

Parents and children gather with Faith Trails organization

By Leslie Mitts
Spilyay Tymoo

Families have the chance to get a little closer, both with their relatives and their religion, through family activities with Faith Trails. Faith Trails, a local organization, conducts a weekly family session at 1 p.m. on Sundays.

Chris Buller, the director of Faith Trails, said families can come to the event and learn how to ride horses, or just participate in any of their family-oriented activities.

They've had riders ranging in age from infants to teenagers, Buller said, and often the adults ride as well.

In Buller's opinion, "Either you love it or you don't, and it's no big deal. It's just a place to get together."

The events are set to continue through the winter as well, Buller said.

"The colder it is, the bigger the bonfire," he added. People often bring food to share and food to cook on the fire, but Buller said that isn't required.

According to Buller, the most important aspect of the weekly gathering is the opportunity for families to spend time together. Families are also given the chance to participate in an activity that doesn't cost anything and is within driving distance of the reservation.

"Most of the kids are just so excited," Buller said. "I love it when they yell 'Hey Daddy, look at me!'"

For the parents, he added, it's especially important to be recognized for spending time with their families.

"We try to make a point of telling them this is great—taking time out on a Sunday afternoon," he explained.

It's also a chance for children



Young people gather for horse riding with Faith Trails.

Submitted photo

to learn something about their parents.

According to Buller, "A lot of the moms and dads grew up riding and the kids never knew."

Father and son teams are often recruited to help break horses too, Buller said. Later on those horses are sold to help support the organization, and Buller said the process is a great way for fathers to bond with their sons.

"Traditionally my understanding is that's a place where a lot of things were passed on," Buller said. "A lot of teaching happened—not about horses but about life."

Family activities are especially important, Buller said, because many parents don't get the chance to spend a lot of time with their children.

For instance, he explained, parents drive their children to and from activities, and support

them in athletics, but the chance to bond is often lost.

"You watch them but you don't really interact with them," Buller said.

He added, "We're trying to offer a place where you can do this together."

While the organization ultimately aims to help people through religion, he said, the adoption of religious beliefs isn't necessarily a focus or requirement of the organization.

According to Buller, "More it's just an attitude of this is a place where we care about each other, and we treat each other well and we learn about each other kids."

Buller also conducts a study hall after school on Tuesdays. Students are picked up at school and taken to the fairgrounds, where they are given something to eat and spend two hours working on schoolwork.

you can get to know. You just need to have a place to meet them."

In the long run, Buller explained, he hopes that the experience of participating in these events will help people develop a relationship with God.

Buller emphasized that nothing is required of parents who bring their children to the Faith Trails activities.

He explained, "If you can spend an hour with your kids and be kind to other kids, or maybe help out younger parents who are going through things that you've already gone through—that's it, that's all. You don't have to feel like you're going to get ambushed."

Buller said another focus of the program is to build a network of parents who are able to help each other out and watch out for each other's children.

Buller also delivers a ten-minute message on a radio show on KWSO.

"For some people it's a safe place to kind of hear me before they engage," he said.

The show features Buller's message and an hour of Christian music on Sunday at 9 a.m., Tuesday at 10 p.m. and Wednesday at 4 a.m.

For more information about any of the Faith Trails activities, Buller can be reached at 475-3315 or cb@faithtrails.org.

Hope to replace stolen tack

Theft interrupted Christmas Eve plans for the Faith Trails organization.

Chris Buller, director of Faith Trails, said they had planned a Christmas Eve celebration with horseback riding and a Christmas celebration.

But on Dec. 23 Buller found that their tack room in Madras had been emptied of saddles, bridles, lead ropes and halters.

"I called each of the families that have been coming and told them that we wouldn't be able to ride, not because of the weather, but because of the theft," Buller said.

Those involved with Faith Trails are asking community members to help replace or recover the missing tack.

Buller expressed concern that thieves targeted those involved with the non-profit organization.

"These families live in one of the toughest places to parent, and they are standing and delivering," he said.

Buller emphasized that the organization has never had a problem with theft in the Warm Springs Community.

"I have had saddles and horses in trailers all over the reservation and have never had a problem," he said.

In Buller's opinion, "The community on the reservation has been great."

Anyone who wishes to donate tack or has information regarding the theft can reach Buller at (541) 460-0177.

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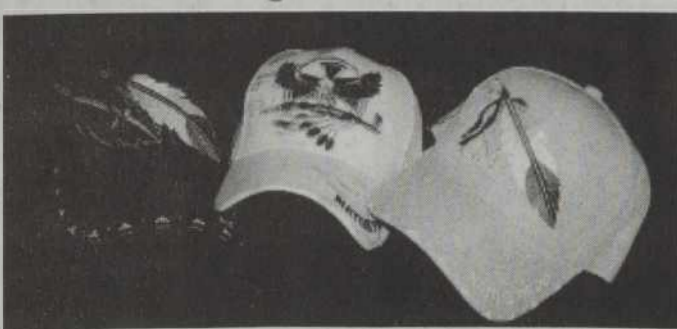


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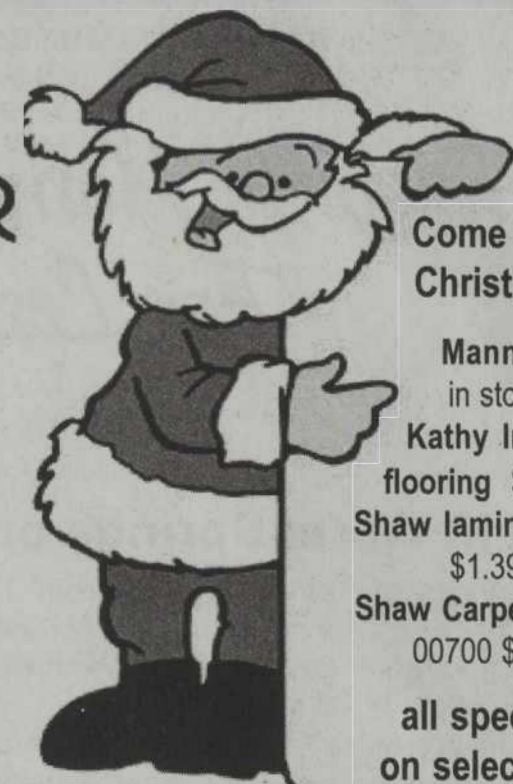
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