

Riders flock to downtown Esplanade

'It looks better than what we thought,' says a participant in the inaugural event.

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Hogs attract hogs. And on Saturday at the inaugural Hot Rods, Harleys and Smoke festival, one thing made itself apparent - it's an instant attraction.

"There's no place to put 'em," explained Roy McConnell, as he helped guide incoming motorcycles to parking spots around the Esplanade in downtown Springfield.

At the time, the festival still had a good five or six hours to go - and the bikes just kept thundering in.

"I think it's going to get worse when the sun goes down," he predicted.

With the **Heritage Center** parking lot taken up by classic cars and Market Street occupied by barbecue vendors, that left the area around the fountain to serve as a compact version of Sturgis.

"I didn't think to start counting. I wished I would have," said Mike Dennis, who, like clubmate McConnell, was helping to park bikes as part of the Springfield Harley Owners Group. "We didn't know how this would go over, but it looks better than what we thought."

Dennis had a theory why the bikes kept rolling in.

"When somebody sees hot rods and Harleys, they've got to go to 'em," he said.

Plus, there was the obvious.

"Nice day," he said.

And on a day like Saturday, you could bet the streets would be filled with riders galore from all over.

"If I had to explain it, you wouldn't understand," Dennis said. "It's just the journey. You just get on and go."

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