

WILDWOOD DAYS IS ONCE AGAIN A WRAP

Wildwood Days concluded its four-day run on Sunday, August 2, under the leadership of a new duo, married firefighters Cory and Kiley Johnson, who are heading the fire department's fundraising efforts. Here are the winners, and sponsors of the prizes, in competitive events.

BBQ rib cookoff:

1st place: Wally Coppini, 2nd place and People's Choice: Tommy Norton, 3rd place: Big R BBQ

Mavis Amen of Fortuna oversaw this event for the third year, and reports winners received trophies from Ferndale Jewelers, lasered cutting boards from Bells Lazy Heart Studio and custom aprons by Kotas Kreations, all Fortuna businesses.

Fire muster:

Hose Relay – 1st place: Loleta Fire, 2nd place: Rio Grande
Bucket Brigade – 1st place: Rio Grande, 2nd place: Fortuna Fire

Color Run, Adult/Children:

1st place: Juan Ornelas, 16, 2nd place: Chance Garner, 31
1st place: Johnny Allen, 3, 2nd place: Chet Allen, 2

Bocce:

13 teams competed, winners received a cash payout. 1st place: Sid's Got Balls, 2nd place: Bocce Bandits, 3rd place: The Buggers

Parade:

Best use of theme: Rio Dell school, Best overall: Larry Doss' Clydesdales, Best vehicle: Robert Tritten's 66 Nova and Douglas Street Contingency's VW Manx (tie), Chamber's choice: Scotia school. Prizes were provided by Humboldt Redwood Company, Coast Central Credit Union, Redwood Capital Bank, and Renner Petroleum.

Car Show:

Mary Burns once again managed this event with a team of family and friends, whom she thanks for their hard work and generosity. She also thanks Cindy Daetwiler of Ferndale Jewelers for designing the trophies, and those who donated prizes, including Grundman's Sporting Goods, Ray's Quality Cars, O'Reilly's Auto Parts, Patron Kitchen, Hummel Tires, Roger Bradley, JB Fabricators, Hoby's Market, Grey's Construction, Lori Cooks BBQ, and more.

Sixty-seven cars were entered from throughout the region and as far away as Oregon and Sacramento. Winners were: Peoples' choice – sponsored by Automotive Workshop, Rio Dell: Randy Bennett, Fortuna, 2022 Corvette; Participants' Choice – sponsored by Blue Star (Sequoia) Gas, Fortuna: Mike Weekly, Fortuna, 1964 VW Beetle; Peace Officers' Choice – sponsored by Rio Dell Peace Officers Association: Don and Lenor Viggers, Fortuna, 1962 Impala; Fire Chief's Choice – sponsored by Ferndale Jewelers, Fortuna: Deb and Bill Jeffries, Fortuna, 1969 Camaro; Platinum Award – sponsored by Mercer-Fraser Company, Fortuna: Jason Saures, Rio Dell, 1974 Jeep CJ5; Best of Show – sponsored by Kreations, Rio Dell: Brian Anderson, Redway, 1977 Chevy Pickup.

Duck Race:

Winners, from first place to 21st, and their prizes are shown here: Robert Rodoni, \$500; Dave Pengioly, \$200; Lisa Wallan, \$100 (gave back); Jeff Peralta, \$300 from HRC; Karen Bartleson, 4-hour patio boat rental, Ruth Lake Marina; Karen Nessler and Dan Crockett, each won a \$150 fuel card from Town of Scotia; and Sam Bartlett and Dave Pengioly each won a \$50 fuel card from Valley Pacific. Sue Montenegro won two nights' stay at an Air BnB in Rio Dell; Gayle Nourse got a fishing rod and reel from Grundman's Sporting Goods; and Cindy Daetwiler won \$10 gift cards from both Eel River Brewery and Jitter Bean Coffee. Nate McKnight received a \$10 gift card from Jitter Bean; Marilyn Lewis won a cheeseburger dinner for two from DJ's Burger Bar; and Aqua Dam won a CCrane solar radio. Lisa Wallan won a bird house by Mike Jensen and Mark Gillam won a s'mores kit by Stormi Davis. Dustin Deike won coffee and swag from Shotz Coffee; Jeanette Rolff won hummingbird feeders from Mary Burns; and Ethan Schilling won a succulent basket by Hannah Southard.

HALLOWEEN DECORATING CONTEST EXPANDS

The chamber-sponsored Halloween decorating contest is back for a second year, expanding to include businesses as well as residences in Rio Dell and Scotia. Watch for notifications at the chamber website (riodellscotiachamber.org) or Facebook page about signing up and voting!

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Deadline for October newsletter is September 8th.

Call the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce at 707-506-5081 to advertise.

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Firefighting duo tackles new, big challenge

Kiley Johnson is this month's featured firefighter. She and husband Cory (featured in the April issue as Firefighter of the Year) just came off a long shift in one of their new responsibilities - managing Wildwood Days, a large portion of the fundraising effort they are overseeing. "Cory and I decided we wanted to be a part of something bigger for our department," Kiley Johnson said of the choice to tackle this role. "I am sure people thought we were nuts, taking on such a huge project with only a couple of years in the department, but we have a lot of years left to give and train up the next generation, so why not? We both have leadership initiative and qualities, so it was an easy yes when we were asked."

"We are leaning heavily on those who have been around the fundraiser for a long time," she adds. "Chief Heussler, Asst. Chief McKnight, Kurt Rumley, and so many more played a huge role in the success of our first year. Anytime we had a question they were there to lend a hand. I am not huge in public speaking, so Cory has been the face of the event while I have done all the behind the scenes of social media, communication with vendors, permitting, etc."

A lot of the events are already chaired by someone within the department, she adds. "For example; Jesse Bugbee heads bocce, Joseph Sancho heads the fire muster, Shannon Morrill heads kids night and the auction, the list goes on. Additionally, people in the community help, like Derek Long with the Dennis Wendt Softball Tourney, and Mike Howton takes care of the music and bands. Overall, we are very blessed with the support we receive both from the department members and the community!"

She adds that they are surrounded by friends, family and department members who also help with their children, daughter Marleigh, who is four, and son Everett, five months old. "Aside from being a firefighter, Wildwood Days chair, wife and mom, I also work full time as an Emergency 911 dispatcher for the cities of Fortuna, Rio Dell, Ferndale, and Fortuna Fire," Johnson says. "My role in the communication center has definitely fueled my desire to be present in my community. I also enjoy baking (sourdough specifically), hobby crafts like puzzles and cross stitching (granny hobbies, as Cory calls them), reading, fishing, and camping with my family."

She grew up in Carlotta, moving to Rio Dell in 2020. "I joined the department a few months after Cory did, in August, 2023, after our family had a few medical emergencies involving both our daughter and myself. I was fascinated and impressed by the professionalism of the responders, and we found a true fire family and community once Cory joined. I decided I wanted to be a part of the action. While others expected me to join as an Auxiliary member, I wanted a bigger role. It has been one of the best decisions I have made." Noting she had to step back from responding while pregnant and postpartum, "I am glad I was still able to remain active on another level as the WWD chair. I cannot wait to get back to regular call responding though!"



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Fire runs for July 2026:

Medical aid - 44
Traffic collisions - 1
Billable - false alarm
commercial - 5
Haz conditions - 2
Public assists - 3
Vehicle fires - 2
Vegetation fires - 3
Meetings - 1
Special events - 1

Total: 62



September Holidays

4 Labor Day
11 Rosh Hashanah (begins at sundown)
15 National Hispanic Heritage Month begins
20 Yom Kippur (begins at sundown)
22 Autumn Equinox - first day of Fall



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Full-time volunteer finds the center her home

Sarah Cloe is a quiet, efficient presence at the Community Resource Center, seemingly there around the clock. So much so, one assumes she is paid staff. But she's September's volunteer of the month, showing up every weekday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and beyond, helping wherever she can.

"This place saved my life," she says. Cloe (pronounced Clo) does not have a permanent home. "Andrea found me charging my phone late at night outside Dollar General and asked if I needed a ride. I told her I had nowhere to go," she said of her introduction to her resource center colleague, Andrea Edington, 10 months ago. It was the weekend and Edington told her to come to the resource center Monday morning, and she's been volunteering there ever since.

The San Diego native came north with her two daughters, now grown, to escape an abusive relationship years ago, lived in Trinity County awhile, and came to Rio Dell over four years ago. Cloe was working at a hardware store until the day 15 years ago when an injury led to the discovery of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, a group of inherited conditions that affect the body's connective tissues, causing dislocation of joints and deterioration of bones. There is no cure.

Unable to find work because of this disability, Cloe lives in a trailer without utilities, using a flashlight after dark and showering at a friend's apartment. "You can only eat so much cold Spaghettio's," she smiles about the difficulty of the full-time camping life.

"I greet people when they come in so they feel seen," she says of her days at the resource center, and assists with the senior lunches. She's delivered meals in the summer lunch program, sorts donated clothes, and bags up food donated by area stores such as Safeway for people in need of a hand. Bilingual, she helps where translation is needed. "I've learned so much" from center coordinator Sarah Reback and Edington, she says, "who are so kind."

Her case is proceeding through the county where cuts to Section 8 housing have reduced the inventory of housing available, but she is optimistic she will have a place soon. It's what she is going through, but "this is not who I am," she says with a smile.





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Father, son seek to make downtown space accessible to all

Jose Beltran explains his goal for the space between the Neighborhood's Barbershop and EmeraldZ Humboldt County Gifts and Games on Wildwood in Rio Dell, which he has been readying as funds become available. He sees it as a place for meeting, collaboration and art, perhaps a bit like the art gallery that was once at the site of the present resource center. Kids have dropped in and worked on art projects, he notes, pointing out the works of some young locals on the walls. What form the location will ultimately take is a work in progress, he says, because all things take time.



Beltran's son, Patrick Reeves, works on an art project in the space his dad is building, with the help of his cousin, Kadee Wilson.

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