

# Thousands of smiles mark success of Sunday Parkways

Posted by [Jonathan Maus \(Editor-in-Chief\)](#) on June 22nd, 2008 at 9:59 pm

[Updated 6/23, 10:10am: I've updated this story with video coverage. Watch it below.]



Babes on Bryant Street and not a care in the world.

[Photo Gallery](#)

(Photos © J. Maus)

Portland's first-ever experiment with a large-scale carfree event was a rousing success.

[Sunday Parkways](#) transformed the streets and parks of North Portland into a six-mile community block party. Thousands of Portlanders (PDOT estimates 15,000) of all shapes, sizes and colors pedaled, skated, and walked among their neighbors and friends while taking in live music, performances, and a myriad of activities.



Learning to hula-hoop at Arbor Lodge Park.

Early this morning, as drizzle and cool winds blew, I could not have foreseen the perfect day that was to come. Not only did the sun and blue skies eventually break through, but masses of people turned out. I could not believe how many families and children I saw riding bikes and in the parks. It was simply a magnificent sight to behold.

A few hours into the event, I bumped into PDOT's Linda Ginenthal. Ginenthal is the one who spearheaded the year-long planning effort to bring this event to Portland. I don't remember what we said, but I remember a long hug and a lot of smiling.

I did not stop smiling from about 8:05 this morning until I left Peninsula Park at around 2:30.



The crowds along N. Kerby Ave.

I spoke with an elderly woman [zooming down Holman Street](#) on her electric wheelchair. She was giggling like a child, telling me how great it was to be outside and not have to worry about cars.

I saw three and four year-old kids riding tiny tricycles with reckless abandon down the middle of the road.



A scene from Peninsula Park.



Tye-dye brings people together.

I had a nice chat with Captain Larry O'Dea and Lieutenant Bryan Parman of the Portland Police Bureau's Traffic Division (they were both riding bikes!).

At Arbor Lodge Park, I watched a 60-plus year-old man, with his helmet still on, laughing as he tried to keep a hula-hoop going.



The Sprockettes were a big hit.

The [Sprockettes](#) entertained one of their largest, youngest, and most appreciative crowds I've seen in the three-plus years I've been watching them.

Homeowners along the route did their part too. There were bake sales, lemonade stands, garage sales, I even saw one entrepreneurial kid selling his old toys for 5 cents a piece. One woman, near Arbor Lodge Park, had a sign hanging in the tree in her front yard. It read, "Howdy neighbors! Stop for a cool drink." When I passed she was chatting with a young couple pushing a stroller.

Bikes towing kids and adults were everywhere. Overlook neighborhood resident Olivia Rebanal had a special passenger on the back of her Xtracycle — her mom Ophelia who was visiting from San Francisco. Greg Raisman from Southeast Portland made a new, wheelchair-bound friend and [gave her a tow for about two miles](#).

"It was a highlight of the year for me."  
– *SE Portland resident Greg Raisman*

Raisman just bought a Yuba Mundo cargo bike (after [reading about it here](#)) and said towing his new friend was, "So much fun. It brought huge smiles to her, me, and everyone nearby. Maybe more cargo bikes means more community... It was a highlight of the year for me."

I also ran into executive director of the [San Francisco Bicycle Coalition](#), Leah Shahum. She said she hopes San Francisco's *Sunday Streets* event (three carfree days in August) is just as popular. "If it's as successful as this is," she said, "I'm sure it will become permanent... thanks for laying the groundwork."



Dave Harris of Piedmont neighborhood.

Dave Harris, who lives in the Piedmont neighborhood, was rolling a laid-back cruiser bike with “Big Daddy” emblazoned on the side. I met him at the clogged entrance to the Bryant Street Pedestrian bridge and he said, “This is just fabulous. Look at all these people here... all creeds and colors, it shows that Portlanders get together, when we want to get together. I love Portland!”

Timo Forsberg works with the city’s Office of Transportation. I caught up with him just as the event was winding down. He said that everybody who came up to his information table asked, “when’s the next one going to be?”, and his answer was, “Give Sam Adams or another city commissioner a call and ask *them*.”

Today was an historic day in Portland, and it wasn’t about being anti-car or making a statement about the price of oil or any other “cause”. Today was about bringing people together, building community in our public spaces, and turning exercise and recreation into a free and accessible celebration of our city.

So, when’s the next one?

<http://bikeportland.org/2008/06/22/thousands-of-smiles-mark-success-of-sunday-parkways>