

PIRATES RAID SCHOOL GYM!

Buccaneers make off with booty at Klickitat fundraiser

By Jeanie Senior

It's kind of hard to see the small town of Klickitat, tucked deep in the Klickitat River canyon, as a hotbed of piracy.

Unless, that is, you visit Klickitat in mid-March for the Pirate Carnival, and find the school gym awash in buccaneers large and small.

This was the third year for the carnival, which is sponsored by the Klickitat School Parent Teachers Organization (PTO).

By all accounts, it was the biggest event so far.

One indicator of numbers: Karen Schlangen's clam chowder sold out in 90 minutes.

"It went like wildfire," says PTO President Debbie Pyle, who came up with the pirate idea about

three years ago. "We were sitting around the table and I said, 'Hey, guys, what do you think about a pirate carnival?' There were some giggles, and after that it was like, 'Oh my gosh.'"

The number of people taking part, and the activities offered, have grown each year, says Debbie, who attended in full pirate's regalia as Captain Blackswallow. She admits she is enthusiastic about pirates.

"I keep telling people, 'You guys do not have to go buy a pirate costume, use your imagination,'" Debbie says. "You see all these different concoctions. That's what makes it fun. I say, see, it's OK to have fun, to go be a big kid."

The PTO used profits from last year's Pirate Carnival to bring in the Missoula Children's Theater, which cast children from Klickitat schools in a production of "The Princess and the Pea."

But making money isn't the only aim of the PTO.

"We like to offer free or low-cost things, where people can come in and enjoy themselves and not have to spend money," Debbie says. "In a tight economy, it's hard to have enjoyable things

for your kids. We always try to focus on something to offer to the community, and kids, where it doesn't cost or is very affordable."

Carnival volunteers put together the games, which included a glittering treasure chest of goods, a treasure dig, a ship's brig, a cannonball challenge, a gypsy tent and a cannonball roll. There also were costume contests and an array of prizes.

"Every year we add something," Debbie says, noting that PTO parent Allie Spino came up with the idea of the gypsy tent. "We just let people run with it. We tell them, 'If you've got a great idea, go for it. You guys just have fun and figure it out.' That's what makes it fun."

A long list of local business owners sponsored the event, donating food, gift certificates and merchandise.

"Because we try to focus on the community and the benefit of the kids, we get a lot of support," Debbie says. "We're not just asking for money for the PTO, we're trying to put a positive spin on the effect on the people and the kids. We're not just trying to make a nickel. If we do make one, great. If not, we still had a fun time."

"I want to commend the people and the PTO because this would not happen without all these people helping out." ■



Above, X marks the spot for buried treasure in the Klickitat school gym. Top right, MyKella Kennedy adjusts her eye patch.



Clockwise, from top left: Pirates, from left, Julie Fink, Chloe Wenz, Samantha Knott, Kaiya Fisher and Zeke Goodliffe. High school librarian Katherine Robinson has a great hair day. More pirates, from left, Bailey Green, Chase Green, Becky Fink, Berkeley Geary, Scotty Herrington and Jeannie Knott. Adrienne Spino digs deep for buried treasure. Carl Coolidge lines up the "cannon" for target practice during the cannonball challenge. Event organizer Debbie Pyle and school Superintendent Jerry Lynch.