

Heppner prepares to roll out the green carpet

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — The Wee Bit o' Ireland celebration returns after a two-year hiatus for bookend weekends, March 11-13 and 18-19, including a full day of food, fun and family-friendly activities on Saturday, March 12.

"We have several benefit breakfasts, an Irish dinner, four food vendors and all our restaurants will be open. Everyone loves to eat," said JoAnna Lamb, Heppner Chamber of Commerce's executive director. "We have lots of music, and the Great Green Parade is on and growing."

The Welly Toss is among the unique activities during the event. After a trip to Ireland more than a decade ago, Heppner residents John and Ann Murray suggested adding the traditional Irish game to the festivities in Heppner.

The concept is simple toss a Wellington boot three times and total the distance of the throws that land in-bounds. The event features both individual and team contests for both children and adults.

In addition to the Welly Toss, which starts Saturday,



The March'n Mommas compete in the bed race on March 18, 2017, at Heppner's Wee Bit o' Ireland celebration. The 2022 festival kicks off Friday through Sunday, March 11-13, with multiple contests, entertainment and family activities on March 12.

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March 12, at 10 a.m., people can watch or participate in a variety of contests and fundraising activities. Events

include Ewe-Do Bingo, the O'Ducky Race, the Heppner St. Patrick's Day Remembrance Walk and 5K Run,

the St. Pat's Polar Plunge, the Leprechaun Run and bed races.

You won't want to miss a

chance for plenty o' laughs during the O'Planky Team Relay Race. The contest pits teams of four against others

as they attempt to synchronize themselves walking down the street on a 10-foot plank with leather stirrups. Also, the Cruz-In Car Show returns for its 20th year. And the Great Green Parade gets rolling at 1 p.m.

Also, the Heppner Elks Lodge turns into Irish Central with the Irish Coffee Hour beginning at 10 a.m. Host Tom Melton will trade barbs and blarney with special guests. It includes an Irish Brogue Contest with cash prizes. The afternoon Ceili features Whiskey for Breakfast from 2-4 p.m. and a traditional Irish buffet is in the evening.

"We aren't actually having whiskey for breakfast but we don't judge," Lamb said. "They are a musical group out of Pendleton."

Free evening entertainment includes a local talent show (6 p.m., Gilliam & Bisbee Building), the Blue Mountain Old-Time Fiddlers (6:30 p.m., Morrow County Fairgrounds) and the Gothard Sisters (7:30-9:30 p.m., Gilliam & Bisbee).

For a full schedule of events for both weekends, visit www.heppnerchamber.com. If you have questions, call 541-676-5536 or email heppnerchamber@gmail.com.



St. William Catholic Church/Contributed Photos

Prior to the pandemic shutdowns, "The Little Way of Saint Therese" was performed March 8, 2020, at St. William Catholic Church, Ione. The final play written by the late Father Gerry Condon will be staged Friday, March 11, 2022, starting at 7 p.m. at the Gilliam & Bisbee Building, Heppner.

Priest's last play takes to the stage in Heppner

By TAMMY MALGESINI
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HEPPNER — Coinciding with the Wee Bit o' Ireland celebration, a play written by the late Father Gerry Condon will be performed in Heppner.

"The Little Way of Saint Therese" will be staged Friday, March 11, 7 p.m. at the Gilliam & Bisbee Building, 106 E. May St., Heppner.

The St. Patrick Catholic Church Altar Society will provide desserts. Admission is free, however, donations are gladly accepted.

"Everyone is really excited about the play," JoAnna Lamb said. "People were disappointed it had to be canceled, especially knowing it was Father Condon's last one."

A number of years ago, Condon, who died March 7, 2020, at the age of 92, began

writing dramas. His goal was to provide historical information about the church and saints.

Staging the plays became an annual tradition during the week leading up to the town's annual St. Patrick's celebration. Lamb, the Heppner Chamber of Commerce executive director, said the play was performed in Ione in 2020, just a day after the beloved priest's death. However,

pandemic restrictions prevented its curtain call in Heppner.

The play is based on the life of Therese Martin, who was born in 1873. The youngest of nine children, Martin desired to follow in the footsteps of several of her sisters to enter the convent. Finally allowed at the age of 15, the young nun only lived to age 24, dying of tuberculosis. Her autobiography, "The Story of a Soul," was

published soon after her death.

Condon, who was born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, came to the United States at the age of 28. Answering a call with the Diocese of Baker, he served several years in Lakeview before a short stint in Heppner when he first arrived. Condon pastored many churches in Eastern Oregon before returning to south Morrow County

permanently in 1990.

Retiring in 2013, Condon served 57 years in the priesthood, including his last 22 years at Heppner and Ione. Always quick with a quip and a caring attitude, Condon was recognized as Man of the Year during the 2008 Heppner Chamber of Commerce's Town & Country Awards Banquet.

For more information about the performance, call the chamber at 541-676-5536.

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