

NEWS IN BRIEF

James2 Kitchen expands outreach

POLK COUNTY — James2 Community kitchen serves those who are hungry on Tuesdays and Thursdays each month. Meals are served from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at St. Philip Catholic Church on Tuesday nights, and at the Dallas United Methodist Church from 4 to 6 p.m. on Thursdays. A meal was added this summer to Falls City on three Tuesdays of each month at the United Methodist Church. James2 is extending outreach to more families with children and to the Hispanic community. There is no charge for meals; guests are not required to give any financial information. For more information, find the organization on Facebook.

Pope honors Indy businessman

PORTLAND — The Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, on behalf of the Chair of Saint Peter, announced that Pope Francis has named Elie Kassab a Knight of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great. Kassab received the letter and insignia at a Pontifical Mass held on Oct. 30. Kassab, the owner of Independence Cinema, received the honor for his contributions to the St. Sharbel parish in Portland and the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Castle Rock, Wash. and for his assistance to the Holy See. Most Rev. A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, of Los Angeles, presented the letter and insignia to Kassab. The Knights of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great was established in 1831 by Pope Gregory XVI. It is one of the five orders of knighthood of the Holy See and one of the highest honors awarded to a layperson by the church.

CSC to host orientation at Henry Hill

POLK COUNTY — The Community Service Consortium will host an orientation at 1:30 p.m. on Friday at its office in Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence. The CSC specializes in helping youth and young adults with attaining a GED, filling out FASFA applications, building resumes, preparing for college, attaining work experience, and finding a job, among other things. The program serves youths aged 16 to 24; high-school dropouts; youths who are pregnant or parenting; and veterans. For more information: Mona K-Hinds, mhinds@community-servies.us, or 541-704-7820.

March of Dimes helps teens in Polk

SALEM — March of Dimes, Greater Oregon Chapter, made a donation to the Fostering Hope Initiative to provide support for pregnant and parenting teens and young women in Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties. Catholic Community Services, lead partner of the Fostering Hope Initiative, said the project will provide outreach services to pregnant and parenting women in the targeted neighborhoods; connect them with health care resources; support them to build "Strengthening Families Protective Factors"; and help them find safe, stable, affordable housing, among other goals. For more information: www.cssp.org.

Oregon State Parks permits on sale

SALEM — The Oregon State Parks Department will reduce the price of day-use parking permits for the month of December. Visitors and holiday shoppers may buy a permit for \$25, regularly \$30. Parking costs \$5 a day at the 26 Oregon state parks unless you have a 12- or 24-month permit or same-day camping receipt. The 24-month pass is \$50. Permits are transferable from vehicle to vehicle. To purchase a pass, or for more information: store.oregon-stateparks.org.



AARON YOST/Itemizer-Observer file

Children sing as the angel choir of heaven during the final performance of Rickreall Christmas Pageant last year.

Pageant retires after 75 years

By **Jolene Guzman**
The Itemizer-Observer

RICKREALL — A local Christmas tradition for generations, the Rickreall Christmas Pageant's 75-year run is over.

The pageant, a classic telling of the Biblical Christmas story, would have run Dec. 8-10 this year, but the inability to find a new director and choir director made it impossible to continue.

Milt Serafin, who served on the pageant's board and was a longtime performer, said the decision was official late this summer.

"We've been looking at it for the last year, year and half," Serafin said. "There was no response."

At least none that would have kept the pageant in Rickreall, which was important to the board.

Serafin said a private company was interested in taking over, but wanted to move the performances.

"We chose to dissolve it," Serafin said.

Timing already forced pageant directors to make a major change last year. For years, the Rickreall Fire Station employees helped with parking for the pageant, but the event coincided with others at the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center. The station couldn't do both, so the pageant had to be moved to the next weekend.

"There are so many other things to do now — activities, more competition," Serafin said.

He and retired director Mary McCarron said ending after 75 years seemed fitting.

"Last year, our 75th, ended on a high note with many in attendance, tears, hugs, and sharing the time with family and friends," McCarron said.

Serafin said, for his family, the pageant opened the Christmas season with a reminder of the story behind the holiday for decades. After more than 30 years of involvement with the pageant, he said that will be missed.

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"You've got a lot of people, the new generation, that don't realize the longevity," he said.

Serafin thanked volunteers and cast members for their loyalty to the pageant, which was run as a non-profit and depended on donations.

Volunteering for and performing in the pageant spanned generations in some families, he said.

That history may be kept alive in a sense. McCarron said the Polk County Museum, also located in Rickreall, is interested in sharing the story of the pageant.

The pageant began in 1938, staging in what was Rickreall School's gym.

A four-member committee planned the scenes and picked Bible verses to build the story around for that original performance.

In the years since — the pageant took a break during World War II, 1942-44 — not much changed.

The school is now known as the Rickreall Event Hall, but the story told in the nine scenes and almost 30 songs remained the same.

Serafin said he's sad to know the show has come to an end, but "at the same time, knowing that the timing was right."

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