

Trees: ‘A completely different way of putting on an event’

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trees, the 23rd annual Festival of Trees had only eight, all of which were sponsored by local individuals and businesses. However, the effort that the organizations, designers, florists and volunteers contributed to decorate each individual tree was in no way scaled back.

“Nothing has changed — the trees are as stunning as they are every year,” Ward said.

The designers put a whimsical spin on this year’s theme. One elaborate display, sponsored by the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, included a life-sized replica of the Grinch attempting to steal the tree and suck presents and decorations down a giant tube. Hanging from the tree, wooden signs were positioned to read “2020 Stink, Stank, Stunk.”

Each group, Ward said, was “really trying to have fun and be joyful about all the challenges we’ve faced this year.”

The trees were lined up in the Necanicum Room, which has a large, eastward-facing window.

On Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. — the time that would normally be reserved for the community open house and “Candy Cane Lane” — the public was invited to stroll along the sidewalk between the Necanicum River and the convention center and view the exquisite trees.

Children received bags with a cookie to decorate and a couple craft projects, including a birdhouse donated by Child’s Play in Cannon Beach.

Organizers wanted to give children and families “a piece of festival to take home with them,” which was reminiscent of the arts, crafts and activities normally offered on Candy Cane Lane, Ward said.

The Festival of Trees gala and auction, a fundraiser for Providence’s campaign to expand cardiac services on the North Coast, also looked different this year.

The virtual event was a mixture of live-streaming from the convention center, prerecorded clips featuring Providence executives, and short musical performances by Amos Lee, Storm Large and Aaron Meyer and the



Photos by Katherine Lacaze

The Providence Festival of Trees in Seaside looked a bit different this year, although it still involved eight stunning tree displays sponsored and decorated by local organizations and individuals.



Signs placed on the tree made the fitting declaration: 2020 Stink, Stank, Stunk.

Brown Sisters.

Mark Nelsen, the Fox 12 weatherman, emceed the event onsite at the convention center. Mark Schenfeld, of Stokes Auction Group, was the auctioneer.

The virtual gala still involved several staples of the traditional event: raffle drawings for a wine tree and an extended trip to one of five destinations, as well as a silent auction featuring

donations from local businesses. The trees and their respective gift packages were also auctioned off.

The silent auction featured a noticeably smaller quantity of items this year, which was intentional, Ward said.

Unlike in previous years, the organizers didn’t “pound the pavement” asking for donations, although they still received several from willing participants, Ward said.

“We recognize small businesses are hurting, and we wanted to be respectful of that,” she added.

‘A Reimagined Event’

The Festival of Trees Committee met in mid-March to discuss this year’s event. Even then, Ward said, they anticipated it would differ because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They decided then to change course and organize a virtual festival.

“As a healthcare organization, it was our responsibility to do this event as safely as possible,” Ward said, adding it was the best alternative, “given we didn’t know what would be going on with COVID in December.”

Looking back, she is grateful they made the deci-

Lodging: ‘It’s an obligation to be transparent’

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to win the game, he said.

“We have to make the effort so people know that the restaurants, hotels and businesses are following the rules,” he said. “People are going out. But where are they going to go? The place where they feel safest. Health and hygiene is the first priority.”

He advised business owners to be clear and upfront about what measures they are taking and if and when a virus outbreak takes place.

Failure to follow coronavirus guidelines could ruin the reputation of a business, he said.

“If business owners hide, it is a danger,” he said. “It’s an obligation to be transparent.”



Head housekeeper Rocío Amezcua at work in the River Inn.

R.J. Marx

Experts say fires harmed state water quality

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Beyond burning trees and structures to the ground, Oregon’s historic wildfires have also impaired water quality in thousands of miles of streams this year.

About 400 miles of fish-bearing streams and 2,500 miles of other waterways were affected by wildfires that burned 1 million acres of forests in the state this year, said Kyle Abra-

ham, chief of the Oregon Department of Forestry’s private forests division.

“After severe fire, soils once held together by vegetation and protected by ground cover no longer have the ability to retain water or the root support to prevent erosion,” Abraham testified on Monday before the state Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

Water quality degradation is concerning to agriculture because adverse impacts to sensitive species can increase

pressure to more strictly regulate irrigation diversions and pesticide usage.

“Some of the most common threats we see include accelerated soil erosion, increased water runoff with flooding and potential debris flows, and expansion of invasive plants and noxious weeds,” Abraham said.

Water systems, fish habitat, drinking water, roads and bridges can be affected by wildfire damage, though it’s possible to recover from these effects, Abraham said.

Apart from introducing more sediment and nutrients into streams, wildfire reduces shade and raises water temperatures to the detriment of aquatic species, said Keith Andersen, western region administrator for the state’s Department of Environmental Quality.

In the immediate aftermath of the fires, hazardous waste is being removed from burned areas and structures near waterways are being stabilized to prevent further pollution, Andersen said.

sion when they did. Had they pursued holding the event in-person, it likely would’ve been canceled or they would’ve had less time for making adjustments.

As it was, the committee had several months to collaborate with the organizers of the Portland and Southern Oregon festivals.

“It’s been a really incredible process of learning a completely different way of putting on an event,” she said.

One benefit of doing a virtual event, she added, was increased accessibility. Anyone could tune-in to the gala for free, and they could watch from the comfort of their own home, regardless of location. Leading up to the festival, people registered who had not attended a gala in years past.

“We have such a generous community, and I think they’re ready to have something to look forward to,” Ward said.

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