



OCF Fire Crew co-coordinators Bill Pack (left) and Tom Bruvold.

All Fired Up

OCF fire crew hopes to educate elders and reduce fire danger. ■ By Ephraim Payne

The Oregon Country Fair springs to life every summer on park-like 350-acre property next to the Long Tom River, 15 miles from Eugene. The land, a mixture of grassy fields with islands of shrubs and oak trees, is flooded for part of the winter by the river and its tributary creeks. Dense thickets of scraggly, 70-year-old Douglas fir dominate the uplands above the floodplain. For years, fire suppression has allowed dry wood and other fuels to

build up, creating a potentially dangerous situation.

The site is usually still green in early June. But in drought years it dries out by fair time, usually the first weekend in July. According to fair fire crew co-coordinator Bill Pack, fire danger has been extreme for the last five years and was especially high during 2002 and 2003. "I think it's just a matter of time before we have a situation," says Pack, a 30-year U.S.

Forest Service veteran. "We've been pretty fortunate."

The fair, in its publicity material, expresses a respect for Native American culture. Pack and others would like to see its community, known as the Fair Family, learn to use fire to help manage the landscape, much as former inhabitants, the Kalapuya Indians, did.

Archeologists and the fair's managers believe the Kalapuya used cyclical burning to maintain an open prairie with patches of large oak trees and firs when they used the area. These oak savannas provided the Kalapuya much of what they needed to live in the Willamette Valley, including such foods as camas, acorns and deer. Low-intensity controlled burning kept larger fires at bay.

Kalapuya elder and storyteller Esther Stutzman says that the use of fire was part of a sacred relationship between the people and the lands they inhabited. "It was something that was extremely well planned," she says. Women who were spiritual leaders directed the timing of the fires after holding council with community elders, and entire families played specific roles in lighting and controlling them.

But some in the Fair Family oppose the fair's plan to thin trees to increase the forest's biological diversity. The real fire problem at the fair, longtime fair volunteer and UO biologist Dennis Todd says, is people, not the landscape. "Pretty much, humans are going to be causing any fires out there," he says.

The fair has already banned candles and

fire lanterns at campsites. But musicians gather around campfires to jam, adding to the fair's ambiance and community feeling, and thousands of people gather at night to watch fire dancers whirl and spin as they perform.

The fair encourages campers to build campfires in special fire pans in and the fire crew mows the grassy areas and chips some dry

'They've got a very good fire crew. They're so self-sufficient it doesn't become a huge problem for us.'

— Chief Marty Nelson, Lane Co. Fire District #1

brush and other potential fuels. Still, every year people light campfires outside the designated areas. Campers and the fair fire crew have suppressed accidental fires every year since 1993 using 5-gallon buckets of water, wet burlap sacks, shovels and fire extinguishers — tools every campsite is supposed to have.

Chief Marty Nelson of Lane County Fire District #1, which shares responsibility for fires in the area with the Oregon Department of Forestry, says the fair has learned from its experiences with accidental fires. "They've got a very good fire crew," he says. "They're so self-sufficient it doesn't become a huge problem for us."

VILLAGE Grand Opening! Integrated Health Care Clinic

Holistic Realistic

offering:

- Acupuncture
- Addictive Treatment
- Chiropractic
- Counseling
- Health & Wellness Management
- Massage Therapy
- Nutritional Consultation
- Pain Management
- Wellness Coaching

Insurance Accepted Billing Options

GRAND OPENING SPECIAL: Free Health & Wellness Assessment – call to book yours today!

1755 Coburg Rd. Bldg. 4, Suite 2 | Eugene, OR 97401 | 541.684.3988 fax 541.686.2279 www.villagehealthservices.com

1030 Willamette St. Eugene, OR 97401

www.POTALA GATE .com

- Prayer Flags
- Tapestries
- Meditation
- Hand Made
- Singing Bowls
- Jewelry
- Music • Books
- Journal • Cards

Come see us @ our new location with lots of treasures from Tibet & Asia

CALL: 338-4611

Kidstuff

NEW Swimwear, Swimdiapers, Sunhats and Shades!

Mon.-Sat. 11-6 • Sun. 12-4 • 62 W. 13th Ave • 484-4488 • gokidstuff.com

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL BAKERS

Leslie's been a baker and decorator at Sweet Life for 4 years and loves her awesome co-workers. In honor of her birthday last year, they made her a carrot cake shaped like a skull and crossbones. Just like Leslie, it looked tough on the outside but was sweet and nutty inside. Her favorite sweet memory was several years ago when she was traveling in the Czech Republic. She found a tiny café and savored a delicious layered spice cake. Someday, she hopes to travel around the world and sample desserts far and wide. She's a fan of sweets all year long. In the summer she feasts on fresh berry compote over vanilla ice cream. In the winter she snuggles up with a spicy and dark hot chocolate. Last January, she gave birth to her favorite sweet of all, her baby boy, Eden.

Leslie

Sweet Life • 755 Monroe St. • 683-5676

www.sweetlifedesserts.com • Open Everyday till 11:00pm