

Festival will celebrate diversity

Polk County Folklife Festival ready for debut on Saturday

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Kurt Dugan, program director for the Polk County Folklife Festival, wants to turn the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center into a place everyone feels welcome when the event debuts Saturday.

Folklife will explore and celebrate the Willamette Valley's diversity through music, food, performing arts and crafts.

"That's what I want, people of different ethnic groups and cultures to feel like they are in their own living room," Dugan said.

And other people's living rooms, too, offering what he describes as "a sense of community." Dugan wants those cultures to interact, allowing people to explore something they haven't before.

That is why musical acts especially were scheduled with so much variety. Bands include headliners Lisa Ornstein and Dan Compton's fiddle and guitar duo act, Native American flute player Jan Michael Looking Wolf, Latin band Romance, reggae-ska group Big Outside, and bluegrass band Roundhouse.

Dugan's hope is that people who come to the festival to listen to one act will stay to hear the next.

"That's what this festival is about, people taking the opportunity to experience other music and other cultures," he said.

Dugan had been envisioning the festival for several years and started putting together a team about two years ago. He presented his idea to the Dallas Area Visitors Center, which agreed to



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROMANCE

Local band Romance will be part of the main stage lineup at the first Polk County Folklife Festival taking place Saturday at the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center.



Dugan

Check It Out

What: Polk County Folklife Festival.

When: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Where: Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center, 520 S. Pacific Highway (99W), Rickreall.

Admission: \$10, or five cans of food and \$5; children 12 and under admitted free. Food donations will be donated to the Dallas Food Bank.

For more information: info@polkcounty-folklife.com or www.polk-countyfolklife.com.

team, helping manage entertainment at the festival.

"To have a folk festival so close to home is exciting," Clark said.

Organizers were especially keen on bringing in Lisa Ornstein, a fiddle player who has helped revive old-time Appalachian music.

"She's nationally known," Clark said. "For her to want to come to Polk County and perform is great."

Folklife will also honor another legend of the genre, Jane Keefer, the festival's main stage namesake. Dugan said she taught and inspired a number of local musicians to take up old-time music.

But music isn't the only reason to come to Folklife.

Festivalgoers can experience culture through cuisine, as a variety of ethnic foods will be featured.

Youngsters will have an area designated for them, called "Little Folkies," with craft ac-

tivities provided by Dallas nonprofit Monkey with Tools, as well as face painting and a juggler and a ventriloquist-magician putting on shows. Arts and crafts vendors and demonstrators will have



Clark

booths set up through the festival area, covering three buildings at the fairgrounds.

For the adults 21 and older, there will be a beer and wine garden featuring Rogue Ales brews and vintages from Airlie Winery.

Truman Price, the regular dance caller at Guthrie Park's monthly country dances, will host a traditional barn dance in the evening.

"I hope to see lots of people out there," Clark said. "I hope this is a success so we can continue next year. We want this to be the start of something."

M-I Chamber set to honor leaders

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH/INDEPENDENCE — It's almost that time of year again, when the communities of Monmouth and Independence recognize the people and businesses who make a difference.

The 50th annual Monmouth Independence Community Awards Banquet will be Friday, March 13, at 5:30 p.m., but tickets must be purchased by noon on Monday.

Nominations this year included a tough crowd, filled with worthy names of businesses and individuals who made a positive impact on the community.

The category for Junior Citizen Award — in its second year — was so tough, the selection committee refused to narrow it to just one, said Jean Love, chamber executive director.

"Upon scoring the (nomination) narratives, these two were tied," Love said. "They said, 'we don't want to choose a specific winner. We want to award both of

them for all they've done for the community.'"

The two Junior Citizen Award winners are Megan Stutzman and Michael Willis.

Other winners will be announced at the banquet on March 13 at Eola Hills Winery.

Much of what was changed at the banquet last year will remain the same this year, but one thing will be added.

"We gave the explanation of the winner, but the accolades were very generic," Love said. "We didn't do a good job of shining the light about what they have done. This year we'll read highlights about each of the nominees and announce the winner. We want to highlight the greatness of all our nominees."

Many businesses that won awards last year are in the top three finalists this year.

"There are definitely some repeats," Love said. "It really shows the impact that these businesses or individuals have made, when you're repeatedly ranked or nominated."

Attend the Gala

What: The 50th annual Monmouth-Independence Community Awards Banquet.

When: Friday, March 13. Social hour starts at 5:30 p.m. Program begins at 6:30.

Where: Eola Hills Wine Cellars, Rickreall.

Admission: \$40 per person. Tickets must be purchased by Monday at noon.

AWARD FINALISTS

Junior Citizen Award winners: Megan Stutzman, Michael Willis.

Business and Organization Awards: *Retail Service* — Independence Cinema, Les Schwab Tire Center, Roth's Fresh Markets; *Nonprofit or Organization* — Monmouth Independence YMCA, Monmouth Public Library, Partnerships in Community Living Inc. *Food and Beverage Service* — Burgerville, Crush Wine Bar and Tasting Room, San Antonio. *Personal Service Provider* — Ash Creek Animal Clinic, Curves, Monmouth Fitness Club. *Professional Service Provider* — Maps Credit Union, MINET, Oregon State Credit Union.

Education Support Staff of the Year: Tracy Barnes, Jodene Presler and Janie Vela. **Educator of the Year:** Adrienne Gault, Scott McCannell, Linda Tonagel. **Distinguished Service:** Mark Fancey, Rod Killen, David Ritchey. **First Citizen:** Dori Showell, Kimber Townsend, Donn Wahl. **For more information:** www.micc-or.org.

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12 and under are free
No presale tickets. Purchase at the door.

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