

Festival proves to be a hit

First ‘Folklife’ event receives good reviews, will expand

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

RIKCREALL — The first Polk County Folklife Festival was all sunshine and smiles on Saturday.

Folklife celebrated the Willamette Valley’s varying cultures with music, food and art. It was such a success that organizers are already planning for 2016.

“I think tally through the gate was about 650 attendees,” said festival program director Kurt Dugan. “That was about what we were hoping for, so we were really happy with the attendance.”

Dugan said including vendors, musicians and festival staff, there were about 1,000 people roaming the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center, all of them seeming to be having a good time.

Dugan said vendor surveys reveal excitement for next year already.

“Every one of them is coming back,” Dugan said. “We had a few people run out of product.”

Artisan Doug Marcoe, co-owner of The Rustic Garden, which makes “rusty” lawn art, said the festival was very well organized for a first-year event.

“Everybody is happy,” said Marcoe, who is from Redmond. “That is a good sign. There’s a lot of things going on and people are engaged. That is a good thing.”

Spanning three buildings at the fairgrounds, the entire festival was awash in music, with three stages and a “jam” area where anybody



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Latin band Romance had the audience up and dancing during its set Saturday on the Folklife Festival main stage at the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

“Dharma,” left, and “Aleiah” of the Corvallis Belly Dance Performance Guild dance on the Performing Arts Stage Saturday afternoon. Each dancer has a stage name.

could join in.

Jo Hockenhull, who plays in a Cajun band that performed Saturday, took the opportunity to buy a new triangle to play on stage from blacksmith Gary Lewis.

After making a few adjustments on the spot, Lewis handed her the instrument. She took a few seconds to try it out, stomping her foot in rhythm with the high-pitched clanging.

Hockenhull nodded her head in approval — sold.

It was that kind of day at the Polk County Folklife Festival.

So encouraging was the response that Dugan said next year’s festival will be expanded to two days. However, due to a quirk in the calendar — March 2015 includes parts of five weekends — the same weekend in March 2016 won’t be available. Instead, the festival will take place in October next year and, if all goes well, every year thereafter.

Dugan said he had to turn down performers for this year’s festival, so the 2016 edition of Folklife should feature an even more diverse slate of artists.

“I want to thank the community for supporting us,” Dugan said. “There was a great sense of community at this event. Everybody was having fun.”

Bill would give cities local power over pot

Dallas possibly seeking opt-out options

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — A bill seeking to amend parts of Measure 91, the initiative that legalized the production and sale of recreational marijuana in Oregon, would allow local governments to prohibit or tax sales within their boundaries.

Senate Bill 542, sponsored by Sen. Jackie Winters on behalf of the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), addresses the main concerns of leaders in the city of Dallas.

“We are working with the legislature to give the cities the right to opt out of having sales and production within our borders,” Dallas Mayor Brian Dalton said at a recent Dallas City Council meeting.

Dallas and Falls City have banned recreational and medical sales of marijuana through keeping provisions in their city codes requiring business to abide by federal law, under which marijuana use of any kind still is illegal.

Monmouth and Independence both allow medical marijuana dispensaries.

All four cities, part of about 70 statewide, have passed ordinances that would tax marijuana sales, both medical and recreational, in spite of such a prohibition in Measure 91.

Scott Winkels, a lobbyist with the LOC, said SB 542 was in response to concerns cities had about the affect legal marijuana will have on local governments.

“The cities and counties in Oregon are going to feel the brunt of the effect of recreational marijuana much more than the state will,” Winkels said. “We are going to need local flexibility and funding.”

If approved, SB 542 would allow cities further flexibility in regulating sales — up to a ban

or “opt out” — and generating tax income to help pay for enforcement of the new law.

Measure 91 allows sales to be banned in local jurisdictions, but only by a vote in the next general election, which would be November 2016 at the earliest. The LOC’s concern is that marijuana sales license applications will be accepted beginning in January 2016.

“The core issue for the League (of Oregon Cities) is local control, and SB 542 makes that clear,” Winkels said.

Dalton said — though he doesn’t speak on behalf of the council — based on past discussions, the council likely would exercise “local control” if the bill were approved.

“I think the council would strongly consider an opt out,” Dalton said.

A public hearing on SB 542 was held March 4 before the legislature’s Joint Committee on Implementing Measure 91.

LOC also is seeking additional amendments of Measure 91 requiring:

- Employees of marijuana dispensaries to pass criminal background checks.
- Cities have the right to express concerns or objections regarding sales licenses.
- Amendments to how the tax revenue is distributed to cities — now based on the number of marijuana outlets in a jurisdiction rather than on population.
- Implementation of safety regulations for the manufacture of marijuana tinctures with flammable or explosive materials.
- Amendments to land use regulations to ensure dispensaries operate only in area the cities deem appropriate, for example, avoiding areas where children congregate.

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