

KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

Whim launches local fiddler into national limelight

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Martha Hughes had been teaching her basic fiddle class for two years at the Willamette Valley Retirement home before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Now, the former orchestra instructor and professional violinist will be teaching her class virtually, and for free.

Sponsored by the Oregon Old Time Fiddlers Association, Hughes is offering fiddling classes over Zoom on the second Saturday of every month for musicians of all age ranges and abilities.

"Starting any musical instrument is a great idea for the COVID-19 era. You don't

have to be an expert to enjoy the process," Hughes said. "It's good for people, sometimes they just need the extra nudge."

Hughes is also planning on hosting guest artists on occasion during the Zoom classes.

"I'm very fortunate that I can still volunteer and do nice things for this community," Hughes said.

Hughes admitted that COVID-19 has left her discouraged and said that she initially wasn't planning on teaching the fiddle class this year.

However, she had a change of heart last month, when, on a whim, she decided to enter the Tennessee State Old-Time Fiddle National Virtual Championships.

Hughes stumbled upon the

competition on Facebook, then made and submitted her tape two days before the contest was set to take place. She had planned to compete in a pair of local of fiddling contests before they were shut down by COVID-19, so Hughes was prepared for her recital, even on short notice.

To her surprise, Hughes ended up placing third in the competition.

"I was especially happy because I got that spot with no networking, strings pulled, they didn't know me from Adam so to speak. I count my blessings daily, but this was really nice, joyous news," Hughes said. "I just did it for fun and it was thrilling."

Hughes says that placing third in the contest was just the motivation she needed to start teaching fiddle lessons again.

While the classes are available to all ages and abilities, Hughes is really hoping the classes will attract "reluctant, hesitant, and shy," people who have a love for music and want

to try the art of fiddling.

"The whole premise of our lessons will be 'fiddling is fun'. People need music more than they know," Hughes said.

"I really felt like the art of fiddling is dying, especially in the younger generation. I believe that playing the fiddle can be more enjoyable for young players, rather than the classical violin, because when you play the violin, you have to be perfect. But with the fiddle, there is more room to have fun with it."

For those interested in participating in the virtual classes, email Hughes at mh.hughes8@gmail.com. Hughes is also willing to offer one-on-one instruction sessions to people as well.



Martha Hughes

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Use caution driving through smoke

Heavy smoke from fires up and down the West Coast is creating hazardous driving conditions in Oregon.

A number of roads are closed throughout the state and the situation is rapidly evolving. Go to Tripcheck.com or call 5-1-1 for real time road conditions.

The Oregon Department of Transportation offers the following advice if you must drive during smoky conditions:

- Slow down and stay alert. Slow driving gives you more time to respond to unexpected conditions.
- Turn on your headlights.

Even during daylight hours your headlights will help others on the road see you. Use low-beams as high-beams reflect off the moisture in the air and cause glare.

• Use fog lights. If you have them, fog lights can help cut through the smoke.

• Check your entire route before setting out. Conditions may be very different at your destination.

• Keep plenty of space between you and other vehicles. Visibility, of course, decreases in smoke so maintain a safe stopping distance between you and

the vehicle up front.

• If visibility becomes too dangerous to continue, pull off to the side of the road as soon as safely possible.

• Never stop in a travel lane. Look for a safe area completely off the road if possible and turn off all lights, including flashers, until it's safe to continue.

• Don't tailgate. Keep a steady, reliable pace. Remember that everyone else on the road is in the same fix you're in. They're counting on you to help show the way.

• Roll up the windows. Set your fan to recirculate.

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