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BIG TOP RAISING - Dozens of schoolchildren and adults watched Barbara, an African elephant, help lift the Culpepper & Merriweather Circus tent on Thursday morning, May 15. The circus was sponsored by the Illinois Valley Family Coalition. Related photos on page 8. (Photo by Britt Fairchild)

Community center would tap area assets

Community Response Team presents I.V. Chamber with plans, requests federal cash

In the interests of bolstering the sagging Illinois Valley economy, a \$350,000 grant is sought for an Illinois Valley Community Arts & Economics Centre that likely will cost some \$600,000.

The concept was presented to I.V. Chamber of Commerce directors during their noon meeting on Thursday, May 15 in Wild River Brewing & Pizza Co. in Cave Junction. Ron Phillips, executive director of I.V. Community Response Team (IVCRT), made the presentation.

There is a definite need to tap into two of the valley's biggest assets: Oregon Caves National Monument, and the steady flow of traffic through the center of the valley on Hwy. 199, known as Redwood Hwy., he said.

A community center with approximately 4,000 square feet of space would not only offer concentrated information for visitors, but room for displays of art and other valley products. In addition, there could be space for offices. The grant is sought from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture/Forest Service Rural Investment Fund.

Four locations, with assistance from Bill Reid of Ore-

gon Mt. Real Estate, are being examined. They are the site of the former Cabax Mill across from Kerbyville Museum; alongside the existing I.V. Visitor Center; on the vacant lot owned by Junction Inn on its north side; and the site of the former Wish-U-Well Motel across from the visitor center on Hwy. 46, known as Caves Hwy.

"We need to take advantage of our Enterprise Community designation," said Phillips, noting that less than two years of its designation remain. He added that during the past 16 months, the valley has lost 175 jobs with relocation of Fire Mountain Gems and Krauss Craft to the Interstate 5 corridor in the Grants Pass area. In addition, with reorganization of Rough & Ready Lumber Co., another 70 jobs are lost.

Plus, said Phillips, "The current recession, exacerbated by the poor tourism season in the aftermath of last summer's Biscuit Fire, has struck at another important sector -- tourism -- leaving many visitor-dependent businesses up for sale or in desperate financial straits.

"The loss of income from these companies and of wages

for local recirculation will have a negative ripple effect on other service and retail businesses. By building on local assets, namely the excellent arts community and Oregon Caves National Monument, a significant improvement in the tourism sector can be achieved."

And the way to approach the situation, he said, is to "construct the Illinois Valley Community Arts & Economics Centre to serve as a hub of entrepreneurial activity and creativity.

"The proposed center will serve as a catalyst for entrepreneurial development by providing a focal point where business owners, crafters, artists and service providers can interact and collaborate. The center," said Phillips, "will serve as the intersection of Internet and on-site marketing for local products.

"The goal," he said, "is to build a critical mass of commercial activity based on existing export products including furniture, arts and crafts, and wine; and tourism services including accommodations, dining and attractions." They would be placed "within

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PRICELESS PRANCING PETS - Area animals made a big impression at this year's Illinois Valley Child's Fair & Pet Parade held in Jubilee Park on Saturday, May 17. Activities included fingerpainting, kite making, face painting, children's guitar music, karaoke singing and a visit by birds of prey from Wildlife Images. Free food and drinks were also provided. Related photos on page 8.

IVFD eyes two plots for station

Two sites for a new Selma Fire Station are being considered, acting Chief Jeff Gavlik told Illinois Valley Board of Directors during its meeting in Cave Junction City Hall on Thursday night, May 15.

One site of 2.5 acres, owned by Rough & Ready Lumber Co., has been a possibility for perhaps three months. However, the price was considered too high. Rough & Ready has dropped the price to \$80,000, the board was told by Gavlik.

Another site, consisting of 3.44 acres, also is available for \$80,000, said the acting chief. Volunteer Lt. Jim Gurley, said Gavlik, "is researching the specifics for me, but his preliminary studies indicate that this property would work for our construction plans."

Both sites are on the west side of Hwy. 199; the larger one closer to the existing station than the other property.

The 3.44 acres already has septic and water on-site, said Gavlik, and its location on a straight section of the highway is advantageous. "It's looking like the better prospect," he said.

Fire chief's paid leave sparks cash concerns

Because Illinois Valley Chief Kyle Kirchner's paid administrative leave during an audit ordered by district directors has stretched from an estimated two weeks to nearly two months, concerns have surfaced about unnecessary expenses to taxpayers, plus anxiety about Kirchner's reputation and the effect on volunteer firefighters.

In addition, board Vice President Larrick Jones said he believes that the situation "could have been handled in one evening" if the board had met with the chief regarding the allegations about misuse of a credit card. "There are no grounds for termination," he said during a telephone interview on Sunday, May 18.

"The items we're talking about," he said, "are no big concern."

He added that the process used by the board regarding the allegations, under the direction of President Don Haviland, "was not done the right way. If there were concerns with the budget or whatever," said Jones, "the chief should have been contacted directly. Then if we weren't satisfied, our attorney could have been contacted.

"This was not done," said

Jones, a retired fire chief for the city of Del Mar, Calif. with 43 years in the fire service. "As far as I'm concerned, this whole process (regarding Kirchner) is null and void. You either do it the right way or not at all," he said, referring to board policy.

Board President Don Haviland, contacted at home on May 18 about the board's regular meeting on Thursday evening, May 15 in Cave Junction City Hall, said he had no further comment beyond those from the first public announcement by the board since March 28. It was during a special meeting in city hall on March 28 that the board approved 5-0 Kirchner's paid administrative leave.

There is still some question as to which of the directors brought up the matter of possible credit card misuse, seeking an inquiry. The matter seemed to have been addressed during a regular meeting in March, when Kirchner indicated that it was done in error and without thought of fraud, and that he had reimbursed the district.

During the regular meeting last week, the board was

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JEFF AND MARY CHRISTENSEN

Valley couple gives the gift of juggling

New Cave Junction business offers free lessons, sells souvenirs and supplies

By BRITT FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

Jeff Christensen is partial to bluegrass, but any music will do.

As long as it has a good beat, he'll juggle to it.

Throw in some funky stepping and the result is quite impressive.

"I'm an avid juggler," said Jeff, who learned the art some 30 years ago. "It's a fun thing I'd like to share."

Slowly but surely, he's getting the chance in Illinois Valley.

A little more than one week ago, Jeff and his wife, Mary, opened Jemarc, a Cave Junction gift and "learn to juggle" shop where most of the inventory, from juggling bags to intarsia wood art, is handmade.

As word about the new business spreads, more and more are coming forth for the free juggling lessons.

Jemarc -- "Je" for Jeff, "mar" for Mary and the "c"

stands for their last name -- is the first business the couple has owned. They moved to the valley in June from Thornton, Colo. (a Denver suburb) after their youngest daughter graduated from high school.

"We vacationed here for years and loved the valley," Jeff said.

While the couple noted that there are no economic guarantees for their type of business, they said they hope to attract tourists.

"If I get people to juggle I'm happy," Jeff said.

Mary, who also teaches lessons, added that she has fun helping others learn.

Plus, she said, it's one of few activities in the area for children.

"There's not too much for the kids (here) to do. It's something for them to enjoy," Mary said.

Jeff and Mary assured that almost everyone can really learn to juggle in 15 minutes or less -- as long as they can

throw a ball with one hand and catch it in the other. "After that, it's just practice," Jeff said.

While a bit embarrassing at first to learn -- likely plan on chasing after a lot of missed bags; arms waving in unsuccessful attempts to catch bags thrown too high, too hard, or in the wrong direction; and a few bags hitting you, or Jeff and Mary, in the face, or elsewhere.

But really, juggling isn't that difficult to learn.

That's another reason the Christensens opened Jemarc, to help dispel the myth that juggling is some mystical, intimidating art, and therefore no one really tries to learn, Jeff said.

Not to mention that juggling is good exercise, especially for beginners running around picking up all the missed juggling bags.

Jeff noted that research

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