



Photos by ADAM LAPIERRE

Christmas Project fundraiser marks 16 years of styling success

By JULIE RAEFIELD-GOBBO
News staff writer

The hairdos were wild along with a few of the t-shirt logos. The room was packed wall-to-wall and the event attendees cheered as each new team of models took to the runway.

If you were there, then you know the excitement and fun shared by the capacity crowd at the 16th annual Gala Fashion Show where over 200 models strutted their stuff, coiffed and clothed by local designers, retailers and salons.

Beyond featuring local merchants' high style clothing and chic, volunteer models, the event held a greater purpose — to raise funds for the Hood River County Christmas Basket Project.

"The Christmas Project is a really important local organization that gives assistance to low income families in the winter season," said Cathy Carter, the event's long-time organizer. "It was awesome. I think this was our biggest fundraiser yet."

And money generated through the Gala will be helpful indeed. Although the final figures aren't in just yet, Carter estimated that nearly \$13,000 was raised for this year's families needing holiday help. The entire Christmas Project must cover about \$25,000 in costs each year.

According to Bruce Holmson, president of the Hood River County Christmas Project 501c3 organization, the project spends the donated funds to buy groceries and small children's gifts for families in need who might otherwise have little to celebrate with for the holidays.

This year, the project will provide baskets filled with nutritious foods and Christmas gifts to over 500 families.

Even with that staggering number of needy families, the Gala serves as a positive force to bring together a whole community of help.

Carter estimated that between models, backstage helpers and audience members, over 800 individuals participated in this year's Gala to bring those families some holiday cheer.

"We have so many people get involved," said Carter. Ticket buyers, volunteer event staff, models, store owners — everyone contributes to make this work."

Originally started by Doug's Sports, Ananas, and Kerrits downtown store owners, the event was always intended to support the Christmas Project — whose funding is entirely based on donations.

Carter started as a model during the initial few years and then took over the organization of the event as it grew.

Each year Carter tries to bring in new ideas or expand on previous crowd favorites, all with a goal of increasing the total donation the group can make to the Christmas Project.

This year's addition included the 2nd annual "children's fashion camp" runway display.

"We held the camp about two weeks ago and 18 kids were in it," said Carter. This year's camp featured a "Duck Tape design-and-build" theme. Those 18 youngsters were assisted by teen mentors from the HRVHS fashion club to create fashions that they then paraded in the early part of the evening.

"They were so cute and we had so much fun at the camp," said Carter, who also involved the HRVHS fashion club in mentoring and designing with the children.

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FASHIONABLE FUN: Pictured at Friday's Hood River Christmas Project fashion show are (top to bottom) Debbi Budnick modeling for Trunk Show; the Gorge Roller Girls modeling for Salon Visio; Christa Joy with 5th Element Salon; Katie Haynie modeling for Sam Rodgers; Dave Peterson with Enchanted Alpaca; Kimberly Gomez and Jesus Beccera from Hood River Valley High School's fashion club; Georgia Orgain and Amanda Martin representing Flow Yoga; a whole crew of youngsters (below, left) from Future Fashionistas, wearing their duct tape creations (Cathy Carter announces while Jeri Fisch hands a flower to one of the girls); and designer Rebecca Flaiz modeling for her brand, Bunny+Pear.

Registering for the Christmas Project

The Hood River Christmas Project is here to make the holidays a bit brighter for those in need.

Baskets of food and toys are provided to qualifying families and seniors and signups for families and individuals seeking the holiday assistance are available now.

The 2012 food and children gifts distribution to the families will again be held at the Hood River County Fairgrounds in Odell (next to Wy'east middle school, 3000 Wy'east Road) Dec. 21 and 22 from 1-6 p.m.

Applicants can register at whichever location is most convenient for them (see list below). The registration application requests name, spouse name, address and phone number, and names, age and gender of children within the household, plus eligibility questions and documentation.

Each year, the Christmas Project also coordinates with the DHS caseworkers to mail out Christmas Project applications to their low-income seniors and people with disabilities. Volunteers deliver all senior and people with disabilities food/toy baskets. The approved families are mailed a printed receipt showing the date and time they can expect their basket to be delivered.

Locations for sign-ups:

■ Cascade Locks — Cascade Locks City Hall, Nov. 28, 2-4 p.m.

■ Hood River — Oregon Department of Human Services, 1610 Ninth Court on the Heights (off of Pacific Avenue), Fridays -Nov. 30 and Dec. 7, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. or Saturdays, Dec. 1 or 8 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

■ Parkdale — Parkdale Community Church (food bank) during food bank hours (4-6 p.m.) Nov. 26

■ Odell — Odell Food Bank, 3440 Odell Highway, 4-6 p.m. on Dec. 6.

New applicants are asked to:

■ Show proof of Hood River County residency (Oregon driver's license, power bill, phone bill or rent receipt)

■ Meet State of Oregon Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility standards (previously known as the food stamp program)

■ Show proof of all children living within the home (Oregon Health Plan document, federal income tax papers, local school district report card). A WIC card or Oregon Health Plan document meets the program requirements.

■ A recent pay stub can also help determine if you meet the State of Oregon low-income requirement.

If you have registered previously, a quick update of your file is all that is needed.

■ Bilingual Christmas Project volunteers will be present during all registration hours. Approved families are given a printed receipt showing the date, time and location to pick up their basket.





Photo by Kristin Reese

LEADERS FOR TOMORROW class at The History Museum in front of the paddlewheel: Conner Moon, left, Luke Boyden, Ethan Field, Georgia Orgain, Jenna Mobley, Ellie Webb, Siena Harlin, Frida Mata and August Beard.

Leaders for Tomorrow make rounds

Students discover local cultural and community resources

On Nov. 14, Leaders for Tomorrow first year students visited some local cultural treasures as part of Cultural and Community Resources day.

The class got a behind-the-scenes look at new exhibit areas at the History Museum of Hood River County, which has undergone major renovation

over the past year (see page B5 for more).

Students also received an exclusive guided tour at Western Antique Aeroplane and Automobile Museum, where they learned more about antique aeroplanes and automobiles than they could have imagined, according to advisor Kristin Reese.

“Not only did we get to see the different planes and automobiles, but we got to learn about their role in history,” observed one leader.

Non-profit organizations were given an opportunity to meet with

the LFT class to share information about the work they do and how the students can get involved through volunteering.

A variety of causes including Adopt-a-dog, Heart of Hospice and Columbia Gorge Ecology Institute, were represented as well as civic and service groups such as the Elks and Lions clubs.

Learning about opportunities to get involved in the community was the class’s favorite part of the day, according to Reese. For more information, contact Reese at 541.806.0278 or kristinr@nextdoorinc.org.

Gorge Grown gives thanks for growth

“Tis the season of thanks and everyone from the Gorge Grown Farmers’ Market would like to share our appreciation with the community for a very writes successful season,” writes Todd Dierker, co-director of Gorge Grown

Food Network, which wrapped up its farmers’ market season on Nov. 15.

“Your strong support of our local farmers, ranchers, bakers, and food producers is overwhelming. Every week for the last six months, we have had record-breaking attendance and seen a new wave of vendors bringing food grown, raised or produced right here in the Gorge. Over \$200,000 was spent this year at the market, which gets funneled back into our local economy and community. Local food first!

“It is equally important that we remember to extend our deepest appreciation to those that are growing or raising our food. The dedication of the farming community is inspiring. Seeing how quickly a storm like Sandy can cripple a region, it is comforting at least to know we are blessed with a passionate group of people that will make sure that we will have food to eat. So please this holiday season, pause to give thanks for the bounty on your table, and to those that produced it.”



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

RILEY DIERKER lugs home a sack of onions his family purchased at Gorge Grown. His dad, Todd, is co-director of Gorge Grown Food Network.

Poetry celebration night slated Nov. 30

Join HRVHS English students in a performance of works composed during a two-day workshop with poet-performer Mosley Wotta. The Bowe Theater will host the Nov. 30 evening of poetry and spoken word

performance. Student artists will take the stage 7-9 p.m.

Contact English teacher Haley Harkema for more details on the free event at haley.harkema@hoodriver.k12.or.us.

GALA

Continued from Page B1

That kind of connection-building is Carter’s secret to success. She tries to include as many people and organizations as possible.

“This is always high energy and good fun for everyone but also heartwarming because it is the largest fundraiser we do for the Christmas Project,” said Carter.

And, the evening offers a unique opportunity for businesses who design and market current fashions and beauty services. At this year’s event about 20 local fashion retailers and salons sent models down the runway, gaining exposure and involving their own customers as models.

To keep up the annual momentum, much goes on behind the scenes to make the evening work.

Carter provided a long list of annual supporters including Area 54 who provided music; Marty Knowles and Josh Breedlove on lights; Kevin Tolkstad on media projections and Gavin McAlpine who volunteered as emcee. Moria Reynolds provided graphics and Lucy Gorman coordinated the registration table with help from Christmas Project volunteers and friends.

Topping Carter’s list of generous donors is the Hood River Inn Best Western Plus, who provided the Gorge Room free of charge for the event and the rehearsal the day before, along with a bank



of 19 hotel rooms for the staging areas and dressing rooms.

“The hotel graciously and generously gives us rooms to use, helping us get the 200 (plus) models ready for the runway,” said Carter. The Hood River Lions also help by donating the use of a giant tent to house the fully dressed models before their walk.

A special runway surprise was offered this year when Salon Visio styled up about

30 of the new Gorge Roller Girls team, bringing a bit of edge to the evening’s styles. The audience also helped cheer on a recipient (Marie Parker) of a months-long makeover courtesy of Columbia Laser Skin Center of Hood River.

The HRVHS fashion club sent young designer pieces into the limelight displayed on student models. “They were amazing as well,” said Carter.

For those who felt the

need to own some of the latest designs on the runway, Carter added a “Fashion Boulevard” sale in the hotel following the show. “A lot of people took advantage of the sale,” said Carter.

“I love to help people and children in particular, but anyone that is in need has a place in my heart and I am honored and thrilled to be able to help,” said Carter, who plans to return as lead fashion mogul for next year’s event.



STYLIN’: Models seen here are (from top left) Megan Hobbs from the HRVHS Fashion Club, Gwenth Davis modeling for Kerrits, Kate Conley from Trunk show and Marie Parker (center), winner of a full makeover with the crew from Columbia Laser Skin Center.

Photos by Adam Lapierre

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