

Fiber festival draws enthusiasts to Eastern Oregon

By Jeff Peterson

Go! Magazine

PRAIRIE CITY — Meet old friends and make new ones at the family-friendly fourth annual Prairie City FiberFest.

A love of fiber is expected to draw about 500 enthusiasts from throughout the Northwest during the last weekend of July to the picturesque Eastern Oregon town. Spinners, dyers, felters, crocheters and knitters of all ages and experience are expected to converge to share their passion for fiber.

It's a chance to see projects go from raw fiber to finished product, and to shop for handcrafted items and fiber art-making supplies. Fiber vendors are open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, July 30, and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, July 31.

"This festival is Ginger Shive's crazy idea to draw people to Grant County to stimulate the economy, after seeing how the 2017 solar eclipse did just that," said Trish Lindamann, FiberFest board president. "Being a spinner and weaver, and aware of other fiber festivals in Western Oregon, she thought Prairie City would be a beautiful setting to host our own festival, the only one in Eastern Oregon."

The small size of FiberFest is a plus,



Eloise Boren/Contributed photo

Prairie City FiberFest offers a variety of workshops, such as lacework, knitting, felted bags, pine needle basketry, weaving and spinning. Sign up at www.prairiecityfiberfest.com/workshops.

Lindamann said.

"Our festival, unlike festivals in metropolitan areas, is small, intimate, making it easy to get around and meet people," Lindamann said. "There's a lot of small town friendliness to enjoy, plus spouses/partners who travel with their fiber enthusiast can go hiking, fishing, visit local museums and much more."

WORKSHOPS

Workshops are offered July 29-31. The 23 workshops are about double the number offered in previous years and are led by fiber artists from near and far. Workshop topics include beginning lacework and knitting, felted bags, gourd art, ice-dyed T-shirts, pine needle basketry,

weaving and spinning.

Workshops charge a fee determined by the instructor. Early signup is encouraged to guarantee a spot, but most classes can accept same-day registrations if not already full. For a workshop schedule visit www.prairiecityfiberfest.com.

An unrelated small street fair will take place from 3-7 p.m. Friday, July 29, featuring craft makers and vendors. FiberFest vendors who provide their own table can set up for free. If interested, call Zach Denney at 541-589-5565.

DEMOS, LIVE MUSIC AND A SPINNING CIRCLE

Throughout the weekend, those attending can browse for free at indoor and outdoor booths set up by more than 30 regional vendors in the park, Community Center and Teen Center. Expect to find fiber goods and accessories, supplies and equipment, and kits to start projects.

Most vendors will demonstrate their craft. Visitors will see among other things carding and sorting wool and a World War II sock knitting machine.

"The wide variety of vendors bring products not available in this area," Lindamann said. "Quality fleeces, commercial and handspun yarn, woven and knitted garments can all be found at the festival."

The Sage Rats, a hammered dulcimer and guitar duo from Burns, will play July 30-31.

A spinning circle will be a focal point.

"This is a shady place to sit with your spinning wheel, knitting needles, needlework or crochet hook and chat while working on your project," Lindamann said. "It's a good place for beginners to introduce themselves to various types of spinning wheels as the owners love to talk about their wheels. It's informal, and people come and go throughout the event."

Out-of-town visitors have a variety of lodging options to choose from. Camping is available at Depot RV Park. For reservations, call Prairie City City Hall at 541-820-3607 or 541-350-1851 and be sure to say it's for FiberFest. Air B&Bs and hotels are available in Prairie City and John Day.

Volunteers come from throughout Oregon to help out with FiberFest, and its board members are a diverse group from throughout Oregon and as far away as Georgia.

Proceeds from the event benefit Grant County 4-H and FFA youth.

"Last year we gave Grant County FFA \$1,800 to attend the national FFA conference in Indiana," Lindamann said, "and we distributed \$750 to the 4-H groups who helped with the event."

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