

NEWS BRIEFS

First Friday alight with holiday events

A children’s lantern parade will precede Silverton’s annual tree lighting ceremony on Friday, Dec. 7. Festivities start with a lantern-decorating workshop at Coolidge McClaine Park, from 3 to 6 p.m. Lanterns cost \$5 but are free to children without funds. Proceeds benefit the local warming shelter. Participants may bring their own lanterns, but organizers have asked for battery-operated models, no open flames. At 6 p.m., the Holiday Angel and Santa will lead children in a caroling parade to Town Square Park. Tree-lighting events start at 6 p.m. with songs by two choirs and hot chocolate. Santa will light the tree, with help

from the Silverton Fire Department, at 7 p.m. Silverton’s stores will be open late, as it’s First Friday.

State Park offers movie night, holiday festival

Silver Falls State Park, Oregon’s largest state park, is hosting a free movie night on Friday, Dec. 7 and an old-fashioned Christmas festival the next day, Saturday, Dec. 8. The movie night starts at 7:30 p.m. at Smith Creek Meeting Hall at the Silver Falls Conference Center. It is free to all guests of the park and community members; snacks are available for purchase. Preceding the move, dinner is also available for purchase, with a reservation. At the Dec. 8 festival, attendees can

make a wreath, gingerbread house, cards and ornaments. Storytelling, music and hot chocolate will also be available. Events take place 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the South Falls day use area. The hosts are Friends of Silver Falls State Park; for information, call 503-874-0201.

Shop Hop runs through Dec. 11

Shoppers in Silverton and Mt. Angel can support local businesses and win prizes if they make their rounds with a Shop Hop passport, which can be picked up at participating stores and Silverton Chamber of Commerce. Forty-one businesses are participating and giving away prizes. To be eligible to win the grand prize of \$1,025, shoppers must gather 32 stamps from local

businesses. All passports must be turned in by 5 p.m. on Dec. 11; the grand prize drawing will be Dec. 12.

‘Arsenic and Old Lace’ at Brush Creek through Dec. 16

The three-act comedy “Arsenic and Old Lace” is showing Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at Brush Creek Playhouse through Dec. 16. Friday and Saturday showings are at 7 p.m. Sundays are at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10; discounted \$8 tickets are available for seniors 60 and over, children under 12 and all students with ID. The playhouse is located at 11535 Silverton Rd. NE. For more information, visit www.brushcreekplayhouse.com or call 503-508-3682.

Idanha

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and Linn counties 55 miles east of Salem – is more drastic than any other incorporated city in Marion County. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the median household income of a resident in Idanha at \$29,083, and 18.8 percent of residents live in poverty. In Marion County, the average income is \$50,775 and 13.6 percent of residents live in poverty. Since the town’s logging mills closed in the 1990s, the population has shrunk to 140 in 2017, down from 230 in 2005. Some older residents can’t leave their homes. “I think that food bank is just a ministry, just an outreach from our church,” said Debby Ruyle, a church member who was instrumental in procuring the grants. Though the goal of the food bank in Idanha is to feed those in need in their relatively isolated part of the world, they don’t turn away anyone. There also are homeless camps in the woods around Idanha out of sight from casual observers, but those residents come to the food bank. People have come from Marion Forks, Silverton, Gates, Mill City and Newberg to get food from the Idanha Food Bank.

How Idanha Food Bank started

The food bank in Idanha started in 2012 with Ralph Swisher – known as Bart – as the driving force. But after Swisher was slowed due to cancer, Steve Kinney took over as the point man. In those early days, it was operated out of the old Green Veneer factory and relied on hand-me-down food from a similar food bank in Mehama. To get food to those who needed it, Kinney delivered boxes of food home to



Steve Kinney talks in front of the Idanha Community Church on Nov. 28. BILL POEHLER/STATESMAN JOURNAL

home. After the Idanha Community Church was gifted to Detroit Community Church in 2015, its fellowship hall became the new home for the food bank. Some residents in Idanha can’t make it when the food bank is open from 10 a.m. to noon on Fridays. “And a lot of people that would take food if you delivered it to them wouldn’t if they had to come get it,” Kinney said. “We’ve only got a couple like that, and my wife (Barbara) does some deliveries.” The two new 12-foot-by-16-foot buildings being built on the church property – and the future walk-in refrigerated building – will be more easily accessible from the road and make it easi-

er to load and unload food. The two main buildings have been started, with foundations poured, but there is no timeline to when they will be completed. They will also allow enough space in the fellowship hall to be able to host

community meals for those who come to receive food from the food share program.

Debby Ruyle finds a new way to help

Ruyle is a city councilor in Detroit and was one of the driving forces in the creation of the new park system in that city. Her ability to physically help at the food bank has been diminished the past few years as she’s battling cancer. But she helped by writing grant applications that brought in \$1,000 from Marion-Polk Food Share, \$9,000 from the Oregon Food Share and \$10,000 from the Larry & Jeanette Epping Family Foundation, as well as a \$500 donation from the local Can-Can Club. Frank Lumber Company donated the wood to frame the building and Freres Lumber Company donated plywood for construction. Scott Lunski, owner of Santiam Ice Company in Idanha, has donated metal coated Styrofoam panels to build a free-standing walk-in refrigerator. “The grant thing was something I could sit at home and work on, so that’s why I don’t feel like I have much to offer,” Ruyle said. “I should do more.” Ruyle is the only one who understands her impact. “She does more than most 10 other people around here,” Kinney said. bpoebler@StatesmanJournal.com or [Twitter.com/bpoebler](https://twitter.com/bpoebler)



Santa’s special mailbox in Silverton. CHRISTENA BROOKS/SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

Santa

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permission from the postmaster, John collects all the letters he finds addressed to Santa, and his wife, Brenda, ensures each one gets a response. The letters kids get back aren’t from Santa – usually, it’s Mrs. Claus or Sprinkles the Elf – but they’re personal, friendly and full of holiday cheer. “We really want those kids to feel the spirit of Christmas, Brenda said. “I want them to get a big smile and then keep that spirit of giving as they get older.” The couple first started responding to kids’ letters to Santa when they were in their 20s, living in John’s hometown of Poolesville, Md. At the time, he was a rural route carrier, she worked at an accounting office, and they both taught kids at a local gym in on the side. Working with kids via coaching, directing summer camps and teaching strength training made John think about the kids behind the letters to Santa he’d occasionally find on his mail route. Finally, he brought one to Brenda and asked whether she’d like manage his correspondence, “if Santa wouldn’t

get too mad,” she recalled. The Zajdels received only encouragement and thus continued their promotion of Christmas magic when they moved back to Oregon, and John landed routes in Salem and then Silverton. Now they’ve offered to handle all letters to Santa found by Silverton’s USPS carriers. So far, the number hasn’t been overwhelming – under 10 this season so far – although Brenda did note they’ve come “earlier than usual.” Her holiday duty as Santa’s helper fits comfortably into her duties as a mom, wife and part-time employee at an eye doctor’s office. The Kiwanis Club’s effort takes more like three or four creative elves, and they go to work after kids’ letters are collected at the annual tree-lighting ceremony, said club secretary Wayne Suggs. For about five years, Kiwanis’ iconic mailbox has stood next to the mural of Mr. and Mrs. Claus facing Fiske Street. Club members collect letters throughout the year and make sure Santa responds to them all – winter, spring, summer or fall. “It’s all about the magic of Christmas and the joy of receiving a letter ... and from someone you feel like you know!” said Kiwanis president Lisa Santana.

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