

COMMUNITY

Kodiak hosts first Disability Celebration

By KDM Staff

More than 90 people took part in Kodiak's first annual Disability Celebration on Saturday at Baranof Park. The event was part of the nationally recognized Disability Pride Day.

Kathy Larson, a Peninsula Independent Living Center board member, got the idea of having a Kodiak event in June.

"Getting things organized was easy with this group of people because they all totally wanted to help," said Tonya Lee, of the Independent Living Center.

So, with barely a month to plan, Charles Barker got onboard and the ball really started rolling fast. Barker gathered a larger committee together and organized weekly meetings to pin down event details.

With the goal of connecting others who experience similar disabilities, the committee decided they would start small.

"There was no shortage of

help and donations. Next year, we want to make it bigger," Barker said. "We'd like to reach out to the veterans or others who may experience post-traumatic stress [disorders] or other hidden disabilities. We all want to be there for each other to let people know they're not alone and there's lots of support if we look in the right directions."

People arrived at the event early and kept coming for about three hours. A friendly atmosphere with music, a lofty number of door prizes, homemade salads, desserts and grilled foods allowed all walks of life to enjoy an afternoon at the park.

Kathy Larson took on the role of photographer, Betty MacTavish made icebreaker games to help people feel comfortable and George Lee sported the BBQ grill.

Randy Zank set tables and other volunteers helped with balloons and flowers — whatever needed to be done.

Chris Windnagle decided door prizes would be good, then



Kathy Larson

Charles Barker welcomes everyone to the diversity celebrations Saturday at Baranof Park Rink.

with a large handful of donated door prizes, numbers were called. About every 10 minutes a new participant cried out a number for another door prize winner.

"Embracing Kodiak's diversity is a perfect reason to have a celebration," Tonya Lee said. "It's a good idea to network and learn more of the resources that



Kathy Larson

From left, Tony Aspiras, Bonnie Dillard, Charles Barker and Randy Zank celebrate diversity.

are out there, and to celebrate our uniqueness."

The organizing committee would like to thank the following generous donors for making the event possible: St. Mary's, Cost Savers, Walmart, American Legion, Abba Father Christian Fellowship, Parks and Rec,

the Independent Living Center and all the wonderful volunteers who stepped up.

"That's what's so great about Kodiak," concluded Bob Foy, who was with his wife Kathy. "We want to help, there is something meaningful to do and we love doing it."