

Our Community

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All-stars advance to San Jose

Community donations needed to pay for team's travel to regional tourney

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

The Hermiston Junior Little League all-stars are teaming up with the community to continue their winning ways.

Earlier this month, the baseball team, which plays in the 13-14 age division, won the Oregon District 3 Tournament in John Day. Then, the team took the championship trophy at the Oregon State Little League Tournament July 15-18 in Bend.

In addition to the state title, the win makes the team eligible for the West Regional Tournament, which is July 31 to Aug. 7 in San Jose. The expenses for the trip are anticipated to be fairly high, said Kelly Schwirse, wife of manager Jeff Schwirse.

The team, Schwirse said last week, was looking to raise \$20,000. The goal is to raise enough money to pay for transportation, lodging and meals for the entire team, she said.

Due to the short time-frame, Schwirse said coordinating fundraising events has been difficult. However, individuals and businesses have stepped up to the plate.

"The community has been amazing," she said. "People are just very generous. We live in a really special place."

The once-in-a-lifetime experience features televised games on ESPN3, as they play other teams from across the Western United States. Their first game is Tuesday, Aug. 1, at 2 p.m. The winner of the tournament in San Jose will go on to the Junior World Series.

Jeff Schwirse has been involved at the coaching level with the all-stars for 14 seasons. While he's

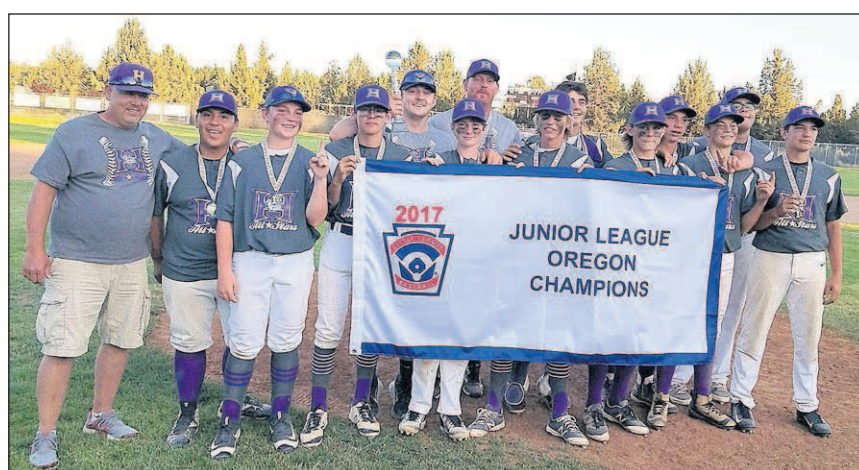


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY KELLY SCHWIRSE

The Hermiston Junior Little League baseball team proudly displays the banner for winning the Oregon State Little League Tournament July 15-18 in Bend. The team is raising money for the West Regional Tournament, which is July 31 to Aug. 7 in San Jose.

taken three other teams to the state tournament, Kelly Schwirse said this is the first time a team has brought home the big trophy. The coaching staff also includes Ladd Edmiston and Tyler Schwirse.

A core group of six players — Sam Schwirse, Rustin Edmiston, Carter Tolan, Spencer Juul, Gavin Hunter, Ethin Randolph — have taken the field together since 2013 when they were 10 years old and placed fourth in the state tournament. They won the state title the following year as 11 year olds, Schwirse said. The rest of the 2017 team includes Angel Barron, Chase Harshfield, Trevor Wagner, Darius Jones and Alexis Rosales.

"The kids are just pumped," Schwirse said. "This has been an end goal or dream for them."

After this season, the team members are done with Little League, she said, as they move up to playing high school ball. A trip to the larger tournament, Schwirse said, is what the group has been swinging for since they first picked up their gloves several years ago.

Donations are tax deductible. People are asked to make

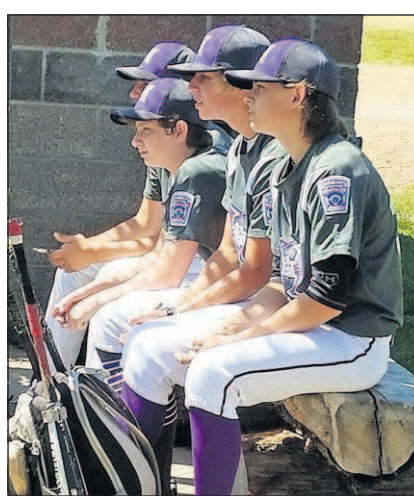


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY KELLY SCHWIRSE

Members of the Hermiston Junior Little League baseball team watches from the bench during the Oregon State Little League Tournament July 15-18 in Bend.

checks payable to Hermiston Little League. They can be dropped off at the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, 415 S. Highway 395, made online via www.youcaring.com/hermistonlittleleaguejunior-sallstarteam-882369 or sent to Hermiston Little League, P.O. Box 1034, Hermiston, OR 97838.

Watermelon Festival offers slice of fun in the sun

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

Watermelons and more are featured during the 33rd annual Irrigon Watermelon Festival.

The event kicks off Saturday from 6:30-10 a.m. with a breakfast hosted by the Irrigon Moose Lodge at Irrigon Marina Park. There's a downtown parade at 10 a.m. — which will wind its way back to the marina park where the family-friendly event runs all day and into the night.

"We're trying to get the community involved," said Charlene Cooley. "It's a fun way to build a sense of community."

While there is no admission fee for the event, people should bring a hearty appetite and some extra change. Food and craft vendors will be available throughout the day. And, slices of watermelon are 50 cents each.

Festival-goers will have several ways to beat the heat. A water slide and dunk tank will provide opportunities to get wet. In addition, people can take boat rides with the Morrow County Sheriff's Office.

In addition, Cooley said a LifeFlight medical helicopter will land at 12:30 p.m. People can take tours and learn more about their services. Also, local firefighters and paramedics will be on hand and using the landing as a live drill to improve their skills.

"It will be neat for people to see our first responders in action," Cooley said.

There are several chances to win cash and prizes.

The 50/50 raffle has been combined with the event's commemorative button. People who buy an Irrigon Watermelon Festival button for \$2 will have a chance to win half the pot. Also, raffle tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5. Raffle items include gift certificates from area businesses, Tri-City Dust Devil tickets, a sightseeing cruise for two from the Portland Spirit, tickets to Silverwood Theme Park and more.

Stage entertainment features regional talents, including the Irrigon High School cheerleaders & Gems Cheer, Lindzoolie Singers, the Missy G Band, the Coyote Dancers, Aly the Traveling Marimba Busker and Brass Fire. In addition, there will be a community lip sync contest (1 p.m.) and a city leader seed spitting contest (3:45 p.m.). The city of Irrigon has thrown down the gauntlet — challenging the mayors from eight surrounding communities for bragging rights.

The day crescendos with a street dance from 9 p.m. to midnight. DJ Jeff Richie will be behind the mic.

Derrick Kestler is getting revved up for a great car show during the event. He invites people to join the parade and then display their vehicle for the show. The participation fee is \$15 with registration from 9 a.m. to noon. There are multiple categories and trophy presentations will be made at 3 p.m. For more about the car show, call Kestler at 541-571-0421.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/irrigonwatermelonfestival.

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