

May 8, 2019

Cottage Grove Sentinel

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Living history coming to The Grove

By CINDY WEELDREYER
SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

Surrounded by children and steeped in 19th century history, Karen Rainsong is a happy and fulfilled woman. Beginning this month, she continues her lifelong dream of offering workshops and summer camps focused on pioneer living from Singing Creek Educational Center's new home in the historic Dr. Snapp House at 360 South River Road.

Rainsong is the founder and volunteer executive director of the Singing Creek Educational Center (SCEC), a nonprofit organization she created in 2015. She is an artist and educator who grew up in Southern California and moved to Oregon 27 years ago to raise her family in "a smaller town with a strong and creative community vibe"



CINDY WHEELDRYER FOR THE SENTINEL

Summer workshops and camps will be offered this summer by Singing Creek Educational Center, offering hand-on history experiences.

"I've always loved kids and nature," Rainsong said. "I saw there was a need in the community for living history programs for kids and I knew we could offer some-

thing unique."

Her fascination with the culture of the Old West led to a surprising genealogical discovery that she and Opal Whitely share a common ancestor: Daniel Boone.

To honor her kinship with Opal, she named her nonprofit after Opal's childhood diary, "The Singing Creek Where the Willows Grow," first published in the 1920s. She said she is delighted to now have her organization located in Opal's hometown.

The mission of SCEC is to inspire children and families toward an appreciation of local history through hands-on learning. Its interactive history programs include school field trips, classes, pioneer summer camps and

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History from Al

several special events throughout the year.

Cottage Grove resident Alice Christensen joined the SCED board last year. When she learned the program had outgrown its present site, she suggested the Dr. Snapp House as a potential new location and arranged a meeting to explore the idea. The historic house, built in 1886, was built by an early local doctor.

Today it is owned and maintained by the Prospectors and Gold Diggers Club.

Club President Tom Munroe said the group has an agreement with the City of Cottage Grove and Lane County to use the house for educational programs.

He said the mission of the Prospectors and Gold Diggers Club is "to prospect better things for Cottage Grove" so having SCEC offering its programs using the house is

a good fit with the mission of both organizations.

"It is important to teach students about our history," Munroe said. "To be successful in the future they need to learn what happened in the past. We want to introduce young people to the traditional values that, sadly, are not as commonplace as they once were."

Rainsong agrees.

"When kids attend our programs it's more than just having fun," she said. "They learn great values such as perseverance, teamwork, honoring elders and respecting each other and the environment,"

She says her committed volunteers and a few paid staff passionately share their love of nature and history with approximately 1,000 children and adults each year in meaningful and inspiring ways.

To introduce the Center to its new community and to promote its upcoming summer camps, the SCEC will create a living history village in the "Bohemia City" Kids Zone in Coiner Park during the Bohemia Mining Days festival, July 18-20.

"We will offer hands-on pioneering activities at a multitude of booths featur-

ing weaving, games, crafts and petting a horse that paints pictures," Rainsong said. "Some of the booths will have a small fee for the activity to help our organization raise money to fund the center's ongoing expenses."

BMD Kids Zone Coordinator Misty Burris is delighted with the partnership and says it is a good fit for the festival, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

"Karen and Leslie (Graymer) have so many great ideas to provide a fun, interactive experience for children and families with lots of hands-on activities," Burris said. "It's a great fit with the BMD Board's commitment to increase the cultural heritage aspects of the festival."

The summer camps include visits from costumed interpreters like the medicine woman, the spinners, the trapper, "grandma" and more. SCEC offers monthly home school classes for groups from September through May.

Some of its favorite activities include butter churning, grain grinding, sewing, making puppets, learning pioneer games and songs, washing clothes, gardening, herbal walks and trading

with the trapper.

This year's camps will be: Pioneer Settlers Camp, July 8-12 and repeats Aug. 5-9. A Lewis and Clark Adventure Camp is planned for Aug. 19-23. They are held on Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for children ages 6-10 years old. Boys and girls are asked to bring their own lunches and a water bottle.

The cost is \$215 per week with a sibling discount available.

SCEC is a small organization with a \$25,000 budget to pay staff and cover basic operating expenses. Rainsong said they are looking for volunteers to serve on the center's board and committees. They welcome donations to help with operating expenses and to provide scholarships so all students can enjoy an opportunity to travel back in time.

More information is available at www.singingcreekcenter.org. To inquire about an internship, if someone has a particular skill to share or wants to financially contribute to the Center, they can call 541-968-1986 or send an email to director@singingcreekcenter.org.