

Ex-smokejumper base seen as draw

(Continued from page 1)

“We think we can leverage donations, grant money, and other assistance to do the repair work on the buildings. All of this will reduce or eliminate the expenses that taxpayers of Josephine County will need to pay to get this work done,” said Buck, who served as a smokejumper at the base.

One of the main objectives of the group is to increase the use of the airport by the owners of private airplanes who take weekend trips with their families to see places with interesting stories and activities.

“We think that by offering consistent services and interesting things to see and do, we will earn a reputation that will attract families who travel by airplane,” said Sharon Westcott, owner of Fly Wild Air at Illinois Valley Airport. “We want to get these people to visit the historic base, but we are also going to be proactive at getting them to visit other attractions in the area.

“It’s a win-win situation for everyone,” said the long-time pilot and aviation enthusiast.

Group members hope that by developing a self-guided tour and a small museum, they will be able to slow some of the tourist traffic and increase the amount of tourism dollars that are spent locally.

“With the loss of O&C funds, we need to get started on alternative ways to gen-

erate revenues that can help keep patrol cars rolling, libraries open, and roads repaired,” said Roger Brandt, a valley resident who has been working on tourism development on the Hwy. 199 corridor for 14 years.

“We want to do what we can to help extend the amount of time travelers stay in Josephine County so they spend more money at our restaurants, gift stores, and other businesses that depend upon tourism to generate their income,” said Brandt. “It makes good business sense to turn this one-of-a-kind heritage story into an attraction that gives our community an advantage in the competitive tourism market.”

The group also plans to aggressively promote other attractions in the area, which they hope will help increase visitor spending locally.

The business plan includes a timeline to prepare the site for attracting visitors to the area to include bus tour groups, and SSBMP plans to schedule tour guides to meet with groups and take them around the base on a tour.

“We already have an offer from the National Smokejumper Association to help us organize a schedule of visiting smokejumpers who might stay in the valley for one or two weeks and provide personalized tours,” noted Buck.

“We hope to use volunteers to help visitors enjoy

their experience, spend more time at the base, and encourage visitors to see other attractions in the area,” he added. We can help to increase the economic benefit of heritage tourism at a very low cost.”

The historic base has a park-like setting and the group hopes that regular maintenance of the grounds will make it a place that local residents will enjoy using for picnics, family reunions, and other family oriented activities.

The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was the first to be established in Oregon and now has the oldest parachute loft in the United States. It is one of the original four smokejumper bases established when smokejumping began in the early 1940s. The other bases have since been destroyed.

The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base is perhaps the most complete representation of early smokejumping history remaining in the nation, said SSBMP.

Smokejumping is a firefighting strategy that quickly delivers firefighters to blazes in remote regions where they extinguish them while they are small and easily controlled. Using this technique, they were able to prevent small fires from becoming uncontrollable and catastrophic infernos.

Smokejumpers parachute from airplanes to fires and fight them on the ground.



HALLOWEEN DAY was observed by (from top) Home Valley Bank, with its six of Snow White’s dwarves, plus her magic mirror; Sterling Savings Bank with its scary crew of vampires; and the staff at SOFCU Community Credit Union, who donned attire from the 1950s. The banks also offered goodies for trick-or-treaters, or any customer with a sweet tooth. (Photos by Dale Sandberg for ‘Illinois Valley New’)



If you think that changing clocks for daylight savings time is a nuisance, consider the shadow clock, which told ancient Egyptians the number of hours before or after noon. That clock had to be turned around each day at noon, which meant that if someone forgot to move the rock they wouldn’t know what time it was.

Choose to Live Life Well

CareSource
Count on Us

Better benefits, same low premium.

For a Medicare Advantage Plan, it doesn’t get any better than CareSource. Enjoy the feeling of a secure future with a CareSource plan. We’re a local source for your Medicare coverage and we’re here for you! Come in to see us about all the plans we offer and pick the one that’s right for you.

Call for more information or attend our next seminar:
Wednesday, November 15th, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Junction Inn, 406 S. Redwood Hwy., Cave Junction. Lunch will be provided.

A sales person will be present with information and applications. We accommodate people with special needs.

The care you need for the *life* you lead.

Mid Rogue
Health Plan

CareSource is a Medicare Advantage Plan with a Medicare contract. Anyone with Medicare may apply. You must continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium.

820 NE. 7th St, Grants Pass, OR 97526

• Phone: 471.4106 • TTY 800.735.2900 • www.caresourcehnp.com