

COLUMN

Round-Up brings benefits to entire region

It's that time of year again. Late summer, most county fairs are now over, the wheat harvest is wrapped up, and thoughts turn to back-to-school, football games, and the arrival of Fall. Around these parts, it also means Round-Up time!

Having attended my very first Pendleton Round-Up and PBR events last year, I now know what all the fuss is about.

Working the Rotary beer sales booth one day last year, I had the opportunity to do some serious people watching in between pours. Of course, I saw a large contingent of what I would estimate to be veteran Round-Up/



CHRIS RUSH
PUBLISHER

rodeo goers. They wear their boots and hats with an easy style that makes it clear that this is their frequent attire.

Other, shall we say, dudes and dudettes appear in Western attire as well, but the newness of their embroidered jeans, the immaculate and crisply blocked hats, and the finely polished boots seem to give away that this not a way of life, but rather an attempt to blend in. I myself own a clean straw hat that typically only makes it off the rack and atop my cranium just a few times a year, so I would be considered part of this "all hat and no cattle" crowd.

But I was also pleasantly sur-

prised to spot several groups of what I would call Portland-style hipsters. Some might say, city slickers. The guys, in their 20s-30s, sported finely coiffed hipster beards, pork pie hats and tight-fitting rolled-up jeans, and the girls wore even tighter jeans, fashion boots (not Western) and whatever made one comfortable on a warm, sunny afternoon. I gathered that this was their typical uniform and they did not seem the least bit self-conscious or concerned about being out of place.

It's an interesting development and a good thing. Round-Up has grown beyond just an Eastern Oregon event, or even a purely rural Northwest event. It's now on people's bucket lists from all walks of life. As Pendleton Convention Center Director (and a

Round-Up aficionado from way back) Pat Beard told me recently, Round-Up — now celebrating its 109th year — is seen as a nationally acclaimed spectacle and genuine cultural happening that must be experienced.

For one week out of the year, Pendleton may well be the hippest and happiest place to be in all of Oregon, if not the Northwest. The event's widespread popularity has grown tremendously over the past several years.

Early ticket sales for this year's edition appear to confirm that positive trend. By almost every measure (attendance, concession and souvenir sales) the event is still growing. Hotels and campsites between Hermiston and La Grande will once again

be fully occupied, restaurants and watering holes will be jammed, and hopefully, our local mom and pop stores will benefit from the additional traffic (and wallets) walking around town.

Included in today's newspaper, you'll see that we have inserted a complimentary copy of the 2019 Round-Up magazine with the theme "People of Round-Up." As most locals know, it takes a virtual army of volunteers to pull off every facet of Round-Up, Happy Canyon, PBR, the Main Street Cowboys carnival, parades, concerts and more. We've tried to capture as much of that as we can in this 80-page volume.

We hope you enjoy these stories and images.

Now, let's all get ready to "Let 'er Buck!"

Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo earns two grand championship wins at Richland tourney

By BRETT KANE
STAFF WRITER

Stanfield's Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo sent 18 kids to compete at the 11th annual Battle on the Columbia, and brought home some gold.

Hermiston's own Chris Godby, 12, took first in sparring and won the grand championship title, and Anais Garcia, 7, also won first in sparring and the grand championship title.

"I was so impressed," said Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo co-instructor Erwin Watson. "You get to the point where you watch them and you get goosebumps. It's a great thing to hear your kids' names announced as winners. It was the only time I was able to hear how good they did at the competition. It was good to hear their names on the intercom."

Godby and Garcia weren't the only ones to bring home top honors

at the Richland-hosted tournament.

Kiona Idris, 15, won first in the weapons and padded weapons competitions, as well as second-place finishes in forms and sparring. Jordan Velasco, 7, took first in weapons. Luciano Zavala and Jezly Higareda, 6, both took first in sparring.

Kristian Cardenas, 8, claimed first in padded weapons, as well as second in both sparring and weapons. Abel Garcia, 11, also took home a first-place trophy for his performance in the padded weapons category, along with second-place finishes in forms and sparring.

Iria Lissman won first in forms and second in sparring, Ervin Higareda, 8, won a pair of first-place trophies in sparring and padded weapons, and Samuel Godby, 9, placed first in padded weapons.

Watson said his team's showing at the recent Richland tournament was a display of the progress the team had made since the begin-

ning of the year.

"I don't get a lot of kids at the beginning of the year who want to go out to these tournaments," he said. "But when they see other kids come home with medals, it boosts their interest. Now these kids are ready for the next tournament. They got the taste of it. Now they know what it feels like to be winners. They're hooked on it. It's great."

Watson, who co-owns the Stanfield-based taekwondo program alongside his wife Lorry, said that his team's tournament turnouts have doubled since the start of the year.

"I'm so proud of these kids," he said. "I was impressed with every single one of them."

The Watsons and their team will have a bit of a break until their next competition, which is scheduled for November, and will take place at Mount Hood Community College in Portland.



Photo contributed by Erwin Watson
Stanfield's Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo team poses with their medals after the Battle on the Columbia in Richland, Wash., on Saturday, Aug. 17.

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