You need a town for a parade

Thousands flocked to Pottstown last week for the annual Fourth of July Parade, which has been conducted on High Street for more than a century (in recent years, sponsored by the Pottstown Rotary Club).

You won’t find such parades in the Pottsgroves, the Coventries, or any of the other auto-oriented suburbs surrounding Pottstown. They have no main streets, no heritage, and no interconnected sidewalks where people can stroll from one destination to another and casually greet their fellow citizens on the way.

Suburbanites may have luxurious houses and ample acreage, but they are isolated from everyone except those whom they specifically invite to visit.

So they make a pilgrimage to Pottstown to experience community. The Fourth of July Parade is one time, and one place, that brings together people of all ages, ethnicities, and incomes to enjoy a common, joyful experience. It allows people the leisure to informally greet each other.

The parade starts at the Pottstown Post Office and continues one and a quarter miles to the entrance of Memorial Park. For some of the marchers, who comprise everyone from children to octogenarians, it may be the longest walk they take all year.

The police officers who ride up and down High Street on their bicycles during the parade demonstrate that bikes are cool, and an efficient and congenial form of transportation.

The GoFourth Festivities following the parade are another rare opportunity to bring people together. Memorial Park is a lovely gathering place, one that is not overwhelmed by parking lots, yet is easily accessible.

Kudos to event coordinators Amy Francis and Amy Wolf for organizing this fantastic event, and for living downtown, where their historic houses are just a five-minute walk apart.

LEFT, CHILDREN SHOW A CAROUSEL COLORING PAGE to Pottstown Police Cpl. Brian Weitzel, one of the officers safeguarding the parade. Children who color the page, which were handed out by volunteers along the parade route, could trade it in for a free ride on the carousel.

BELOW, the Allegheny East Conference Pathfinder Drum Corps marches in the parade.