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Chamber will miss 'Melva'

By BRITT FAIRCHILD

Spend time in Illinois Valley, and the name Melva Nichols begins to sound familiar.

Besides her roles as Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce office manager and secretary, coordinator for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and visitor center volunteer -- positions she's held for almost 23 years -- Nichols also has spent the past 13 years as Josephine County Transportation Program specialist.

Twice as saucy for every bit of sweet, it's clear that Nichols has the vigor and zest to remain working for several more years.

However, she has decided to retire.

"I think I better," Nichols said following an emergency chamber board meeting Thursday, Sept. 19 at Wild River Brewing & Pizza Co. in Cave Junction.

During the meeting, a committee was established, with Director Ted Crocker at the helm, to begin the process of filling the post. Nichols noted that Oct. 30 will be her last official day with the chamber.

Nichols also advised the county and visitor center of her retirement last week.

Although not specific about her reasons for retiring, Nichols, who is in her 70s, noted that a recent back injury, accompanied by a touch of pneumonia, has slowed her down a little. She is currently undergoing physical therapy for her back.

But Nichols doesn't plan on entirely leaving the labor force just yet. She said that she is staying on part time with RSVP, which is sponsored by Three Rivers Community Hospital.

"That's the only job I'm going to do," she said. "It's going to be a treat and not a treatment."

Fewer irons in the fire means more free time for Nichols to spend with her husband, Ted. She said that he has been a wonderful source of support, especially since the injury.

"I might do some traveling," Nichols said, adding that she hasn't been able to take a vacation yet this year.

Eventually, she hopes to return to Washington, D.C.

She and Ted traveled there for the first time on Sept. 11, 2001, landing just hours before the terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

The trip was to honor Nichols, who was selected as Oregon's Outstanding Older Worker for 2001, and the recipients from the other 49 states. Given the situation, few recipients made it to Washington, D.C.

Despite heightened security within the city, and not being able to see all the sights she had planned to visit, the trip -- and the honor -- remain

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COUGS WIN! -- Illinois Valley corralled the Hidden Valley Mustangs 28-6 in a Skyline Conference game in Cave Junction on Saturday, Sept. 21. Quarterback Mike Pagnotta (14) had 81 yards rushing on eight carries and scored twice in the first quarter. Natty Krauss ran for a 20-yard TD, and hit a 2-point conversion. Gary Couch snagged two interceptions. He held I.V. in rushing with 15 carries for 151 yards. The Cougs held HV to 66 rushing yards, while amassing 372 yards. (Photo courtesy of Timeless Photography/Andy Mechling)

State tax plan advanced

State legislators are hopeful that an income tax increase on the Jan. 28 ballot will pass, thus raising \$313 million to help fill a hole in Oregon's 2001-03 budget.

The plan to gain more funding came after the fifth special session of the Oregon Legislature that ended on Wednesday, Sept. 18.

However, the ballot title for the three-year \$725 million tax measure does not refer to the state's budget shortfall. It also does not mention that \$310 million in spending cuts would be repealed if the plan passes.

The wording on the tax increase measure reads:

"Temporarily increases income tax rates.

"Result of 'yes' vote: 'Yes' vote increases income tax rates for three years.

"Result of 'no' vote: A 'No' vote does not increase income tax rates.

"Summary: This measure increases income tax rates for three years.

"For personal income taxpayers filing single returns, this measure increases the rate of tax on taxable income of

Shriners offering assistance

Saturday, Sept. 28 is set for a free screening clinic, to help identify Illinois Valley children under 18 who can benefit from free orthopedic and burn care at Shriners Hospitals.

The clinic will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Siskiyou Community Health Center, 319 Caves Hwy.

All the expert care at Shriners Hospitals for children is provided free. The hospitals treat problems including scoliosis, neuromuscular disorders, and hand and back problems.

Also, leg length discrepan-

cies, rickets, congenital hip problems, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, and orthopedic problems tied to cerebral palsy.

Said the Shriners: "Those who know of any children under 18, who have problems of the bones, joints or muscles, or problems associated with healed burns, can bring them to the free clinic for an evaluation to find out if they are eligible for free, expert medical treatment.

"Throughout their 80 years, Shriners Hospitals have not been just hospitals, but places of healing and caring," said the Shriners.

more than \$6,450 from 9 percent to 9.5 percent. For taxpayers filing joint returns, this measure increases the rate of tax on taxable income of more than \$12,900 from 9 percent to 9.5 percent.

"For corporations, this measure increases the rate of tax on taxable income from 6.6 percent to 6.93 percent.

"The increased rates apply to taxable income earned in the 2002, 2003, and 2004 tax years. The measure restores the existing tax rates for 2005 and later years."

Besides the \$313 million that would be realized in the current biennium, the approved proposal would raise an estimated \$412 million for the 2003-05 budget period.

Besides the tax raise plan, the proposal includes \$150 million in borrowing, plus \$50 million in identified budget reductions.

And there is a provision for cutting \$95 million to kindergarten through 12th grade schools; plus \$215 million in reductions to other programs that would not occur if the tax proposal is approved by voters.

No, not another Biscuit, please

By BRITT FAIRCHILD

Josephine County will join Jackson, Douglas, Coos and Curry counties in funding a fire prevention plan for the five-county area.

During the Josephine County Commission meeting on Wednesday evening, Sept. 18 in Anne G. Basker Auditorium in Grants Pass, Commissioners Frank Iverson and Harold Haugen approved \$10,000 to support the project.

Commissioner Jim Brock was absent.

"We are dedicated to bring back the equivalent of smoke jumpers," Iverson said.

Despite a temporary stay on the tanker base to be kept in Medford, Iverson said a

permanent solution to prevent the "threat of repeat catastrophes" such as the Biscuit Fire is needed.

Moving the base to Klamath Falls would place the five counties outside the fire coverage area.

"We wouldn't get sufficient coverage," Iverson said.

The total cost of the project is \$100,000. Iverson noted the project will be done in phases. Douglas, Coos and Curry counties also plan to give \$10,000 each. Jackson County will give \$60,000.

Topographically similar, Iverson said that all of the five counties have the same community interest in being part of the coalition.

Besides preventing another Biscuit Fire, Iverson said that another goal of the five-county coalition will be to make use of the trees that burned in the fire.

"We would like to see the charred timber salvaged," he said. "There is good timber inside."

Had the Biscuit Fire been "snuffed out" earlier, it wouldn't have caused such psychological, economical and physical damage to the almost 500,000-acre area of forestland that it burned, said Iverson.

"We're going to do all we can," he said, "to make sure this type of situation doesn't happen again."

Kerby may receive city of CJ water

By BRITT FAIRCHILD

It could soon be well water no more for Kerby residents.

During its Monday evening Sept. 23 meeting in city hall, the Cave Junction City Council approved a tentative agreement between the city, the Kerby Water District and the Illinois Valley Community Response Team to begin providing water to Kerby.

The agreement is based on the following six principles:

*Kerby will be deemed as a single "outside" customer.

*The city will provide basic operation and maintenance of the Kerby Water District's distribution system.

*The city will provide meter reading and billing services for the district. However, the district will be responsible for collecting payment from Kerby residents.

*The district will invoice all emergency, after-hours, and major repairs responded to by the Cave Junction Public Works Dept.

*The district will coordinate installation of meters and type of equipment with the city prior to completing any installation.

*The district will bill each customer the basic minimum charges and for additional usage at the same rate as a city customer. The minimum charge is \$25 per month for the first 500 cubic feet of water used.

Councilor Rita Dyer ex-

pressed concern about how much Kerby residents would pay for the service.

She said she didn't want Cave Junction residents paying to supply water to Kerby, nor did she want Kerby customers paying more than city residents.

The council initially adopted the agreement during a workshop to discuss the issue on Tuesday, Sept. 17 and requested it be added to its next regular meeting.

Councilors also discussed what size meters to install.

Mayor Ed Faircloth noted that the agreement is still open for refinement.

Funding for installation of the water system infrastructure is being handled by USDA Rural Utilities Service as a combination grant and loan.

Perhaps the most emotional discussion of the evening centered around tree removal at Old Stage Park. Several trees in the park were removed after a weevil was found to be attacking them.

Cave Junction resident Christopher Sabionski addressed the council with concerns about how the project was conducted.

"I feel something needs to be done to restore this park," Sabionski told the council.

His comments mirrored those in his letter to council

members dated Sept. 11.

The piles of removed trees remain in the park, which Sabionski said endangers the health of the other trees.

"We have plans to gather up the brush," Faircloth said. "It (the park) hasn't been forgotten."

The forest service plans to burn the slash piles once fire season ends, said Forest Utility Supervisor Gary Biggs, who also was at the meeting. He added that the piles were moved away from other trees.

Faircloth said that more trees were removed than originally planned, as they were discovered to be infested as well. The main concern was to remove the unhealthy trees, he added.

"It wasn't done for financial gain," Faircloth assured Sabionski.

Sabionski had made reference in his letter to the number of trees being logged for monetary purposes.

Sabionski also wanted to know how much of the \$24,000 revenue from the operation, which is in the parks department general fund, will go toward renovating the park.

Faircloth said he couldn't give Sabionski a definite figure, but noted that some of the money will go toward fixing roads in the park and putting

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SCHUMACHER TRAILER FIRE -- Illinois Valley firefighters responded at 11:15 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 18 to a trailer fire behind a residence at 410 W. Schumacher St. in Cave Junction. The trailer resident, Arthur Ross, was not at home, said Capt. Jeff Gavlik, who indicated that a refrigerator was listed as cause of the \$2,500 blaze. No injuries were reported. One window of the home melted from the heat, and another was warped. American Medical Response and Oregon Dept. of Forestry responded in the 'quick save' of the residence.