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A Christmas tale: Family, friends combine for 'holiday pickup'



Larry Smith admires his pickup truck, which was refurbished through a grass-roots labor of love. (Photos by Bryan Harley)

By **BRYAN HARLEY**
IVN Staff Writer

Cave Junction resident Larry Smith, 49, has owned his 1972 Ford F-150 4x4 truck since he was 18.

Miles of memories have been logged behind its steering wheel. Even after the clutch went out five years ago, he still couldn't bring himself to get rid of it.

A little paint, some new tires, a little work under the hood -- Larry sensed that one of these days he was going to get that old truck running again. Then came the diagnosis.

Larry & Annette Smith

have had a rough 2005.

Each suffered the loss of one of their parents this past year. In May, Larry was diagnosed with colon cancer. Chemo treatments followed.

Drained by the effects of the radiation, Larry's dream of restoring his prized truck sat rusting in the yard gathering fallen leaves.

That's when his adoring wife, Annette, seized the initiative.

"Larry's the type that always gave to those who were in need and never asked for anything in (Continued on page 10)



Smith and son as he gets his first glimpse.



Oregon State Police Arson Squad detectives from Central Point sift through debris after a Cave Junction

structure fire in which a body was found. (Photo by Dale & Elaine Sandberg/Illinois Valley Fire District)

Cave Junction fire death investigated as homicide

A homicide investigation is under way following discovery of the charred remains of a white male at a major structure fire in the city of Cave Junction.

Missing is Curtis Dylan Willie, 28, who rented a single-wide mobile home and lived alone at 208 1/2 Caves Ave., said Josephine County Sheriff's Office (JCSO).

A transient, Benjamin Allen Tolle, 28, was found with one of the victim's two vehicles after the blaze, reported at approximately 2:15 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 13. Tolle was arrested in Illinois Valley by JCSO under outstanding warrants at ap-

proximately 10 p.m. the day of the blaze.

Besides the missing vehicle, officers found some of Willie's personal belongings near the destroyed residence. The items were recovered.

The body of the unidentified victim is similar in physical description to that of Willie, said JCSO. His family in Tennessee is cooperating with the investigation, and dental records are to arrive soon.

The body in the home was taken to the state morgue in Central Point, and an autopsy will be (Continued on page 10)



A HEAD START FIELD TRIP to Illinois Valley Fire District's (IVFD) Station 1 in Cave Junction occurred Friday, Dec. 16. One boy (photo immediately above) wore a shirt proclaiming his desire to be a fireman some day. I.V. firefighters and American Medical Response personnel conducted a tour for the children. (Photos by Dale & Elaine Sandberg/IVFD)

Letters to Santa, including some from yesteryear, begin on page 13, as well as holiday greetings from a number of valley merchants.

Weather Watch

Illinois Valley

Wednesday, Dec. 21
Cloudy, Rain Likely
High--52 Low--35

Thursday, Dec. 22
Mostly Cloudy
High--48 Low--34

Friday, Dec. 23
Cloudy & Cool
High--49 Low--35

Saturday, Dec. 24
Clouds Continue
High--50 Low--33

Sunday, Dec. 25
Merry Christmas!!
Mostly Cloudy
High--49 Low--33

Monday, Dec. 26
Rain
High--50 Low--32

Tuesday, Dec. 27
Partly Cloudy
High--50 Low--33

County job market has high marks

By adding 900 payroll jobs since November 2004, Josephine County's job-growth rate outpaced Oregon's statewide rate, which during that time was the sixth fastest in the country.

So said Oregon Employment Dept. (OED), which announced Friday, Dec. 16 that due to seasonal declines in leisure-and-hospitality the Josephine County jobless rate during November this year rose a notch to 6.2 percent from 6.1 in October.

During November '04 the county unemployment rate was 7.7 percent.

OED noted that last month in the county 32,804 persons were employed, out of a civilian labor force of 34,984.

Jackson County's jobless rate was 5.0 percent, up from 4.9 during October.

In Josephine County,

said OED, employment fell during November in a number of industries.

"With a much wetter November than the previous month, construction employment slipped by 20," said the agency. It added that during the past year, "The construction sector added 170 jobs. With building permit data still showing no signs of a slowdown, employment should remain strong in the coming months.

"Data show 740 residential building permits issued through October," OED said. "During the same period last year, 661 residential-unit permits were issued in the county."

Retail trade in the county last month "bucked the trend of many sectors," gaining 70 jobs.

Sectors posting slight

employment losses were transportation, warehousing and utilities (-20), financial activities (-30), professional and business services (-20), federal government (-10) state government (-30), and "other" services (-20).

With the tourist season in its typical seasonal retreat, employment fell by 170 during November, reported OED.

Most published sectors recorded job gains during the past 12 months, OED noted. It listed those gaining the most as manufacturing (+240), retail (+250), wholesale trade (+100), professional and business services (+70), health care and social assistance (+80), and local education (+70).

Last month's seasonally adjusted rate for Oregon was 5.8 percent. The U.S. rate was 5.0 percent.

Josephine Interagency Narcotics Team member gains top enforcement honors

Detective Pete Jenista, a member of the Josephine Interagency Narcotics Team (JOINT), has been honored as 2005 Oregon State Narcotics Officer of the Year by the Oregon Narcotics Enforcement Association (ONEA).

Jenista is a member of the Grants Pass Dept. of Public Safety, who has been assigned to JOINT since 2000, said JOINT Detective Sgt. Ken Selig, of Josephine County Sheriff's Office.

ONEA President Ron Nelson presented Jenista the prestigious award during the recent annual ONEA conference in Wilsonville.

Jenista was given the award for his dedication and hard work in narcotics and

drug enforcement in Josephine County, said Selig.

The award-winning detective is frequently the lead investigator in many of the narcotics and drug cases worked each year by JOINT investigators. During the past year, JOINT investigators have removed from the streets of Josephine County:

*More than 13 pounds of crystal methamphetamine with a street value of more than \$108,000.

*Seven methamphetamine manufacturing labs.

*Some 4,500 marijuana plants associated with four separate organized crime groups operating in Josephine County.

*The seizure of slightly more than \$3 million in

criminal asset forfeitures.

Jenista and JOINT investigators work closely with the federal court system; thereby saving Josephine County thousands of dollars in local prosecution costs, Selig noted.

Jenista has played a key role in the enforcement of drug laws that reduce Josephine County's methamphetamine production and drug dependency, said Selig.

Under the ONEA system, Oregon is divided into four districts. District 3 comprises Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Klamath, Lake and Josephine counties. Jenista was chosen from all districts in the state to receive the ONEA award for narcotics enforcement.