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The Community of the Saw

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Chainsaw Festival Sculpts Works of Art, Aug. 6-9

By Joanna Bartlett



It's amazing what you can create with a chainsaw. Not just a wooden sculpture, but a way of life, a sense of camaraderie, and support for a good cause.

All these elements come together at the McKenzie River Chainsaw and Arts Festival, Aug. 6-9, as

world-class chainsaw carvers make works of art from blocks of wood.

The festival, now in its third year, features quick carve demonstrations where carvers create individual sculptures over a one-and-a-half-hour period that are then auctioned off to the highest bidder. Each carver—more than a dozen from Washington, Oregon and California—will also work on a large, 6-foot tall by 3-foot round, carved piece over the course of the weekend, also auctioned at the end of the festival. Festival goers can vote for their favorite through the People's Choice Award.

Last year, the People's Choice Award went to Jacob Lucas, a Washington-based full-time chainsaw artist. "I did a unique piece—a mother horse nuzzling a baby horse," he says. "It was an off-balanced, asymmetrical piece. I looked at the wood and that's what I saw inside of it."

The festival was originally conceived when Jeff Sherman, McKenzie Community Track and Field vice president, met a chainsaw carver at a local shop while pondering ways to raise money to keep the track maintained. The carver suggested a chainsaw art festival and offered to help put it on, says Peggy Pantel, one of the festival organizers.

If watching tree stumps reveal their inner beauty isn't enough for you, exhibitors will show and sell their wares, including plenty of wood-themed items like chairs, door knockers, bird houses and spoons.

Kids can learn fly tying, paint bird houses and climb trees. "The Pacific Tree Climbing Institute puts kids in a harness and helps them climb up a tree," Pantel says. And McKenzie Schools booster clubs offer food and drink for festival goers.

Proceeds from the McKenzie River Chainsaw and Arts Festival go toward sustainably maintaining the McKenzie Community Track and Field, a professional track and field facility used by the McKenzie Schools athletic program and community members.

Camaraderie, support and collaboration are common traits of chainsaw artists. Chainsaw sculptor Bruce Thor enjoys the energy and graciousness abundant in the chainsaw family at festivals. "I've been blessed to be in the presence of some of the greatest unknown artists of all time," Thor says. "They're all people who are brought together by the commonality of the saw."

What: McKenzie River Chainsaw and Arts Festival

When: Aug. 6-9. Thursday noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: McKenzie River Track, Blue River, Ore.

Cost: \$3, age 12 and under free

More info: www.mckenzietrack.com/CAF



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Pete

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Thank you for the great story about our festival. The McKenzie Track looks forward to seeing everyone at this year's Chainsaw and Arts Festival in August.

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