

Here, There, & Everywhere

AFFORDABLE HOUSING - A workshop to help people get their own homes will be presented Friday, Feb. 9 in Cave Junction City Hall. The program is organized by Luz Moore, of Century 21 Harris & Taylor. More than 40 persons have signed up for the free presentation, which will run from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

CHAMBER RECOGNITION - Citizen and Business of the Year awards for 2006 will be announced during the Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce public dinner-dance Saturday, Feb. 10 at the Junction Inn. Sheriff Gil Gilbertson and the board of county commissioners will attend. There will be live music, and a no-host bar beginning at 5 p.m.

PLAYGROUND PENNIES - Evergreen Elementary School PTA's annual Penny Drive is under way. Slightly more than \$2,000 was raised last year, and it's hoped that will be exceeded for 2007. The PTA again has voted that half the net proceeds will go toward purchasing new playground equipment. The other half will help pay for field trip buses, art grants for each teacher, and the Artist in Residence Program. To donate pennies to the PTA, leave them at the Evergreen office. Also acceptable: nickels, dimes, quarters, cash or checks. Any donations will be appreciated. Last year, Principal Linda Brown offered to dye her hair if the goal of \$2,000 was met -- and she looked wonderful with rainbow-colored hair. This year, Principal David Valenzuela has offered to wear a dress to school. The classroom that raises the most money will pick his make-up.

'LIKE A DREAM' - Tom Hewkin, principal at Lorna Byrne Middle School in Cave Junction, will take home approximately \$1.8 million from his winning \$5.4 million Oregon Lottery Megabucks ticket. He bought a winner late in January. It's believed to be the largest jackpot won in Josephine County. Hewkin and his wife, Kathy, a teaching assistant at Fruitdale Elementary School, will retire from Three Rivers School District in June. Her retirement was planned; his is expedited by the winning. "It's like a dream," said the effervescent Tom Hewkin. "We've paid off all our bills, and we're going to invest." But they're also going to have underground sprinklers installed for her home garden. And maybe go to Disneyland.

NOTEPAD - Tax help for senior citizens and those of low income is available by phoning 592-4440 for appointments, said Illinois Valley Community Development Organization ... **An item** in another newspaper last week stated that an accident occurred "on Williams Hwy. near Hay's Hill." Last time we checked, Hay's Hill was nowhere near Williams Hwy. Upon seeing the item, one valley resident expressed tongue-in-cheek concern about Grants Pass encroachment ... **HUD housing** counselors are available from SOFCU Community Credit Union through a grant from the National Credit Union Foundation. SOFCU said that it is the only HUD-approved housing counseling agency in the county. Phone 479-2601, Ext. 1721 ... **Strawberry-flavored meth** has turned up in Nevada, says JoCo Sheriff Gil Gilbertson. It can be identified by its pink color, and there's concern that it will appeal to young persons ... **Bumper stickers:** *God is coming, and she's not happy. *If you are born again, do you have two belly buttons? *I'm only driving like this to annoy you. *Clear the road. I'm 16. *Men are idiots, and I married their king.

LAST WORDS - *Let my heart be broken with the things that break God's heart. (Bob Pierce)

*If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him. (Voltaire)

Budget group seeks member

Applications to fill one vacancy on the Josephine County Budget Committee are being accepted by the Josephine County Board of Commissioners until the position is filled.

Applications are available at the commissioners' office at the Josephine County Courthouse, Room 154, Grants Pass.

For more information, phone (541) 474-5221.

The committee is composed of three members of the public and the board of commissioners.

The Budget Committee meets three or four times in a public setting each spring to review and approve proposed budget documents by the budget officer for the county.

The budget consists of several funds covering a variety of departments such as public safety, property services and general fund.

Budget Committee members should have an interest in county operations and an understanding of governmental budget processes.

County commissioners outline financial situation; plan to announce criminal justice levy next week

Sheriff Gilbertson tells Cave Junction crowd about 'emphasis on excellence' for service

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

A weeklong series of countywide public meetings was concluded by the Josephine County Board of Commissioners Monday night, Feb. 5 at Illinois Valley High School.

The meetings were an attempt to solicit public opinion regarding the replacement of federal O&C funds with a proposed public safety levy in May.

Approximately 36 persons attended the Cave Junction meeting. It began with commission Chairman Jim Raffenburg explaining the severity of the situation. He was accompanied by Vice Chairman Dave Toler and Commissioner Dwight Ellis.

"As a matter of public safety, we have to address those impacts," Raffenburg said. "This is our problem, and we have to face it together."

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Rosemary Padgett said that alternative funding methods have been considered. They include a consumption tax, gasoline tax, and a bed-and-breakfast tax. However, she said, none of those options would raise enough money to fund county operations.

Sheriff Gil Gilbertson told the audience that his agency has established a more active presence in the rural portions of the county, including Illinois Valley.

"You're seeing more vehicles out here than in the past," Gilbertson said. He added that the primary emphasis by the sheriff's office now is "excellence in service."

"We want to provide you with service you've never seen before," Gilbertson said.

During a question-and-answer session, Raffenburg said that the median county property tax rate in Oregon is \$2.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The lowest rate in the state is in Josephine County, where residents pay 58-cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Sherman County pays the most, at \$8.71 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

In response to concerns about senior citizens living on fixed incomes or pensions, Raffenburg said that

the state has a property tax deferral program to help offset potential hardships.

"Nobody's going to lose their home if they can't afford to pay," Raffenburg said. "The county has not taken a home in years and years and years."

Real estate broker Jim Frick, of Century 21 Harris & Taylor, suggested that the 18 Oregon counties that have traditionally received O&C funds should file a class-action lawsuit against the federal government for failing to honor its commitments. Frick said that more national attention should be brought to the issue.

"Let's make a national media story out of this," Frick said.

Raffenburg said that other states would not be very sympathetic, since a vast majority of the O&C funds come to Oregon.

Kerby resident John Bowler said that if the levy passes, Grants Pass property owners would end up paying more than \$8 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

"I don't see them voting for this," Bowler said.

After taking questions from the audience, county officials made themselves available to speak with citizens individually.

Ellis said that he is encouraged at the level of support that residents have expressed for a possible public safety levy.

"I'm happy to have them say they want to support the new sheriff, and that they're willing to do it with their pocketbooks," Ellis said. "I thought we'd get more anti-tax people speaking up."

County officials had distributed surveys to audience members during all the meetings held during the last week. According to Ellis, out of 115 participants, 20 said that they would vote against any levy; 29 would support a basic levy; and 59 would support an enhanced levy.

Out of 92 participants, 51 said that they would support a three-year levy; and 41 would support a five-year levy.

Another survey question asked whether participants would be willing to

support two levies, one for sheriff's patrols and the other for the rest of the criminal justice system.

Ellis said that the split levy proposal failed to gain any traction among citizens.

"Hardly anybody wants separate patrol from the whole package," Ellis said.

Raffenburg said that the commissioners will consider the surveys as a group and announce the levy amount during their meeting Wednesday, Feb. 14 at 9 a.m. in Anne Basker Auditorium adjacent to the county courthouse in Grants Pass.

(Related story, page 13)

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I.V. Little League
Tryouts & Registration

Where: Evergreen Elementary School gym
When: Saturday, February 17, 10 - 4, Minors/Majors
Sunday, February 18, noon - 4, Juniors/Seniors
What: You will need a birth certificate & 3 proofs of address

Registration forms are available at Evergreen, Lorna Byrne, & from our website (www.seavla.net). Register early!

We still need coaches, umpires, & concession stand helpers.
Contact Trisha Arias at 592-5112, email at i.v.ll@hotmail.com, or Janet Ewing at 592-4389.

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Luz Moore Presents:
Low-Income Housing Workshop

Friday, February 9, 5:30 to 7 p.m. in the Cave Junction City Hall Council Chambers.

Financing is available for up to 100% of value with no down payment required for purchase of a new or existing home in rural areas. Eligibility based on household size, income, credit history, & debt to income ratio.

Depending on household income, mortgage payments may be subsidized to a low as 1% interest. Eligibility requirements & area income limits will be discussed at the workshop.

Those needing help with credit scores should attend the Credit Repair Workshop.

Guest Speakers:
Bret Dixon, Area Director, United States Dept. of Agriculture
Susan Cherry

Seating is limited. For registration, call (541) 415-1961

Sponsored by:
Luz Moore
with
Century 21, Harris & Taylor

Traffic safety blitz under way

Extra traffic safety enforcement efforts will be utilized during a Three Flags Safety Blitz through Sunday, Feb. 18.

Agencies including Josephine County Sheriff's Office, Grants Pass Dept. of Public Safety, and Oregon State Police will be involved. The campaign will involve extra patrols funded by federal grant money.

The focus during the

blitz will be on appropriate child passenger restraints. They include car seats, booster seats, and seatbelts. Officers also will concentrate on enforcement of driving under the influence of intoxicants laws.

Oregon's crash fatality and injury rates have decreased to 46 and 45 percent respectively since passage of the adult seatbelt law in 1990.

Saturday, February 17, Noon to 4 p.m.
I.V. Senior Center - 520 E. River St.

3-game Sheet 25¢

Winner Take All Bingo

Snack Bar open at 11 a.m. with:
Burgers,
Hot Dogs,
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