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Emily Skaar, Emma Hampton and Hannah McCulloch of Avery Middle School; Crystal Houle, Kacee Harding, Diana Westphal and Suzanne Gallaher of Mark Twain Elementary School; and Savannah Rose, McKenzie Steffes, Nicole Renfroe, Haylei Bolton, Hannah Bolton and Alexis Fowler of Toyon Middle School. The winner is announced at Saturday's event at the fire station and she is welcomed by the rest of the county during the Miss Calaveras Pageant on Thursday, May 17 at the Calaveras County Fair.

But Saturday's shindig isn't only about crowning new royalty; it's a head start for youngsters who can't wait to jump frogs, too. Kids ("of all ages," a release says) can jump a frog for \$1 throughout the event. You can bring your own Olympic leaper or select one from those that will be provided at the firehouse. (Honestly, I have considered before how much fun it might be to be a croaker who got picked up for a couple of weeks of relaxation interrupted by a few moments of jumping. The frogs collected to serve as "extra hires" for the fair really seem to live the life of Riley – kept in climate-controlled containers housed underneath the main stage at, befittingly, Frogtown. You can – and should – make it a point to visit the Frog Hotel at the fair, even if it's

Junior Miss Calaveras and Junior Frog Jump

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Altaville-Melones Fire Department, Monte Verde Street, Angels Camp

COST: Free to attend

MORE INFO: 736-4461 or 736-8067

just to cool down during a warm May afternoon.)

Anyway – my amphibious aspirations aside – youngsters can jump for \$1 a try on Saturday, no matter whose frog is employed. The best part is, this is an officially sanctioned jump, so the winner gets to appear onstage during the Grand Finals of the Frog Jump Sunday, May 20 to try and beat the rest of the hoppers who will be in town. Regardless, the asso-



File photos

Eva Darby tries to get her frog motivated at the 2011 Junior Frog Jump.



2011 Junior Miss Calaveras Kodie Harding gives one of her subjects a kiss.

ciation has assured me that the first 125 frog jumpers Saturday will receive a prize, no matter how far their frogs fly.

For those not in the know, the Frog Jump's rules are fairly straightforward. Each frog must fit on the starting pad – an 8-inch piece of green that seems to travel the world leading leapers to Calaveras County – before it hops thrice. The third jump is marked and then the distance the frog ventured from the pad is measured and recorded. It's great if your frog wants to bolt away from you, you see, because three successive hops away from the pad mean a greater distance

from that starting point. I've seen many a frog jockey dismayed when their hopper hefts his body into the air for an incredible distance, only to reverse gears and return toward the launch pad on another hop during the Grand Finals.

There will be other children's games at Saturday's event and a chicken-in-a-barrel lunch (or dinner if you feel like saving your plate or drive up for a to-go order) is offered for \$10 per person. Those tickets are only available from firefighters and there is a limited number; I'd say you should stop by the station if you've really got to have some of this tasty chicken for your dinner

Saturday, only a few may be left for purchase by that time.)

Another fun activity is sure to be the photo booth, where would-be firefighters can don their gear for a picture, or young leapers can pucker up and smooch their frog for a photo.

It's that wonderful time of year when we get to be green inside and out; when frogs entice us to the fairgrounds and we all get to be little kids for just a few minutes. Lace up your Air Hopper Nikes, spritz some ice-cold water on your bumpy skin and start jumping!

Reach Mike Taylor at mtaylor@sierralodestar.com.

Round-up queen reigns over more than the rodeo

I don't talk about my pageant years much; the image of a beautiful queen in crown and sash doesn't quite match up with my current body image. But while my younger years were full of "Toddlers and Tiaras" drama, they also gave me a pride in myself that I couldn't find at school or in my parents' constant encouragement. Representing a title and a community cultivates a feeling of distinction and importance.

Sonora's own pageant queen will represent the foothills throughout California during the next year as the Mother Lode Round-up Queen. Regal in more than beauty, she must represent herself with solid speaking skills in interviews and horsemanship skills in the arena and must act as a spokeswoman in public.

"The rodeo queen is the first face of the rodeo," said Janice Gray, co-chair for the 2012 Mother Lode Round-up Queen Pageant. "She

represents the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Posse, the sport of rodeo and our community, so it's very important to find someone who is well spoken, a great horsewoman, carries herself well, has good moral standards and can answer rodeo and agriculture-related questions."

Gray described the weekend rodeo as the homecoming weekend of the Sonora area, noting extra events like the annual parade and pointing to the importance of celebrating the Western lifestyle. Round-up activities existed long before rodeos were organized into entertainment. Cattlemen performed round-ups as a necessary part of their livelihood.

Sonora's own annual rodeo has existed since 1916. The Round-up Queen Pageant found its place at the rodeo in 1959, and just last weekend, Taylor Howell, 17, Layne

Tuolumne Talk

Harmony Wheeler



Olson, 18, and Trisha Berg, 17, competed for the Round-up Queen crown. (Because of Sierra Lodestar's print date, we couldn't wait to get you the results here.) In addition to the actual competition, each girl had to sell 200 tickets to the rodeo, thus raising money for the fund that produces the Mother Lode Round-up, as well as raising money for the six scholarships the group gives away to agriculture-related students in Tuolumne County. The

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winning queen receives a \$2,000 scholarship in addition to her queen buckle and tiara, the use of a horse trailer for a year, a saddle and related tack and custom-made chaps.

This year's queen and her runner-up "posse" appears at the Mother Lode Round-up rodeo this weekend. The queen will officiate over drawings and help with events. But while many of the queen's duties are based locally, Gray said the community also holds much pride in what the queen does outside of Sonora.

"At this time, we have three past queens holding rodeo titles in California who will go on to the California Rodeo contest," Gray said. "(Queens) travel throughout the state, go to other rodeos as visiting royalty and ride in the grand entries, which also gives our rodeo a plug."

Gray said she enjoys watching the girls grow each year.

"I have stayed involved because I enjoy helping the girls achieve new goals and strengths," she said. "They tap into places they didn't even know existed."

Events at the 55th annual Mother Lode Round-up include a band review on Wednesday, the traditional Calcutta on Thursday, a parade and dance on Saturday, and Mother's Day Breakfast, Cowboy Church and Wrangler Family Day at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds on Sunday. The rodeo takes place on Saturday at 2 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m., with a Kiddie Rodeo at 12:30 p.m. Sunday. For a full schedule of events, visit motherloderoundup.com.

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

Mother Lode Round-up

WHEN: Band Review, 6 p.m. Wednesday; Calcutta, 6 p.m. Thursday; Parade, 10 a.m. Saturday; Rodeo, 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

WHERE: Band Review at Sonora High; Calcutta at the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Posse Grounds, Rawhide Road, outside Jamestown; Parade on Washington Street, Sonora; Rodeo at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds, 220 Southgate Drive (off Highway 49), Sonora

COST: Parade is free; Rodeo is \$18 for adults and \$7 for children; Mother's Day Breakfast is \$7

MORE INFO: motherloderoundup.com

Future Farmers have a proud past

Our youth and agriculturalists have several opportunities for learning and promoting the business of agriculture. There is the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4H for the youngsters, and the Grange for the adults.

The FFA was first conceived in 1928 as a way to bring students, educators and agricultural businesses together. Its first conference was held in Kansas City, Mo., where 33 students represented 18 states. The organization grew rapidly, despite the subsequent economic hardships in the country at the time. Even at the height of the Depression it was recognized that a society's solidity lay in its agriculture. From that meager start, the FFA has grown nationwide to include millions of young people who wish to pursue careers in agribusiness. The only dip in participation was during World War II, when so many young members served in the armed forces that FFA activities were temporarily curtailed.

United States presidents have spoken at the conventions and have hosted delegates at the White House. Since 1933, FFA conventions have been colored by the blue corduroy jackets that are so recognizable. The corn-gold emblem on the



Bonnie Miller

Mining the Past

back depicts the wise owl on the plow.

The FFA sponsors competitions and gives multiple awards that recognize students for their proficiency in fields like leadership, agricultural mechanics, public speaking and agri-science.

In 1969, the FFA opened membership to girls. Today there are more than 500,000 active members that represent more than 7,000 active chapters across the country. The organization has raised more than \$10 million for various educational and charitable programs. With the motto, "Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve," the young future farmers cannot help but grow into responsible adults.

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Free Community Lecture

1 in every 6 people will have a stroke What YOU know can save a life

When it comes to stroke, every second counts. Join us for a free community lecture to learn the top health risk factors, stroke signs and symptoms and what we can do to help reduce the long-term effects of this leading cause of disability. Also, find out about the resources available for life after stroke.

Stroke Educational Event

Thursday, May 17

4:30 – 6 pm

Sutter Amador Outpatient Services Center
Mountain and Meadow Conference Rooms
100 Mission Boulevard, Jackson CA 95642

Presented by:

Richard Atkinson, M.D., Neurologist and Director of Neuroscience Education
Ron Hood, M.D., SAH Emergency Department Stroke Champion
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