

Local

Sumpter holds SLOT session

• SESSION FOCUSES ON BRAINSTORMING

BY MEGHAN ANDERSCH
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About twenty-five residents of Sumpter and the surrounding area gathered Tuesday evening at the Sumpter Schoolhouse for a special town hall meeting. Called a SLOT (strengths, limitations, opportunities, threats) session, the meeting was an opportunity for folks to brainstorm ideas together.

Mayor Melissa Findley made a few brief introductory remarks, emphasizing that there are no bad ideas in a brainstorming session. LeAnne Woolf added that the purpose of the session was not to try to fix things or find solutions and also asked folks to remember “no cross talk.”

The session opened with attendees brainstorming Sumpter’s strengths while Woolf wrote the suggestions down on poster paper, and Robert Armbruster hung the filled sheets on the walls.

Many mentioned ideas related to Sumpter’s outdoor setting, including hunting and fishing opportunities, and mushrooms and huckleberries. Sumpter’s people, history, events, volunteer force, and various attractions were also listed.

Findley named the Fire



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press

LeAnne Woolf at the front of the room, speaks during part of the City’s brainstorming session.

Department and Planning Commission as huge strengths and Dan Patton of the Planning Commission listed the City Council.

The brainstorming then moved to limitations, including tax base and funds, limited “big city”-type services, dirt roads and dust, lack of youth (Patton shared that the average age of residents is 64), lack of law enforcement, and little marketing or visibility. Other concerns were limited growth potential, government requirements (unfunded mandates, or as Woolf put it, “Westside requirements on Eastside realities”) and lack of jobs and housing.

Most of the nearly-90-minute session was spent on brainstorming opportunities. Some of

the ideas related to things already in existence, but many ideas for community development were suggested.

Ideas ranged from a new fire hall or community center to street, Renaissance, or bluegrass festivals, expanded health care offerings, and drawing more families, retirees, and full-time residents.

As the ideas multiplied, Armbruster performed some interesting acrobatics involving a folding chair and various other items, trying to hang the poster sheets high enough on the wall to make room for all of them. Patton quipped they should just add “et cetera” to the opportunities section, saying, “We could be here all night!”

The final brainstorming section was on threats,

with input ranging from forest disease and forest fires to gossip and rumors, drugs, apathy, and lack of communication.

Findley thanked everyone for the great participation said they will type up a list of all the suggestions and send them out to folks in the next water bill, asking for everyone’s feedback on what they personally think are the top strengths, opportunities, concerns, etc.

The next meeting on this topic could then focus on folks’ top issues. It was pointed out that sending this out via the water bill will reach only those who live within the City limits. Outreach to get involvement from residents of the greater Sumpter Valley was promptly added to the brainstorming sheets.

Duck Derby floats on



Eileen Driver / The Baker County Press

Duck herders meet at the starting line in Huntington.

• \$250 GRAND PRIZE GIVEN TO THE FASTEST DUCK ON THE BURNT RIVER

BY EILEEN DRIVER
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No one is quite sure how long the Duck Derby has been a part of the Memorial Weekend festivities here in Huntington. But certainly as long as anyone can remember the cute little plastic ducks have been set loose and floated down the Burnt River by the Huntington Historical Society, to see who can get to the finish line first as well as last.

For \$3, participants can purchase a numbered duck to run the race in hopes of winning a prize. Prizes are given to the owners of the first 11 ducks and Last Place Duck. The proceeds from this event go toward the upkeep of both the indoor and outdoor Historical Museums in Huntington.

The Ducks are released into the Burnt River and followed down the cold river about a quarter of a mile by “duck herders” who make sure none of the little guys get stuck along the way.

This year’s duck herders were Michael Wiley, Tina Greiner, Kelly Grissom, Austin Lutheran, Tanner Stewart and Jordan Grissom.

When the ducks arrive at their destination, they are greeted at the finish line by “duck catchers” who wait patiently in the river by the net strung from bank to bank to rescue the little ducks from the river one at a time until all the ducks have safely returned.

This year’s duck catchers were Tim Stroebel, Robert Addleman and Nina Addleman.

Spectators on the sidelines cheer the ducks on to their destination, which can take anywhere from half an hour to an hour or longer depending on the swiftness of the current. This year the water was moving pretty fast and it was over in half an hour with the following results:

Grand Prize #80 \$250 Charlie McNiel
1st Place #11 Afgan Arin and Renee Blin
2nd #399 Beauty Basket Dave Wallace
3rd #258 Cooking Pan Elena Anderson
4th #108 Kid’s Basket Logan McFarland
5th #94 Sewing Basket Sue Karboobo
6th #33 Picnic Basket Denice Leir
7th #297 Movie Basket Ted Anderson
8th #337 Wine Basket John Hoopes
9th #274 Book Shelf Sandra
10th #346 Kid’s Pole Boxberger
Last Place #114 Fishing Pole Cheryl Buchanan

Safe Families for Children

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Glidewell explained she has a heart for vulnerable children. She began doing research into what programs worked to help families and which did more harm than good, a project that was facilitated by her forty years of working in the same community.

After leaving her social work position, Glidewell moved to the Willamette Valley, bought a business, and began providing foster care. She began a project to try to understand why reading levels dropped and continued to drop for children placed in foster care.

Glidewell found that due to the placement and multiple appointments necessitating missing school, issues began compounding with kids starting to not to like school because they were falling behind.

She started a program to match retired teachers with foster children to provide tutoring. The project resulted in the children involved climbing an average of three reading levels during a nine-month period.

Through these efforts, Glidewell learned of Safe Families for Children. Due to her vast research and knowledge, she saw that SFFC had all the pieces that actually worked to help families rather than hinder them.

Glidewell said the movement rests on the theory of change and the strength of an informal support network. It’s the idea of supplementary care versus substitute care, compassion versus coercion, volunteer placement versus mandated placement. Though referrals

may come from different places in the community, most placements are “self referrals,” when biological families ask to have their children placed with a host family. All placements are done only with the parent’s consent and end when the parent chooses.

Glidewell said recidivism is something they like to see. They count as positive when relationships of trust are built between host and biological families.

Safe Families for Children started in about 2002 in Chicago, Illinois. Dave Anderson ran LYDIA Home Association, a large network of foster homes. One day, a woman came to him and told him that she needed him to take her children, just for a few days so that she could resolve some pressing issues.

Anderson told her they couldn’t help her unless she had abused or harmed her children. After making that statement, he realized how absurd and backward this was. Anderson and his wife ended up taking the children temporarily and building a relationship with the mom.

Anderson began talking to people in his church and found that there were families of faith willing to take in children on a temporary basis to help parents out. And so, Safe Families for Children was born.

SFFC has three main goals: to deflect children from Child Welfare placement, lower incidences of child abuse, and increase family support and stabilization.

The two main components to the model are a 501(c)3 agency and the local faith community. The nonprofit agency takes

the lead on ensuring safety, including approving host families, conducting background checks, monitoring placements, and coordinating resources and support for families

The local faith community provides safe homes to volunteer host vulnerable children, and acts as an “extended family” for the children’s biological families, building relationships that last beyond the length of the child’s stay. Glidewell said there is an advantage to the movement being of “lay people” instead of professionals.

She said the danger of using professionals is having this turn into another program, instead of letting it be a natural outgrowth of the Church and families wanting to share the love of Jesus with others. Glidewell said this model gives the Church the opportunity to be the “hands, feet, and voice of Jesus.”

The main activities of the model are recruiting families, approving placements, monitoring placements, and supporting and resourcing placement families and biological families.

A unique hallmark of Safe Families for Children is the outlook that everyone has something to offer. Glidewell emphasized that relationships between host families and biological parents should be of mutual give and take.

She said the starting point for a family in need is to ask them, “What do you bring? What can you offer?”

Glidewell is a firm believer in coming alongside families to support them. She referenced two books, When Helping Hurts and

Toxic Charity, saying that giving material goods doesn’t change lives. She said providing for people instead of supporting them to do things on their own makes them believe they cannot support themselves.

Oregon is one of only two states that has legislation regarding Safe Families for Children.

The legislation helps protect volunteer host families. Glidewell said placements through SFFC are seen the same as if extended family was taking in children for a period. Also, the volunteer family is protected by the legislation from being sued. Any liability rests with the 501(c)3 taking on the safety piece.

Salem was the first area in Oregon to begin Safe Families for Children, and there are now active sites in Bend, Portland, and Medford.

The process has started in The Dalles and Eugene. Besides Oregon, Safe Families for Children is in 24 states and two foreign countries. Since its beginnings, almost 9,000 children have been provided a safe place to stay.

The average length of stay is 45 days, but can range from a couple of days to a couple of years. Parents maintain custody of their children and when they are ready, take their own children back in.

Most children placed in homes are 0-6 years old, but can be up to age 18.

More information can be found at safe-families.org. To get involved in bringing the movement to Baker County, contact Meghan at 541-406-0948 or e-mail m.andersch@yahoo.com.

Crash injures two near La Grande

On May 21, 2015 at about 6:07 p.m., a 2000 Chevy Tahoe operated by Avis Elaine Thomas, age 59, from Portland, was eastbound on I-84 near milepost 257 when the vehicle drove off the south shoulder and impacted the embankment and came to rest back on the gravel shoulder. Motorists who witnessed the crash stopped and extricated Thomas and her five-year-old grandson, Zashawan Perez, just before the vehicle caught fire from damage sustained during the crash. Both occupants were transported to the Grande Ronde Hospital where Thomas was stabilized and transported by air to St. Alphonsus in Boise with serious injuries. Perez sustained significant but non-life threatening injuries.

Causes of the crash are still under investigation. Information will be released as it becomes available. The Oregon State Police was assisted by the Oregon Department of Transportation, the LaGrande City Fire Department, the LaGrande Rural Fire Department and the Department of Human Services.

Rollover leads to DUII

On May 26 the Oregon State Police responded to a single vehicle rollover crash on US HWY 26 just east of Dayville in Grant County. The operator, Travis Lake, age 25, of Caldwell, ID lost control of his vehicle, which subsequently rolled over and came to rest on its top.

Lake refused to be transported to the hospital. He showed indicators of impairment and was subsequently arrested for driving under the influence of a controlled substance. He was transported to the Grant County jail, where he cooperated with a drug evaluation. Lake was issued a citation in lieu of custody for DUII, Reckless Driving and Possession of Less Than an Ounce of Marijuana.