

Contestants hope to pull in prize money

Sunflower Festival exceeding expectations

By JANET WILLIAMS
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Tug-O-War and sunflowers hardly seem like a compatible mix, but Sunday at the International Sunflower Festival in Frankfort they will merge.

Teams came together to get a little practice on Saturday afternoon and weigh in hoping they would make the 900-pound class in anticipation of walking away with the \$1,000 in prize money.

"I have never been in a tug-o-war contest," team member Matt Gray of Frankfort said. "It should be a lot of fun though.

The rules and tools are simple.

The contest is divided into weight classes, 550 pounds - 770 pounds and 750 pounds - 900 pounds. This is the total weight for the entire team. Each team is made up of four "pullers" who are required to wear factory standard footwear without cleats or protrusions.

The rope is 150 feet long and one and a half to two inches in diameter.

Teams try to pull each other 12 feet until the center of the rope, marked with red tape, crosses the center line.

Gray gave a little advice to his team members before practice.

"Be sure to wear long sleeve shirts," Gray said. "If the rope gets pulled through your arms you can get really scraped up."

Other rules include no hand-over-hand



At Brad Lightle Memorial Park in Frankfort, Ryan Graham, Cory Morris, Adam Johnson and Ryan Morris practice for the Tug-O-War that will be held tomorrow at the International Sunflower Festival for the grand prize of \$1,000.

Shelley Bossert/Gazette

feeding of the rope, feet only can be used for traction and no time limit on the contest.

Asked what they would do with the money if they won team members said they would buy beer or go to the Easyriders Rodeo.

The contest will take place at 2 p.m. at Brad Lightle Memorial Park.

Garrett Shoemaker, coordinator of the festival, said attendance is more than was anticipated.

"We figured we'd get 22,000 people for the two days," Shoemaker said. "We've had 12,000 through here already and its only been open four hours. We are looking at 30,000 to 35,000 now."

"As good as this is we think this is only the tip of the iceberg," Shoemaker said.

The festival is billed as an international festival in hopes of being included

with two other similar festivals, in Germany and Australia, so they can participate in the queen exchange according to Shoemaker.

Shoemaker looks for a different crowd as the day turns to evening and the events go from the Adelphi Band to the Forkin' The Road country group and Full Effect retro rock group.

Sunday's events include the 3 p.m. Pride Ride.

Riding single file through the event motorcyclist will display their bikes and drop a few dollars in a bucket at the end of the ride to benefit the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program.

"The Pride Ride is where the Easyriders Rodeo participants shine," Shoemaker said. "God bless them. It's a yin and yang thing, they can live the way they want and come here too."

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