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EAT, DRINK AND ROCK THE KINDTREE CAUSE

Oregon Gour-Made supports the autism community BY VANESSA SALVIA

For years, FOOD for Lane County's Chef's Night Out has ranked as Eugene's premiere charity foodie event. When it comes to benefiting the community, however, sometimes newcomers hit it out of the park. On June 9, the first annual Oregon Gour-Made event will step up to the plate.

Oregon Gour-Made is the fundraising brainchild of KindTree-Autism Rocks. Up to 50 vendors of Oregon-made specialty foods will set up booths in Lane County Fairground's Wheeler Pavilion, where they will offer sample sizes of their products. "It's going to be a fun night celebrating local Oregon producers of great foods as well as celebrating the autism community, which is what it's all about," says Tim Mueller, KindTree's secretary and treasurer.

No selling will take place, though each vendor will have a basket of their products for bidding in a silent auction. Proceeds will help fund for KindTree programs serving local children and adults on the autism spectrum, such as the artists-with-autism program, social skills groups and a yearly camp retreat.

Most of the vendors of cheese, meat and seafood, chocolate and candy, beer and more are from close to home, although a few will travel from the far corners of the state. "We have local start-up Brandon's Cookies," says Mueller of a homemade cookie company.



Betty & the Boy go Gour-Made

"He's so new he doesn't even have a website yet."

Food is just one thing to enjoy at Oregon Gour-Made, Mueller says. "And then there's folks who do wine, like King Estate. We have everything from brand new teeny start-ups to well-established local businesses."

Eugene's Betty and the Boy will provide acoustic folk music during the event. "She has a lilting, gentle voice," Mueller says. "Their music is contemporary and sweet." Framed art pieces from KindTree's art program will be available for purchase, along with notecards and T-shirts.

KindTree will present a "Thanks To You" award to Springfield Creamery. "They've been donating their products to our camp for 15 years," Mueller says. "We have always served organic and home-grown food at our retreats."

KindTree grew out of the "hippie community," explains Mueller, and this event is an opportunity to honor that as well as connect with other people around the state who have similar goals. "When we first started as an organization (in 1997) we were pretty connected with the alternative community," he says. "Our founder was a Deadhead. Many organizations grew out of that alternative community and we all share that we want to do something

different and be successful. This is a really nice way for these two communities to celebrate our local culture." ■

Oregon Gour-Made takes place 6-8:30 pm Thursday, June 9, at Wheeler Pavilion, Lane Events Center; pre-reg. at kindtree.org or 342-723; \$30 per person/\$50 per couple, \$35 per person day of event, 12 and under FREE.

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