

The Royal Rosarian Milk Carton Boat Race

In 1973, for the 65th Annual Rose Festival, the Rose Festival leaders created the Milk Carton Boat Race to provide an event that was “just for kids.” The Rose Festival Junior Court put on all the events that the adults did in other Rose Festival events, including an Honorary Knighting ceremony and a program where they performed.

The shallow casting pond in the Westmoreland Park is what makes the Milk Carton Boat Race possible in Portland. Built in the 1930’s as part of a CCC program at the same time that Timberline Lodge was being built. A decision to have the casting pond dug by hand lengthened the job so long Theodore Roosevelt was unable to dedicate it when he dedicated Timberline Lodge.

Over the years, the rules for the boats built for the races have changed, and with the demise of the Junior Court, the event continued through the efforts of the Rose Festival Association, presenting sponsor, the Oregon Dairy Farmer’s Association and contributing sponsors, which have included Darigold, Alpenrose, Skipper’s Fish and Chips, Farrell’s Ice Cream and other until 2015.

The Royal Rosarians were asked to host the event in 2016, and have been doing so except 2019 and 2020, during covid. At the 2025 event, there were forty boats entered in the races, with racers from as far away as Vancouver, Washington, Hillsboro, Beaverton, Lake Oswego, Happy Valley, NE Portland, and as close as Gladstone, East Moreland, and Sellwood.



A returning winner, and 10-year participant, Matt Walters, came home from college at Western



Figure 1 Exciting heat in 2-person adult race; Figure 2 Matt Williams, #24, in lead on the competition.

Washington, to compete with his dad and the other five single adult competitors. He won the adult race on his boat, Even Hotter Cocoa.

The Royal Rosarian Milk Carton Boat Race committee is looking forward to seeing colorful boats and their excited racing teams next year compete on the historic Westmoreland Casting Pond in 2026.



*Mercheeta III team take off in Mixed Ages - 3 to 4 racers.
They won the People's Choice Award of 2025, their third consecutive year.*