

Mary Olney is Sisters Rodeo Queen

Sisters Rodeo Queen Mary Olney won't miss out on her year representing the venerable institution — she'll just have to wait a year. The Warm Springs rider will reign again in 2021.

Olney was chosen at Sisters Rodeo grounds from a group of highly qualified cowgirl competitors on September 22, 2019. John Leavitt, who heads up the queen selection committee, told *The Nugget* that the Rodeo has already determined that she'll be back in the saddle for the 2021 events.

Mary is the niece of Warm Springs Chief Delvis Olney, Sr. She was raised in a rodeo family. Her father was a rough-stock rider and her three brothers are all bronc and bull riders. Even her grandmother, Catherine Watah, was a bareback rider.

"I was raised by some of the toughest cowgirls in the Northwest," Olney

explained, "They instilled in me a love for animals, rodeo and the Western way of life."

Sonia Heath, Mary's mother, dreamed that Mary was chosen as Sisters Rodeo queen. "I couldn't have had a better daughter than the one I have," Sonia said. "She herself is a dream for any mother of daughters."

The queen, a graduate of Madras High School, has served on student council and was a member of National Honor Society and FFA. She played soccer and softball, and participated in cheer.

The petite 18-year-old rides Dixie, her 5-year-old bay mare, who performed nearly flawlessly in the riding drill.

In her speech, Olney said, "Now, I'm not sure if there's something in the lemonade, or it's just the surrounding atmosphere, but there is a closeness that you can feel

right when you step through the front gate. When you attend Sisters Rodeo, you feel you're part of a family."

Her youngest brother, Josh, said that his sister is "always able to smile. Even when she doesn't feel like it, she smiles. She is so friendly and wants to make other people happy."

Grandmother Catherine repeated such perception of her granddaughter.

"Mary is so friendly, happy, and fun-loving," she said. "Other people feel good just being around her."

Friends in attendance supported these statements. Ronnie, a family friend, said, "She is dedicated, strong-willed and has a wonderful personality." Delia, an older friend, said, "She's an awesome cowgirl, sweet, and anything she wants to do she does well."

Olney plans to attend Tulsa Welding School to become a certified welder,



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Sisters Rodeo Queen Mary Olney will reign again in 2021.

but her long-term goal is to be a pediatrician.

money for school so I'm not starting my chosen career in

"I want to save some huge debt," she explained.

Sisters Rodeo supports students

Two big things happen in Sisters in June: The Sisters Rodeo — and the celebration of the Sisters High School graduating class.

The Sisters Rodeo supports students in Sisters through the Sisters Rodeo Association Scholarship. The Association offers scholarships that may be used at an accredited trade technical or vocational school; two- or four-year college or university.

The scholarships are to be awarded to Sisters High School graduates with financial need, but who may not be eligible for tuition assistance programs, who have exhibited a commitment to the Sisters community through their volunteer involvement, have shown a good work ethic in their school and community, and have demonstrated an attitude and aptitude to be successful in post-high school educational choices.

This year's recipient of the Sisters Rodeo Association Scholarship was Gracen Sundstrom. Gracen is a multi-sport athlete and honor roll student.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Gracen Sundstrom is the 2020 recipient of the Sisters Rodeo Association Scholarship.

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We look forward to the return of the Sisters Rodeo in 2021!

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