

# Kids gather at McGowan farm for ninth annual History Fest

## Hands-on history

By Amanda Dyslin

Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — History was coming alive all around them Thursday afternoon.



John Cross

Jeremiah Ennen, a student at Maple River Central, directs a stream of water pumped by his classmates in a firefighting contest Thursday during History Fest at the Jack McGowan farm.

Gypsies danced, tomahawks whizzed toward targets and jugglers shuffled pins in the air at the ninth annual History Fest on the Jack McGowan farm in rural Mankato. It was like a child-size Renaissance Festival, decked out with as much hands-on history fun that hundreds of school-age kids could handle.

But, for the moment, the 30 or so students standing in a long line down by the Le Sueur River had something more important to think about. A decision had to be made before the girls and boys climbed the wooden stairs and mounted the 15-foot-high platform at the front of the line.

"Should I stand on the rope or sit down in the seat on the way down. ... I'm scared. I think I'll sit," said a girl with braided blond pigtails.

The line for the zip-line ride was filled with kindergarten through 12th grade students grappling with the same decision. Each would wait 10, maybe 15 minutes before it was their turn to climb inside the makeshift denim seat hanging from a rope that would sail them through the air about 200 feet.

Sarah Rosebaugh, a sixth-grader at Covenant Family School in Mankato, knew exactly what she was going to do. As soon as the rope swing was in hand, Rosebaugh eagerly stepped her right foot in, held tight to the overhead bar and shoved off, "woo"ing the whole way down.

"It's fun!" Rosebaugh said seconds later, running up to a teacher from her school.

Covenant teacher Theresa Forbes cheered on the girls from a nearby wooden bench beside a black cauldron of simmering chili, while checking her watch. She'd been at the festival with 30 students since 9 a.m. and, when the kids lined up for the zip line, it was 20 minutes to departure.

"We only have a few minutes. We're just gonna make it," she said. But she made time to take a ride on the zip line herself.

## At a Glance

History Fest began Thursday and runs 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. today and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday. Today is for pre-registered schools only. The public is welcome Saturday. Admission is free but freewill donations are accepted. For more information, call Melanie Schmidt at 387-5501.