

FAMILY FESTIVAL BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN HARTFORD

FRAN SILVERMAN, Courant Staff Writer. Hartford Courant. Hartford, Conn.: Aug 23, 1992

Kelli Smith bent over the hot pavement at Keney Park Saturday, intent on using a piece of chalk to send a message to the city.

"Want to stay alive?" she wrote with the chalk. "Don't be jive. Say nope to dope."

Kelli's message was one of a half dozen scribbled on the pavement near the pool during the seventh annual Family Day Festival in Hartford. The chalk art was one of the activities offered at the two-day event hosted by the Friends of Keney Park.

"This is better than sitting at home watching television," said Kelli, 15, who has just moved to Hartford.

Participants said the festival, held on the first sunny weekend since August began, gave them a chance to get out of the house and share some warmth with friends.

"It's great that they do anything in which people can get out in anyway with all the cutbacks," said Paul Richmond, who was dressed like a court jester and was showing children how to juggle a stick in the air with two other sticks.

Next to Richmond, little children were clutching leather straps on a pony ride. Others had formed a line by the clown to get their faces painted.

The festival offered a variety of ethnic food, hot dogs and ice cream, and booths selling Tshirts, African clothing and books on the Nation of Islam. A mobile stage provided entertainment including reggae and rhythm and blues.

Phillip Rochester of Hartford said events such as the Family Day Festival should be held more often.

"It should be done every weekend in the summer. It brings the community together," he said.

The Rev. John Ike, of the Archer Memorial AME Zion Church of Windsor, said the festival helps break down cultural barriers.

"It shows great diversity and richness in the Hartford community," he said.

The festival will continue today from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Among the events planned are racquetball, a fishing derby, tennis, crafts for children, swimming and a horseshoe tournament. On stage, musical groups will play gospel and jazz.