th year of the International Homecoming Festival with a parade that belonged to both countries.

Last year, the festival committee worried that with increased border security the parade, which crosses the international bridge, would not be possible.

Chris Bernardini, co-chair of the organizing committee, said the parade was possible because of good cooperation with border personnel.

Bernardini said each person who was planning to be in the parade sent a form in with their information and were pre-cleared by customs. He said random searches could be made of the floats before they left St. Stephen for the U.S.

Bernardini said the parade was able to cross the border without any security problems.

Customs officers, along with shop owners and workers along the front street, stepped out of their businesses to watch the parade make its way past.

An American customs officer stood at the entry point for walkers, checking identification and asking a few questions.

The parade featured a mix of floats, half of which were Canadian and the other half American with the theme "Celebrating 35 years of International Friendship."

The weather was a mixed bag of surprises, with the sun shining one minute and a downpour the next. Onlookers crowded under umbrellas and building overhangs waiting for the rain to clear before the parade.

Bernardini said the parade starts in the U.S. one year and Canada the next so people never know where it is coming from.

The time difference made it so the parade began at 1 p.m. in St. Stephen at noon in Calais.

He said the parade is a sign of the close connection shared by Calais and St. Stephen. Despite belonging to different countries, Bernardini said the communities depend on one another and the citizens of both communities get their services in both countries.

The winner for best overall float went to the St. Andrews Biological Station. The float featured fishermen, gigantic lobster suits and scuba divers standing beneath a gigantic whale. When the whale blew water out of its blow-hole, all of the float participants got soaked as the crowd laughed.