

CARA-PAGE YOURSELF

There's plenty of time for fun at the Garibaldi Crab Races

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For the TODAY

Let's just go ahead and talk about the elephant in the room. Crabs are not naturally athletic. There never has been nor is there likely to be a crab in the Summer Olympics. With their front heavy claws and silly lack of symmetry, a scuttle is all you can really ask of these crusty crustaceans.

And yet, the Garibaldi Crab Races will be celebrating 35 years on Saturday and Sunday, March 14 and 15. Every year, the prizes are just the icing on the carapace for the human competitors, who can do anything short of actually touching the Dungeness crabs to encourage them down a short, slightly tilted ramp.

"People usually just yell at them and bang on the ramps," said Garibaldi Mayor Judi Riggs. "There aren't many rules, although you need to make sure your crab is sideways otherwise they don't move."

Championship heats are scheduled on both days, but there are also spontaneous races where people scurry to compete with a moment's notice.

"We usually have about 75 races but we can always have more," Riggs said. "We buy extra prizes and also get donations from everywhere in Tillamook County, so we give every opportunity to win something. When a spontaneous race is announced, the first few people with a dollar who find the person in the crab hat get to compete."

A pub game turned public fundraiser, the races support disadvantaged community members in many ways.

"It all started out in a bar on a cold dark rainy night when the patrons had nothing else to do," Riggs said. "Then the Lions club got involved and helped build it up; now it's our biggest annual fundraiser."

Proceeds from admission and race entries, food and beverages and logo gear go to help local residents in need.

"Last year we were able to donate about \$12,000 to different programs," Riggs said.



"Garibaldi has seniors and disabled residents that don't have money for glasses and health care; the grade school has a pantry for students and we also help them get coats or shoes. We help fund the senior sewer discount program, the local food bank and the Christmas basket program. This event really goes a long way."

Proceeds also come from the pick-your-prize raffle, where participants toss tickets in a jar to compete for the thing they really have their eyes on.

"We have great donations like a fishing trip for two," Riggs said. "There's a big Tillamook Cheese basket and lots of gift

certificates from local restaurants. The hot ticket though is the stainless steel wind spinner from a local artist. We had one last year that was the most popular item so we're excited to have another one."

Prizes for backing the winning crab in the adult heats include cold hard cash; and kids can earn bikes with helmets and pint-sized fishing poles.

The now-legendary tale of a sports-related injury shows why the races are as fun to watch as to participate in.

"One year we had someone break their hand when they were banging on the track," Riggs said. "He needed medical attention

on the cover

because of his passion for the races. People can see races from previous years on YouTube if they want to get some idea of what it's like."

The races can be seen on other screens too. "Drew Carney's Out and About on KGW has filmed a mock crab race here, and this year we are going to have Joe Vithayathil from On the Go with Joe on Fox 12 broadcast before the event."

Winners or losers, the competing crabs' fate is on a plate.

"We always have lots of really good food with and without crab meat," Riggs said. "Crab salads, crab melts with Tillamook cheese, hot dogs and sausage dogs. We have a master chef who'll make triple berry cobbler, chocolate cake and brownies. We also will have beer and wine. We didn't have them one year and it was a dud."

If you want to race, there is no worry about showing up empty handed, as this is not a BYOC event.

"The crabs are donated by the crab fleets," Riggs said. "We've had to skip some years because of low crab amounts but this year we are fine and are ready for a good crowd."

Races are run from 11 am to 5 pm on Saturday and 11 am to 4 pm on Sunday, at the Old Mill Event Center, 210 Third Street in Garibaldi.

Two-day admission is \$5 for adults, \$2 for kids aged six to 12, and free for children five and under. Race entry fees vary from \$1 to \$10 depending on the heat.

For more information go to <http://visitgaribaldi.com/garibaldi-crab-races/>