

To stay cool, locals crank up creativity

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Last updated: July 30th, 2009 05:37 AM (PDT)

Despite the heat, Wednesday was a good day for Micah Tyler.

The 38-year-old was able to find shade in a thicket of trees at Spanaway Lake, plopping his chair on a secluded fishing spot away from the sun. To top it off, he caught a couple of bass.

"It's cool," the Spanaway man said. "It's nice right here."

Some people weren't as lucky, as Wednesday's record heat forced South Sound residents to scramble to find ways to escape the heat. Some were more unconventional than others.

Martha Smith of Tacoma was at Sprinker Recreation Center's ice rink watching daughter Cassandra, 13, practice her skating.

Smith said she watches her daughter skate almost every day, but the heat provided extra incentive for her and her son, Jeremy, to watch.

"It makes it bearable," she said.

Sprinker was about 65 degrees Wednesday, warmer than usual for the rink but refreshingly chilly compared to outside. Some skaters donned earmuffs, while a few instructors wore thick coats.

Skating director Kathy Wainhouse said she heard how warm it was going to be on the radio driving into work and immediately was grateful for her refrigerated workplace.

"I was thinking what a great place to be working right now," she said. "It's a little perk to come here on days like this."

For people who braved the scorching sun outside, the day was all about swimming, splashing and sweating. The day's uniform consisted of shorts, tank tops and sunglasses.

Watery venues such as Ruston Way and Spanaway Lake teemed with recreationalists. Outdoor restaurants and drive-ins, especially those that provided shade, were also popular.

Bruce Peterson of Tacoma, 29, waited for his order at Frisko Freeze. After that, it was on to Owen Beach for a dip.

"We want to get out of this," he said of the heat.

Jamal McGee, the restaurant's supervisor, said the hot items of the day were cones and milkshakes.

"On a day like today, we do about 2,000" customers, he said. "It's been busy."

For those who don't have air conditioning, Hotel Murano in Tacoma offered a reasonable, luxurious reprieve.

The hotel informed customers on its Twitter and Facebook pages that through Sunday, room rates were based on the day's high temperature.

Dina Nishioka, spokeswoman for the hotel, said the day's projected high at 10 a.m., on the Web site, www.weather.com, was 101 degrees, so the rates Wednesday were \$101.

The hotel put out the word before noon. Four hours later, 10 people had taken advantage of the special.

"There are so many people without air conditioning, so we're just trying to help," Nishioka said.