

## Mattoon has 'hole' lot to cheer about with video crew on hand for Bagelfest

**ROB STROUD - H&R Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, July 19, 2009 12:00 am**

MATTOON - The cheer "Lenders, now that's a bagel! We want more! We want more!" repeatedly rang out during the Bagelfest breakfast Saturday morning.

The cheers were encouraged by Ray O'Brien, vice president of Lender's Bagels, as video crews filmed footage for Lender's promotions and a documentary about bagels, but the cheers did not take much prompting.

Excited bagel fans were lined up at the DeMars Center as the doors opened at 8 a.m. for the annual free bagel breakfast. They quickly filled every seat in the spacious banquet hall, spilling outside to picnic tables at Mattoon's Peterson Park.

O'Brien, who was on his fourth visit to Bagelfest in a row, said Lender's will post footage of the cheering bagel fans on its Web site along with information about Bagelfest and will use the video for other promotional projects.

"My partner (producer Sarah Teale) and I are making a documentary on the bagel, and one of the places we really wanted to visit was Mattoon and the festival," said director Joan Micklin Silver as she surveyed the crowd. "It's fantastic. I love the enthusiasm, and I love the excitement of the community."

Bagelfest, celebrating its 24th year, was created after the Lender's Bagels factory came to town in the 1980s, and the festival has included a free bagel breakfast since its inception.

Debbie Perkins of Windsor and her daughter, Amber Saul of Sullivan, said they have been attending Bagelfest and its breakfast ever since these events were held on Broadway Avenue in downtown Mattoon.

"We love the bagels," Perkins exclaimed. The Windsor resident said she usually sticks with the plain bagels but was impressed by the new chocolate and strawberry bagels that were offered Saturday.

Saul, who brought along her 1-year-old son, Caden, in a wagon, said they also like seeing the parade and its bagel-themed floats every year.

Dana and R.J. Rowland of St. Joseph brought their children, Bobby, 4, and Libby, 8, to the family's first Bagelfest for the breakfast, parade and carnival at Peterson Park. Dana Rowland said they had planned to go to the St. Louis zoo but had van problems, so they decided to stop closer to home at Bagelfest.

"We didn't expect this. We knew there was a breakfast, but we thought it was something you paid for. It's a nice bonus; it's free," Rowland said, pointing at the bags of bagels they received. "I didn't realize it would be a whole bag. This will probably last quite a while in the freezer."

The sheer number of bagels produced at the Lender's factory led Mattoon to be named the "Bagel Capital of the World."

Documentary producer Teale noted Mattoon is a long way from bagels originating in Hungary and Poland

and then becoming an important part of the Jewish community in New York.

Teale said the documentary she is developing with Micklin Silver, who directed the 1988 Amy Irving film "Crossing Delancey," will chronicle the history of bagels and their production, which evolved from the handmade bagels of New York's old Jewish community to Lender's pioneering frozen bagels.

"(The bagel) assimilated. It's like an immigrant," Teale said. "We think it's a little thing that tells a very big, traditionally American story."

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