

Murphys Irish Day

WHEN: 8 a.m. pancake breakfast, parade at 11 a.m. and festivities till 5 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Main Street, Murphys

COST : Free

MORE INFO: murphysirishdays.org



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centennial. Also scheduled to amble along the parade route are Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Murphys 4-H members, Murphys Preschool, Studio 4 Dance Studio hoofers and the Michelson Extended Day program. Children are cute as can be

dolled up in green and grinning from ear to ear.

Another highlight of the party is the drawing for a trip for two to the fabled land of shamrocks and leprechauns; you might win a trip to Ireland. Association members will be selling tickets all the way till the drawing at 4 p.m. The grand prize

includes round-trip air to Dublin or Shannon, a rental car, hotel stay on arrival and five nights in a variety of bed and breakfast locations sprinkled throughout the country. Specially created vacation prize packages are awarded to three other winners.

The first includes two nights' lodging at Murphys Garden Cottages, breakfast at the Murphys Hotel, dinner at The Kitchen, wine and food pairing with Val Du Vino, golf for two at Sequoia Woods Country Club in Arnold, an outdoor activity thanks to Sierra Nevada Adventure Co. and an embroidered tote and T-shirts from Bandera. Another package includes two nights in a vacation home from Murphys Vacation Rentals, lunch at Mineral, dinner at Grounds, golf at Sequoia Woods, part of a Courtwood Wine Tour, a \$100 gift certificate to Creative Cookware and the tote and T-shirts.

The third prize package features two nights at Milfiore Historic Country Retreat, golf at Sequoia Woods, dinner at the Murphys Hotel, wine and food pairing from Frog's Tooth Winery, lunch at Magnolia, massages and facials from Jillian's Day Spa and a tote and T-shirts.

Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20 and are sold at The Spice Tin, Yogurt Your Way, Tanner Vineyards, La Folia Winery, Marisolio Olive Oil, Jillian's Day Spa, NEXT-Upscale Resale, Murphys Hotel, Sierra Nevada Adventure Co. and Tea An' Tiques in advance or up and down Main Street Saturday. Winners don't have to be at the event to claim their prizes.

Weather permitting, I'm told, paid parking will be available close to the event off of Big Trees Road and Main Street and free parking is available at the Black Bart

Playhouse lot on Algiers Street after parade participants clear out of the place. Handicap parking is at the Arbors parking lot off Jones and Scott streets. It's very important to remember that there will be no parking from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Main, Church, Algiers, Scott and Jones streets or Sheep Ranch or Six Mile roads. If you're like me and generally take Murphys Grade Road to town, this is the day to take Highway 4 instead; you'll avoid a lot of headache.

Don your "Kiss me, I'm Irish" lapel pins, load up the little ones and get to the shindig. It's a great party that remembers those who founded the town and really, I think a few other towns in California are green with envy; they can't promise this much fun.

Reach Mike Taylor at mtaylor@sierralodestar.com.

Party with St. Patrick on Saturday

Due to early spring weather, St. Patrick's Day fits right in with the Mother Lode this year. The color of green abounds in our lovely hills and mountains. One could easily say that the hills are alive with the "Sound of Music" (I have enough experience with the musical to make fun with it here). Highways 108, 120 and 49 serve as gorgeous scenic routes. The leprechauns may be after gold, but maybe some of our green will attract them. I have my share of memories setting up traps to catch the little guys in my younger years.

If last weekend's Celtic Faire did-



Courtesy photo

Dan Engle, back left, Nic Caciappo, Mike De Smidt, Autumn Rhodes, front left, Will Wheeler and Darcy Noonan perform Saturday in Sonora.

and the meal priced at \$10.

Advance tickets are required and may be obtained by calling Sona Dixon at 533-0156 or email info@sonoraemblem124.com.

Twain Harte sports the St. Patrick's Day Shooter Scooter Relay and Poker Run on Saturday. The relay starts at the Twain Harte Golf Club, with each team competing for the fastest time; each team supplies its own non-motorized scooter and contestants follow a pre-

Tuolumne Talk

Harmony Wheeler



set race route. The winning team receives a trophy with the date and the team name engraved on it. Prizes will be given for the best costumes or team uniforms. There will also be a poker run in which each team member picks up cards at stops and the best hand wins a cash prize.

But if we truly want to capture a leprechaun, we'll need to add some-

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St. Patrick's Day Ceili

WHEN: 7 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Sonora Opera Hall, 250 S. Washington St., Sonora

TICKETS : \$15 in advance at Bob's Greenley Pharmacy, Mountain Bookshop and Sonora Music and \$17 at the door

MORE INFO: 768-7482 or nic@bigworld-agency.com

n't do the trick, perhaps together we can catch a few leprechauns with some of the "green" and cultural events we have going on this weekend. In addition to the green grass of the country, the annual Home and Garden Show offers plenty of greenery Saturday and Sunday at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds. I don't know why, but when I lived in Modesto as a child, I always looked

forward to going to the Modesto Home and Garden Show with my mom; I guess there was some element of excitement there, and, as an adult, who doesn't love free entertainment, if you can call it that.

The Sonora Emblem Club will hold its 10th annual St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner at the Sonora Elks Lodge Saturday, too, with the doors opening at 5 p.m.

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thing that more befits St. Patrick and the Celtic culture to our weekend. A St. Patrick's Day Ceili (pronounced kay-lee, a party) at the Sonora Opera Hall ought to do the trick. Nic Caciappo, the celebration's organizer, said the event will include a corned beef and cabbage meal as people arrive – the doors open at 6 p.m. – and music by the Irish band Kilty Town, which begins at 7 p.m. Caciappo said the band will provide strictly high-energy traditional Irish jigs and reels, and Irish step dancers will also make appearances. After the performance, the floor will open

for attendees to either play their own instruments or dance and socialize.

Caciappo said he wants to create an environment in the opera hall similar to that of an Irish pub and what you would find people doing at a pub on St. Patrick's Day. He himself visited a different pub in a different town every night during the week he spent in Ireland several years ago. There, he heard live traditional Irish music created by patrons at every pub.

"There are a lot of people doing St. Patrick's Day celebrations, and too often it's not really Irish," Caciappo said. "Often, it's people who have

no idea of the culture of Ireland or St. Patrick or Irish music. That's why I decided to do something that was very cultural and related to what the Irish people would do in Ireland on St. Patrick's night."

In the past, Caciappo has worked booking acts for the Sonora Celtic Faire and bringing top Irish bands to the State Theatre in Modesto. He has been involved with promoting and booking concerts since age 19, and he said it has always been more for fun than for money. He cares most about keeping the magic of the music alive, and that's truer than ever when it comes to his love of

traditional Irish music.

"So much of Irish music has been watered down or mixed up with things like Celtic new age and Celtic punk, Irish punk or Irish rock," Caciappo said. "None of this has to do with St. Patrick's Day. Not to be negative about any of those things. You really have to be aggressive about keeping real Irish music alive."

Caciappo said he loves how traditional Irish music makes people happy and provides a good time.

"It's happy music, and people love to be around it when it's being performed, especially in pubs in

Ireland," he continued. "That's what music was meant to be. The good thing is that St. Patrick's Day falls on a Saturday this year, and I've really wanted to do something that was a big concert and party at the Sonora Opera Hall that's never been done before on St. Patrick's Day itself. The Celtic Faire is always the week before. I wanted to organize something where people could go on the night of St. Patrick's Day."

Send your Tuolumne County events to Harmony Wheeler at hwheeler@sierralodestar.com and mtaylor@sierralodestar.com.

The blooms are ahead of spring, but still special

Our calendars tell us that next Wednesday is the first day of spring, but after a seemingly endless fall, a few much needed storms and another big dose of sunshine, wildflower blooms began popping up in late February this year. These haven't been the brilliant displays we're sure to seeing in a few weeks, but they've been nonetheless noticeable.

First to burst onto the green scene were – as is typical for this area – the buckeye, oak and almond trees. Although these trees are obviously not wildflowers, their unbelievable neon green and vibrant white blossoms added a nice touch to our drives along the foothills' highways.

In the first week of March, alongside nearly tropical climates at elevations near 2,000 feet, small bursts of life began to spring up on the

sunny south-facing slopes. Our standard wildflower walks – including portions of the Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail, Red Hills and Table Mountain – were sprinkled with green grasses, lush mosses, colorful lichens and even a few patches of red and yellow from early blooming wildflowers.

Some of the most obvious splashes of color this early season have come from the deep red blooms of a flower called Indian paintbrush. Although the flowers are an atypical pinkish shade this season – most likely due to a severely dry winter – they still manage to catch the eye and give us a hint of the spring colors yet to come.

On March 4 I joined fellow Sierra Lodestar contributor Joel Metzger at Tuolumne's Table Mountain for a bit of climbing, some wild chasm

scrambling and some spectacular views of this season's early wildflower blooms. Winding our way up the steep paths along the formation's western slope, we encountered some truly unique and flourishing terrain. A long day of roped climbing, some potentially not-so-safe rope-free climbs and endless photographic opportunities added up to a perfect way to jump-start this spring season.

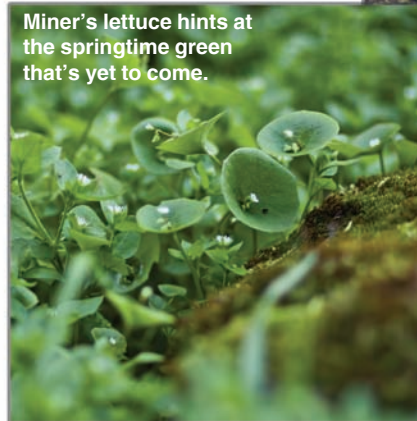
Tying into a rope and scaling the vertical walls of Table Mountain, or scrambling through the cliff's impressive fissures, is probably the least likely way many might view this area's springtime blooms. But if you've ever met Joel, you know that he doesn't like to take the easy

way out – or up. I've been rock climbing for 16 years. Still, I experienced some pretty serious vertigo when wedging myself up the massive fissures on Table Mountain's western wall.

The most common (and safest) way to get to the top of Table Mountain is via the Grant's Crossing Trail, a well-defined path


from the end of paved Shell Road outside Jamestown. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has installed

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Photos by Dean Fleming

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