

KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

2nd tree carving begins soon

By ERIC HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Carving of the second story pole in front of the Keizer Civic Center is set to commence next week and, this time around, a McNary High School graduate is returning home to show off his skills.

Chainsaw artist James Lukinich plans to start work on the second story pole Monday, July 27. On the first day, most of his work will be setting up scaffolding and debarking the tree, but carving is expected to begin in earnest on Tuesday, July 28.

The second pole is meant to complement the existing story pole on the site with depictions of Keizer's history as an agricultural area. Rocks, iris, strawberries, a hazelnut orchard, hops, blueberries, a farmer plowing soil, a beaver lodge and dam and a spiraling representation of the river are all potential elements. At the top will be a rendition of the Wallace House, the first white settlement in the area. Lukinich is free to interpret the slate of items however he wishes. Working by himself, he expects the whole project to



Submitted Chainsaw artist James Lukinich.

take 8-10 days.

"I definitely want to spend a lot of time on the details because it's going to be highly visible," he said.

Spectators are welcome to watch as Lukinich works but must maintain physical distancing and wear masks. Free masks are available inside the Keizer Civic Center, 930 Chemawa Road N.E.

Lukinich found out about the project when Kevin and

Tyler Strauslin of Oregon 3D Art and Chainsaw Sculpture had to pull out due to scheduling conflicts. The Strauslins carved the first pole last summer and are connected with Lukinich on the carving circuit.

"It's sort of cool how it all came back around," said Lukinich, a 1987 graduate of McNary.

Lukinich left Oregon for Alaska shortly after graduating and began working as an arborist. Almost immediately, he began carving in his spare time.

"There was never a shortage of chainsaws or trees," he said.

Lukinich and his wife turned it into his full-time job about five years ago.

The cost of the carving is \$10,000 and funding was raised by the Keizer Public Arts Commission. The Keizer Community Foundation donated \$5,000 to the effort, \$2,000 was provided by a grant from the Marion County Development Corporation and the final \$3,000 was provided by the Rotary Club of Keizer through sponsorship by Wayne Thackery and John Blake.

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continued from Page A1

Chicken Fingers in Portland. "We're excited to try and be kind of first-to-market, in our opinion, in the area," Toombs said.

Though it is a chicken restaurant, it is unlike Popeyes, KFC or Chic-fil-A.

"We specialize in jumbo chicken fingers, jumbo chicken wings and fries, along with burgers, wraps [and] salads. We're more of the chicken finger type place," Toombs said.

The Toombs live in Independence, but have been keeping an eye out for businesses locations in Keizer, which reminds them of their hometown. Their hometown, Hanford, Calif., has a population of about 55,000 comparative to Keizer's 40,000.

"We couldn't have been blessed with a better location and community than Keizer ... that prayer led to a location that we think is a really spot on for what we're looking to do," Toombs said.

What they're looking to do, beyond open a restaurant that sells chicken, is to create a community and family atmosphere.



KEIZERTIMES/Lauren Murphy Markey and Monica Toombs.

"I just really hope that [the community] can come to our restaurant and feel what Monica and I have always tried to do. We've always tried to be an open door home where people can come, relax and feel a part of a family," Toombs said. "We're really excited to be right next to our partners in Keizer Village because each business there brings that element."

Though they haven't opened for business yet, Toombs said the interactions they've already had with the community (lease negotiations, etc.) have been good. "They were very patient, versatile, very easy to work with through this process," he said of the landlords at the Keizer Village.

The opening is planned for August but is subject to rules of Marion County's reopening.

"We hope that the restaurant opening at this time will hopefully serve as an encouragement to people that things can happen and bloom in hardships like [the COVID-19 pandemic]," Toombs said.

In addition to being a glimmer of hope, opening during the pandemic offers certain advantages.

"It's funny. For most people, COVID is going to present some situations where kids will be limited in their actual onsite learning. Our kids are happy because they know if they're not at school they get to come [to the restaurant]," Toombs said.

Toombs said both of their children are excited to be a part of the new family business.

"All they knew was California before they moved here, so for this to be a situation where they're excited about what's coming up a year after they've gotten here, we're really excited for them," Toombs said. "We want to be a place that serves the whole community and lets them feel like they're at home."

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crossword

Boiling Point

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52	53				54			55				56	57	
58					59	60	61							62
63					64						65			
66					67						68			

CREATORS NEWS SERVICE

By Charles Preston

ACROSS

- 1 Find fault
- 5 Kind of renewal
- 10 Mall unit
- 14 Single
- 15 Girl from uncle?
- 16 Had on
- 17 Feeling stress
- 19 Suit to ___
- 20 ___ as a rail
- 21 Plum
- 23 Tithing fractions
- 26 Canapé treat
- 27 In the lead
- 29 River of France
- 31 Fabled bird
- 34 Urge
- 35 Throat ailment, for short
- 36 Ms. Hogg
- 37 After taxes
- 38 Position of stress
- 40 Parasite
- 41 Elected ones
- 42 Piles
- 43 NCOs
- 44 Negative vote
- 45 Plinth
- 46 Lock
- 48 1989 play about

DOWN

- Capote
- 50 Emulated Dürer
- 52 Church groups
- 55 Writer Fallaci
- 58 ___ Smile Be Your Umbrella
- 59 Kin of the Bantus
- 63 Once, once
- 64 Mrs. Peron, in a musical
- 65 Bacchanalian cry
- 66 Soviet ballerina Plisetskaya
- 67 Single-celled organism
- 68 Title for Peggy Ashcroft
- 1 Russian composer Cesar
- 2 Mrs. Leonowens
- 3 Stadium cries
- 4 Schemed
- 5 Relax
- 6 Laughing
- 7 Wager
- 8 King topper
- 9 Dull one
- 10 Hindu mystic
- 11 Arkansas resort
- 12 Classic cookie

- 13 Hammer head
- 18 Take ___ Train
- 22 Skillful
- 24 Nightclub
- 25 Fathers
- 27 Atlanta's Omni, e.g.
- 28 Just perfect!
- 30 Red or Dead
- 32 Forgets
- 33 Above-purr entertainment
- 34 Nabokov hero
- 35 Trite
- 38 Cousin of D-Day
- 39 "___ the ramparts . . ."
- 43 Doped
- 46 Filament
- 47 Check
- 49 Lasso
- 51 Terra ___
- 52 Skelton's Kadiddlehopper
- 53 Wife of Zeus
- 54 Noah's son
- 56 TV series
- 57 Power source
- 60 Ab ___: from the beginning
- 61 Stannum
- 62 Holy ___

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