

COMMUNITY BRIEFING



East Oregonian, File

Umatilla County sheriff's deputy Darrin Parsons spits a watermelon seed to victory on Aug. 21, 2021, during Melon Fest in downtown Hermiston. The event returns Saturday, Aug. 20, 2022, on Hermiston's Festival Street.

Melon Fest brings slice of fun to Hermiston

HERMISTON — Watermelons take center stage during an all-day festival in Hermiston.

Melon Fest returns Saturday, Aug. 20, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on downtown Hermiston's Festival Street. Presented by the Hermiston Downtown District, Hermiston Parks and Recreation and the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, there is no admission charge to attend.

The outdoor event features activities for the kids, vendor booths, a costume contest, bathtub races, a seed-spitting contest and of course, free slices of Hermiston watermelon. Live entertainment brings Jonna Kopta to the stage at 9 a.m., and Dallin Puzey will start playing at 11 a.m.

Open to all ages, the costume contest starts at 10 a.m. Prizes will be awarded to the top three places.

Prepare to get wet during the Melon Fest Bathtub Races, which start at noon. Teams of three members — two pushing and one "driving" — will navigate between street cones down a 100-foot course. Competing head-to-head with another team, winners will advance to the next round.

While the tubs are provided, racers are encouraged to get creative with team uniforms and slogans. Open to participants 18 and older, the entry fee is \$5. Register at the Hermiston Parks and Recreation website under "Special Events" or via bit.ly/BathTubRace2022.

In addition to bragging rights, prizes valued at up to \$300 will be awarded between winners of the costume contest and bathtub races.

For more information, search www.facebook.com/Hermistondowntown or call 541-667-5018.

Wheatstock cranks up music on Aug. 20

HELIX — Three bands based out of Austin, Texas, are filling half the lineup of the 2022 Wheatstock Music Festival.

In its 14th year, the event is Saturday, Aug. 20, 3-10 p.m. at Quantum 9 Arena, Helix.

The Lone Star State acts include Josh Abbott Band and Micky and the Motorcars, both from the red dirt music scene, and Giovannie & The Hired Guns, who incorporate everything from Southern rock and stoner metal to la musica nortena and Latin hip-hop.

Filling out the rest of the lineup is the Oklahoma-based group Ragland — offering up Okie Americana with a twist of edgy, alt-country — and bands hailing from the area include Imperial Twang and The Froghollow Band. DeWayne Dunlap, festival president, said they continue to honor Wheatstock's roots of showcasing regional musicians.

The nonprofit festival was founded with the purpose of raising money for the Helix School District. It also donates proceeds to Cross the Divide, a wilderness retreat for combat veterans in the Willowa Mountains.

General admission tickets are \$59 and VIP packages are \$149, which



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Members of the Oregon East Symphony's Preludes Orchestra perform Jan. 27, 2022, at the Vert Auditorium in Pendleton. The symphony recently announced it received a Wildhorse Foundation grant to help support Playing for Keeps, its youth music education program.

includes one admission ticket, a limited backstage pass, a meet-and-greet with the Josh Abbott Band and a signed event poster. For tickets or more information, visit www.wheatstock.org.

Tickets still available for Round-Up concert

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon kick-off concert is just around the corner.

Organizers announced earlier this year that Nashville recording artist Kip Moore is the concert headliner. The singer-songwriter will share some of his chart-topping tunes on the Saturday leading up to Round-Up week. The concert is Sept. 10, 7 p.m. at Happy Canyon Arena, 1601 Westgate. The gates open at 6 p.m.

A troubadour in the truest sense, Moore released his most recent studio album, "Wild World," after traveling the globe to places like Maui, Costa Rica, Australia and Scotland. The self-described lone wolf found peace as he wrote a collection of songs.

And in mid-June, it was announced that singer-songwriter Ned LeDoux is the opening act. Carrying on his father's musical legacy — Chris LeDoux, a cowboy crooner and rodeo champion, died in 2005 — he's bringing a new voice to the LeDoux name.

Known for his high-energy shows, LeDoux mixes his western roots with the rock 'n' roll influences of his youth. In addition to headlining his own shows, LeDoux has opened for Garth Brooks, Toby Keith and Aaron Watson.

Tickets range from \$51-\$90. Also, VIP packages are available for \$156, which includes dinner before the concert and beverages during the show.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.pendletonroundup.com. For questions, call 541-276-2553.

Symphony's youth project receives Wildhorse grant

PENDLETON — The Oregon East Symphony recently received a \$10,000 grant award from the Wildhorse Found-

ation to support the symphony's Playing for Keeps project.

A comprehensive classical music education program, Playing for Keeps targets rural youths located in Umatilla County and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The grant will be used to support activities, classes, rehearsals and performances of area youth musicians in fourth through 12th grades.

Designed for different ages and skill levels, the project features beginner- and intermediate-level youth orchestras — Preludes and Oregon East Symphony Youth Orchestra — and Symphony Strings, an afterschool beginning strings program produced in collaboration with the Pendleton School District. It also includes the Youth Chamber Collective, a youth chamber ensemble; Raising the Bar, a mentoring program for advanced students who perform as members of the Oregon East Symphony; Nixyaawii Strings, an art elective for students at Nixyaawii Community School; Summer Strings, a weeklong music day camp; plus private lesson financial assistance and an instrument lending library.

The bi-annual Young Peoples' Concert, which has been on hiatus since 2020, will return this fall. An educational concert for area fourth and fifth grade students, it will feature music from "Star Wars" and Gustav Holst's "The Planets."

For more information about the Oregon East Symphony's upcoming concert season, Playing for Keeps and the Young Peoples' Concert, email info@oregoneastsymphony.org or call 541-276-0320.

The Wildhorse Foundation is a community benefit fund established by the CTUIR. The board considers quarterly grant applications in the areas of public health and safety, education, the arts, historic preservation, gambling addiction services, salmon restoration, environmental protection and cultural activities.

The next application deadline is Oct. 1. For more information, visit www.thewildhorsefoundation.com.

— EO Media Group

Rose Murphey looks back on an 'amazing' life

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Rose Murphey of Pendleton is in her seventh decade, and said her drive for life has led her to have an interesting one so far.

Murphey said she was born on a poor farm and lived as a child in a Hermiston migrant labor camp, working in the fields. At 12, she picked strawberries in Parkdale, hoed mint and cut seed potatoes.

"I could see the mighty Columbia River," she said. "(Then I worked) nights in a hot potato chip factory and (canned) asparagus at Rogers in Walla Walla. I was always hungry for a better life than the one I grew up in, always dreaming of the white picket fence and a nice little white house. No living in a trailer with a few kids hanging (on) my knees, was never going to be my life plan."

Murphey, 71, moved to Pendleton as an emancipated minor at 15. She got a job as a dishwasher for B&K Donut shop.

"Bob called me 'Mighty Mouse' because I only weighed about 90 pounds, but I was a hard worker," she said. "Later I worked at the Rivoli Theater and the Ranch Cafe. At age 21, not wanting to be trapped into waitress work, I joined the Women Marines. I wanted to go to college, but on my own with no family support, it would never happen."

In boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, Murphey said she had an allergic reaction to some vaccine shots. She was medically discharged from the Marine Corps after 18 months.

"I presented with big welts all over my body," she said. "I had orders to go to Okinawa to serve my first KP duty. But after spending weeks in the Balboa Naval Hospital, because the fever blisters and welts kept recurring, I was discharged instead."

Murphey said she still suffered health issues after discharge at 23.

"I continued to have outbreaks and blisters on my skin coming from inside me," she said. "Usually stress or getting a cold or flu, herpes around my mouth, which later led to fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, Epstein-Barr system, sleeplessness and so much more."

Despite these medical conditions, Murphey activated her life plan.

"I was smart, motivated

and a real hard worker," she said. "To prepare me to return to civilian life, my IQ, which was 125 that day, I was told I had more in common with a judge or politician. I said, like that is ever going to happen. See, I can't spell and have dyslexia and my last math class was in the seventh grade."

The GI Bill and federal vocational rehabilitation funds enabled Murphey to graduate from Blue Mountain Community College in 1975 and Eastern Oregon State College in 1977.

Murphey said she became a licensed clinical social worker, was a vocational and educational counselor in Pendleton and at 30 had her only daughter.

"Because in life I had more than my share of '15 minutes of fame', then I was gifted with the most amazing, musically gifted daughter, Jaclyn Penner Sites," she said. "She goes by Jacie. My brother, cowboy Dave Murphey, and his then wife Bobbie Beers, along with a couple in California, started the WSRRA."

Jacie is a championship fiddler, living in Idaho. The Western States Ranch Rodeo Association allows everyday, working cowboys and cowgirls to compete in sanctioned ranch rodeo events.

Murphey said she looks back on her life with satisfaction.

"I did not waste or throw away my life," she said. "I do not drink, do drugs or gamble. I was born a child of God, and try to live my life the way Jesus and my mom ... and her mom taught me. Kindness, compassion, empathy, caring about my fellow man and women, helping my neighbors, giving back and now paying it forward. Every human and animal on Earth is important to me, no matter how insignificant others find them. My personal life is a mystery to most, because that is the way I want it to be. Gossip and bad talk hurt people. If I have nothing good to say about a person, I just do not say anything at all."

Murphey's husband, Art Merriman Jr., died in 2018.

"I have had just the most wonderful and amazing life," she concluded. "I am not running for any elected office, maybe town clerk or most loved and respected woman in town. I'm amazed at all the people I've been able to help and all the rock solid work I've done. I've gone from the poor farm to a federally certified attorney."

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