

Southern California's Largest New England Style Picnic

Article and photos by Bruce Rick, 32°. KCCH Valley of Santa Barbara

Trading your lobster or steak ticket for a wristband starts you on this yearly fun-in-the-sun (hasn't rained here in 28 years and continued sunny on this 29th year in July 2019) picnic at Camarillo Grove Park in Camarillo, California, where you just bring your appetite! Well, New England Picnic old-timers know to bring a large platter for the 1 1/2-pound lobster or the 16 oz. steak. Both choices come with coleslaw, corn on the cob, garlic bread, and mussels. Since 1998, Harold Bogner, 32° KCCH, has led the crew of over 30 volunteers comprising of Ventura County Valley Scottish Rite Masons, local Masons, family members, and even high school community service helpers, to benefit the Santa Barbara RiteCare Child Language Center. And the main dish isn't all - when you stroll around the grounds, you will find a drinks tent, a bake sale, a huge selection of raffle items, and musical entertainment.



Lead man Harold Bogner had the idea of Lazy Lobster Lovers

“Here you see Masons and non-Masons coming together to support our local RiteCare center, which is the crown jewel of the 14 California RiteCare centers,” said Maurice Sourmany 33°, Personal Representative (P.R.) to the Sovereign Grand Inspector General (S.G.I.G.) of California for the Santa Barbara Valley.

This year “The Rockin Henrys” family band played before the crowd of over 300 picnic guests. The family leader is Mason Michael Henry.

Among the many dignitaries from Grand Lodge, Grand York Rite, Scottish Rite, and Shriners in attendance, Grand Master of California Stewart Wright said, “The New England Summer Picnic or Lobsterfest as I like to call it, again is a big success, not only for the Santa Barbara RiteCare but for our extended Masonic family.” He pointed out,



The Rockin Henrys Family Band

“the Grand Lodge is a big supporter of the activities that help kids like this and like our Masons4Mitts (providing baseball mitts to California’s underprivileged children).”

Evelyn Rick, in the lobster cracking line said, “Every year the lobsters are so big that Harold’s idea of doing the hard work has made a Lucky Lobster Lover out of me!”

The lobsters are flown in from Maine, the steaks and mussels are provided by local Oxnard California vendors.



Grand Master of California Wright tosses in the ceremonial first lobster.

"Will it bite me?"



Kids could have hot dogs and chips.

"The works, please!"

"Medium Rare For Me"



Said the original Ventura Valley picnic organizer Fredrick “Tiny” Potter (PM, Hiram Award recipient, Camarillo Lodge No. 824): “We started the picnics in 1982, with the idea of a family oriented fundraiser, always for the Santa Barbara speech clinic. Each year we have worked to make this an enjoyable experience as our first priority and a fundraiser as a secondary benefit.”

“Julie and I are always thrilled to come to the Picnic and see so many who want to support our RiteCare activities”, said Summer Calvert, staff Speech Language Pathologist. She and Julie DeAngelis also a Speech Language Pathologist, share the work to cover the needs of over 200 children per year.

The Santa Barbara RiteCare Center is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit that provides screenings, evaluations, and therapy services to pre-school through kindergarten age children. Contact RiteCare through their website www.sbspeech.com.



(l-r) RiteCare recent grad Zaiden, Julie DeAngelis, Maurice Sourmany, Summer Calvert

As emcee, Sourmany thanked all for coming, and, even though he didn't win any raffle items, said, “This is just like a family reunion; some folks we see most every day and others, here, once every year. It is worthwhile even just to visit dear friends and meet new ones.”

"Have you ever been to such a great family picnic?"

