

LA GRANDE SOROPTIMIST FESTIVAL OF TREES

# Festival of Trees

ONLINE AUCTION OFFERS

HOLIDAY SHOPPING & A PERSONAL DECORATOR

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande's annual Festival of Trees began in 1987, the same year 800,000 people gathered at the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco to celebrate the span's 50th anniversary.

Such a gathering would be impossible today during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so would a traditional Festival of Trees event, which in the past has regularly attracted close to 1,000 people.

Yet fans of the annual celebration can relax. Soroptimist International of La Grande is moving its fundraiser online for 2020.

There will not be in-person viewing of decorated trees, a gala or live auction, but people will be able to purchase Christmas baskets and other holiday items to raise money for the charitable organization, which supports women and girls of the community.

The online auction will run from Dec. 6 at 1 p.m. to Dec. 12 at 5 p.m.

"We had to think outside the box due to COVID-19. It is important that we are sensitive to the restrictions and health of our community," Soroptimist member Shayla Rollins said in a press release.

The Festival of Trees has raised more than \$600,000 for community projects during its history, according to Di Lyn Larsen-Hill, also with the group. A high percentage of the funds have come from the auction of decorated Christmas trees at the annual holiday festival.

White decorated trees will not be sold at this year's online auction, the services of a tree decorator will be. The tree decorator, a Soroptimist International member, will bring lights and ornaments to the home of the winning bidder and decorate their Christmas tree.

Soroptimist International of La Grande is modeling its online auction after a successful one the Soroptimist chapter in Hamilton,

Montana, conducted previously this year, Larsen-Hill said. The La Grande chapter contracted with Auctria, an online auction company, to create the upcoming virtual event.

"This platform will be very interactive for our bidders," Rollins said. "As soon as you place your bid it pops up, and when someone outbids you, you immediately receive an email and a text message so you can place a new bid anytime during that week."

Bidders must register for the online auction by going to [Charityauction.bid/FestivalofTrees2020](http://Charityauction.bid/FestivalofTrees2020) or [www.auctria.com/auction/FestivalofTrees2020](http://www.auctria.com/auction/FestivalofTrees2020).

Net profits will go toward the La Grande Soroptimist EOU Scholarship and Live Your Dream Awards for 2021. Past Soroptimist scholarship winners will be featured in imbedded videos throughout the online auction.

For more information call Rollins at 541-910-5511 or Larsen-Hill at 541-963-5341 or send an email to [FestivalofTrees2020@gmail.com](mailto:FestivalofTrees2020@gmail.com).



Chris Baxter/  
The Observer, File

Soroptimist member Marilyn Fallow, right, and Linda Whittemore examine one of the decorated Christmas trees up for bid during the 2007 Festival of Trees' gala and live auction.

Dick Mason/  
The Observer

People check out the decorated Christmas trees up for auction at the 2019 Festival of Trees. Due to the pandemic, this year's fundraising event will be virtual.



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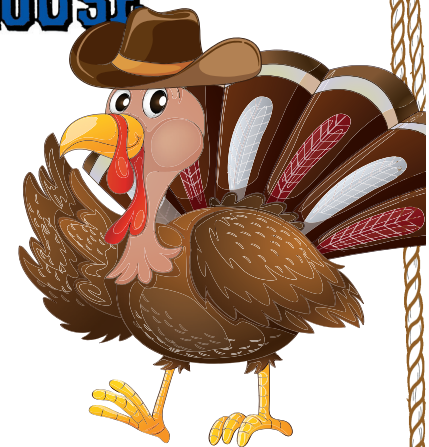
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