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TOP STORY

# Camporee to hold special night for community the day before event starts

By JONATHAN GALLARDO News Record Writer [jgallardo@gillettenewsrecord.net](mailto:jgallardo@gillettenewsrecord.net)  
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Pastor Ron Whitehead with the International Pathfinder Camporee talks during a Gillette Chamber of Commerce luncheon at Energy Hall in Gillette in 2023. Whitehead spoke at the same event Tuesday as the 60,000-person event draws near its August start.

News Record File Photo

Gillette is now less than five months away from the International Pathfinder Camporee, where more than 55,000 visitors from all over the world will converge from Aug. 5-11 in Campbell County.

In the numerous visits that Pastor Ron Whitehead and other Camporee officials have made to Gillette over the last three years, they've heard from many community members who are interested in watching the night-time events, which will take place at Cam-plex Park. Because of security reasons, this just isn't feasible.

But they came up with a solution.

The Pathfinders will arrive in Gillette on Aug. 5 and 6. On the Sunday night before, on Aug. 4, residents will be invited to a "Night at the Camporee." A stage will be set up on the amphitheater site at Cam-plex Park, and the public will have a chance to see part of the production that the thousands of kids will get to experience that week.

"You can come out, bring your chairs, we'll show you a snapshot of what takes place in the evening program," Whitehead said. "It's our way of saying thank you to the community."

Whitehead, director of the Camporee, spoke at the Campbell County Chamber of Commerce's luncheon Tuesday. This is the fourth year in a row where Whitehead has updated the community on the event.

Whitehead said tickets for the event sold out on Jan. 4, and that the Camporee has never sold out this early. About 52,000 ticket sales are from the U.S. and Canada, while there will be about 4,000 international visitors.

He's working with Walmart executives to ensure there are no supply chain issues at the Gillette Walmart leading up to and during Camporee. He said he's working directly with an executive who's in charge of all of the Walmart stores west of the Mississippi River, and that they're analyzing "everything" from 2019's Camporee to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Whitehead said he believes the Camporee has done “a poor job” of communicating to the community about the upcoming event, and that he’s open to any suggestions.

“Even with all the efforts, we haven’t done as good a job as we would want to do to let people know what’s coming, why it’s coming, who we are,” he said.

More than two dozen community service projects are on the docket. Over three and a half days, the Pathfinders will put in a combined 10,000 hours of community service, Whitehead said.

“We believe this generation needs to know, it’s not all about you, as you go through life it’s important to serve others, not just yourself,” he said.

Camporee reached out to local groups for project ideas, and Gillette did not disappoint.

“Your community service participation has just been over the top, the best ever, of anywhere that I’ve been connected to,” Whitehead said.

From cleaning headstones at Mount Pisgah Cemetery to picking up trash to organizing food drives, the Pathfinders have a wide range to choose from.

“We don’t want to be a burden, we want to be a blessing,” Whitehead said.

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Jonathan Gallardo