

# CONNECTICUT

ON THE WEEKEND

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SECTION B

## Region's Spirit Leads At Twain Days Celebration

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**E**ight-year-old David Horowitz of Hartford sprinted to the fence and began splashing it with whitewash. Paint flew.

By the time he tagged the next teammate in the painting relay at Mark Twain Days Saturday, David's entire face was speckled with whitewash.

"I am painted!" he squealed with delight.

A bit earlier at Charter Oak Landing in Hartford, John Williams, Ben Condon and Marc Johnson, three West Hartford teens, struggled to the shore of the

Connecticut River with their entry in the Riverfront Raft Race, "Sleeping Army."

The 13-year-olds had lashed together U.S. Army inflatable mattresses, lumber, and a tenuously floating lawn chair. An old bike, spokes outfitted with plastic paddles, provided motive power — along with Marc's mother Grace Johnson, who kicked from behind in the lawn chair.

"I think the best part was me jumping off" into the river, John proclaimed after the race.

"Sleeping Army" finished last (although it did garner the "Pride of the River" award for creativity), while David and his whitewash team was third of

three. But everybody was having way too much fun to worry about that.

"There's tons of hands-on things for the kids," said Andrea Pirog of Berlin, who was headed down to the river for some cane pole fishing with her children Alysha and Alex.

"And I like that they're finding out how things were way back when, and doing things with their hands instead of it being all electronic."

Despite fine weather, crowds were thin at times for events at Charter Oak Landing and Riverfront Plaza

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## Twain

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Saturday. Knots of people formed at all the events, which included a seemingly inexhaustible smorgasbord, based on Twain's life and writings.

There was origami frog-making, pie-eating, face-painting, medieval jousting, falconry, antique baseball, frog-jumping contests, croquet, riverboat rides and performances of American Indian dancing. At times, however, the four sites felt like four separate festivals.

Ellen Laramie of Bolton said her daughter Mary Alice hadn't wanted to come to Twain Days.

But once they walked across the Founders Bridge to Hartford, they "were hooked," Laramie said.

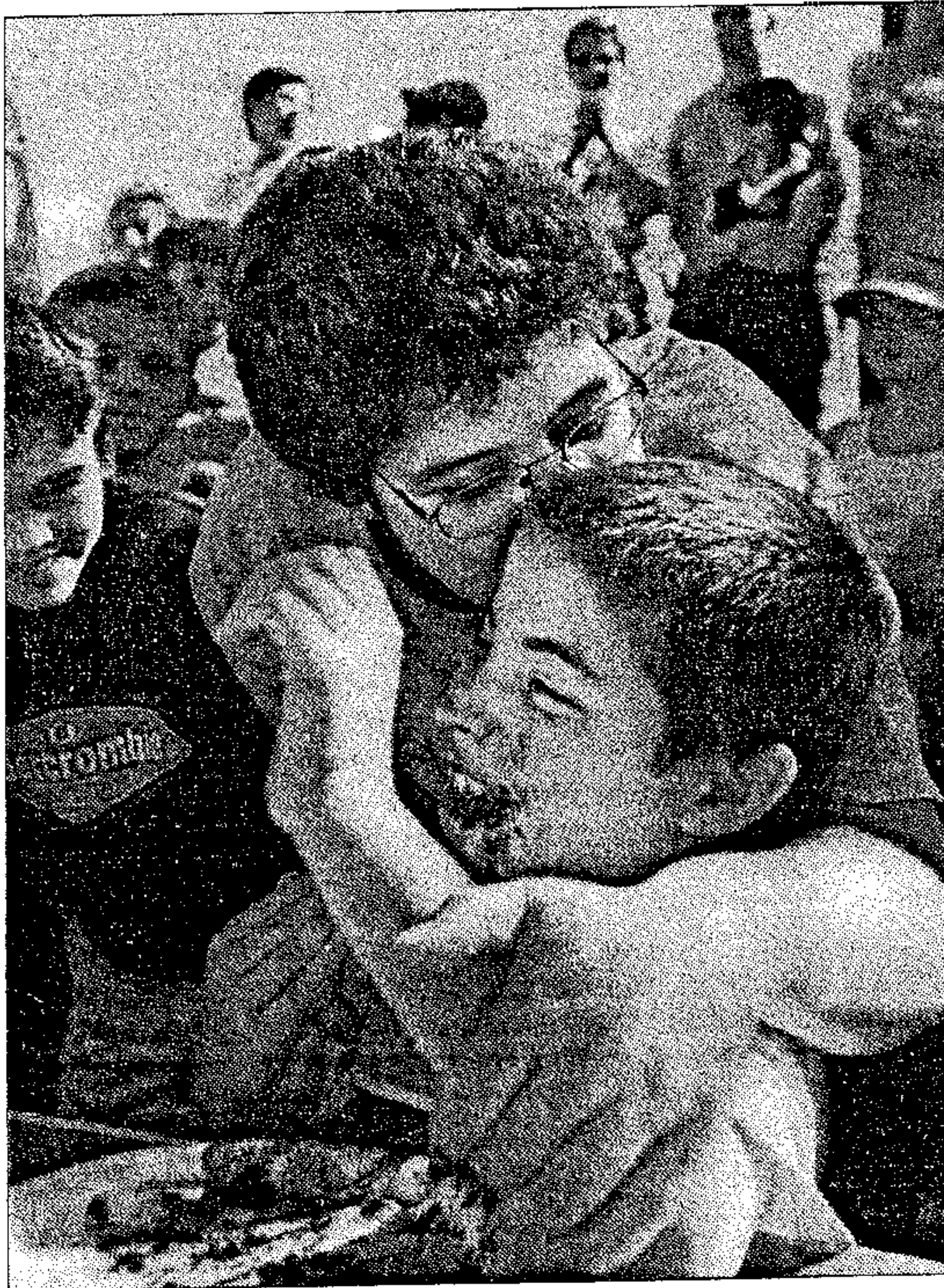
Mary Alice and her friend Alexa Hazel, both 9, even won the fence-painting contest.

Almost all of Saturday's events repeat today, with many events starting at noon at Bushnell Park, Nook Farm and the riverfront sites.

The festival concludes tonight with a concert at 8 by the Temptations in Bushnell Park and a fireworks display at 9:30.

Organizers hope to draw 50,000 people over the weekend. Joseph Marfuggi, president of Riverfront Recapture, said he wasn't disappointed there were only three entries, for example, in the raft race.

"This has the potential to be the signature event in Hartford,"



STEPHEN DUNN / THE HARTFORD COURANT

**MATHEW LOURIDO, 8**, of Hartford, gets a hug from his mother, Antoinette Cordier, after being one of the winners of a pie-eating contest, held at Riverfront Plaza, Saturday during Mark Twain Days events.

he said. "I think it can grow in a very, very big way."

The best Twain Days activity for some was no activity.

Martha Sandefer of Suffield gave her husband Fred Sweitzer

a backrub at a quiet Riverfront Plaza Saturday afternoon.

"We've just been sitting here watching the river," Sandefer said, "which is a very Mark Twainish thing to do."