

NATIONAL RESTAURANT HOSPITALITY MONTH



Bar Manager Jennifer Davis has been with the Axe & Fiddle for four years. She was chosen to represent the restaurant during National Restaurant Hospitality Month by her bosses Alyssa Gonzales and Bart Caridio. ALIYA HALL/THE CHRONICLE

Jennifer Davis: Cottage Grove's hometown-driven bartender

BY ALIYA HALL
THE CHRONICLE

COTTAGE GROVE — When it comes to cultivating a warm and diverse atmosphere at restaurants, Axe & Fiddle owner Alyssa Gonzales says that bar manager Jennifer Davis does it best.

“(She’s) the employees’ favorite and the customers’ favorite,” Gonzales said. “She

really is the perfect representation for the Axe & Fiddle. She’s kind, understanding, hard-working and community-minded.”

Davis has been identified by Gonzales as an exemplary employee, in honor of National Restaurant Hospitality Month. She has been working at Axe & Fiddle for four years, since Gonzales recruited her to the restaurant.

See JENNIFER — 27

The art of toga

The first time I tried to attend the Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany, I missed it. Naturally assuming that it was held in October, and without doing any research in that pre-internet era, I showed up mid-month to find the beer tents gone and the festive spirit dissipated. A mirthful local explained that the festival, founded in 1810, takes place in the weeks leading up to the first Sunday in October.

I did eventually get to experience this phenomenon and met real Bavarians who explained some of the traditions. The first festival was to honor the marriage of Crown Prince Ludwig to Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen. The citizens were invited to huge festivities held in the fields in front of the Munich city gates to honor the couple. Activities included tastings of wine and beer, a procession of children in traditional costumes and a student choir, and culminated in a mad race of 30 horses.

The decision to repeat the popular horse race and other festivities the following year began what is now an annual event; the festival that has grown into a huge, world-class event, currently in full swing. Last year, over 6.3 million visitors attended and consumed around two million gallons of beer and untold wursts, pretzels and the like.

American purveyors of beer, looking to entice customers into their establishments, have latched onto this popular festival to bring a bit of the old world to the new, and Cottage Grove has added a unique twist on the celebration that touches on some of the movie-making history of the town. In honor of the movie “Animal House,” filmed partly in The Grove, the monthly Last Friday Art Walk in historic downtown added a new dimension: OkTOGAfest, sponsored by the Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce and billed as a pub crawl, which is yet another

culture’s tradition.

While what we call bar-hopping is sometimes looked down upon, in the U.K it is a time-honored tradition. Often inspired by a birthday or other special event, the pub crawl is generally a spontaneous night out for drinks where only the original meeting place is agreed on. As the crawl labors on, the group decides where to go to next, sometimes splitting up and reconnecting later by plan or by chance.

The idea of combining a pub crawl, a German beer festival and a toga party is the Chamber of Commerce’s way to honor the filming of the “Animal House” parade scene in downtown Cottage Grove, while at the same time promoting both Art Walk and local businesses.

Travis Palmer, director of the Chamber, explained how the hugely successful 40th anniversary celebration of the film in Cottage Grove last year inspired the Chamber to find a way to commemorate the filming of “Animal House” annually in a smaller, more community-developed way. “I hope the participants celebrate responsibly and don’t end up recreating the parade scene,” Palmer said, jokingly.

The toga-clad revelers that mixed it up with the downtown Art Walk last Friday had signed in at The Brewstation earlier and then bounced between The Grove Bar & Grill, Axe & Fiddle, Stacy’s Covered Bridge Restaurant and The Brewstation. Each establishment offered specials to patrons who had registered and donned a toga. A few of the costumes had the patina of having survived several toga events in Cottage Grove, and the OkTOGAfest added a festive flavor to the mix of buskers, artists and visitors as the crowd worked their way up one side of Main Street and down the other.

The Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce was

the original creator of the Art Walk here in the Grove, but has since handed it off to a committee. But the Chamber still wants to help support the event and promote the businesses involved. The toga event was planned to piggyback on the Art Walk and draw some folks who may not have attended or haven’t gone in a while.

In speaking with Kate Brown at the Chamber, she let me in on a bit of a surprise: Art Walk is going to a year-round format. I followed up that lead by going to see Michele Rose, one of the committee of seven that has taken on the planning and management of the Cottage Grove Art Walk. She confirmed that, yes, we don’t have to give up our Art Walk just because the seasons have changed. Rose and committee members had reached out to other Oregon communities that host Art Walks and the consensus was that Art Walks in the winter are in fact better attended. When the summer festival season ends the number of activities available in a community plummets, making an Art Walk attractive to attend.

Instead of ending in October, there will be now be Art Walks on Black Friday in November (Nov. 29, 2019), on Dec. 27, to help walk off the holiday malaise, and on into the new year. Rose also promises surprises that will be sprinkled throughout the winter world of art. She was being cagey, but from the quality of music and art that I have been experiencing this season, I am very intrigued.

“We are always looking for artists and musicians to participate,” Rose said.

If you know someone or would like to offer your own talents to a year-round celebration of culture on the last Friday of each month, contact Rose at 541-514-0704 or drop in to see her at The Crafty Mercantile on Main.

You can reach Dana Merryday at 541-942-7037 or dana_merryday@yahoo.com.

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Magnolia Gardens plans 37 new apartments

FROM STAFF REPORTS

COTTAGE GROVE — Magnolia Gardens Senior Living is expanding and began construction of 37 new apartments this week. The construction will offer new assisted and memory care options and enhance function and accessibility between the assisted living and memory care facilities, said executive director Tara Blount, but will maintain the nature and wildlife access around Magnolia Gardens. More info: 541-942-0054.

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Evidence Based Birth® childbirth class comes to Grove

FROM STAFF REPORTS

COTTAGE GROVE — Evidence Based Birth® Childbirth classes aim to inform, empower and inspire expecting parents and birth-care practitioners to understand the latest, proven, evidence-based care practices. Learn evidence for birth options in an online class; meet in-person with an experienced instructor, Molly Patterson, and other parents in your area who are going through pregnancy. This class is limited to only six couples per session.

Two in-person classes are held at Cottage Grove Community Center in the Shepherd Room at 700 E. Gibbs Ave. November Class: Friday, Nov. 1, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

More info: tenderhandsdoula.com/workshops-classes and oregon-ebb-workshops-classes.eventbrite.com.