

Parade kicks off Sandcastle weekend festivities

By Andrew R. Tonry
Cannon Beach Gazette

Signaling the start of Sandcastle Weekend, the Friday, June 19, parade boasted clowns, mermaids, Boy Scouts and more. Gearing hundreds of spectators, children and adults alike lined the curbs and sidewalks of Hemlock Street, reveling in the rare spectacle.

"Nobody really knew that we were doing it last year," Sandcastle Contest Chairwoman Debbie Nelson said. "This year there were so many people lined up waiting for us. So that

was very fun." Nelson resurrected the parade in 2014.

Participants came from Cannon Beach and beyond, including Seaside's Boy Scout Troop 642, the Oregon Mermaids, the Haystack Rock Awareness Program and more.

Wearing loud face paint, colorful, ill-fitting attire and devilish grins, the Astoria Clowns were a fan favorite. Atop minibikes and piloting a wildly painted wagon, complete with sirens and a pipe-organist in tow, the storied group swerved through the streets and into the crowd, sharing hugs and high-fives along the way.

"The clowns, they're crazy!" Dana Jones, who brought her two children from Seaside for the parade, said. Jones too enjoyed the oddity. "It's kind of fun to see a bunch of old men riding around on bicycles," she said.

"We do a number of different parades," clown Chuck Westerlund (aka "Swiggy") said. "Some are huge. This is rather small, but it's good for the town."

Regardless of size, Westerlund added, the joy of clowning is simple: "Just seeing the smiles on the young chil-

dren, saying 'Mr. Clown! Mr. Clown! Can I have a hug?' Stuff like that is cool."

Floats from local businesses were on hand as well, including Coaster Construction, pulling a replica sandcastle, and the Chocolate Cafe, whose marchers passed out samples from a tiny yellow van.

The procession also made room for nonprofit groups like the campaign for a new charter school, the Cannon Beach Farmers Market, whose sign reminded attendees to "make half your plate fruits and vegetables," and the Coaster The-

atre, promoting their production of "Little Shop of Horrors" with bright set-pieces.

The parade's long tail was comprised of local servicemen and women, including fire trucks, medical vehicles and Gunner the police dog. Their inclusion was fitting, as the event was organized in large part by Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn.

In its second year back, the parade seemed to have grown.

"Last year it took us 20 minutes to go through," Nelson said. "This year it took about a half-hour. So a few more peo-

ple got on the bandwagon and said 'Hey, I want to be involved too!'"

"There used to be only the sandcastle build on Saturday morning," Nelson added. "We've now created a three-day, six-event weekend. This kicks off the entire weekend."

After the parade, visitors were encouraged to attend a dinner at the Chamber of Commerce. "It's very much a success," Nelson said of the parade. "I just love seeing the smiles on everyone's faces as you go through town."

Dip in attendance at contest made for 'a more tranquil event'

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"The last couple of years we haven't done well," Hawley said. "We brought some organization back to our group and worked a lot of things out, and now we're cutting sand like we used to. We've been champions before, and to come back and be champions again feels great."

The team, Hawley said would split the winnings. "We're going to drink beer," he chuckled. "We've got IPAs with our name on them!" Hawley's good spirits extended to competitors, spectators and even the event organizers.

'No lost kids'

"Everything went really smooth, actually," Sandcastle Contest Chairwoman Debbie Nelson said.

"Turnout was less than last year," she added. "Last year was our 50th anniversa-



ANDREW R. TONRY — FOR EO MEDIA GROUP

Wabi Sabi's sandcastle project took first-place in the Masters contest.

ry and we expected a massive crowd. We're guesstimating about 10,000 in attendance this year. Last year it was close to 30,000."

Rather than disappointment, the dip in attendance made for a more tranquil event.

Of particular relief to Nelson and her logistical team was that, for the first time in years, no young children were separated from their parents.

"I think that's a record!" Nelson said. "No lost kids this year! So that was great. That's why it's so calm, there's no sense of panic."

Indeed, when held up against the 50th anniversary's overwhelming crush of spectators, the 2015 contest was relatively serene, both on the beach and throughout the town. And while the crowds may have been thinner, they were still stacked rows deep

around the seven Masters division plots.

Masters teams

Inside the ropes, competition was as fierce as ever. "We had eight Master teams last year, and seven this year," Nelson said. "I think eight might be the most we've ever had. It's been great to have all of that enthusiasm again, because a lot of people really come to see the Masters."

One of those teams, the Jessop family from Independence offered an added buzz as they were being followed by television cameras from Oregon Public Broadcasting, filming for an upcoming episode of Oregon Field Guide on the Sandcastle Contest. This year the three-generation Jessop team fielded three generations, including four siblings, wives and cousins. They've been competing for the last seven years, and five in the Masters Division. "It's been interesting," Raymond

Jessop said of being trailed by the cameras. "They came up and followed us on a practice in April for one day."

At first, it didn't go well. "Everything fell down that day," Jessop said. "And then they came up and interviewed us yesterday, and they've been poking cameras in our face all day. But it's been a fun experience."

The Jessops suffered a bit of bad luck at the contest when two bridges between sandcastles collapsed only five minutes before the final bell sounded. "I'm a little

disappointed about the arches falling," Jessop said. "But that's just the way it goes. We did one practice sculpture on Tuesday that was maybe two or three inches wider than the one that fell, and it held for about nine hours." Still, the Jessops, whose sculpture depicted the board-game LIFE, quickly cleaned up the fallen bridges and managed a third-place finish, behind the Form Finders. While the official acknowledgment and the \$400 check were no short shrift, the family's participation was about more than just awards.

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CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

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CANNON BEACH GAZETTE
The Cannon Beach Gazette is published every other week by EO Media Group.

1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside, Oregon 97138
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