

Mason Day Excitement By Kristen Shifflett

Funnel cake. Sweet, crunchy fried sugar coated cake called to her.

George Mason University sophomore Jalissa Ford spotted a sign advertising funnel cake and felt the craving for some of that sweet treat.

How did she score some?

Ford went to George Mason University's annual end of term community celebration, Mason Day.

Mason Day uses a parking lot for a stress-relieving carnival with rides, food, games and music each year. With free student admission, students get their hands stamped and two free tickets to pay for at least a piece of pizza with the option to buy more and are turned loose.

Crowds of students and other visitors milled around traveling in groups of three or four to stand in line for an adrenaline rush on simple slide rides like the Magic Carpet or on mechanical rides like Upshot and a scrambler. They could get souvenirs and spray paint free T-shirts, get balloon animals or a caricature, or try to win prizes from games like Wii dancing for a free prize. Live and disc jockeyed music blasted from the stage until 8 p.m. when pop singer Jesse McCartney took the stage to sing to a large crowd of fans.

A Mason sophomore became a first-time visitor of Mason Day after she saw the sign for funnel cake. The treat cinched it. "I came for the funnel cake not the rides," she said, "It was honestly the best part." She brought along her friend, an incoming fall 2015 freshman, to enjoy some too.

Mason celebrated its 50th annual Mason Day last Friday, April 24 and according to Michelle Webber, a senior and three-time Mason Day attendee, the attractions change every year.

"Last year we had Luda (referring to famous rapper and actor Ludacris) and there wasn't as many mechanical rides," Webber said while standing in line for a caricature with her friends. "But it's better than last year because you don't have to use your tickets on the rides."

Like Ford, Michelle Webber came to Mason Day for a sweet treat but in her case it was "shamelessly, totally, and completely for the kettle corn," she said.

Students enjoy Mason Day but not many were sure why it is even held. Ford said, "It might be (for students) to just have fun away from school. It's the time of the year everyone's stressing out so they come for stress relief."

Candace White, a junior and first-time visitor, “came to get free stuff” and waved her wrist adorned with a ladybug balloon animal bracelet strapped to it as example. She agreed with Ford’s assessment and said that Mason holds it “before finals so everyone’s not stressed out.”

"It's an event that the university offers and it's an opportunity to feel even more connected to GMU. We get anywhere from 6,000 to 7,000 people in attendance at Mason Day every year." said Gaby Peda, Patriot Activities Council's vice president of publicity and second-time Mason Day visitor said. "If you're not at Mason Day, you're missing out. I would attend regardless of my role with PAC because there is so much to offer and it is literally a day of pure fun. Everybody needs a day of pure fun."

Both White and Ford agreed the carnival was a good idea by Mason but wondered how it was paid for.

"Student fees and revenue made at Mason Day through food ticket sales cover the cost," Peda revealed.

White, Ford, Webber and Peda each commented how much they enjoyed Mason Day except for the long lines at each ride, game or activity which Peda said they will work to avoid this problem by adding more artists to the venue.