

Junior Royale Parade salutes Disneyland's 50th anniversary

BY LINDSAY VANHULLE
Record-Eagle staff writer

In honor of Disneyland's 50th anniversary, this year's Touchstone Energy Junior Royale Parade theme will be "A Tribute to Disney."

The theme ties into both current events, with the California theme park's anniversary, and a way to make the parade unique, said Kelley Johnson, Junior Royale Parade director for the National Cherry Festival.

"You have to get creative sometimes, because the theme has to be something that has a lot of crowd appeal," Johnson said. "The schools are building these floats and we have to give them something that they can use their creativity with and make it a fun event."

The parade will be held at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, July 7 in downtown Traverse City, with registration beginning at 4:30 p.m. at F&M Park. First-grade students will get the opportunity to serve as Cherry Festival princes and princesses in the annual program sponsored by PPOM.

The parade is not just celebrating the

theme park, Johnson said — it's also celebrating the life of creator Walt Disney.

"His whole life was spent creating places for children to come and enjoy themselves," he said. "He was just so child-oriented."

Past president Kay Relyea will serve as the parade marshal this year — dressed as Snow White.

Relyea, who was president in 2003, dressed as the character in the Junior Royale Parade that year for a "Dreams and Wishes" theme and was asked to do it again this year.

"I'm told I look like her," she said. "I'm a big fan of Snow White. I always have been, even as a child."

Relyea said she is excited to see the reactions of children and of her 3-year-old granddaughter, who also loves Snow White.

"I love their faces," she said. "I love how excited they get when they see someone they recognize or someone they think they recognize."

"Elementary schools are each given the

broad theme and then asked to come up with their top three float choices," said Mandy DePuy, administrative director for the National Cherry Festival. A total of 31 schools are participating.

"Each school got its first choice for their float. With Disney, there's such a broad base," she said.

Schools chose a variety of Disney-related themes, including movies, Disney villains and Epcot Center.

In choosing the theme, Johnson said he keeps a list of all the Junior Royale Parade themes from the past and looks for something unique.

"It can be kind of daunting at times, coming up with something new and creative every year," he said. "Did that, did that, did that — what can we do that we haven't done yet?"

"The fact that each participating elementary school was awarded its first-choice float theme will help keep it unique and fun," Johnson said. "That's what the key to this is. You have to look at crowd appeal."



Kay Relyea will serve as the Parade Marshal as Snow White.



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