10 minutes with...

Kathleen Doyle

Executive Director of Illinois Valley Family Coalition
Lived in area: 12 years in Wilderville

What does the Family Coalition do?
We have 11 agencies in this building with 25 partners. The whole idea was to have one building where people can access everything rather than have to travel to Grants Pass.

So the Family Coalition is the glue that holds all the social service agencies together?
We're the private nonprofit that owns the building and creates the programs that aren't already offered here. Most of the agencies here are private nonprofits or state agencies that offer services.

So in a community like this, are the services offered at the coalition really important?
I think some people don't understand that when you're low income you need transitional services to get cars and to get to work. Most people in life have to get help from somebody. We see a lot of successes.

Do you think people in our community are in bad shape economically?
The 2000 census had the Illinois Valley at 19 percent unemployment and a lot of statisticians think it is much higher than that. Transportation is a major barrier (to employment) and we're working on getting some donated vehicles from car dealers in Grants Pass. The job situation in Grants Pass isn't great either, but this is a great area to be self-employed.

Is there a solution to I.V.'s economic problems?
There seems to be a sense that there will never be sustainable incomes here. I think it is a matter of brainstorming, trusting each other and working together. One of the classes we will be teaching next year is how to sell products on the Internet and how to start a small business. We'll also offer peer-support groups. We're not just a 'patch it up and get people out the door' kind of place. We're trying to create long range ways to make a sustainable living here and not have to commute.

Is there anything new going on in the building?
One of the things we're trying to do is find out what the community needs. We started new computer classes and have an incredible computer teacher that teaches beginning to advanced classes. We have wonderful services provided by volunteers including a volunteer clinical psychologist. We're trying to build as many services and classes as possible.

You started as executive director here six months ago. How has it been?
I'm very hopeful that we can bring a much wider spectrum of people in the community to use this building and to use the services here. I think the more outreach we do, the more people we will see. We're an important center for community groups in the area. We have a lot of meeting rooms.

Are there any big events coming up at the coalition?
The Illinois Valley Christmas Basket and Toy Program, run by a nonprofit, is coming up. Last year we had 563 families that came. We had toys for all the kids and teen-agers. Anybody that wants to sign up to volunteer and contribute can.

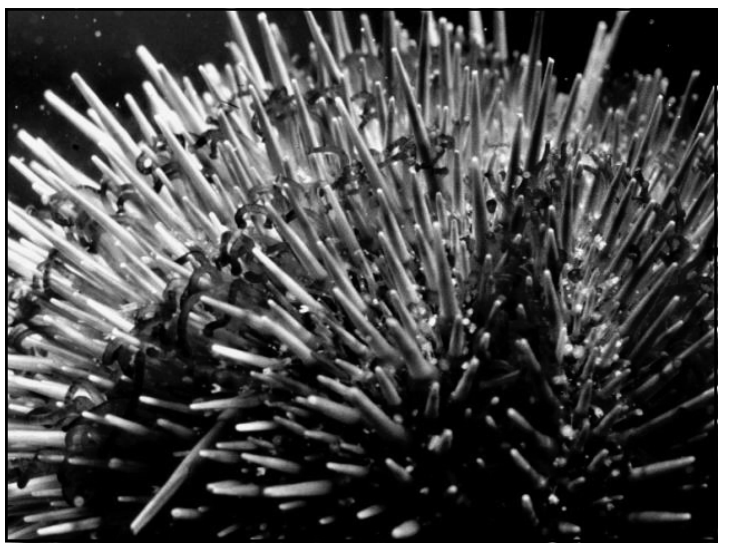
What do you like about living in the area?
I like the rural lifestyle and self-sufficiency of people.

What are some of your hobbies when you're not working?
Horseback riding, hiking, reading and teaching.

What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?
The really low-fat Umpqua Cookie Dough.

— Interview by Steve Fairchild

Study: Sea urchins may live more than 200 years



A new study concludes that the red sea urchin, a small, spiny invertebrate that lives in shallow coastal waters, is among the longest living animals on Earth -- they can live to be 100 years old, and some may reach 200 years or more in good health with few signs of age.

In other words, an individual red sea urchin that hatched on the day in 1805 that Lewis and Clark arrived in Oregon may still be thriving and breeding.

The research was published in a professional journal, the U.S. Fishery Bulletin, by scientists from Oregon State University (OSU) and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

It used to be believed that red sea urchins lived to be only seven to 15 years old, experts said. But the newest findings are based on the use of two different techniques of determining sea urchin ages -- one biochemical and the other nuclear -- that produced the same results.

The studies show red sea urchins can live longer than virtually all terrestrial and most marine animal species, and seem to show almost no signs of age-related dysfunction, right up until the day something kills them.

"No animal lives forever, but these red sea urchins appear to be practically immortal," said Thomas Ebert, a marine zoologist at OSU. "They can die from attacks by predators, specific diseases or being harvested by fishermen. But even then they show very few signs of age."

Some of the new studies on this species were done with funding support from the Pacific States Fishery Commission to gain more information about the species, its life cycle, biology, survival rate, growth patterns, and perhaps shed some light on why the red sea urchin resource was declining in some areas.

This small marine animal, which is found in shallow Pacific Ocean coastal waters from Alaska to Baja, Calif. And also elsewhere in the world's oceans, lives by grazing quietly on marine plants and deterring most predators with pointy spines. Historically, it had been considered a nuisance.

In the 1970s a sea urchin-based commercial fishery developed in the U.S., but the urchins were sold primarily to Japan where their sex organs were considered a delicacy. They brought high prices, and at one point in the 1990s were one of the most valuable marine resources in California.

Ebert did some early work on the red sea urchin, along with colleagues Steve Schroeter at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and John Dixon, of the California Coastal Commission. It quickly became apparent that sea urchins, among other things, grew a lot more slowly and lived a lot longer than had been believed.

The red sea urchin, does in fact grow fairly quickly when it's young -- at two years of age, it can grow from two to four centimeters in one year, doubling its size. But even at that, it still takes at least 6-7 years before the sea urchin is of harvestable size, the scientists said, compared to the two years that had previously been believed.

The recent study suggest, among other things, that all types of sea urchins have a fairly poor ability to survive various threats during the first year of life and reach reproductive age. Otherwise there would be a great many more. Older sea urchins can help provide more young and therefore may play a key role in creating a sustainable fishery, so a return to harvest policies that limits harvest beyond a certain size might be prudent.

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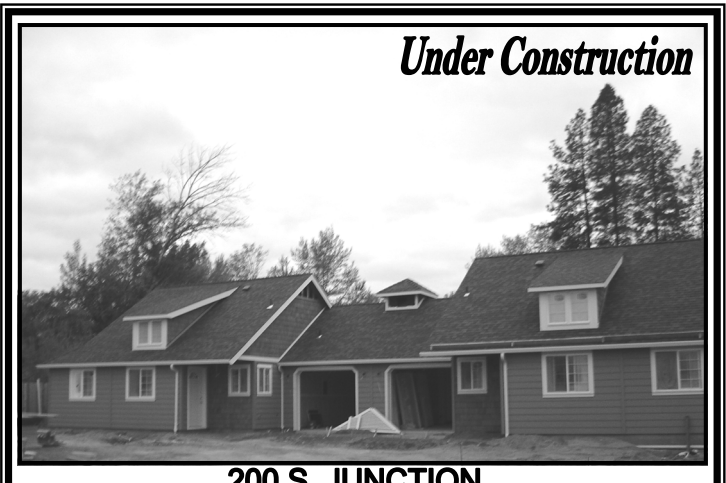
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