

# Float wins Queen's Award

By Brent Merrill

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

PORTLAND — The Spirit Mountain Casino Grand Floral Parade on Saturday, June 11, was a case of “excessive celebration” in the streets of Portland.

“It’s the perfect day for a parade,” said Rose Festival President Frank Chinn during breakfast with his family in the VIP Chalet near the beginning of the parade route.

“Excessive Celebration” was the theme of the 2016 parade, which is the highlight of the annual five-week event in Oregon’s largest city.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the Grand Ronde Tribe’s first float entry in the Grand Floral Parade. The 45 foot-long float featured three coyotes made out of grasses and a sign up front that announced the casino’s newest marketing campaign, “Have Some Real Fun.”

The Tribe’s float, which paid tribute to the first float entered by the Tribe 20 years ago and featured massive amounts of red, blue and yellow flowers, won the Queen’s Award for best non-animated float for the second year in a row. The float was designed with a mother coyote watching her two cubs as they play in front of her.

The Royal Rosarians Foundation float won the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Award this year for best depiction of community spirit. The Rosarians’ float honored Heather Anderson as Oregon’s Teacher of the Year and Melyssa Ferro as Idaho’s Teacher of the Year.

Just before the floats entered the parade route, members of the Rose Festival Court gathered in Veterans Memorial Coliseum for the coronation of a new queen for 2016.

Princess Grace Ramstad of Centennial High School, who along with the other members of the Rose Festival Court visited Grand Ronde the week before, was named 2016 Rose Festival Queen. She will attend Georgetown University in September.

The Tribe’s float was the first of 15 to enter the parade route following the Portland Police Bureau, the Portland Mounted Police Patrol, the official parade car, the Happy



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

**Spirit Mountain Casino’s float “Have Some Real Fun” rolls down Northeast Weidler Street during the 2016 Spirit Mountain Casino Grand Floral Parade in Portland on Saturday, June 11. The float won the Queen’s Award, which is awarded to the most outstanding non-animated float in the parade.**



**From left, Junior Miss Grand Ronde Isabelle Grout, Veterans Special Event Board Princess Iyana Holmes and Little Miss Grand Ronde Kaleigha Simi wave to the crowd as they walk through the Veterans Memorial Coliseum during the 2016 Spirit Mountain Casino Grand Floral Parade in Portland on Saturday, June 11.**

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Canyon Trail Horse, the Boy Scouts of America, the Clown Prince and the Star Valley High School Marching Band from Wyoming.

The float was preceded by Junior Miss Grand Ronde Isabelle Grout, Veterans Special Event Board Princess Iyana Holmes and Little Miss Grand Ronde Kaleigha Simi, who waved to the crowd along the first part of the parade route.

“I was inspired by that float,” said Erwin J. De Luna, president of the Fiesta San Antonio Commission of San Antonio, Texas. “I think there is a lot of symbolism in that float.

I think there is a lot that shows about nature and how we honor those spirit people.”

De Luna, who is Taos Pueblo and Navajo, was enjoying the Spirit Mountain Casino Grand Floral Parade as part of a sister city relationship. De Luna said he was visiting Portland as part of an exchange between Rose Festival organizers and Fiesta San Antonio officials.

“When you look at it you can feel the spirit within it,” said De Luna of the Spirit Mountain Casino float. “When you combine it with the nature that is all around it – you guys did a great job, you really did. I would think there would be a lot of pride. To have that float coming through to show those people who we are as American Indian people and who we are across the country kind of unifies us.”

Grand Ronde Tribal Elders and Spirit Mountain Casino employees spent the days leading up to the parade in a Portland warehouse creating the float.

“I’m very, very excited,” said Spirit Mountain Casino Marketing Director Shawna Ridgebear. “We’ve been working on the float all week and we are just super excited to see it now that all the finishing touches have been done on it.”

Ridgebear, who is a member of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone and a member of the Edge Water Clan of the Dine Nation and Mescalero Apache Tribe of New Mexico, was experiencing the

parade for the first time. She said it was “really cool” to see Spirit Mountain Casino’s name everywhere at the event.

“It really strengthens our commitment to the community,” said Ridgebear of the casino’s title sponsorship, now in its sixth year. “I’m so amazed by the sense of community and the pride that Oregonians have – it’s like nothing I’ve ever experienced before; being part of this just takes it to another level.”

Ridgebear said watching the float come to life and the commitment to excellence made by everyone involved with this year’s entry made her a little emotional.

“To have Spirit Mountain out in such a positive way like this is overwhelming almost at times,” said Ridgebear. “Watching the community members that came out to help with the float – the Elders from Grand Ronde and the employees from the casino – it brought me to tears just seeing the commitment that everybody has to make us really look good. It just really cements our place in the community and our commitment to the event. It’s such an amazing opportunity.”

During the parade, casino Sponsorship Administrator Jocelyn Huffman, Ridgebear and Tribal Council member Jon A. George announced that Spirit Mountain Casino would return as the title sponsor of the Grand Floral Parade for another three years. ■



**Tribal Elder Victor Cureton, left, and Veronica Gaston work on the Spirit Mountain Casino sign for the casino’s float “Have Some Real Fun” at the Funtastic Traveling Shows office in Portland on Wednesday, June 8. The float was in the Spirit Mountain Casino Grand Floral Parade in Portland on Saturday, June 11.**