

Buckwheat Festival

The Dominion Post



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KING BUCKWHEAT AND QUEEN CERES



Submitted photos

King Buckwheat J.J. Reese and Queen Ceres Keely Gregory are set to reign over the festivities of the Preston County Buckwheat Festival in Kingwood this week. Events and activities begin Wednesday and run through Sunday. For stories and more photos of the royal couple, see pages 5 and 7.

Buckwheat cake and sausage dinners are served Wednesday through Sunday at the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department, 115 Brown Ave.

MAIDS OF HONOR

Friends come with royal court

BY WILL DEAN

WDean@DominionPost.com

This year's maids of honor for the Preston County Buckwheat Festival came at the royal court from different sides.

Both young ladies said they got the same thing out of the experience — friends and fun.

Kiley Christopher and Lyndsey Bucklew are the maids of honor for 2021's Buckwheat Festival Royal Court.

Christopher said she's always been involved in the festival through showing livestock and marching

in every parade. She was a flower girl when she was younger and a junior princess.

"I've always been around it," Christopher said. "So I just always wanted to represent Preston County in the festival as the royal court."

Bucklew said she's never been on the court, but she decided to compete because "it's the Buckwheat Festival."

"So, I grew up with that. And my dad was an escort," Bucklew said. "So, it's been some-

SEE COURT, P-8



Kiley Christopher



Lyndsey Bucklew

RUNNERS UP

Burns grows up with festival, farming, football

BY WILL DEAN

WDean@DominionPost.com

Jacob Burns grew up around the Buckwheat Festival and its royal court while showing animals with 4-H.

Running for King Buckwheat is also something Burns' mom, Jaime, has always wanted him to do, he said.

"So, I've seen it every year. And I just decided that I wanted to give my shot at it," Burns said.

Burns said the judge's home visit was pretty relaxed and he got to talk to them about his animals.

"I have two hogs, and I've raised hogs since I was 9, which is when you're allowed to start raising them," Burns said. He enters the hogs he

raises in the market hog sale.

The second, formal interview was a little more intense, Burns said. He said the selection process taught him you

really have to be prepared and do your research for the formal interview.

"I'm just really excited to have a festival again and be able to see all the people and just kind of see everybody come back here," Burns said. "I mean, because it was empty last year. Real quiet."

Jamie said she was "super proud" and excited when Burns told her he was going to try out for king.

Burns is excited for the buckwheat cake eating contest and prefers his cakes less sour with butter and syrup.

"I'm an eater," he said. "So, I'm not too worried about anybody else up on the table."

Burns is a defensive end and tight end on the Preston High School varsity football team.

"So, that takes up most of my time right now,"

When football season ends Burns said he goes right into basketball. He is on the varsity team as a power forward or center.

First runner up to King Buckwheat J.J. Reese is Evan Harsh.



Evan Harsh



Jacob Burns

TWEET @WillDean_DP



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From princess to queen — Gregory reigns over fest

BY WILLIAM DEAN

WDean@DominionPost.com

KINGWOOD — Keely Gregory liked her experience participating in the Buckwheat Festival as a junior princess so much she decided to compete for the title of Queen Ceres.

“I really enjoyed getting to meet the girls,” Gregory said. “And I enjoyed being a role model for the county. And I wanted to do that again.”

And so she is, as Queen Ceres LXXIX. She’ll reign over the 80th Preston County Buckwheat Festival this week.

Gregory said she “absolutely loves” kids and is excited for the opportunity to interact with them. There’s no need to be shy around her.

“Her favorite part is when young girls come up and say, you know, can I have a picture,” the queen’s mother, Erin Gregory said.

As part of her royal duties, Gregory and the maids of honor spoke at Energy Express, a six-week summer reading and nutrition program run by WVU Extension, about the process of running for queen.

They told the youngsters education is important as GPA is considered.

“And pretty much I just tell them to be themselves because that’s what I did,” Gregory said. “And I mean, it worked for me. Just be yourself and try not to be the quote-unquote, fake version of yourself.”

Erin Gregory could not be more proud

of her daughter. “We grow some good kids in Preston County.”

She said her daughter is very driven and a great person.

The queen is a member of Key Club and likes to volunteer.

The competition was her first, as she said, she didn’t really have to compete for junior princess. That process included reading a speech in front of her classmates and have them vote for her.

There were three parts to the queen selection process: interview, three-minute speech and 30-second promotional speech for the Buckwheat Festival.

Gregory said her promotional speech was kind of catchy and rhymed.

“Normally, you have to do a costume for those, but due to the craziness of COVID, and not having it in front of the public, we didn’t have any costumes this year,” the queen said.

Being the first Queen Ceres to reign over the festival after the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the 2020 Buckwheat Festival is a little extra special, Gregory said.

“I kind of have a sympathetic heart for the queen and king last year because they didn’t get to do anything. And I think they’re gonna incorporate them in the parade somehow, too,” she said. “So I’m just lucky that we’ve even had this opportunity to do this.”

TWEET @WillDean_DP



Submitted photos

Queen Ceres LXXIX Keely Gregory will reign over the 80th Preston County Buckwheat Festival this week. At left, the queen poses with King Buckwheat J.J. Reese in a field of buckwheat in Preston County.



The coronation of Queen Ceres and King Buckwheat will take place at noon Friday at the Craig Civic Center in Kingwood.

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King Buckwheat J.J. Reese

Submitted photos

The 80th Preston County Buckwheat Festival kicks off Wednesday with livestock shows, buckwheat cake dinners and the carnival. Livestock will begin arriving to the festival grounds Tuesday.

BY WILL DEAN

WDean@DominionPost.com

KINGWOOD — King Buckwheat J.J. Reese was going to be an escort but decided to give running for the title a shot.

“My parents talked me into it, honestly. But I secretly wanted to do it,” Reese said. “But I signed up. And I was originally just gonna be an escort. And then I decided, know what, I’ll just give it a shot. If I win, I win if I don’t, no big deal. So I tried out.”

Reese’s dad, Mike Reese, said they were driving down the road one day when Reese said ‘Dad, I think I want to run for King Buckwheat.’ ”

Reese was the last one to sign up, Mike Reese said.

Reese said the selection process was a lot different than he imagined. There was an interview at his family farm, where he was asked by judges about how things work.

“When I took them up to my chickens, they asked like, what kind of chickens I had, how many eggs I get a day,” Reese said. “And they asked how much profit we make off of everything that we have.”

Reese said the farm has a 30-by-90-foot-high tunnel greenhouse, two pigs and “too many” chickens.

The second interview took place at the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department’s community building. Reese said he was asked all about the state and county’s agriculture — a topic he’s passionate about.

“I definitely wasn’t expecting them to come to like my house, per se to come interview me. I was just expecting, like, an interview at like, here, for instance,” Reese said.

The various parades are Reese’s favorite part of being king.

He said any guys thinking about running for king should just go for it — it’s a lot of fun.

“I’d say just go for it. I mean, kind of like what I did. I was kind of nervous, you know, going into like a pageant per se,” Reese said, “But it’s not what you’d expect. And it’s actually a lot of fun.”

Reese is also looking forward to the buckwheat cake eating competition and is confident in his ability to win.

One of Reese’s hobbies is hunting squirrels, describing himself as a “big-time squirrel hunter.”

“It’s just more of an adrenaline rush. You’re not like sitting in a tree stand or blind all day; you’re actually walking around looking for squirrels.”

TWEET @WillDean_DP



King Buckwheat J.J. Reese and Queen Ceres LXXIX Keely Gregory are surrounded by their maids of honor and the two runners up for king, Evan Harsh and Kiley Christopher and Lyndsey Buckley and Jacob Burns.

ESCORTS



Hunter
Hershman



Daniel
Long



Joshua
Montgomery

Market livestock will arrive at festival grounds Tuesday and Wednesday. Animals include beef, lambs, goats and swine.



Submitted photos

Maids of honor to Queen Ceres LXXIX are Lyndsey Buckley (left photo) her escort Jacob Burns and Kiley Christopher and her escort Evan Harsh.

COURT

FROM PAGE P-2

thing I've wanted to do for a while," Bucklew said.

Both are looking forward to the parade where they will ride on a float with the rest of the court.

Bucklew's favorite part of the competition was everybody coming together and friends she made.

"You'd expect it to be competitive, everybody kind of minding their own business trying to do their best," Bucklew said. "But we were all friendly during the whole thing. We were talking when we weren't stressing about having our speeches memorized. And we all supported each other during the whole thing."

Christopher agreed.

"It's pretty much the same thing. Like there were people that I talked to that day that I haven't talked to that much since we started high school. So we all basically came together and supported one another as we went through this whole process. And we were all happy for each other."

Bucklew said the competition is hard, but you really learn to push yourself and grow as a person — while having fun.

"Getting selected on the court, you will create friendships and bonds as you go through the whole process," Christopher said. "I've even noticed from the few parades and time that we've spent together we've already gotten closer."

Both girls are president of their local 4-H clubs. Christopher is president of Lenox Royal Workers while Bucklew leads Sandy Pals.

TWEET @WillDean_DP

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Parade schedule

Firemen's Parade — 7:30 p.m. Thursday
School Day Parade — 2 p.m. Friday
Farmer's Parade — Noon Saturday

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BUCKWHEAT CAKES





Violet Kadiri left, (top photo), then 2, eats buckwheat cakes as her mother Alicia looks on at a previous Preston County Buckwheat Festival at the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department Community Hall. A previous royal court (bottom, left photo) kicks off its Buckwheat Festival with a buckwheat cakes and sausage dinner. Nina Sheets (at left, front) and Lori Rodeheaver make buckwheat cakes for hundreds of diners at the fire hall. Dinners will be served at the fire hall from 4-8 p.m. Wednesday, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday, 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday.

The Dominion Post file photos



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2021 Buckwheat Festival schedule of events

Tuesday

9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. — Market livestock arrive (beef, lambs and goats only)
2-8:30 p.m. — Exhibits registered in Memorial North Building
6-7 p.m. — Market steer weigh-in and picture taking
7-8 p.m. — Market lamb and goat weigh-in and picture taking

Wednesday

5-8 a.m. — Market swine arrive
8 a.m.-3 p.m. — All remaining livestock arrive
8 a.m. — Market goat showmanship followed by show
9 a.m.-3 p.m. — Market swine weigh-in and picture taking
1 p.m. — Market lamb showmanship followed by show
4-8 p.m. — Buckwheat cakes and sausage dinners
6 p.m. — Carnival opens
6 p.m. — Buckwheat cake eating contest
6-9 p.m. — BINGO
6:30 p.m. — Judging of market steer

Thursday

8 a.m. — Market swine showmanship followed by show
11 a.m.-8 p.m. — Buckwheat cakes and sausage dinners
Noon-10 p.m. — Arts & Crafts open
Noon-10 p.m. — Exhibit buildings open
Noon — Carnival opens
Noon — Geocache contest begins
4 p.m. — Judging of feeder calves and prospect market steer
5:30 p.m. — Purebred sheep show; breeding goat show
6-10 p.m. — BINGO
7:30 p.m. — Firemen's Parade
9:30 p.m. — King & Lady Fireman coronation and trophy presentation (closed to the public)

Friday

8 a.m.-8 p.m. — Buckwheat cakes and sausage dinners
8:30 a.m. — Ladies and Shepherds lead
10 a.m. — Judging of purebred/cross-bred beef

10 a.m.-9 p.m. — Arts & Crafts open
10 a.m.-10 p.m. — Exhibit Buildings open
10 a.m. — Carnival opens
Noon — Coronation of Queen Ceres and King Buckwheat at Craig Civic Center
2 p.m. — School Day Parade
4-10 p.m. — BINGO
5:30 p.m. — Purebred sheep show; breeding goat show
6 p.m. — Beef showmanship
6 p.m. — Gun Blitz at Craig Civic Center
10 p.m. — Fireworks (rain date Saturday)

Saturday

8 a.m.-8 p.m. — Buckwheat cake and sausage dinners
10 a.m.-9 p.m. — Arts & Crafts open
10 a.m.-10 p.m. — Exhibit buildings open
10 a.m. — Carnival opens
Noon — Farmer's Day Parade
Noon — Geocache contest ends
2 p.m. — Draft horse pull at baseball field

4-10 p.m. — BINGO
4 p.m. — Youth livestock sale in Cow Palace
7 p.m. — Big Bucks Bingo in Craig Civic Center, doors open at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday

8 a.m.-3 p.m. — Buckwheat cake and sausage dinners
10 a.m.-1 p.m. — Registration - Antique, Rod & Custom Car Show at Civic Center
10 a.m.-3 p.m. — Car show open for viewing
10 a.m.-4 p.m. — Arts & Crafts open
10 a.m.-4 p.m. — Exhibit buildings open
Noon — Carnival open
1-4 p.m. — BINGO
1:30 p.m. — Irish Road Bowling on Pleasantdale Road
4 p.m. — Drawings for \$10,000 and commemorative rifle
5-6 p.m. — Remove exhibits from Memorial North



The Dominion Post file photos

Above, children enjoy one of the carnival rides at the 2018 Preston County Buckwheat Festival. At right, crowds start to gather for one of the many parades held during the five-day festival. Due to COVID, the 2020 festival was canceled, but the annual event is back this year. Officially opening Wednesday with rides, crafts and more, livestock and exhibits will start entering festival grounds behind the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department Tuesday.



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