

## Playtime for the fairies

The annual Faerieworlds festival aims to be one with nature at new Mount Pisgah site

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If anyone was going to have a low impact on the new natural setting for Faerieworlds at the Howard Buford Recreation Area, it would be the fairies. With their delicate wings and small feet, you'd barely know they were there were it not for the flower petals they leave behind.

However, goblins, giants, trolls and goats on stilts are also invited to the annual gathering celebrating mythic music and arts, so organizers are not leaving it to chance that their invited creature guests won't sully the new stomping grounds.

"Our goal is to leave the park better than we found it," said Emilio Miller-Lopez, one of the event's producers.

Having outgrown its previous location at Secret House Vineyards, which held 11,500 people last year, the three-day festival has moved to the Mount Pisgah area and for the first time will offer on-site camping to the general public.

"The footprint we are using is much larger," Miller-Lopez said. "We had to push the seams of Secret House last year. It was definitely time for an upgrade."

Many visitors to the Howard Buford Recreation Area are more familiar with the day use sites reached when turning right off Seavey Loop Road, and may assume that's where the festival is. On the right is the fee-collecting machine, and a little further is Mount Pisgah Arboretum along the Willamette River.

To the left, however, there is a wide, relatively flat area that will become a temporary fairy

realm starting today.

Miller-Lopez, who with his wife, Kelly Miller-Lopez, and Robert Gould are co-producers of the event, took a visitor on a recent tour. The youngest Miller-Lopez child, Triana, also came along and kept herself busy wandering around the vast acreage that by today will be filled with 200 vendor booths, two stages and various temporary shade structures.

In most ways, the format for the festival has not changed. There is still a main stage with international talent, including this year's headliner from Germany, Faun, making its U.S. debut.

Adding to the magic are large puppets from Tony- and Emmy-winning production designer Michael Curry. Curry is based in Portland and had worked extensively on Michael Jackson's stage shows, including the one in the works when the pop star died.

While main stage bands set up and tear down, a second, acoustic, stage will keep music in the air.

"The focus is always unified," Kelly Miller-Lopez pointed out. This is the sixth Faerieworlds in Lane County and the intention is to have the audience watch one performance at a time and not have its attention divided.

Triana got her mother's attention several times during the interview, saying she had spotted a bunny and handing over a ladybug she had found.

"There are lots of critters," Kelly Miller-Lopez said about the site. She said twilight is a special time: "The spirit of nature is alive here. (We) open doorways to help people connect with beauty and magic."

Vendor booths will line a meadow that was established before the park was permitted for big events. A view of Mount Pisgah looms behind the main stage.

Faerieworlds organizers said they have reached out to neighbors, offering free booth space and festival passes.

Leading up to the event, volunteers joined Friends of Buford Park work groups to groom the grounds.

“We put out a call for a work party on Facebook and within an hour hundreds had signed up,” Emilio Miller-Lopez said. About 60 of those online enthusiasts showed up.

By the time the gates open today, organizers said they hope all the thistles and blackberries in public areas will be cleared, but still advise people to be careful. They did what they could on short notice, and have long-term plans to work with the county recreation department to help develop and maintain the site.

The Web site Faerieworlds.com outlines ways in which the festival is working to have a low environmental impact, and many of these initiatives were in place back at Secret House.

Faerieworlds will give a donation to Mount Pisgah Arboretum and Friends of Buford Park following the event, the Web site says.

“This park is so beautiful and I never knew it was here,” Emilio Miller-Lopez said. “This event will bring awareness to the park. We could definitely generate a lot of support for the overall message of Friends of Buford Park.”

As organizers have said in years past, the Faerieworlds event is about much more than dressing up.

There is a lifestyle profile that fits a majority of ticket buyers, and environmental consciousness is part of it.

“Faerie is not so much about fantasy, as it is about connection to nature,” Gould said.

Camping is still available and there is a quiet area for families that can fit about 300 people.

Gould said to many people, the event is like a holiday. The slump in the economy has not hurt ticket sales.

“Exactly the opposite has happened,” he said. “What people need is some sense of purpose, joy and escape.”