

Off to the races

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Mountain Resource Center hosts second Derby Daze

By Corinne Westeman

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And they're off!



Chancey Bush

Kris Cooper, owner of Anchorage Farm, adjusts a wreath around one of her horses during the 2nd annual Mountain Derby Daze fundraiser at Anchorage Farm in Pine Saturday, May 6, 2017.

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The veteran horse is leading the pack, but the newcomer is following close behind.

The finish line is coming up quickly. Who will win?

Three children raced to the end, their stick hobby horses in their hands.

On the other side of the stable, women adorned in fancy hats take their pictures in the 'winner's circle,' as music played in the nearby riding arena.

As a way to take part in the Kentucky Derby with a "mountain flair," the Mountain Resource Center hosted its second annual Derby Daze fund-raiser at Pine's Anchorage Farm on Saturday afternoon, with more than 125 people — couples, families and groups of friends — turning out to show their support and derby spirit.

Women sported large hats, similar to those at the Kentucky Derby, and each was as unique as its wearer — flowers and feathers; mint leaves with a bottle of bourbon; a Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket; large-brimmed and cowboy hats. Some were made by MRC volunteers and available with a \$10 donation, while others were homemade.

Katie Linkner of Evergreen, who had entered the best derby hat contest, said she had decorated her black cowboy hat with vines, a birds' nest and a silvery dove-like bird that she'd found among her Christmas ornaments. The whole thing had taken her about five or 10 minutes, she commented.

Linkner said Derby Daze had provided the perfect “authentic” atmosphere to view the sporting event, which she tries to watch every year. She liked being near a barn, smelling the horses, and seeing people walk around in their cowboy boots and hats, Linkner described, adding that it was “fun and cool.”

And that is precisely what the center had hoped, organizers Lorye McLeod and Kristina Sherwood of MRC stated.

The event was held in Evergreen’s Elks Lodge last year, but McLeod and Sherwood said they were grateful to owners Jim and Kris Cooper for donating the space at Anchorage Farm, as well as the several local businesses and organizations that sponsored the event.

The event included a live nine-piece band — Ruth Israel and the band Once Removed — as well as a silent auction, kids’ activities, and the opportunity to take pictures with one of Anchorage Farm’s horses, just like the derby winners. There was also plenty of time for dancing, face-painting, horseshoes and corn hole.

Couples Dan and Sam Sheffield and Janet and Bill Tettemer, all of Conifer, were playing corn hole as it began sprinkling a little mid-afternoon.

Dan said he’d heard about the event through an app on his phone that helps people get involved in local events, and he and Sam had invited the Tettemers to come along. The couples said they were happy to support the MRC, and enjoy watching the Kentucky Derby every year.

Sam and Janet pointed out their hats, which they said had been made by the MRC volunteers, and Sam added that she thought there was a really good turnout for the event.

After a hobby horse race, Eva, 5, and Gianna Leone, 7, were playing with bubbles next to the face-painting booth. Their dad, G.C. Leone, said the family had driven up from Aurora to attend after they heard about the MRC’s event from family members.

The girls said they had been excited to spend the afternoon at a horse farm and had enjoyed racing hobby horses, making bubbles and taking pictures with horses the most. Gianna mentioned that she really enjoyed the prizes.

The Leone sisters were invited by the Park County and Evergreen Rodeo royalty members to play musical chairs inside the riding arena. Eva took second place and picked out a coloring book as her prize with a big smile on her face.

With the mostly cooperative weather and a higher-than-anticipated turnout, McLeod and Sherwood estimated that the event would raise about \$10,000 to \$15,000 for MRC. Last year’s Derby Daze raised about \$5,500 and had about 40 attendees, the two clarified, but they expected to raise two or three times that amount with the larger crowd.

Until the next Derby Daze, the center will be always dreaming.