

Rigs

From page 1

Even the weather cooperated. The day was sunny and the temperatures warm. Families purchased food from the concession stands and picnicked on the grounds. Children climbed on tractors, fire trucks, police cars, dump trucks, bulldozers and other vehicles, ranging from the familiar black and white Monroe Dairy milk truck to military vehicles, a huge Coca Cola truck and the Channel 10 mobile van. The Salvation Army's Providence Canteen, which traveled to Ground Zero in New York during last year's Sept. 11 rescue operations, was also present.

Serbst first approached Father Zinno with the idea for "Touch a Truck" about two months ago. He said he had learned about the unique fund raiser from his sister and brother-in-law in Connecticut after they had organized a similar and very successful event there to raise money for a local charity.

Father Zinno admitted that his first reaction to the parishioners' query about organizing one as a parish fund raiser was: "You want to organize a what?" But, with a "nothing ventured, nothing gained" attitude, the pastor told the organizers to "go for it."

Publicity for the fund raiser generated inquiries from businesses and agencies from as far away as Smithfield and Kingston, all wanting to participate. Families attending the event, came from around the state.

Marge Iervolino, a Mount Carmel parishioner, said she has "no little ones" to help into the driver's seats of any of the vehicles, but she enjoyed the event anyway. "Just look at the children's faces. They're having such a wonderful time. This is a great idea," she said.

Adults paid no admission to tour the grounds while children paid \$5

for full access to the trucks. Owners of the trucks and representatives of the many service agencies were on hand to explain how the vehicles worked and the functions they served.

Upon entering the grounds, participants were greeted by the familiar Mr. Potato Head, adorned in a construction site hard hat. Serbst and Simeone laughed, recalling how, after they picked up Mr. Potato Head from its regular site in Lincoln, they were returning to Bristol with the stout figure carefully placed in back of the truck. As the potato head with arms raised peeked over the side, Serbst heard a siren and saw a familiar flashing dome in his rearview mirror. Johnston Police, perhaps fearing that the men had absconded with one of the Rhode Island landmarks, pulled them over. After a lengthy explanation and showing permits and other paper work, the two were allowed to continue their trip home. Mr. Potato Head's grin mirroring the ones on the policemen's faces.

Richard and Nancy Cece of Smithfield brought their grandson, Jonathan Cimino, 4, to the fund raiser. "We stopped for breakfast along the way," Richard said. "This is quality time we're spending with him. We're having a great time."

Jonathan was just beginning his exploration of the various trucks but seemed impressed with a John Deere tractor he was riding at the time.

Zachary Johnston and Jason Trudeau, there with their grandparents, said they liked the dump truck they had just climbed on board. "It had a loud horn," Zachary said, demonstrating. Jason explained that the net rolled up in the back of the truck could be unrolled to "stop sand from blowing on cars" when the truck was moving.

Abigail (5) and Kirklin (6) Roderick from Portsmouth learned about "Touch a Truck" from their Bristol cousins. Temporarily finished with the trucks, they were painting faces on their pumpkins, another feature of the event. Kirklin was painting one for his sister Brianna, 6 weeks old, who was "too little" to appreciate the trucks or the pumpkin painting. Brianna didn't let any of the noise bother her; she was sound asleep in her mother Sandy's arms.

Abigail said she liked the Monroe Dairy truck best because she had chocolate milk there - "two cups," she said, smiling and licking her chocolate mustache.

The police and rescue vehicles were also a great hit with the youngsters. Most had the "whoop-whoop" sirens down to an art.

Father Zinno said the event raised more than \$6,000 for the parish's general fund which will support building, school and sacramental needs. Because of its popularity, its easy implementation and low overhead, he said he anticipates its becoming an annual event.

"There was very little overhead, because all of the trucks were donated, and although I would like to make it a well-kept parish secret, I have to admit that I would highly recommend it to other parishes," he said. "Next year, we want to bring in even more trucks."

The Monday after the event, Father Zinno said he is still amazed at how the children were awed by the trucks. "They were so well-behaved. I think everyone had a great time. Who ever thought I would be doing a truck show and then raving about it?"



PUMPKIN PAINTING - Abigail Roderick, 5, and her brother, Kirklin, 6, from Portsmouth, enjoy pumpkin painting Sept. 28 at the Touch a Truck fund raiser for Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Bristol. (Visitor photo by E. Lynn Ascoli)