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Crime ring annoys CJ merchants

By STEVE FAIRCHILD

A growing burglary ring has Cave Junction area business owners up in arms about not enough protection and lack of involvement from city officials, lawmen and parents in keeping the town safe.

A late night burglary Wednesday, July 2 -- that led to \$20,000 in lost merchandise and damage to Bear Images, a boutique and gift store -- is the latest in a series of crimes perpetrated against Downtown Cave Junction businesses.

On Thursday, July 31, a customer who stopped by the business at around 9:30 a.m. discovered that the front door to Bear Images was kicked in and that items inside the store had been thrown around.

Josephine County Sheriff's Office deputies took a report for second-degree burglary, first-degree theft and criminal mischief.

An employee at Dave's Perfect Pizza discovered that the cash register and tip jar were taken when he went to open the business on Wednesday, July 30.

The burglars forced their way through a small bathroom-size window and left through a back door, he said.

On Saturday, Aug. 2, an employee at La Caverna Restaurant, which is in the same shopping center as Bear Image, noticed that the door to the restaurant's storage shed had been burglarized and that beer was missing. The shed was broken into again the next night, and deputies said \$100 worth of beer was taken.

During the past six months several other businesses have been the victims of burglaries. They include Video Explorer, The E-Store, Puff 'N' Stuff, CJ Radio Shack and Video Store and others that were not reported to deputies.

Colene Talley, owner of Bear Images, said the crime ring is being perpetuated by youngsters riding around town on bicycles. But they are getting more sophisticated or may be led by an experienced thief, she believes.

When her business was broken into, the sus-

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Cave Junction citizen patrol meeting Friday, Aug. 8 at 7p.m. Jubilee Park Pavilion



No injuries were reported in a Selma mobile home fire fought by I.V. firefighters. (Photo by Steve Fairchild)

I.V. firefighters battle Selma home blaze in 107°

A mobile home located at 375 Squaw Mountain Road in Selma burned to the ground Wednesday, July 30.

Illinois Valley Rural Fire Protection District Division Chief Joe Feldhaus, who lives nearby, was on scene in 45 seconds after hearing the fire announcement on his radio.

Upon discovering that

the house was fully engulfed, I.V. firefighters focused successfully on keeping the flames out of the nearby woodlands and fought to save a motorcycle shop behind the house.

Nobody was reported injured in the blaze including the home's residents Bruce Mueller and Two Feathers Man Killer.

According to Feld-

haus, firefighters saved approximately \$100,000 in tools by preventing flames from overtaking the motorcycle shop, but the contents of the house including several computers used to operate a key and the motorcycle business were destroyed.

The fire was most likely started when someone at the house dropped a

cigarette onto a wood pile, Feldhaus said. The 107-degree weather probably made it difficult for them to detect the flames.

Members of the I.V. Fire District spent five hours mopping up the blaze. Four firefighters, a water tender and a brush truck left the scene to help fight a fire in Grants Pass on Robertson Road.



A sheriff's deputy dusted for fingerprints in Bear Images after a burglary.

Forest restrictions rise due to fire risk

Due to the hot weather and increasingly dry forest conditions, campfires, smoking and off-road vehicle use is restricted in the Rogue River and Siskiyou National Forests.

As of Friday, Aug. 1, open campfires are prohibited in both national forests, except in approved fire rings and fireplaces at

specific developed and dispersed recreation sites. The use of pressurized, liquid or gas stoves is allowed in the forests. Smoking is prohibited in the forests, except in enclosed vehicles and buildings, in designated recreation sites, or while aboard watercraft on rivers or lakes. Off-road vehicle use

is prohibited, and all motorized vehicles must stay on developed forest roads and within established parking areas.

In Illinois Valley Ranger District Grayback Campground and Day Use Area, Cave Creek Campground and Bolan Lake Campground are approved for campfires.

Hickerson move loss to valley

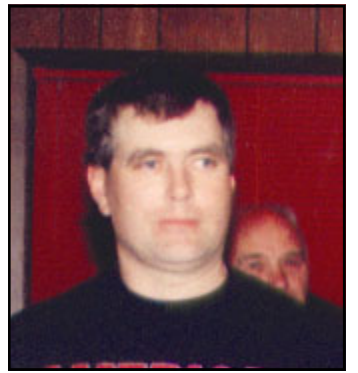
By BRITT FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

After living in Illinois Valley since the sixth grade, Bill Hickerson is moving on.

The former city of Cave Junction employee, who quit his job at the city of Cave Junction Wastewater Plant last month after five years there, said he's ready for a change.

"I've lived here (almost) my whole life," Hickerson said.

Don't get him wrong. He'll always treasure the valley -- 24 years of volunteering for I.V. Rural Fire Protection District



Bill Hickerson

(IVRFPD) demonstrates his commitment to this community. However, he said, the skills he's learned are viable in other places, such as Grants Pass.

Hickerson began his new job at the GP Wastewater Treatment Plant on July 28.

He and his wife, Lariann, who also works in Grants Pass, plan to sell their house on Caves Hwy. and build somewhere in Grants Pass.

That she has been commuting to work for some time was the main reason he changed jobs, Hickerson said.

Although the situation surrounding former Fire Chief Kyle Kirchner's resignation also played into his decision, he added.

"It just made it easier (to leave)," Hickerson said.

Kirchner accepted a deal from the IVRFPD board for his resignation at a June 18 board meeting following accusations that he spent district money and used a district card for personal purchases.

Kirchner also noted at the time that had he not settled, three of the five board members would have voted to fire him.

The way in which board members handled the situation, from placing Kirchner on leave months

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Sentencing pending in GP arson

A 17-year-old boy could be sentenced to 15 years in prison in connection with 16 counts of first-degree arson involving fires that destroyed two Grants Pass complexes for senior citizens.

Michael C. Stephens, a student at Grants Pass High School was scheduled for sentencing on Friday, Aug. 8 after entering a plea of "no contest" on Monday, July 28 in connection with a major blaze on March 6. It left 62 people homeless.

Subsequently he has asked to withdraw that plea and the court is considering the request. A new sentencing date is pending.

The fire caused more than \$6 million damage at Oakview Gardens and Jasmine Park. The major blaze was fought by firefighters from several agencies. They included Grants Pass Fire & Rescue, Illinois Valley Fire District and Rural/Metro Fire Dept.

A defendant who pleads no contest admits no guilt, but acknowledges that he could be convicted.

Check out the new 'I.V. News' feature, '10 minutes with...' on page 10