

All's fair in Hermiston during kick-off parade

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian



The court of the Miss Connell pageant in Connell, Washington, swept into the fair parade on a Neverland-themed float. For more photos, visit eastoregonian.com.

Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

For a chance to see Neverland and Paul Bunyan up close, the city of Hermiston turned out in droves.

When the Umatilla County Fair Parade began Saturday evening, the sidewalks were packed as a bevy of floats representing local businesses, school groups and service clubs glided around Hermiston, tossing candy to eager kids.

Floats ranged from elaborate — a Peter Pan-themed float built on a street sweeper, from Connell, Washington — to traditional, with groups of people on horseback, pickup flatbeds, or on foot.

For many, the parade was about pride in their city and in their group.

"We're the 2017 business of the year," said Maria Garavito of Atkinson Staffing, referring to the Hermiston Distinguished Citizen's Award. "We feel proud of our workers, so this is for them."

The Tillamook float had people from all aspects of

their company on board, including employees' families.

"Everybody from the plant manager to people that do sanitation," Gonzalo Rodriguez, Tillamook's safety manager, said.

While many groups

handed out candy, some stayed on theme with their businesses.

Tillamook handed out individual cheese packets and wooden ice cream spoons. "We wanted to show some pride in the product," Rodriguez said.

Walchli Farms handed out watermelons, off the back of a vehicle carrying an enormous inflatable slice of their signature fruit.

Some people reversed roles — Manuel Velasco of Templo Abarim was handing out popsicles and water

to parade participants as the parade passed by the church, on Seventh Street.

Church members are usually in the parade, but this year they didn't have a vehicle.

"We still wanted to be a part of it," said Doria Velasco.

On the sidelines, some people watched for their favorite floats, while others wanted to be surprised.

"I'm looking for something new," said Saul Chairez, who was watching the parade with family on Highland, across from Hermiston High School.

Hermiston Mayor David Drotzmann rode in one of several trucks representing the city of Hermiston.

"I dialed in some better weather," Drotzmann said.

He said he was pleased with the variety of parade entries, and liked some of the new features this year, like the fair kickoff party on Main Street, and using the old fairgrounds as a gathering area for the floats.

State Rep. Greg Smith and his wife Sherri were this year's grand marshals.

They're Morrow County

residents, but the Smiths said they attend the parade and fair every year.

Smith said his favorite float, other than a huge Paul Bunyan and Babe from Ranch and Home, were the local Future Farmers of America floats.

"That's what the fair is all about, families, kids and community," he said.

Though the parade drew people from neighboring counties and Washington, one spectator changed time zones to be there.

"We traveled 2,852 miles," said Karen Flabetich. She and her daughter, Sarah, live in Maui. Flabetich grew up in Hermiston, and came back to visit her relatives.

"But we wanted to come so my daughter could see the fair," she said.

She recalled riding her bicycle in the fair parade with her neighbors when she was young, and winning an award for their costumes.

The parade kicks off the Umatilla County Fair, which starts Tuesday, August 7 at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center, at 1705 E. Airport Road.

When wildfire strikes home, preparation can help

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Homeowners who lose their homes to wildfire are often covered by insurance, but it helps to know how that insurance works before disaster hits.

The NW Insurance Council, a trade association of insurance companies in the Pacific Northwest, is recommending that people take a moment this fire season to review their insurance policy and discuss it with their insurance company or agent to make sure they have the right coverage for what they want to cover — particularly if they have recently added on to their home, remodeled or made other changes that could affect their policy.

The same applies to business owners, and even renters can be reimbursed for the loss of their belongings if they have renters

insurance.

LuAnne Davison, a State Farm insurance agent in Hermiston, said for stick-built homes, the typical policy is a replacement cost policy that would replace "like kind and quality" that had been previously disclosed to the insurance company. If someone adds a room onto their house and doesn't update their policy, they could find themselves under-covered if something happens.

After policy holders are clear on what their policy covers, NW Insurance Council suggests they create a complete "home inventory" documenting their possessions through receipts, photos, videos, contracts and other items stored somewhere that will be accessible after a fire. Adjusters can settle claims more quickly with that documentation.

Davison said people used to fill out inventory booklets listing everything in their home, but these days most people snap photos with their smartphones and store them in the cloud to help substantiate their claims. It also helps jog peoples' memories about exactly how many shoes, DVDs or plates they own.

"We tell people to open their cupboard doors, open their closets, open their dresser drawers and take pictures," she said. "A picture is worth \$1,000."

If the worst happens and your home does burn down or get damaged by fire, the sooner you start the claims process the sooner you can get the funds you need. The NW Insurance Council suggests contacting an insurance representative as soon as possible to provide an initial description of the damage and a phone number

where you can be reached. Having insurance policy documents on hand is helpful but not required to start a claim.

Most insurance agencies will offer immediate cash to help cover basic living expenses in the aftermath.

When it is safe to do so, take pictures or videos of the damaged property.

"Don't discard anything that is damaged until it has been examined by your adjuster," the tips suggest. "You could miss out on coverage for that item."

The NW Insurance Council warns against pay-

ing a significant amount for temporary repairs without first being authorized by the insurance adjuster, because the insurance company might deem the bill "excessive" and not reimburse it.

Davison noted, however, that people do have a responsibility to mitigate damage. If there is a hole in their roof, for example, they're expected to get that covered as soon as possible to prevent rain from coming in and further damaging the home.

Contractors and subcontractors are extremely busy in the Hermiston area and

rates are getting higher, but Davison said if the insurance company's claims representative and the contractor have different estimates of the cost for repairs, the company will review the reason for the discrepancy.

The best thing people can do is prevent their home from burning down in the first place, she said. People should follow recommendations from fire departments that include things like safe storage of flammable items, clearing brush and tree branches from around homes and properly screening chimneys.

Heat brings record-level temps

East Oregonian

The heat wave rolling in this week could carry record-breaking temperatures.

The National Weather Service is forecasting Pendleton to reach 100 on Tuesday, 105 on Wednesday and 106 on Thursday. The federal service predicts Hermiston's highs over the same days as 104, 110 and 111.

The National Weather Service reported Hermiston in 1972 set record highs of 106 on Aug. 7, 108 on Aug. 8 and 107 on Aug. 9. Hermiston temperatures are taken at the Hermiston airport, next door to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, the home of the Umatilla County Fair.

Pendleton's record for Aug. 7 is 109 at the city's airport on Airport Hill, sev-

eral hundred feet higher than the elevation of downtown. The record for Aug. 8 is 111, also from 1972, while the record high for Aug. 9 of 106 came in 1971.

All that pales in comparison to Aug. 10, 1898, when downtown Pendleton topped

119, although weather service staff caution that might not be accurate.

The oven lets off beginning Friday, according to the National Weather Service, and high temps slide into the mid to upper 80s for the weekend.

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