

Medieval Festival

By Andrea Jermacans

The Osgoode Village Community Association is calling all volunteers, vendors, and sponsors for its Third Annual Medieval Festival this summer.

This July 9, 10 and 11, the Village of Osgoode will transform itself into the glorious and brutal Medieval Kingdom of Osgoode - an enchanted place where maidens wear flower circlets and knights best each other with chivalry and swords.

The year is 1199 and a new King and Queen (played by locals Brent and Natalie Currie) hold court. And Medieval Organizer, Judy Carey, expects that the royal couple will reign over Osgoode's most prosperous festival to date.

"In 2008 we had about 800 attendees and last year there were about 2500," she says. "For the 2010 festival we are expecting up to 5000 people."

While time-tested favourites, such as live music throughout the grounds, food merchants, and vendors peddling everything from jewelry to swords will still be available all weekend, the festival has expanded. "Its popularity has grown and we've decided to add an extra day to the 2010 Festival - an Education Day for children."

School teacher Maureen Silva will head up this program and lead kids up to age 14 through demonstrations of sword play, belly dancing, archery, and music. "The program will run on Friday and is geared toward summer camps and school-aged children," says Carey.

But the fun is for adults as much as the kids and many come decked in their snazziest Medieval duds. "You certainly don't have to dress in period costume to attend but many do," Carey admits. "Some are in armour, some in royal finery, wenches come dressed in peasant blouses and skirts. There are crowns and circlets, leggings and chain mail," she says. "It's an eclectic mix. Even the children come dressed in costume. But many also come in shorts and T-shirts."

But the Kingdom offers more than just child's play and lovers will enjoy the spotlight, too, as the King and Queen host a Hand Fasting Ceremony for potential betrothed. In Medieval times, when priests weren't available, an unwed couple could be formally linked by the head of the clan or a professional, such as a blacksmith. This union lasts a year and a day, after which the couple can either find a member of the clergy to seal the deal or go their separate ways.

"In the Hand Fasting Ceremony the couples' hands are 'bound' with rope or ribbon and that's where we got the phrase 'tie the knot,'" Carey explains. "It actually drew a couple from Montreal last year who specifically wanted to get hand fasted."

The festival also caters to anyone with a voracious appetite as Saturday's events begin with the King's Breakfast at 8 a.m. at St. James Church and end with the much trumpeted King's Feast at the Community Centre that evening. "You will be able to sup on

medieval faire while entertained by musicians, belly dancers, swordfighters, jugglers and jesters,” says Carey of the Feast.

But the festival comes to a halt when the Knights of Valour take to their horses during the weekend. “The Knights are the biggest hit for all ages,” gushes Carey. “They are just amazing. This is not play acting. It’s real jousting on horseback.”

Last year Sir Shanton unseated Sir Jason from his horse with a shocking and thunderous crash.

“With armour and man together, that was about 400 pounds that was knocked to the ground,” says Carey. “The crowds gasped. I think this was the point where people knew for sure it was real. The children were in awe. One mother told me that even weeks after the event, her four-year-old son still slept with a piece of the knight’s lance that he salvaged from the jousting site.”

In Medieval times Sir Jason would have lost more than just his dignity. His horse, armour title and lands would all become property of the victorious knight. “But still,” adds Carey. “What little boy hasn’t dreamed of becoming a Knight? And at the festival he gets to see them, talk to them, pet their horses. The pounding hooves, the clash of metal - it takes you back to a different world, one of respect and discipline. It was a much simpler time.”

But naturally, no Medieval Festival is complete without a healthy dose of treachery. Amid jousting, feasting, and dancing, a dastardly plot to dethrone the royalty unfolds.

Last year, a King from a neighbouring Kingdom toppled King Kevin and Lady Francine with a flick of his dagger. The year before, the royalty were poisoned. Carey says mum’s the word on the fate of the Royal Curries, but adds that the prince and princess of 2010 who will succeed the king and queen in 2011 have yet to be named.

“We usually look for someone who has earned the kingdom’s respect and admiration. These are people whom the peasants feel are deserving of royalty,” says Carey.

But every year, Sir John the Inept makes a sinister dash for the throne. “We don’t yet know who will play John, but we know he’s bad,” hints Carey.

Advance tickets for the King’s Feast are \$35 for adults and \$25 for children. Admission to the Festival is \$5. To buy tickets or register for Education Day visit the website at www.osgoodemedievalfestival.com or contact Judy Carey at 613-826-1622. Interested vendors should contact Brenda Fedun at 613-821-1846 and volunteers can call Connie Bazil at 613-826-3135. OVCA is also seeking donations in-kind, such as fencing.