

Mardi Gras celebration returns to Mount Angel

Event acts as major fundraiser for Holy Family Academy

BY DANIELLE KUEHNEL

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MOUNT ANGEL-Before the Catholics of Mount Angel quiet down for 40 days and 40 nights of abstinence in preparation for Easter, Holy Family Academy brings the lavish New Orleans Mardi Gras affair to the Oktoberfest Building on Saturday, Feb. 17.

The Mardi Gras celebration is an annual favorite for the school and the surrounding areas, and acts as a major fundraiser for the independent Catholic grade school.

In past years, Holy Family Academy has raised anywhere between \$16,000 and \$24,000 to go toward teachers' salaries and other expenses - quite a feat, considering that the school currently includes 15 families and 36 students.

"It would be wonderful if we could break \$20,000 this year," Mardi Gras Coordinator and Holy Family Academy parent Mary Belleque said.

While admission to the event is free, patrons can partake in funny-money Monte Carlo games hosted by Wild Bill's Casino Company, an auction, raffle and even submit their names for door prizes. The evening also includes a homemade dinner, made by Belleque and other coordinators.

This year, the raffle and the silent auction will include items such as a Traeger Grill, an outdoor garden bench, a patio set, an outdoor basketball hoop, garden items, a Nintendo Wii and gift certificates.

"Every family from the school has to bring in at least 15 contacts," Belleque said. "Everyone is important. Everyone is doing a lot of hard work, and the event really pulls the community together."

Since Holy Family Academy is an independent Catholic school (not affiliated with a parish, and does not receive financial support from the Archdiocese), it is important to have successful fundraisers in order to keep the doors open.

"I'm really tired but really excited because we have a really great group of parents and kids," Belleque said. "We do this to keep the doors of the school open. It's the best of both worlds: the atmosphere of a small school combined with extremely talented teachers educating our kids."