

Fair: ‘Could be one of our busiest fairs we’ve had in a while. Hard to know’

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Behind the scenes, however, planning the event has been more complicated than past years because of the pandemic.

Up until a few weeks ago, Lewis said, organizers weren’t sure what restrictions they would be dealing with, and they were in contingency-planning mode. At one point, Lewis was even researching a type of security camera with sensors to read people’s temperatures from afar and send data to a computer. If a patron showed up with a high temperature, it would be easily detected, Lewis said, adding that was one of many solutions under consideration that, ultimately, wasn’t needed.

The pandemic also disrupted his usual schedule for planning fair entertainment. Normally, he starts that process in January, giving him plenty of time to book a full lineup for each day, from the moment the fair opens to the moment it closes.

This year, Lewis was hesitant to invest so early with uncertainty surrounding the event and what kind of turnout they should expect, compared to the roughly 6,000 to 7,000 people who attend on average.

“We had to wait, literally, until three or four weeks ago before we knew, ‘OK, this is actually going to be able to happen,’” he added. “It was definitely a little nerve-wracking.”

Even with the shortened time frame, Lewis managed to book two big names: country musician Josh Turner, who performs at 7 p.m. on Friday, and Steve Augeri, the former lead singer of the rock band Journey, with a concert at 7 p.m. on Saturday.

Throughout the rest of the week, Lewis focused on lining up local and regional groups to provide live entertainment for the busiest times — lunch, dinner, after the work day — to cut back on costs.

“I like to risk more on the side of caution,” he said.

On the other hand, Rainier Amusements, the contracting agency that provides carnival rides, has been doing the fair circuit all summer, starting in southern Idaho, and they’ve experienced a noticeable

increase in revenue from past years.

“It could be one of our busiest fairs we’ve had in a while,” Lewis said, adding it’s “hard to know.”

Another challenge, which is affecting an array of industries, is the lack of available labor. Typically, fair organizers contract with an outside security agency that brings more than a dozen people to oversee the gates and ticket booths.

They even had a contract with a company for this summer, but were told a few weeks ago the company could no longer make it, because they also lacked the staff. Instead, organizers relied on a pool of volunteers from a county database, as well as partnering with local nonprofit The Healing Circle.

“That’s how we’re manning our gates and our ticket booths this year,” Lewis said, adding he’d heard the day prior they had finally got all the shifts covered.

The Knappa School District also is sending students to help with maintenance and cleanup in exchange for a donation to sports programs.

Now that event staff, vendors and entertainment are lined up, Lewis doesn’t anticipate other disruptions to the fair.

“This year, I moved all the indoor vendors outside just to create more breathing space,” he said.

Additionally, over the past year, the staff focused on replacing on-site amenities — such as toilets, paper-towel holders, soap dispensers and sinks — with touchless models.

“We’re hoping that will improve things overall for the safety of everybody,” Lewis said.

However, with the number of people who attend the fair annually, along with the presence of livestock and food, he feels there is always the risk of “something coming through.” In 2019, an adult and two children were infected by cryptosporidium, a microscopic parasite.

Every year, they put up signs and hand-washing stations, and “go out of our way to make sure everybody is safe — even before COVID came along and added to the mix,” he said.

Prom: Parade will showcase businesses, organizations

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tourism, funded by local lodging taxes, Joshua Heineman, the director of tourism marketing for the visitors bureau, estimates the bulk of it went to promoting the anniversary.

“Everything was pointed at the centennial,” he said.

The primary component of the campaign is a 32-page booklet that can be picked up for free at the visitors bureau. The booklet, Heineman said, features scavenger hunts, stickers, entrances to sweepstakes and other ways for visitors to interact with the Prom.

He recalls seeing a group of visitors from a recent event at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center out on the Prom following guides and activities in the book. “It was good to see people taking advantage of it and having a smile on their face as they look through the book and remember all the times they came here with their families and things like that,” he said.



Seaside Museum & Historical Society
A crowd gathered at the Turnaround for the Miss Oregon pageant in 1950.

Evoking that sense of nostalgia, he said, is the biggest goal of the centennial. In a collaboration with the Seaside Museum & Historical Society, the Seaside Public Library has a collection of classic photos of the Prom over the years on display.

“That’s the history right there,” Mespelt said. “It’s one thing to look at period pieces, but those are true snapshots.”

A parade will showcase many of the businesses and organizations that have

helped promote Seaside, such as the Rotary Club, representatives from the Miss Oregon pageant and Portland’s Royal Rosarians.

Regional dignitaries, such as state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, will make speeches commemorating the Prom just as Gov. Ben Olcott did a century ago.

Later in the day, officials will bury a time capsule near the Turnaround to be opened in 2121.

City Councilor Steve

Wright, the president of the historical society, echoes the words of officials who commemorated the boardwalk and welcomed visitors a century before him. He hopes the Prom will forever remain a playground for the town and the Pacific Northwest as a whole.

“It’s free, once you’re here. It’s an attraction. You don’t have to pay an annual pass for it, or pay for a daily. It’s just there to enjoy,” he said.

K-9: Transition ‘going very well for him’

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“I was waiting to see what would happen with any legal changes,” Police Chief Mathew Workman said. “It just became time to make the decision.”

Workman said the determination to let Gabe go did not come easily.

“This was a hard decision,” the police chief said. “I consulted with the district attorney and with the way things are now, he just said, ‘You know, Matt, I don’t know that canines are a viable solution.’”

While Workman said the dog was effective at performing searches, he saw that his usefulness within the department was dwindling, as searches were happening few and far between.

“Unless we’re dealing with trafficking of huge quantities of narcotics, a narcotics canine wouldn’t have a whole lot of work to do for us,” he said.

A national debate around the purpose of police dogs was sparked last year after The Marshall Project, a nonprofit that examines criminal justice issues, released a report detailing the excessive violence the dogs can inflict on unarmed or nonviolent suspects.

But Workman said Gabe, who was solely a drug-detection dog, did not have issues

with temperament.

“He had a great disposition and we never had a problem with him,” he said.

Gabe’s addition to the police department in 2017 was a result of contributions from the community, including one from Lylla Gaebel, who donated in memory of her husband, former Warrenton police officer Jim Gaebel. Gabe was named after him.

Since Gabe tagged along with Wirt on nearly every shift over the last four years,

he said he will miss the companionship of having him by his side while on duty.

“He was my partner 24/7, whether on the job or off the job,” Wirt said.

Gabe lived with Wirt during his time on the force and will continue to do so in retirement.

“He has bonded with my family since then,” he said.

As for his transition to house pet, Wirt said, “It appears to be going very well for him.”



City of Warrenton
Warrenton Police Officer Robert Wirt offers a piece of retirement cake to his K-9, ‘Gabe.’

Trujillo: ‘Excited to be able to stay in the area’

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Working with young people at the Naselle Youth Camp, a medium-security facility in Washington state, as well as with animals at Hammond Kennels, gave her good training in management, problem-solving and resolving conflicts, she said.

“I have different experiences that I can apply in different ways,” Trujillo said.

Workman sees many qualities in Trujillo that make her a good fit for the department.

“Overall — her positive attitude — she has a very

optimistic personality,” the police chief said. “She has a lot of qualities that we look for — someone who wants to make a difference and help people, but has a good temperament to deal with people when they are at their very worst or experiencing their very worst.”

Knowing those kinds of difficult interactions are inevitable, Trujillo feels as though a police officer fills a unique role within a community, particularly a smaller one like Warrenton.

“Obviously, keeping the community safe, being

somebody the community can reach out to and trust,” she said. “Being somebody that knows the community and knows the people and can just be there to help them get through things and solve problems if they are having problems.”

While the everyday challenges police officers face lay ahead, Trujillo is happy to help protect the area that raised her.

“I was very excited to be able to stay in the area and continue to be a part of the community and look after it,” she said.

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• JOSH TURNER CONCERT 7PM GATES OPEN 6PM

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