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Lucas Strauss-Wise, right, 9, of Bend, dances around the Maypole with his classmates Saturday afternoon at the Waldorf School of Bend's May Faire Festival. Students at the school practice each year for the Maypole dance, which is a traditional celebration that takes place in many European countries.

Photos by **Melissa Jansson / The Bulletin**

## It's not every day you get to say, 'Hurray for May!'

### Spring celebrated in style at Waldorf School event

By **Erin Golden / The Bulletin**

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This article has been [corrected](#).

As a soft mist fell from clouds floating overhead, a small group of children picked up long red and white ribbons tied to a tall wooden pole and began to dance and sing, weaving the ribbons into a checkerboard pattern at the top of the pole.

Nearby, a few musicians sat on hay bales, strumming guitars, while children wearing crowns made of willows joined in on flutes. Around the dancers, parents and teachers stood in a circle, some singing along to the music.

The performance, which took place outside the Waldorf School of Bend, was the kickoff of a daylong event featuring food, music and activities ranging from face painting to rock wall climbing. Held each year on the first

featuring food, music and activities ranging from face painting to rock-wall climbing. Held each year on the first Saturday in May, the private school's May Faire Festival is a family-oriented celebration of spring that usually attracts more than 100 people from around Central Oregon.

Though the free event was open to the public, most of those in attendance were Waldorf teachers, students and parents. Some parents, including Claire Spampinato, 39, of Bend, said the festival provides a unique opportunity for families to join together for low-key activities that are all about creativity, rather than consumerism.

"One of the main emphases of the school is that it's not commercial — it's all homemade, natural fun," said Spampinato, who has a preschooler at Waldorf.

Paul Carlson, the school's administrator, said Waldorf's 75 students spend a lot of time learning about nature and the outdoors, so the May Faire celebration provides a way for them to share some of the experience with their parents, siblings and other members of the community. He said the Maypole dance — a spring tradition in many European countries — is also a tradition at other Waldorf schools around the country.

"We're honoring spring," he said. "We're very connected to the Earth, and we have a respect for the seasons and a respect for Mother Earth."

After the dancers completed their performance, visitors to the festival sampled food and browsed tables of handmade crafts. In one area, a few children tried their hand at making wreaths from fresh flowers.

As she helped her 12-year-old daughter, Mikayla, pin carnations to a wreath, Jennifer Mormance, 40, of Bend, said the festival is something her family looks forward to every year. Mormance said her daughter doesn't attend school at Waldorf, but she likes the event's focus on simple, low-tech crafts and activities.

"Maybe 'unplugged' is the best way to describe it," she said.

Brian Caldwell, 32, of Bend, was also working on a flower wreath with his 5-year-old daughter, Lily, who is in kindergarten at Waldorf. Caldwell said he also appreciates the idea of families getting together outdoors to celebrate the changing seasons.

"For me, it's like getting back to nature," he said.

A few of the school's older students were manning tables covered with handmade crafts for sale. Fifth-grader Emma Belden, 11, was selling beaded sun catchers and pencil sketches of animals she'd done in her free time. Emma said she was excited about running a craft booth for the first time and about participating in some of the festival's other activities.

"There's so many fun things, and mostly you don't have to pay for everything," she said.

Students said the festival is something they look forward to every year. And every year, several said, it gets a little bit easier to do the event's signature activity, the Maypole dance.

"It takes a little while, but once you get the hang of it, it's pretty easy," said Briley Johnson, 12, of Bend. "It's just up and down, up and down."

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