

Pageant helps students show their pride



Lion Pride contestants visit the local NICU unit at RiverBend. The trip helps to remind the students why their raising money. Below, this year's Lion Pride group.

By Caitlyn May
cmay@cgsentinel.com

On Tuesday, April 17, high school students took over for the staff of El Tapito trying their best to earn tips for a worthy cause--and a bit of pride.

The students are part of the Lion Pride Pageant and have been working for months to raise funds for the local Children's Miracle Network, the benefactor of the pageant.

"It's something that we do

with other schools in Lane County and it's actually nationwide," said Carmen Adler, the coordinator for this year's pageant.

The event, formerly the Lion King pageant, has changed in the last two years, allowing female students to embark on the long journey towards the crown.

"It's a process," Adler said. Students have to apply, undergo and interview process, have a 2.5 GPA and get teacher recommendations before they can

spend months doing extracurricular activities and raising money.

At the start, students visit the local NICU and pediatric unit at RiverBend.

"It's an impactful experience for them and grounds them in the why of why we're doing this," Adler said. "This year we had a mother in the NICU just cry and thank the kids because she was from Cottage Grove. It's helping local families."

To help as many families as

they can, students head a letter-writing campaign relaying their experiences at RiverBend to potential donors in the community. Each week, students are asked to write an average of 10 letters.

It's part of the contest: Who can raise the most money.

Contestants aren't judged solely on how much money they raise, however. According to Adler, the judging is much more complex.

Not only are students judged on how they behave during the months leading up to the night of crowning--from showing up on time to taking part in practices--but also how they do on the night of the pageant.

"So, the pageant is broken into sections," Adler said. Those sections include a non-traditional sports competition like bubble gum blowing or pillow fighting, a question and answer section and a skit portion. "They also come out and read a letter to their parents which is very emotional," Adler said.

In the end, the student with the highest number of points wins.

"They get bragging rights," Adler said. "The real winner is the Children's Miracle Network."

The Lion Pride Pageant will be held on April 28 at 7 p.m. at the high school with a prize for the first 100 people through the door. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door.

Earth Day in the park set for Saturday



Dana Merryday helps three-year-old River cross a makeshift swinging bridge during last year's Earth Day celebration.

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cgsentinel.com

Cottage Grove is excited to celebrate Earth Day.

On Saturday, Coiner Park will be the site of an Earth Day Celebration. Beginning at 10 a.m. and ending at 4 p.m., the park will feature food, vendors and music to celebrate the planet. Community organizations will have booths around the park, there will be youth activities, a local birding opportunity, a Native American blessing and a "Trashion" show.

This year, the event will also feature three different tours that people can go on to learn more about the community.

The first tour, that begins at 10:30 a.m., is a tour of the Cottage Grove drinking water treatment plant. Individuals will get the chance to see both the water quality laboratory facilities and the computer control system while learning about how water is treated and distributed.

The second tour, that starts at noon, is an examination of the wastewater treatment plant. Visitors will learn how wastewater can re-enter the water cycle with as little environmental impact as possible. Those on this tour will also have the chance to examine the microorganisms that help aid this process under a microscope.

The third and final tour of the day is a look at Singing Creek Farm. Individuals will get to see how the area that was once Kizer Creek Farm grows greens and vegetables that go to local restaurants. Attendees will also learn about biodynamic agriculture.

For each event, free transportation will be provided from Coiner Park by South Lane Wheels. The bus will return after each tour. To sign-up, individuals can go to the information booth at Coiner Park on Saturday morning.

The free event is sponsored by the City of Cottage Grove, Coast Fork Willamette, Presbyterian Church and Parent Partnership.

Additionally, over the weekend the Opal Center for Arts and Education will be putting on their 2018 Trashion show. The event, which is \$15, features over 10 designers and over 20 models walking the runway wearing "fancy trash outfits".

There are four different times for the hour and a half event over the weekend. The event times are Friday at 7 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. and a Sunday show at 2 p.m.

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Sunday

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at tables and served rather than having to stand in line. Jean also serves appetizers and provides a sack lunch for the next day.

"I just feed people," Jean said previously. "Some are homeless, some aren't. But they sit very well together. Food is the great

equalizer and it brings people together."

Burke said she plans to continue incorporating Jean's policies and hopes to expand the program's focus on nutrition. Currently, Soup's On operates on donations from local food pantries, churches and good Samaritans as well as community gardens like the plot at Kennedy High School.

"Sourcing even more of our food from local farms, that's my goal," Burke said.

During Monday's council meeting, Jean teared up

thanking the council who, in turn, thanked her.

"It was one of those how are you going to continue to sustain this?" Meyers said of his initial meeting with Jean about Soup's On seven years ago. "If anyone could she could and so she did. She'll be missed, she's been an energy and a force for good in the community. She'll take something and run with it and is able to bring people together."

Jean is expected to leave Cottage Grove in July for the sunny island of Hawaii where she'll continue caregiving.

"I'm going to miss my people. I'm getting teary-eyed just saying it," she said. "I'm going to miss the people and this community. It's very special."

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