A modified version of Canyon City's '62 Days planned Saturday

By Steven Mitchell Blue Mountain Eagle

A smaller, modified version of the 99th annual '62 Days Celebration that organizers say will fit within Gov. Kate Brown's guidelines is scheduled June 13 from 10 a.m. to

Colby Farrell of the Whiskey Gulch Gang, which organizes the '62 Days Celebration, said there would be kids' events in the park, displays and "stationary floats" throughout Canyon City.

Farrell said areas where people congregate will need to be limited to under 25 people. He said they would issue color-coded wrist bands and

rotate people in and out of those areas every half hour.

Farrell said Emergency Operations Center staffer Nathan Gordanier told him he spent 40 to 50 hours researching the regulations and had the plan approved by the EOC's core medical group, Canyon City officials and the state.

"(Gordanier) did all of the legwork on submitting the plan, but then he ran it by everybody, and they said it sounded good," Farrell said. Farrell said the state wanted

a little more detail regarding social distancing between the stationary floats.

"Other than that, the plan was good to go," Farrell said.

Farrell said people in

the community seem to be excited, and the group's Facebook page received positive comments.

"I think people around here are just ready to kind of get back to some sort of normalcy," Farrell said.

He said it is important to the Whiskey Gulch Gang, active and past members, to keep the tradition alive this "I mean, 100 years is a long

time to walk away from something and not be able to keep it going for just one year," Farrell said. The fate of the demoli-

tion derby, Farrell said, "is not

Under the governor's cur-

fairgrounds and organizers would lose money. He said next week the

group would reassess the scheduled date of July 18 and possibly look at dates in August and see what phase the county is in at that point.

rent guidelines, the grand-

stands at the fairgrounds can

only hold 68 people, and the

"It's not like we're going to walk away from it anytime soon," he said. "We're just going to keep holding out hope that at some point we can

Farrell said those interested in putting together a "stationary float" for the '62 Days Celebration could call 541-620-0874.



The Whiskey Gulch Gang fires off shots during the '62 Days Celebration in 2018. The century-old event is slated to go on in modified form June 13 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A team of seniors delivered a swing set for a 7-year-old boy with cancer

By Steven Mitchell Blue Mountain Eagle

A team of up to 15 seniors delivered and assembled a swing set to a 7-year-old Mt. Vernon boy who has won his battle with cancer so far.

The Wyatt Strong Senior Project team is the brainchild of professional photographer Tanni Wenger.

When taking Humbolt Elementary School pictures last fall, Wenger noticed Wyatt Simmons had to have his photos taken separately while going through chemotherapy because he was at such a high risk. Wenger said she made the senior

team open to anyone who came to her studio to take their senior portraits. She said one of the prerequisites to joining the group was to take part in a community project.

"I just wanted these kids to give back to the community," Wenger said. "This little community does so much for them."

Wenger said she wanted to do something new for the seniors this year, and she saw a need when she heard about Simmons.

After throwing some other ideas out for the seniors, she said she let them decide on the project, and ultimately they decided on Simmons.

"All the kids just kind of fell in love with him," she said.

Rylee Browning said she loved that, despite everything he has been through, he is always happy and

"I just loved his little smile," Browning said.

Tiler Voigt, a senior on the team, from working with his father, Mike Westland.

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Contributed photo/Tanni Wenger Photography

Wyatt Simmons celebrates after receiving his swing set May 16 in his backyard in Mt. Vernon. Simmons said the slide is his favorite part of the set.

happy," Voigt said.

For her senior project, Averie Wenger oversaw the project and was instrumental in organizing the auction last year.

"He is a super sweet and happy little boy," Averie said. "And he has the cutest little voice.'

Wenger said they decided a swing set would be something that both Wyatt and his two brothers Noah, 9, and Blanton, 2, could each benefit from.

The team raised the money through a can collection and coin buckets at Grant County businesses such as Sinclair gas stations. It opened an account through Bank of Eastern Oregon — the name of the account was Wyatt Strong Senior Project. They also sold T-shirts and said she previously knew Wyatt hoodies with sizes for children and adults.

Wenger said the students were "He's always super sweet and responsible for the change buckets

and were expected to make regular deposits at BEO.

Wyatt's mother, Areah Anderson, said the outpouring of support from the community had kept her and her family going since the 7-year-old was airlifted from Burns to Portland after she took him in to see the family doctor for what she thought was appendicitis, but later turned out to be a Wilms tumor. This rare kidney cancer is said to be highly treatable.

"We just barely moved here, and it has meant a lot to all of us," Anderson said. "The boys love their swing set, and everything that they've done is amazing.'

Anderson said the family moved to Grant County from Burns nearly two years ago.

Anderson said the community support transcends finances. She said the hospital and the hospice center have been very supportive.

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"The nurses at the hospice center are like his own personal nurse," Anderson said.

She said it had been a very long journey, and they are still on it.

Wyatt said his favorite hobby is

"His whole passion in life is to fish," Anderson said.

She said Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife plans to put on an event for him at Prairie Pond but had to postpone due to the social distancing regulations.

The Make-A-Wish Foundation planned to send the family on a fishing trip to Alaska in July but had put the trip on hold due to COVID-19

Anderson said, while Wyatt is not terminal, the Make-A-Wish foundation always does something for kids with cancer to bring them

Wenger said the project recognized seniors affiliated through a scholarship program. Both Maddy Way and Voigt each won a \$250 scholarship that all of the seniors were eligible for participating in the

Wenger said the committee that awards the scholarships is made up of people who are not from the area and do not know any of the kids.

She said they fill out an application and send it to the committee members in Arkansas.

Meanwhile, Anderson said she is grateful to everyone involved in the project, and the community has helped her and her family

"I wouldn't have been able to get through this without a lot of people," she said. "And Tanni has helped immensely."

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The mushroom whisperer

By Steven Mitchell Blue Mountain Eagle

As social-distancing rules put the kibosh on many Grant County pastimes, recreational morel mushroom hunting is not one of them.

With social get-togethers on hold to control the spread of the new coronavirus, hunting for the elusive fungi has been a welcome activity.

A Mt. Vernon couple has spent their early days of spring doing what they do every year: hunting for the best, biggest, tastiest mushrooms.

Keith Nichols said that mushroom hunting is an old tradition for him and his wife. Nichols said, in addition to eat-

ing the morels, he and his wife, both retired, enjoy being out in the Nichols said he enjoys eating

the fungi the best, though. "They're better than a ribeye

steak," Nichols said. "Once you start eating them, you can't stop." Nichols, who has been picking

morels in the area for upwards of 30 years, said he had found several giant mushrooms. He said, a couple of years ago,

he came across one that was nearly 13 inches in length. Typically, Nichols said, morels

are 4 to 8 inches tall. Nichols said morels are typ-

ically found from March to late May, at best. Nichols said his wife breads the

morels with egg, flour and garlic and tosses them on the skillet.

"Oh, man, when they come off of that skillet, they look like chicken fried steak," he said.

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Nichols said, if there is something out in the forest that is edible, he'll eat it.

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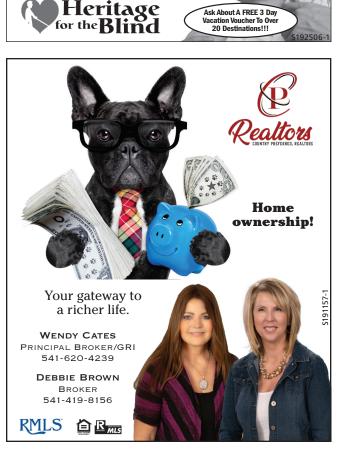




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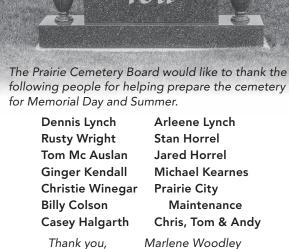
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