



CAROL ROBIDOUX/UNION LEADER

From left, Patricia Canney, Mariah Hyndman and Davonte Coleman try to beat the clock during yesterday's hot dog eating contest.

# City block party draws hungry kids and curious adults

◆ **Manchester:**  
Neighbors also used the event to clean up "a ton" of trash.

By **CAROL ROBIDOUX**  
*Union Leader Staff*

**MANCHESTER** — You can bring in every block party big gun known to man — live music, balloons, face painting, fire trucks, free food, even policemen on horseback — but yesterday nothing beat a two-minute hot dog eating contest among eight neighborhood rivals, the grand finale to a Granite Street Neighborhood Clean-up/Block Party on the city's West Side.

"I'm going to win," said 11-year-old Mariah Hyndman, her eye-of-the-tiger stare directed at Devonte Coleman, age 9.

"No you're not; I am," countered Devonte, neither of them paying much heed to 8-year-old Patricia Canney, sitting quietly to their right.

She was hungry for more than a win.

"I haven't eaten all day," she said. "I'm starved! Where are the hot dogs?"

It was a dog-eat-dog situation all around, as contestants waited impatiently for the big event — delayed by more than an hour due to a steamer malfunction.

Finally, 32 frozen dogs were nuked to perfection in a microwave oven at Grace Haven Baptist Church, and the contest was a go.

Two minutes and three hot dogs later, 11-year-old Kaley Kennard prevailed.

"I do not feel well," she said, immediately after her decisive victory.

Throughout the day neighbors from adjoining streets milled around the cordoned two-block area, stopping by

various tables for food, face paint and potted flowers, or to register their fingerprints for future reference.

Event organizer Will Stewart, who works for NeighborWorks Greater Manchester, said the West Side neighborhood was adopted by the group after several meetings of its community service committee, which includes residents from all parts of the city.

Yesterday's Granite Street block party was a giant step toward bringing out the best in this two-block stretch of the city, which has been working hard to rise above the undercurrent of crime and apathy that seems to come in waves on the city's West Side.

"I live on Rimmon Street, and just last week I saw a girl trying to open car doors parked along the street. I called my son and they came right over," said Alice Melanson.

Her son, Bob David, shares a house with two other men on Granite Street. They bought the house 12 years ago through the House of Your Own Program, which serves the developmentally disabled community.

"Our biggest complaint is the cars that speed by," David said. "That, and the drug houses."

Before the party, neighbors worked together to clean up trash, in the end bagging about a ton of it, estimated Joe Labbe, a member of NeighborWorks of Greater Manchester community service committee.

"It's great to see a bunch of people get together with no lip service, just action," Labbe said.

Melissa Chase said she appreciated a chance to get out and meet her neighbors.

"I work all day, so I don't get to see people," Chase said. "It would be great to do this more often, but I think finding a time when everyone can get together is hard."