

COMMUNITY

# All Fired Up

Friendship Firehouse celebrates 250 years.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The Friendship Firehouse Festival celebrated the 250th anniversary of the founding of the city's first fire company Aug. 3 at the historic Friendship Firehouse Museum on South Alfred Street.

Now in its 28th year, the festival is sponsored by the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association and Historic Alexandria. Crowds lined up for tours of the museum as attendees learned about the city's historic firefighting apparatus and checked out modern firefighting equipment on display.

"This is always a great festival," said Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association board president Jimmie McClellan. "This is the 250th anniversary of the founding of the Friendship Fire Engine Company as well as the 275th anniversary of our great city so this is a great day to celebrate."

In addition to tours of the Friendship Firehouse Museum, festival goers learned about fire safety and had the opportunity to see Alexandria Fire Department equipment up close.

**"It's great to be able to be outside with the kids and have some fun while they learn about fire prevention."**  
— Local resident Aaron Swift

The festival also included booths by the Alexandria Police Department and Sheriff's Office, music performances, face painting, and displays by community organizations and local vendors.

Younger attendees participated in hands-on activities with all children receiving free toy Friendship firefighting helmets.

Established in 1774, the Friendship Fire Company was the first fire company in Alexandria. Today the Friendship Firehouse, built in 1855, is a museum open to the public.

The Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association (FVFEA) is a philanthropic organization focusing on fire-fighting history and fire safety. It remains active in community events, including the annual Festival, and supports historic preservation of the building and its collection.

"This is a fantastic day," said Aaron Swift, who attended the festival with his daughter Liana and friend Mike Labadie and his son Jack. "It's great to be able to be outside with the kids and have some fun while they learn about fire prevention."

[www.alexandriava.gov/FriendshipFirehouse](http://www.alexandriava.gov/FriendshipFirehouse)

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



The Aug. 3 Friendship Firehouse Festival celebrated the 250th anniversary of the founding of firefighting in Alexandria.



The Thomas family enjoys the Friendship Firehouse Festival Aug. 3 in Old Town.



A firefighter helps demonstrate how to use a fire hose on a makeshift burning house at the Friendship Firehouse Festival Aug. 3 in Old Town.



Lynette Garrett, John Renner and Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association president Jimmie McClellan at Friendship Firehouse Festival Aug. 3 in Old Town.



Festival attendees enjoy a ride on the DASH bus



Mike Labadie, Jack Labadie, Liana Swift and Aaron Swift enjoy the Friendship Firehouse Festival Aug. 3.



Children enjoy hands-on activities at the Friendship Firehouse Festival Aug. 3 in Old Town.