

Festival Celebrates Central Oregon's Rich Celtic Ancestry

by K_Guice

Celtic or not, everyone who is looking for a good time is invited to attend the 18th Annual High Desert Celtic Festival and Highland Games.

The event, put on by the High Desert Celtic Society, takes place Saturday, August 12 from 9 a.m. until the wee hours at Cline Falls Ranch on the corner of Hwy. 126 and 67th Street in Redmond.

"It's the best kept secret in Central Oregon," said Sue Fuller, director of High Desert Celtic Society.

Opening Ceremony - Parade of Celtic Nation Flags - Opening ceremonies start at 10 a.m. and include the Parade of Clans and a Scottish pipe band will pipe them in," she said.

The clan will march with their namesake's flag. "A clan is usually a family unit; it is where you come from," Fuller added.

From there the fun begins with traditional Celtic heavy athletics. “Over 25 people will be competing,” she said.

The competition includes putting the stone, which is the same as the Olympic shot put, except a smooth rounded stone weighing just over 17 lbs. is used instead of a steel ball.

S.O. Scottish Bagpipe Band

Athletes will also test their strength in the weight for distance competition. The 28- and 56-pound-metal weights are suspended from chains. Contestants spin around and then toss to see who can go the furthest.

The Scottish hammer throw also offers a weighty challenge. A 16-pound, steel ball attached to a cane handle is swung up to three times to see who has the most strength.

Last but not least, there is the caber toss. Cabers, which look like wooden telephone poles, are 13’™ to

17â€™ in length and weigh from 70 to 120 pounds.

Challengers lift the heavy pole, balance it in an upright position and then run to build up speed and momentum. Using all of their strength, balance, and speed, the contestant then tries to throw it end over end so the tapered end will land straight ahead (12 oâ€™clock) for a perfect score.

â€œIt is really something to see,â€• Fuller said. However, the fun doesnâ€™t stop there. â€œThere is so much to do,â€• she added.

For those who want to compete but donâ€™t have the athletic strength there is also a tattoo contest. â€œPeople can show off their tastefully located Celtic tattoos,â€• said Fuller.

There will also be a bonniest-knees competition. â€œThis is a guyâ€™s thing,â€• she said. â€œWe are looking for the prettiest knees.â€•

“There are vendor booths where you can look up your ancestry, people selling kilts and woolens, knives and blades,” Fuller said. “There are also traditional shirts and bodices and stuff that you can’t get here easily that are of an Irish nature.”

There is also great entertainment being showcased. “We have Molly’s Revenge as the headline act and they are great,” she exclaimed.

In addition there will be an Gaelic acapella singing group, Scottish country dancers, Amadan playing in the pub and much more.

One of the most popular spots is the pub. “It will be going until 10 o’clock,” Fuller said. “We will be serving Cascade Lake Ale,” Fuller said.

As things wind down the ceilidh begins. “That is basically Gaelic for party, celebration or gathering of friends,” she said. People sit around; tell stories, sing and talk.

The festival is rounded out with great food. “We’ve got quite a few food vendors,” Fuller said. There is traditional kettle corn, buffalo burgers, a banger booth, ice cream and other refreshments.

Admission is \$8 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors and children under six are free.

“It’s a fun day,” Fuller said. “There are lots of fun things to do and see, for the whole family.”

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