



84TH FESTIVAL PROGRAM

RHODODENDRON FESTIVAL EVENT LINEUP C2-C3



Outgoing Princess Skyanna Iradella crowns incoming Queen's Court Princess Addison Asbell, a seventh-grader at Blue Heron Middle School... Leader photo by Kirk Boxleitner

Rhody royalty court preparing for fest

Neville crowned queen

KIRK BOXLEITNER
KBOXLEITNER@PTLEADER.COM

Mary Neville was crowned queen of the 84th annual Rhododendron Festival, and Kaylee Krajewski and Ellienne Thornton were named princesses during the coronation ceremony Feb. 16 at Chimacum High School.

Neville, a sophomore at Jefferson Community School in Port Townsend, received the congeniality award from her fellow candidates.

Krajewski, a sophomore at Port Townsend High School, was recognized for selling more Rhody Fest pins than either of her fellow candidates.

All three candidates, including PTHS junior Thornton, were praised for selling well more than the \$800 minimum.

Each of the three royalty candidates was introduced with a letter written by her parents, read aloud for the audience.

In the talent portion, Neville sang Katy Perry's "Rise," Krajewski received accompaniment as she played the drums, and Thornton expressed her gratitude to her adoptive home country by performing "The Star-Spangled Banner" in American Sign Language.

and Debbie Neville. She has an older sister and a younger brother.

Neville has lived in Jefferson County for 14 years, and she's a teacher's aide at the Swan School in Port Townsend.

Neville enjoys horseback riding and is looking forward to her family's vacation to Mexico this spring.

She enjoys computer science, computer programming and art, and she loves classical music, the color silver and her books.

After high school, she would like to spend a year traveling before she attends college to become a therapist.

"When people in the community talk to me about you, they always say to me, 'Wow, that Mary,'" Neville's father wrote. "Your ability to strike out and do things with fierce independence and focus is astonishing to watch. It's also extremely hard to keep up with."

Neville's father recounted an incident a year ago, when his daughter was confronted by "a violent and unpredictable man" after she finished dinner with a friend at a local restaurant.

"While most adults would have frozen in fear, you, fearing for your friend's safety, stepped forward and confronted the threat head-on," Neville's father wrote. "Your unwavering strength and loyalty is something I am very proud of."

QUEEN MARY NEVILLE
Neville, 15, is daughter to Sam

See QUEEN, page 5 ▼

Queen's Court crowned for Rhody Fest

Junior, Senior royalty also selected

KIRK BOXLEITNER
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The high school trio was not the only set of royals crowned Feb. 16 at Chimacum High School for the 84th annual Rhododendron Festival.

QUEEN'S COURT

The Queen's Court was open to candidates from the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. Chimacum Middle School seventh-grader Paige Govia, 13, was joined by fellow princess and Blue Heron Middle School seventh-grader Addison Asbell on the court after they both exceeded their \$600 goal for recruiting sponsors.

Govia previously was crowned as one of the Junior Royalty as a first-grader in 2013. Asbell's older sister, Aurin, was among the Junior Royalty in 2011.

Govia described the week of Rhody Fest as a family get-together at her grandparents' place, complete with a barbecue meal and watching the floats in the grade parade from their minivan near the fire station on Lawrence Street.

Asbell sees the Rhody Fest as a family affair, watching the pet parade with her sister and grandparents, and



Outgoing Queen Desirae Kudronowicz and Princess Skyanna Iradella crown the incoming Junior Royalty of seven candidates drawn from first-grade classes throughout the county. Leader photo by Kirk Boxleitner

sitting next to the First Baptist Church to watch the grand parade.

Asbell has watched her sister and cousin Noelle in the parades in recent years, she's lived in Port Townsend all her life and attended Rhody Fest every year she's been able.

"My first time running the Rhody Run was in fourth grade, and I've run it ever since," said Asbell, who also has participated in the trike races on a regular basis.

JUNIOR ROYALTY

The Junior Royalty recruited seven candidates from first-grade classes throughout the county, including:

- From Salish Coast Elementary, Prince Grayson Hvidsten-Cain, 7, and Princess Zoe Peterson, 6.
- From Chimacum Creek Primary, Princess Rois Bradshaw, Prince Landon Eldridge and Prince Jamie Thompson, all 6, and Prince Canyon Kjoson and Princess Gwen Mathews, both 7.

Hvidsten-Cain is son to Ashley and Shawn, with one older brother, Carson, and three younger brothers; Ben, Weston and Owen.

His hobbies include riding motorcycles with his dad. Hvidsten-Cain has never attended a Rhody Festival before, so he's excited to take part in this one, and to share the experience with his brothers.

Hvidsten-Cain's hero is his mom, because she always makes him feel better when he's hurt or sad, and when he grows up, he wants to be a Seattle Seahawk.

Peterson is daughter to Rosie and Marcus, with a brother, Sebastian.

See CROWNED, page 5 ▼

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The Greatest Rhody

The 84th annual Rhododendron Festival honors Washington's state flower and is the county's oldest community-based festivals.

The following list features Rhododendron Festival Association events, as well as other special events and performances traditionally staged in conjunction with Rhody Fest week.

Judges look at each group and determine first, second and third places per category, which include unusual animals, cats and kittens, rabbits, small dogs, medium dogs, large dogs and one category for goats, llamas and horses.

Pets must be contained or leashed. All participants younger than 6 years old must have an adult with them.

The parade will begin Uptown at Harris Street and end at Taylor Street.

May 15



Trike Races

Trike race registration is at 5 p.m., the race begins at 6 p.m.

The event is coordinated by Sunrise Rotary, and assembly will take place at Pope Marine Park and Water Street.

Children ages 1 to 6 are eligible. Each age and each wheel group has a separate chance to compete for first, second and third place honors.

The wheel groups include tricycles, push bikes and small two-wheel bikes with training wheels – all four wheels must touch the ground at the same time.

All bikes must have at least three wheels. Two-wheeled bikes are not permitted.

May 16



Pet Parade

Pet Parade registration begins at 3:30 p.m. with judging beginning at 4 p.m. Participants must have a ribbon to participate. The parade begins at 4:30 p.m.



Funtastic Carnival

Funtastic Traveling Shows brings a carnival to Jefferson County Memorial Athletic Field downtown. The carnival is open from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. and runs through Saturday, weather permitting. No pets and no smoking on the field.

Thursday is coupon day at the carnival. Stop in at local retail stores to pick up a coupon.

May 17



Kiddies Parade

Kiddies parade registration begins at 2:15 p.m., judging begins at 3 p.m., and is followed by the parade at 3:30 p.m.

The event is sponsored by Port Townsend Kiwanis, and will begin assembling at Lawrence and Tyler streets, by Aldrich's Market.

Participants must have a ribbon to be judged. The parade will go from Adams Street to Madison Street. Awards will be given to preschool groups, Disney/storybook, wheels, superheroes, sports, nature, animals, fantasy, original/unique and youth groups.

Ribbons will be awarded to first, second and third places in each category.

Parents and other adults are asked to remember this is a kiddie parade and not to walk in the parade unless absolutely necessary.



Funtastic Carnival

Funtastic Traveling Shows brings a carnival to Jefferson County Memorial Athletic Field downtown. The carnival is open from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. and runs through Saturday, weather permitting. No pets and no smoking on the field.



Hair and Beard Contest

The Hair and Beard Contest registration will begin at 5:15 p.m. at the American Legion, and is being coordinated by Kinetic Sculpture Association.

The contest will kickoff at 6 p.m.

Hair categories for kids 12 and younger will be the longest, coolest braid and Rhody spirit. Hair categories for men include best use of hair, most unique overall and longest beard. Hair categories for women include longest, coolest braid and Rhody spirit.



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The Greatest Rhody

Bed Race

Immediately following the Hair and Beard Contest will be the Bed Races.

Registration begins at 5:15 p.m., and assembly will be at the American Legion on Water Street.

The event is being coordinated by the Kinetic Sculpture Association, and is projected to start at about 6:30 p.m.

Gather along Water Street between Monroe and Madison streets to catch the action.

Contestants must provide their own beds. Beds must have a foam or pad mattress, a headboard and a footboard. Wheels cannot exceed 12 inches in overall diameter and 3 inches in width. Beds must have one rider who weighs at least 100 pounds and four people must propel the bed. The bed must remain in its assigned lane throughout each race. The racing grid is determined at registration.



Farmers Market

The Port Townsend Farmers Market is to be in its usual location on Tyler Street this year and will not be moving. Its hours will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The market's presence means additional food and beverage options for parade watchers.

Funtastic Carnival

Funtastic Traveling Shows brings a carnival to Jefferson County Memorial Athletic Field downtown. The carnival is open from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. and runs through Saturday, weather permitting. No pets and no smoking on the field.

Running of the Balls

Port Townsend Sunrise Rotary sponsors this golf ball race down a course on Monroe Street with some of the balls funneling into the winner's circle.

The race begins at noon. The event is a fundraiser to support grants to the community, as well as a dictionary project for third-graders. Every third-grade student in Jefferson County receives a dictionary each year because of this event. The winning ball earns its "owner" \$2,000 for first place, \$500 for second place and \$250 for third place.



Cake Picnic

The Cake Picnic begins after parade ends, about 2:30-3 p.m. at Pope Marine Park. Follow the Grand Parade downtown to Pope Marine Park (across from City Hall) for 2,000 slices of free cake, in the interest of building community through celebration. The baking team of volunteers is joined by Crust Bakery staff and Dalla Notte Baking. The cake flavors are a secret, ingredients are mostly organic and there is a gluten-free option.

Once the 2,000 slices are served, a dance party begins. Food vendors also are set up at Pope Marine Park this year. Donations to sustain the Cake Picnic are welcome; visit cakepicnic.com.



May 18

Rhody Breakfast

The Elks Lodge 317 hosts its annual pancake breakfast fundraiser from 8-10 a.m. at the lodge, 555 Otto St. Groups are asked to RSVP by calling 360-385-0317.



Rhody Golf

Port Townsend Golf Club hosts the Jim Caldwell Memorial Rhody Open. Players can attend events on one or both days. On May 18, the tourney begins at 8 a.m. and is an individual stroke play event. On May 29, it's two-person best-ball. Proceeds benefit the Rhododendron Festival Association. Call 360-385-4547.



Grand Parade

Grand Parade registration will be from 8 a.m. to noon at the Visitor Center on Sims Way. The parade will start at 1 p.m.

The parade forms on Lawrence Street and begins at Harrison Street (fire hall), proceeding to Monroe Street and then to Water Street, ending at the corner of Water and Adams streets, turning onto Adams. The review stand, with usually staffed by announcer Janet Emery, is on Water Street between City Hall and the American Legion. Vehicle access to Point Hudson resumes at about 3 p.m.



Spaghetti Feed

BPO Elks Lodge 317 hosts its annual post-parade spaghetti feed fundraiser, 5-7 p.m. at the lodge, 555 Otto St.

May 19

Rhody Golf

Port Townsend Golf Club hosts the Jim Caldwell Memorial Rhody Festival Golf Tournament. On May 20, starting time is 9 a.m. for this two-person, best-ball event. Proceeds benefit the Rhododendron Festival Association.

Rhody Run

Rhody Run XLI's online registration ends at 5 p.m., May 17.

People already registered can pick up packets 4-7 p.m. on Saturday and 8:45-10:30 a.m. on Sunday inside Fort Worden Commons.

Race day registration opens at 8:45 a.m., May 19 and closes at 10 a.m. inside the Fort Worden Commons.

The race begins at 11 a.m. at Fort Worden State Park. The full Rhody Race is 12 kilometers, or 7.64 miles. The half-Rhody is a 6 kilometer course, which is 3.72 miles, and begins at 11:10 a.m.

Register online at rhodyrun.com. The sixth annual Kids Sprint for Health is a pre-Rhody Run event for youngsters ages nine and younger. Registration opens at 9 a.m. and the sprint begins at 9:30 a.m. on the Fort Worden Parade Ground.



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Queen: Setting the example for 2019 Rhody festival

▼Continued from page 1

PRINCESS KAYLEE KRAJEWSKI

Krajewski, 16, is daughter to Rebecca Krajewski. She has a sister, Lizzy, and two brothers, Tyler and Nathan. She has lived in Jefferson County for 14 years.

Krajewski is in the pep band for both the football and basketball seasons after she served as a cheerleader for basketball her freshman year.

Krajewski is active in Girl Scouts, Friends of Sports & Rec and is a Special Olympics athlete.

Her hobbies include camping, crafts and bowling.

She loves country music, and her favorite color is purple.

She plans to attend a local community college or technical school to study the culinary arts.

Krajewski's mother wrote of how her daughter created her own form of sign language when she was still learning to talk.



Krajewski



Neville



Thornton

"You sit back, take things in, and when you're ready, you take it on and succeed," Krajewski's mother wrote. "I love how you look for the good in everything, and how you always find a way to compliment each person you come in contact with, whether you know them or not. I am so proud of you for trying new things, taking on

challenges and not giving up."

PRINCESS ELLIENNE THORNTON

Thornton, 17, is daughter to Tony and Addy Thornton, and she has two older brothers.

Thornton has lived in Jefferson County for seven years, during which she's been involved in her school's student-run coffee shop,

the American Sign Language Club, Redhawk Mentors, InterAct Club and the Redhawks volleyball team.

Thornton is involved in her church and likes to help out as much as possible.

Her interests include cooking, walking her dogs, drawing and hanging out with her friends.

She plans to attend Bellingham Technical College to study culinary arts, and her dream job is to work in a fine dining restaurant.

Thornton's parents wrote about their 17-year-old daughter's extracurricular activities and charitable works. They described her as a helpful hard worker and a "trouper," even when she's not enamored with the tasks she's carrying out.

"You have the ability to take any type of 'hard knocks,' and rework it into a positive endeavor," Thornton's parents wrote about the PTHS junior. "You have a sense of intuition about people's emotions and thoughts, and seldom condemn anyone or speak of them in a negative manner."

Thornton's parents also noted their daughter's ability to "mediate the situation," as well as her reliability and commitment to honesty even in the face of "deal(ing) with the fallout."

Crowned: Representing, honoring Jefferson County

▼Continued from page 1

Her hobbies include swimming, Girl Scouts, choir, music, art and basketball.

Peterson's family is no stranger to becoming Rhody Festival royalty, since her aunt Melissa was a princess in 1998, and her aunt Alisha was a princess in 2005.

Peterson's favorite part of the Rhody Festival is passing out water at the Rhody Run, and when she grows up, she wants to be a veterinarian or a teacher.

Bradshaw is daughter to Adam and Danielle, with three brothers; Banker, Anders and Stone.

She enjoys swimming, hanging out with her brothers, drawing and coloring.

Bradshaw's favorite parts of the Rhody Festival are the parades and flowers.

Her heroes are her mom and dad, because they take care of her and love her so much, and when she grows up, she wants to be a teacher.

Eldridge is son to Bob and Carol Eldridge, and Mike and Sandy Eldridge, with three brothers - Tyson, Chance and Koby - and two sisters, Jaycie and Ryley.

His hobbies include football, basketball, baseball, Minecraft, LEGO and Christmas.

Eldridge's cousin Paige was Junior Royalty in 1998, his favorite part of the Rhody Festival is the trike races, and when he grows up, he wants to be a race car driver.

Thompson is son to Stephani and Michael, with an older brother, Sam.

He enjoys playing the guitar and singing everywhere, even in his sleep.

In the 1950s, Thompson's grandmother, Colleen, was Junior Royalty, as was his dad, Michael, in 1981.

Thompson's cousin, Jenny Delaney, was a Rhody Festival Princess in 1997.

Thompson's favorite part of the Rhody Festival is the carnival, his hero is his brother, because he helps him, and when he grows up, he wants to be a dad and an engineer.

Kjoson is son to Katie Minnihan and Colin Kjoson, with an older brother, Ryder, and two sisters, Nova and Lila.

He enjoys swimming, photography, tree-climbing, riding bikes and video games.

Kjoson's mom, Katie, was Rhody Festival royalty in 2007, and she's his hero because she always stands up for him.

Kjoson's favorite part of the Rhody Festival is dressing up for the pet parade, and when he grows up, he wants to be a teacher.

Mathews is daughter to Kari and John, with a sister, Grace, and a brother, Luke.

She enjoys dance, building LEGO, drawing, reading and playing with her friends.

Mathews' cousin Skyanna was the 2018 Rhody Festival Princess, and her favorite parts of the Rhody Festival are walking in the kiddies parade and watching the trike races.

Mathews has many heroes, including her mom, dad and teacher, and given that her mom is also a teacher, it's not surprising Mathews wants to grow up to be a teacher.

SENIOR ROYALTY

Rounding out the newly crowned royalty for 2019

were the Senior Royalty, with King Curt Russ and Queen Betty Grewell representing the Port Townsend Senior Association, and King Roger Horner and Queen Leetha Smith representing the Tri-Area.

Russ was born in 1925 at home on a farm in Chimacum, whose schools he attended until he joined the U.S. Navy at 17.

He was stationed in Pearl Harbor and the Mariana Islands, on board USS Bunker Hill, and served in the Korean War.

After his discharge from the Navy, Russ came back home and settled in Port Townsend where he raised a family, worked at Crown Zellerbach for 40 years, and retired in 1982, before starting his second career as an electrical foreman.

Russ spent more than 30 years with his special friend, Loraine Bolling, with whom he enjoyed traveling.

Russ currently volunteers several hours a week at the Port Townsend Senior Center.

Grewell describes herself as "a plain old hometown gal," born at the Fort Worden hospital in 1939, when her father was in the U.S. Army, and raised in Port Townsend with her five brothers.

Betty married her high school sweetheart Larry Grewell, in 1957, and they raised three children in Port Townsend, where the family did lots of volunteering.

The elder Grewells were camp hosts at the Fort Worden State Park and Old Fort Townsend state parks from 1995 through 2008, receiving the Washington State Camp Host of the Year Award in 1999.

Betty Grewell has worked at The Leader since 1968, and she additionally volunteers at the Jefferson County Auditor's Office during elections, as well as at the Port Townsend Community Center.

Grewell sits on the boards of directors for the Port Townsend Senior and Alumni associations.

Roger and his late wife, Katherine, originally came from California.

The Horners purchased a small farm, so his children could have animals.

Roger worked for the Pasadena Fire Department for 25 years, and as a newspaper pressman.

Horner currently volunteers at Irondale Community Church, the Irondale Community Soup on Tuesdays, the Tri-Area Food Bank, and as a driver for the Ecumenical Christian Helping Hands Organization, through which he's taken veterans to medical appointments with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Horner continues his life of service every day in the Tri-Area, saying how much he enjoys volunteering and, "I just do what I can" to help people.

Many children have called Smith "Mom," including not only her own

children, but also their many friends and the children she works with even today.

Smith was raised on a farm, and is a lifetime member of Girl Scouts, from whom she earned the prestigious Curved Bar.

After working as a hairdresser for 40 years, Smith now serves part time as a parent-child visitation supervisor.

Smith loves to volunteer, especially with children, as they satisfy her "granny fix," and she's a constant presence at both the Irondale Community Church and the Tri-Area Food Bank, where she's volunteered every week since 1993.

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Rhododendron Festival history

Information provided by the Rhododendron Festival Association, edited by Leader News Staff

It started as a photo op for a publicity-starved small town.

Clive Buttermere, a local businessman in 1935 convinced the Hearst Metrotone News organization to come to Jefferson County to film rhododendrons in bloom.

Hearst's "short subjects" were screened in theaters throughout the United States, back before the run-up to movies was all

ads all the time. So in 1935, Hearst's camera operators came to Jefferson County to stalk the wild rhododendron.

These were the days when Hollywood was setting its archetypes in place: always include a pretty girl in the shot.

So, Buttermere and the business community organized a Rhododendron Queen competition to recruit young women, some fauna to be photographed with the flora. Nominations were made and the community could vote on their favorite by shopping at participating merchants.

Dollars spent equaled votes. Myrtle Olsen was voted the first Rhododendron Queen and filmed by Hearst.

The American Legion, having witnessed the enthusiasm of the community and the festival spirit created, decided to make the celebration of the beauty of the rhododendrons in bloom an annual event.

In 1936, the first Rhododendron Festival took place. Royalty was chosen in the same manner and this process of selection continued for several years. The first festival in 1936 was a

one-day event with a parade. As the years progressed, more events were added and the length of the festival grew. (Visit the Jefferson County Historical Society to see the old brochures).

The festival was suspended during World War II (1942-45), and resumed in 1946.

The Chamber of Commerce took over the festival leadership in the early 1950s and more events were added until it grew to be a week-long celebration. Each year brought different events: fat man's race, boat race, golf

tournament, baseball tournament, air show, cow chip throwing contest, bed race, trike race, beard growing contest, car show, kids' parade, queen's ball and more.

For many years, the candidate who sold the most buttons was chosen queen. During the early festivals, the publicity tour only included members of royalty, rather than candidates.

In the 1980s, the festival became a non-profit corporation and not affiliated with any one group in Jefferson County. Volunteers chair the festival, as well as serve as

board members. Royalty are provided scholarships from the association to pursue their education. Button sales and contributions from community members and businesses fund the festival.

The annual budget is spent on candidates' expenses, royalty expenses, float building and maintenance, and travel expenses for the float crew and royalty to trek to up to 15 parades per year. The travel to other communities is not only fun, but is a way of promoting Port Townsend and the county.

Family, not flowers motivates volunteer board

It's hard to get Rhododendron Festival board members to talk about Rhododendrons.

You might expect from them a spiel about the merits of the evergreen star of spring in these parts. Maybe a little lecture about the five "anthers" that keep Azaleas on a lower rung. Nope.

For this board, Rhody Fest is the one Port Townsend event of the year that is all about kids and not the squads of retirees who've taken over the Quimper Peninsula.

Some grew up with Rhody Fest. Some adopted it upon arrival.

But this is clearly not an arborist's celebration.

"It's the one week every single year that the largest majority of kids growing up here will come back," says Juanita Maples, who was a Rhody Princess in 1991 and now serves on the volunteer board that makes it all happen. "Even more so than alumni weekends," she said. Rhody Fest calls Port Townsend natives home.

Here's the team that organized this year's festival:

PRESIDENT - BRANDI HAMON

For President Hamon, this year's experiment with recruiting sophomores as royalty paid off. Two sophomores applied and were selected, which gives her hope the Rhody Fest has found a solution to the modern problem: Juniors and Seniors are so focused on college entry tests and athletic scholarships, they don't have time for the busy schedule of more than a dozen Rhody Royalty appearances. There have been fewer upper-classmen applying, so Hamon may have found a good path forward.

Hamon, who has worked on the festival since 2014, said she can't decide which event she likes best, the Bed Race or the Grand Parade. "It's hard for me to choose between those two."

"What I find really interesting about Rhody Week is so many people come back to town for family reunions, for class reunions," she said, with one week left before 2019's

event."That's what I love about the fest is that it brings so many locals back."

Born and raised in Port Townsend, she has served in a variety of roles, preparing her for the presidency during a difficult year, when county officials resisted hosting the carnival at Memorial Field. So far, the Rhody Carnival has a home, but

the Quimper Peninsula from wholesome small-town eastern Idaho, Rhody Fest made her feel right at home. "It's the best," Morris said. "My daughter was a princess in 2015 and actually my son was involved," which means she already has warm memories of Rhody Fests past. "We started doing it as soon as he was old enough to do the trike race," she said of her clan. "We just love that it involves all the family, from the little tiny ones clear up to however old you want to be involved in the parade." What distinguishes this event is the way it draws Port Townsend natives home, she said. From family reunions to class reunions, this is when people gather here.

Morris said she's proud of the experiences Rhody royalty get, traveling the state to appear in up to 15 other community parades per year. She is watching the weather carefully, hoping the Rhody Carnival will be able to unpack on Memorial Field. "If the carnival goes away, Rhody will go away," she said. "It's our biggest fundraiser. They money is used, not only for scholarships, but for the travel."

If you're thinking you'd like to help with Rhododendron Festival, here are some of the key volunteers you can ask how to pitch in:

- Candidate coordinator - **Brandi Hamon**
- Youth royalty coordinator - **Rebecca Krajewski**
- Coronation coordinator - **Juanita Maples**
- Float director - **Bliss Morris**
- Grand parade committee - **Debbie LaFayette**
- Weekly events committee - **Brandi Hamon**
- Fundraising coordinator - **Nichole Locke**
- PR and marketing - **Lisa Jensen, Brandi Hamon**

Members at Large - Mike Aman, Jan Carter, Elsa Golts, Carlene Dahlman, Ann Waters, Janet Emery, Eric Johnson, Gary and Colleen Jensen, Cathy Langley, Michael Ridgway, Christy Spencer, Rita Hubbard, Steve Bozak, Scott Weidner, Polleen Johnson.

if Sequim's Irrigation Festival soaks up all the sunshine and it's Rhody Fest's turn for rain, Hamon will have her hands full trying to get the Rhody Fest's major fund-raising effort launched.

VICE PRESIDENT - LORI MORRIS

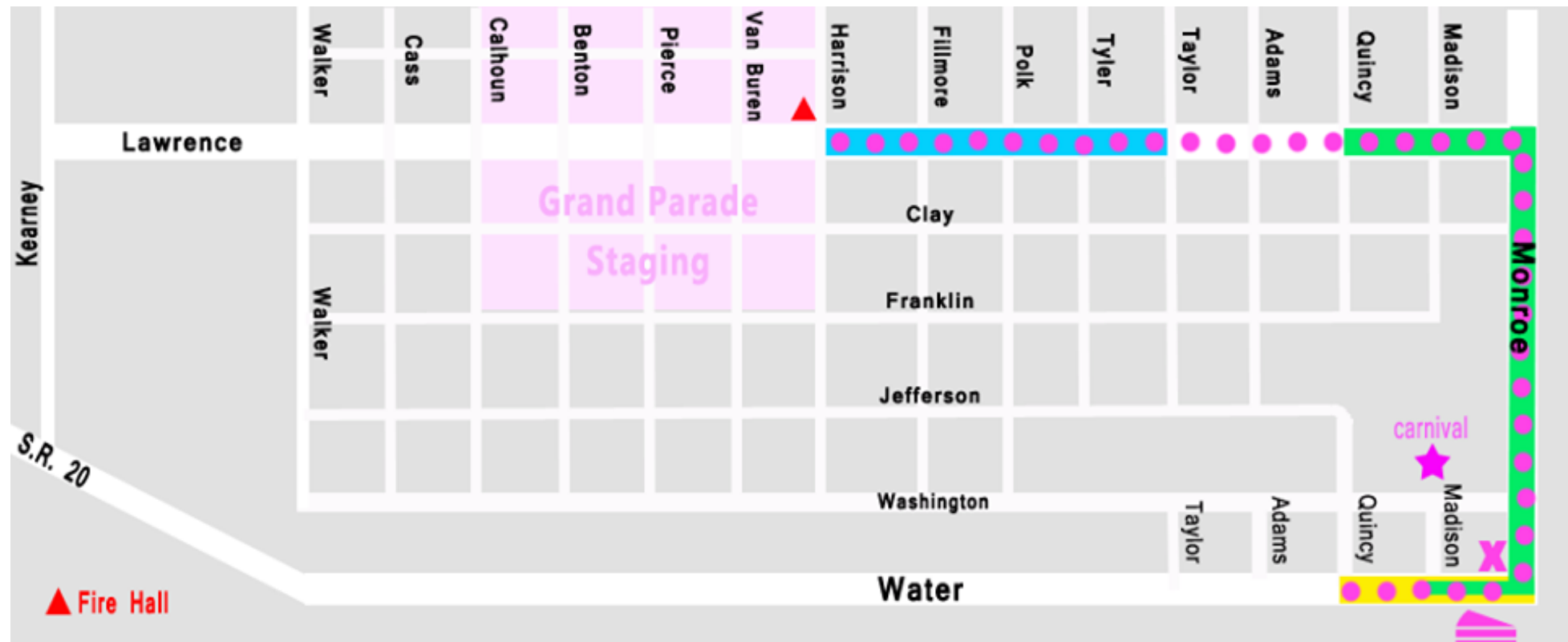
Rhody Fest's second-in-command is no native, but coming to

SECRETARY - TARA WEIDNER

As a Port Townsend native, but a newcomer to the Rhody Festival organization, Tara Weidner said her favorite event is the Grand Parade. "When everything goes correctly, I think it's kinda like Christmas," she said. "But more people come home (for Rhody Festival). I love seeing people come back to their hometown. Weidner left home for a while to serve in the U.S. Navy, but returned and wound up marrying her high school sweetheart. They are now raising their kids to be Rhody returners.

TREASURER - MERRILEE RIDGWAY

Treasurer Merrilee Ridgway got involved with Rhododendron Festival four years ago when the volunteer board recruited her husband to solve electrical and sound questions. Now, she manages the groups finances and, with her own children grown, enjoys watching Rhody Royals have their moment in the spotlight.



RHODY WEEK event LOCATIONS

- Trike Races - Wednesday, 6pm
 - Pet Parade - Thursday, 4:30 pm
 - Kiddies Parade - Friday, 3:30 pm
 - Hair and Beard Contest - Friday, 6:00 pm
 - Bed Races - Friday, 6:30 pm (appx. time - follows hair & beard)
 - Rhody Grand Parade - Saturday, 1 pm
- Cake Picnic follows Grand Parade Pope Marine Park

NOTE: all times listed are Event START times, not staging times. Also, all route locations do not include staging or dispersal locations.

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Rhododendren carnival needs new home for 2020 festival



Weather permitting, the carnival rides will be permitted to set up on Memorial Field. County officials have said this is the last year they will risk the damage caused by trucks. *Leader photo by Lloyd Mullen*

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LILY HAIGHT
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This is the last year the Rhody Festival “Funstastic Carnival” will be held at Memorial Field.

For real this time. The county commissioners approved an agreement with the Rhody Festival Association at their regular business meeting May 6 to allow the carnival to be held one more year at Memorial Field. The agreement had several conditions, including the county’s right to make a last-minute call to hold the carnival at a backup location in the case of wet weather.

“Last year was intended to be the last year that the carnival would take place on Memorial Field because of cumulative damage from the heavy rigs driving across the surface causing compression and actually changing the topography of the field,” said county administrator Philip Morley.

Since the 2018 carnival was intended to be the last year at Memorial Field, festival planners have been working with city and county officials in a year-long search for a new location.

By April, however, they still had not found one. Brandi Hamon, head of the

association, came to the commissioners last month and asked for use of the field one last time.

Commissioners agreed, with the condition of a backup location in case of rain.

“That ultimately was not found,” Morley said.

There were several back-up options considered, including the Haines Park and Ride and Mountain View Commons.

The county fairgrounds and Fort Worden have declined to host the carnival. Holding the carnival as close to downtown as possible was a high priority for festival planners. But having the carnival on the city streets had been turned down by city police and fire officials due to safety concerns.

Finally, the county agreed to work with the association for a backup location at HJ Carroll Park if the rain makes it too much of a liability to hold the carnival at Memorial Field.

Those who use the field for recreation were dismayed to find that the county had agreed to allow the carnival to be there again.

“I use the field to play sports and as a ref for high school games,” said Joost Besijn, during the public comment period of the county commissioner meeting April 15. “I’m all for sharing the

field. The issue is that it really does irreparable damage.”

Meanwhile, others found issue with the county’s lack of ability to say, “no.”

“I think there’s a credibility issue here,” said Tom Thiersch at the meeting on May 6. “You really need to do what you say you’re going to do.”

Thiersch also found issue with the fairgrounds, which is a county-owned property run by a board who has an operating agreement with the county.

“Why would you have a fairgrounds where you can’t have a fair?” he asked.

But though the county commissioners voted unanimously to approve the agreement with the Festival Association, they are determined not to have another year at Memorial Field.

“This is a case where the county has really stepped forward to try and support Rhody despite the fact that last year was the last year,” Morley said. “And when no one else provided a backup we stepped up and provided a back up. I think it’s understood that we won’t be doing this again next year. ... We are hereby passing the baton back to the association. We’ll be a partner, but we won’t be a leader.”

A rose by a very long name

FILE REPORT BY LEADER NEWS STAFF

The “Rose Tree” at the heart of our beloved community festival doesn’t get much attention during the festival.

We’re busy crowning royalty and racing tricycles and sometimes forget to tip our hats to the flower that attracted all this attention.

“It’s sort of like the Irrigation Festival in Sequim,” says local Rhododendron maven Robert Zimmerman. “I’m not sure how many people are into irrigation,” he said of Sequim’s analog to our flower fest.

“Rhododendron” (Greek for “rose tree”) is a tough little shrub of the heather family that grows wild here, with hybrids in a wide range of colors dotting yards all over town. The variety that is Washington’s state flower is pink, “a kinda pooppy pink at that,” says Zimmerman, who has seen species and varieties and hybrids on several continents.

And, he says, there actually are a few odorous rhododendrons that smell the way a “Rose Tree” ought to. “There are some lovely scents,” he said. “a famous variety called Loderi King George.”

If you care about such things, the Washington native is macrophyllum, an evergreen variety, says Zimmerman, whose Chimacum Woods nursery has specialized in rhododendrons for decades.

Some of his are found in the Duke University Arboretum in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, though most of his hybrids and exotics make their way into gardens around Puget Sound, including the Washington Park Arboretum in Seattle and several retailers in Port Townsend.

He makes occasional collecting trips, as far away as China, India and Tibet, and reckons he sells more than 5,000 per year.



Rhododendron grower Robert Zimmerman on a rhododendron expedition in Northeast India. *Courtesy photo*

Should you desire a break from the hustle and bustle of Rhody Fest, Zimmerman opens his nursery during opening weekend of Rhody Festival to visitors between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Chimacum Woods, sits on a hill overlooking the Hood Canal, between Port Ludlow and Shine, where you can see hundreds of different species.

And if seeing them triggers the urge to garden, be sure to provide good drainage, Zimmerman counsels. Most varieties don’t like hot afternoon sun and do like a good annual dose of fertilizer.