

Casino float wins award at parade

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

PORTLAND — Spirit Mountain Casino's Grand Floral Parade float, "Sweet Prayers for a Big World," received the President's Award for most effective overall floral presentation on Saturday, June 7.

The float's subtitle was "For memories yet to come."

Former Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. again designed the Grand Floral Parade float this year. He has created the last six floats for Spirit Mountain Casino and the Grand Ronde Tribe.

Bobb and wife, Connie, had close-up seats in the VIP section as the parade went by. Spirit Mountain Casino's float was the first float out of the chute as Tribal Royalty marched behind it.

For the float's only character this year, Bobb created a model of Nikia Mooney, 17, kneeling in prayer position up front. It had a bear at the back, and scattered around were a raccoon, rabbit and a red bird sitting on Nikia's shoulder.

A drum stood up decorated with yellow, red, black and white, the colors of the Native American medicine wheel. Nine elements, depicted as triangles, decorated the bottom of the drum and represented the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.

"I hope our entry reflects Native Americans' concern not only for our planet, but all of mankind," Bobb said.

The Rose Festival theme this year was "Making Memories."

"It's great to have a part in this, and to represent the Tribe," Bobb said. "The float is what we stand for. It shows the blessings we get to share every day, and every day we give thanks to our creator."

Kathleen George, director of Spirit Mountain Community Fund, presented Oregon Health and Science University's Knight Cancer Challenge with a check for \$100,000. The grant will go toward ending cancer in our day.

Nike co-founder and philanthropist Phil Knight, and his wife, Penny, promised to match gifts up



Photos by Michelle Alaimo



Spirit Mountain Casino's float "Sweet Prayers for a Big World" rolls down North Weidler Street in Portland during the Spirit Mountain Casino Grand Floral Parade on Saturday, June 7. The float received the President's Award for most effective overall floral presentation.

Junior Miss Grand Ronde Iyana Holmes hands out cedar roses to the crowd during the Spirit Mountain Casino Grand Floral Parade in Portland on Saturday, June 7. Other Royalty girls also handed out the cedar roses.

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to \$500 million, aiming at a total gift of \$1 billion.

"This is a number that is very possible," said George, "and we hope that our gift will spark interest in supporting the program. We're thrilled to carry on our tradition of giving. We celebrate tradition. Our tradition is sharing gifts."

Dr. Brian Druker, director of OHSU's Knight Cancer Institute, stood by to receive the oversized model of the check.

George urged the crowd still inside Memorial Coliseum to contrib-

ute what they could, small amounts or large. "No gift is too small to help," she said.

This was the first year of the second three-year contract that Spirit Mountain Casino has signed to be title sponsor of the Rose Festival's Grand Floral Parade.

Tribal Council and casino management see title sponsorship as an opportunity to tell the Tribe's story and welcome people from all walks of life to the Tribe's ceded lands, Bobb said.

Casino staff and Tribal people prepare for the Grand Floral Parade year-round, said casino Sponsorship Administrator Jocelyn Huffman, who leads the annual effort.

Hard working but little heralded each year, Huffman coordinates all Tribal involvement in the parade, including the liaison work with Rose Festival staff, Princess Court visit, Tribal Cultural Center tour, the Starlight Parade where Grand Ronde Royalty ride in cars, and everything else from advertising to the check presentation.

Royalty at the parade were Little Miss Grand Ronde Kaleigha Simi,

Junior Miss Grand Ronde Iyana Holmes, Veterans Senior Queen Savannah Ingram and Veterans Junior Queen Amelia Mooney.

This year was the second for Holmes, who said she liked Royalty's part in the parade and working behind the scenes with other Royalty, doing the little things that make the Tribe and casino look good.

Royalty passed out 300 cedar roses to parade watchers. They were made again this year by Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel.

Among those from Tribal and casino communities enjoying the show from the VIP area were Elders and sisters Violet Folden and Gladys Hobbs, loyal supporters of the parade and many other Tribal events who helped build the float again this year.

Those in the VIP section are always the first to see the parade go by.

Also in the crowd were many Tribal families and employees of both the Tribe and casino.

The float was "perfect," said Bobb.

As was the day. ■



Nikia Mooney applies corn meal to the Spirit Mountain Casino float "Sweet Prayers for a Big World" while decorating the float at SCi 3.2 in Portland on Wednesday, June 4. Mooney was the model for the float.