

You, too, can help the Rose Parade bloom

By CHRIS SMITH, PRESS DEMOCRAT COLUMNIST

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Next month's Luther Burbank Rose Parade should be the grandest and most beautiful in years. A good many hands are busy preparing to make it so, and still they could use yours.

More floats will appear in the 2010 parade, which kicks off in downtown Santa Rosa at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 15. Many will boast fresh roses, as the floats did in the earlier days of the town's 116-year-old parade.

If there are roses in your yard that float-makers might use, parade organizers (roseparadefestival.com) would love to hear from you.

This is a huge year for the Rose Parade. There's an enormous amount of creative energy that's going into invigorating it.

Organizers are reaching out to businesses, schools, other organizations and individuals throughout the county, inviting them to join in.

The test this year will be to see if the community loves the parade enough to pitch in the money necessary to sustain it. Everybody can visit the Web site of the sponsoring Summit State Bank (summitstatebank.com), click on "Save the Rose Parade" and donate from \$5 to you-name-it.

ONE OF THE THINGS Summit is doing is passing out color postcards bearing a caricature of Zoe Valrey, the 10-year-old who'll appear in this year's parade as grand marshal.

The honor went to Zoe in recognition of what she did when she learned last year that a decline in sponsorships imperiled the Rose Parade, a community celebration she's looked forward to all her life.

She set up a lemonade stand in her front yard during the 2009 parade. She enjoyed a brisk business and then donated every dime to keeping the parade alive and thriving.

In addition to her being named grand marshal, Summit Bank has thanked Zoe with a \$1,000 scholarship for college.

You'll see her, and vice versa, at the big parade.