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Bang-up time: Tractor pulls, monster trucks, music, food at Harvest Festival

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By Mary Owen

A little friendly competition is the draw at the Sublimity Harvest Festival, now in its 38th year.

"I like to see the farmers come out and enjoy the show," said Rodney Lutgen, tractor pull chair and truck puller.

Depending on the year, between 40 and 60 competitors show off their pulling skills at the popular event, taking place this year on Sept. 10-12 at the Sublimity Harvest Festival Grounds.

Weekend events include ATV and horse-pulling competitions, monster trucks, a fun run, parade, entertainment tent, Kid Zone, live music, and commercial and food vendors, as well as the truck and tractor pulls.

"It's fun!" said Lutgen of his sport, which he started by pulling trucks in 1989 with his boss's old farm truck.

Lutgen, who has been on the Harvest Festival committee since 2000, said members like to put on a good show for spectators while supporting community groups with a portion of the funds raised at the event.

Truck pull chair Noel Kuzma got hooked on pulling through his friends, Wes Torgison and Rick Bethell. "My most memorable highlight was my first win at Sublimity," he said. "All my wins were special, but the first is always the best."

Pulling competition begins at 7 p.m. Friday, with Country-modified 4x4, pro-modified 4x4 and super-modified trucks running at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday. A draft-horse pull will take place at 11:30 a.m. Sunday followed by a farm tractor pull at 1 p.m.

Many of the trucks are custom built at small home shops, and a visit to the pullers on the track after he shows is well worth the time, Kuzma said. Also featured will be farm tractors.

Dave Veenendall, owner of Veenendall Trucking, started pulling four years ago with a John Deere Model A tractor.

"After that year, I said to Noel, I want to build a country-modified truck – tractors are too slow," Veenendall said. "So he said how much money you got? I said, 'Well how much do I need?' Well, it went from there." The two men started to build the Intimidater, a 1965 Ford F250.

For Daron Basl, who drives monster trucks with his twin brother, Aaron, meeting people and traveling from town to town are the highlights of his career.

"I dreamed of driving since I was a little boy," said Basl, a Texas transplant who grew up in Stayton. The brothers



travel the U.S. performing at monster truck shows, but the Sublimity Harvest Festival is one of their favorites, they agree.

The Basl brothers at age 29 are two of the younger competitors, but bring with them a long-standing tradition of involvement with the Sublimity Harvest Festival. They will perform during the freestyle part of the show after the truck pulls each night.

“We actually saw our first monster truck here,” said Basl of the Sublimity festival.

Monster trucks appearing this year will be: El Matador, Captain USA, King Crunch, the Tropical Thunder, and The Patriot (driven by Aaron Basl).

“We do wheelies, big air and donuts,” said Basl, who will drive the El Matador. “I like to see how high in the air I can get. The crowd just goes wild.”

Sublimity Harvest Festival events

Live entertainment in the Coor’s Light tent includes: The Ty Curtis Band, 9 p.m, Friday; The Flextones, Friday night and Saturday, 3-6 p.m.; the Garage Band Blues, Saturday, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. .The tent is open to all ages until 6 p.m. Saturday.

A Fun Run in downtown Sublimity takes place Saturday, 9 a.m., with a parade at 11 a.m. Gates open at noon Saturday with stock truck pull at 1 p.m., followed by multi-engine and modified tractors, modified 4×4 trucks, country-modified trucks and the monster trucks at 6 p.m.

Sunday is Family Fun Day. The Konzelman Brothers will perform in the tent – open to all ages, all day – as well as the Starlight Dancers and the Third Edition. ATV pulls begin at 10 a.m., followed by draft-horse pulls at 11:30 and farm tractor pulls at 1 p.m. The festival closes at 7 p.m.

Gates open for the Sublimity Harvest Festival at 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 10, and close at 7 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 12. Tickets are \$12 for Friday, \$18 for Saturday, and \$8 for Sunday; children, \$6, \$8 and \$5 respectively; seniors, \$10, \$16 and \$6; and children under 6, free. Tickets are available at Wilco Farm Stores in Stayton and Silverton and at Wholesale Sports in Salem or at the gate.

The Harvest Breakfast sponsored by Santiam Memorial Hospital Auxiliary is Sept. 12, 7 a.m. to noon at the Sublimity Fire Hall, 115 N Parker St. The all-you-can-eat breakfast includes pancakes, eggs, sausage, coffee and juice. The price is: adults \$5; Seniors 60+ \$4; children 6-12 \$3; children 5 and under free.

For details call 503-749-2910, 503-769-5221 or 503-769-2175.