

What a weekend! What a festival! From the opening parade – led by Central Frontenac's Town Crier Paddy O'Connor – to the closing show, about 2000 people converged in McMullen Park to celebrate the joy of being in Verona. Cousin Cameron bog lemming, who has moved home to the Cameron Bog to take over the reins from his other cousin Cameron, proved an enormous hit with the youngsters. He was mobbed at every appearance by little ones wanting a hug or a pat. The cardboard and duct tape boat races are now a Festival classic, with many of the participants returning year after year. The Salute to Our Troops portion of the ecumenical service was moving and informative, particularly Major Ray Idzenga's address. Recently returned to his Verona area home from a tour in Afghanistan, he emphasized the important role of the families of military people and of the friends and neighbours who help those families while loved ones are gone. He gave us reason to be proud. Sunday's Classic Car Show was outstanding. It's practically a festival in itself. The stage entertainment was a terrific mix of young and upcoming musicians and old favourites – all of them from within a hundred kilometer radius. And throughout it all, the sight of horse and buggy riders, little kids dancing, teens and adults working together, and all of us having simple fun together tied the weekend up in a bow. Bravo, Verona! We've come a long way from a farm wagon in the park.

And didn't the village look spiffy? Festival flags give us that special lift, but it's the individual efforts that really add up to a great looking place. Dave and Angela Gard's little park near the back side of the Free Methodist Church off Carleton Drive is an oasis of beauty and calm. It is so artfully landscaped that most of us probably assume it's a municipal space. It's not. Dave and Angela offer it from their own hearts and willingly share it with all who come there. Another, more public space is the garden that runs along the front of Prince Charles School on Road 38. Planted several years ago by students under the direction of then vice principal Bev Vander Schoor, the garden strip is a riot of shrubs and perennials – and of course weeds. Maintaining such a spot is not trivial, and when school is out, it's often completely neglected. But not this summer. Just in time for the Festival, Marilyn Orser martialled a group of weed whackers - including Sharon Sole, Judy Conway, Rolene Peters and Maureen York – who gave the spot a good going over. Thanks from all of us who pass that spot every day. Maybe this could be the beginning of the long-awaited and much-needed Verona Garden Club?

Barb Pigion tells us that baby Joshua has had the liver transplant surgery (his mom Tammy was the donor) and both he and mom are doing well. Joshua, Barb & Dave's grandson, was diagnosed with cancer at nine months, and now at 14 months is in Toronto recovering from the surgery until followup treatment can happen in Kingston. The recent fundraiser raised about \$14,000, and that will go some way to help with the enormous expense of treatment, travel and accommodation.

Did you think you were done with festivals? Hah! Save Saturday, September 1 for something wonderfully different. The first annual Verona Lions Garlic Festival runs from 9-5 at the Lions grounds on Sand Road. There'll be fabulous food, entertainment, vendors galore (including your favourite Farmers Market folks) workshops and contests all on the theme of – yup, garlic. Watch for details.