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mer executive director of the Calaveras Winegrape Alliance. Invitations for the parade have been sent to previous participants; if you think you or your group owns enough green clothing to participate, call 728-2304.

Jenny Baxter, Sierra Lodestar columnist and owner of Yogurt Your Way in Murphys (and Martell!), has signed on to help the Spice Tin's Patty Shultz to organize and promote the Win a Trip to Ireland raffle. In addition to the grand prize, there will be three enticing vacation packages offered and tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20. They will soon be available all over town.

"It takes a lot of good people doing important work to make Murphys Irish Day the success it has become," Heryford said. "We are fortunate to have such a good crew."

Calaveras County is lucky to have so many individuals willing to roll up their sleeves to make an event this large a reality.

And speaking of Murphys, if your sweet

tooth is ready for the impending arrival of the day for hearts and flowers, chocolate has no doubt made an appearance in your taste buds' dreams. From 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday at the First Congregational Church in Murphys, a Heavenly Chocolate Festival promises to give you a buzz. I bet that three hours of sampling chocolate in all its favored forms will brighten everyone's day, just in time for Cupid's arrows to fly on Feb. 14. I promise that you will not find me face-up on the table at the chocolate fountain, drinking myself senseless (or into a coma!).

Mr. Caen might have loved his precious San Francisco, but I love the people who gather together to make our smaller communities so memorable. From big shindigs with parades and parties to intimate affairs of the heart, we know where it's at!

Reach Mike Taylor at [mtaylor@sierralodestar.com](mailto:mtaylor@sierralodestar.com).

## Heavenly Chocolate Festival

**WHEN:** 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday

**WHERE:** First Congregational Church of Murphys, Church and Algiers streets, Murphys

**COST:** \$10 for adults and \$5 for 7 and under

**MORE INFO:** 728-8098 or 728-3141



# To send kids to school, go whole hog



## Tuolumne Talk

Harmony Wheeler

**B**uy a pig at the fair. That might not be the most common way to raise money for scholarships, but it worked for the Emigrant Basin Pack and Social Club 13 years ago when the group decided to find a way to support the Mother Lode community. Small in number but large in spirit, the group packs horses and mules into remote mountain and wilderness areas for trips that last as long as a week.

"Discussions were stated amongst a few members to begin with that we could add an additional dimension to our organization," original member Joel Casler says. "We had several members who were and are involved in other community service clubs. We kind of put our heads together and thought of some way to give to our community. We all participated in some sort of community involvement individually. Why not direct a portion of our group that way?"

Between the various members, they managed to raise enough money to purchase a pig at the Mother Lode Fair's livestock auction.

"Now what to do with the meat?" Casler continued. "A little discussion and instead of just dividing it up amongst ourselves, why not (have) a dinner for the community?"

Then we thought, 'What if we make a profit? How can we make that benefit the community as well?'

"That first year we fed around 80 and made a very minimal profit. With that, we gave a nice scholarship to a local girl. The event was a great deal of fun and everyone was very supportive."

In the following years, the club added music and dancing for additional entertainment and participant numbers grew to around 300. Now in its third location, the dinner will be held Saturday at the Elk's Lodge in Sonora. A no-host bar opens at 5 p.m., with the barrel-roasted pork dinner served at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$20 per person and can be purchased by calling 532-8283 or 768-126. Keith Keenom's Mountain Fever Band provides live country music to dance to following the meal.

"Proceeds go to buying pigs from local kids at the Junior Livestock Auction at the Mother Lode Fair, then cooking and serving those pigs at the scholarship dinner with proceeds from that going to scholarships at local high schools," original club member and leader Mark Alderson said. "Last year we awarded six \$500 scholarships to high school seniors."

Casler pointed to the importance of supporting 4-H and Future Farmers of America clubs that have been in the area for many years.

"A big part of those wonderful youth groups is the education in raising an animal or some other

involvement in the Mother Lode Fair," he said. "The fair is without a doubt one of the largest events of the year in the county. One of the biggest parts of that is the annual livestock auction. Without members of the community going to the auction and purchasing the animals that the kids raise, the event would cease to exist. We could purchase the food for our dinner at a greatly reduced price (elsewhere). By doing that, there would be two to three animal raisers who would have to hope for buyers from elsewhere at the fair. There is a benefit to a grocery store or meat packing plant, but not for our local youth. Purchasing animals from kids at the fair is step one in our program. By having a great function and giving scholarships to five to six kids is step two."

Casler says the club hopes the number of scholarships it awards will increase and that the community will continue to support the annual dinner to help make that possible. As an extra benefit, Casler said supporters get treated to a meal prepared by the club, members of which have gained a great reputation for their cooking skills. Plus, diners can know that 100 percent of the money raised by the voluntary group will go into the community.

Members include Mark "Skeeter" Alderson, Casler, Steve "Slim" Markley, Jim Haughy, Mike Day, Bob Herbert, Mike Machado, Vere Ellinwood, Ed Bush, Bruce Johnson and George Smith. The event also gets support from Buck Bishop, Marty Smith and Colin Peterson.

"We all get along well and enjoy

## Scholarship Dinner

**WHEN:** 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday

**WHERE:** Sonora Elk's Lodge, 100 Elk Drive, Sonora

**COST:** \$20 each at 532-8283 or 768-1126

what we are doing," Casler said. "We come from a lot of different and some similar backgrounds. I think one of the most important reasons our group and functions have been successful is that we are friends first

and are working for the same result."

Send your Tuolumne County events to Harmony Wheeler at [hwheeler@sierralodestar.com](mailto:hwheeler@sierralodestar.com) and [mtaylor@sierralodestar.com](mailto:mtaylor@sierralodestar.com).

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