

Established 1937

Illinois Valley News

Wednesday, April 2, 2003 Three Sections, 19 Pages, Volume 66 No. 2 Cave Junction, Oregon 97523

Single Copy 50-cents



R & R Mill likely to remain in operation

Krausses working to retain family business; encouraged by loyal employees

By SAM NEWTON
Staff Writer

The last log that rolled through the Rough & Ready Lumber Co. mill on Friday, March 25, signaled the end of an era.

After 83 years of supplying quality lumber products nationally and internationally -- not to mention employing generations of area families -- the company has closed for business, putting 150 family wage-earners out of work because standing timber is not

available for harvesting.

But all is not lost.

After months of talk about the business being sold, the owners are working on keeping it in the Krauss Family and continuing operation.

The announcement was made Thursday, March 27.

"We have a tentative three-year contract that will be renewable on a yearly basis from a private timber owner, which will guarantee 50 percent of the timber we need to keep the "big mill" in opera-

tion," said R&R co-owner Jennifer Phillipi.

"The other 50 percent of the timber needed," she said, "will be supplied by Rough & Ready's personal holdings and other private owners."

A surprise offer in February from a private timber owner prompted the Krauss Family to reconsider selling.

"The strength and grace that the employees had while dealing with all this turmoil gave us the courage to take on this challenge and make this

decision," Phillipi said.

The winding down of the mill closure will go as planned, with each department having their own dates of termination, Phillipi noted.

When operation resumes in mid-May it will involve only the big mill.

The new crew of approximately 75 -- half the number of workers prior to closure -- will consist of employees from different areas of the small and big mills.

"The crew will not be

made up of people who worked exclusively at the big mill, but will be a mix of employees from different departments of the mill who have decided to stay on with us," Phillipi said.

She added that the family is hoping to also enter into other log supply contracts that will supply the mill with what it needs to keep operating.

"We are also hoping that timber from the Biscuit Fire will be released," Phillipi said. "I haven't had time lately to

harass our legislators about releasing the Biscuit Fire timber for harvesting, but now I think it's time."

"Rough & Ready started out as a cuttings mill," she continued, "and that's what we are going back to. We're going back to our roots."

She was referring to the fact that when the firm began operations they produced high quality, high value products rather than focusing on high production.

(Related photo, page 9)

Fire chief placed on leave during audit

Division chief Jeff Gavlik appointed interim leader by district directors

Illinois Valley Fire Chief Kyle Kirchner said that he is disappointed at the district board of directors action to suspend his employment during a special audit.

The board voted 5-0 during a special meeting on Friday night, March 28 in Cave Junction City Hall to place Kirchner on paid administrative leave for an indefinite period. However, it is indicated that an audit of the fire district's finances for the past 12 to 24 months could take approximately two weeks.

Jeff Gavlik, the district training division chief, was appointed interim chief with a 5 percent pay increase.

Kirchner did not attend the special meeting, although he was aware of the session after learning of it from a notice posted on the front door to the district office in the main station in Cave Junction. Public notice of the meeting was made via a paid ad in the Grants Pass "Daily Courier" and by fliers placed around town.

The board first met in executive (closed to the public) session with Martial Henault, the district's attorney from Medford, for approximately 20 minutes, then reconvened in open session. Director Joe Malcolm moved for the audit, which involves questions about a credit card bill and one check, according to board Chairman Don Haviland.

Haviland said that he telephoned the chief after the meeting to advise him of the

board's action, and that Kirchner "was disappointed." The chairman said that the



CHIEF KYLE KIRCHNER



INTERIM CHIEF
JEFF GAVLIK

chief indicated that he "thinks the board doesn't trust him" and that "he feels let down."

On Monday, March 31, Kirchner said that he doesn't understand why the board didn't just approach him directly with their questions.

"It's all documented," said Kirchner, "and I would have been happy to show them the information; I have nothing to hide. I'm disappointed, and I don't understand the board's motivation. It appears suspicious to me as to why this came up now, or what caused it."

The chief added that, "It's unfortunate this is happening the way it is because it puts the district in the public's eye with less than admirable news. The district has made great progress during the past few years, and so this sort of situation is distressing."

Kirchner said that he has been scrupulous about paying back the district for personal items that he might have paid for with a district credit card while at training sessions, various meetings and conferences.

I will accept responsibility," he said. "However, I have paid back such expenses; although admittedly some might have slipped through the cracks. I just wish the board had come to me" rather than holding a special session and taking the action it did.

Kirchner, chief since 1996, paid back a pay advance loan from the district two years ago, including a fine, because although the action is not sanctioned by the state, it was approved by the then-board.

Meanwhile, said Kirchner, "I'm going to relax and refresh" during the administrative leave.

benefit the valley and the tourism-related businesses operating here." RDI is working under an assignment from the Oregon Tourism Commission.

As part of the planning process and four training sessions for invitees, information will be provided on key concepts, assumptions and definitions of geotourism.

In addition, sessions will cover key market segments for geotourism, including:

- *How the state is marketing to them.
- * The segments.

- *Spending patterns and what such visitors look for.
- *How to reach them.

(Continued on page 8)



Community help needed to fund pool

Rita Dyer leads effort to rally resources for opening facility this summer

By BRITT FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

The community will play a major role in whether or not Illinois Valley Swimming Pool in Cave Junction will open this summer.

That is, if the Josephine County Board of Commissioners accepts a plan in which it would provide \$10,000 -- half of what it allocated last year -- for pool operations, while the other \$10,000 would be raised within the valley.

The city would again kick in \$2,000, with pool admissions also helping to pay the bills.

"(We're) offering the commissioners what we feel is a win-win situation," said Cave Junction City Councilman Rita Dyer, who attended a Wednesday, March 26 meeting of pool supporters in city hall. "I really think (they) are going to go for this."

The idea of equal funding, Dyer said, is a way for Commissioners Jim Brock, Harold Haugen and Jim Riddle to continue their support of the pool without providing as much as last year due to a county budget slump.

Ten of the 15 to 20 people at the meeting are working on

a presentation to give the board, hopefully within the next couple of weeks, Dyer said.

A decision is needed soon, Dyer added, as little time remains before pool schedules, programs, and classes need to be finalized should the pool open for its 2003 season.

Typically, the season runs from June or July and closes in early September.

If the agreement is approved, planning for community fund-raisers would also begin.

The Grants Pass Family YMCA, Dyer noted, is on board again this year to manage the pool. However, the organization is unable to solely support it as a non-YMCA program.

"We so much appreciate all that the YMCA has done," Dyer said.

Eventually, the goal is to make the pool self-supportive, with pool admissions -- currently \$2 per person -- covering all costs. That way, the county would no longer need to chip in any amount.

One way to do that, Dyer said, is to use a grant to buy a bubble cover for the pool, which would extend the season to perhaps April through

October and bring in more attendance money.

While only a large handful of people came to the meeting, Dyer said she knows there are more pool supporters out there.

More than 1,000 of them used the pool last season alone, she said. Especially during the first part of the summer.

Dyer noted that she attended a water aerobics class early in the season, and that there were so many people there -- approximately 85 -- that there was hardly room to exercise.

Initially scheduled for three days a week, the class was expanded to every day to accommodate everyone.

It was just one example she gave of the level of community support.

Valley residents continuing their support could be the only way to keep the pool operating, Dyer added.

"Support the pool by going to the pool, and support our fund-raisers," she said.

"The bottom line is to keep the pool open," Dyer said.

"It is one of the only resources we have (here)."

(Related photo page 4)

Valley picked for state pilot tourism project

Outdoor-related geotourism attractions for visitors could result in economic boost

Illinois Valley has been chosen for an Oregon visitor industry pilot project designed to boost the economy through sustainable outdoor-related tourism.

The project, which could spread across Oregon after its successful completion, is a joint effort of Illinois Valley Community Response Team (IVCRT), and Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber directors agreed to the cooperative effort with IVCRT during their meeting in the Junction Inn on Thursday, March 20 following a presentation by Ron Phillips, IVCRT executive director.

Anticipated results of the

project, to be facilitated by Rural Development Initiatives Inc. (RDI), include:

- *A geotourism (Earth-related) visitor niche plan.

- *A list of feasible projects that would help attract that type of visitor.

- *A funding strategy that would enable implementation of these projects.

"This will help us get on the state's radar," said Phillips, "and could result in attracting more resources to our valley. We're looking at a particular target market: the affluent, high-spending, low-impact visitor."

"This is a unique opportunity," he said, "that could

phine County Sheriff's Office Substation in CJ.

Four deputies from the sheriff's office, and two Oregon State Police troopers responded to a report of a possible riot or fight, said Harman.

However, when the group

was contacted at the substation, no problem was evident. All were checked for "wants," said Harman, and there were no arrests.

"It turned out to be about 20 guys just hanging around," he said.