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Day off set on Monday, 19th

Monday, Feb. 19 (Presidents Day) will be a holiday for city, county, state and federal employees including those in the U.S. Postal Service.

Additionally, schools and banks will be closed in honor of Presidents Washington and Lincoln.

The "Illinois Valley News" office will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Regular Thursday deadlines will apply (see staff box, page 2).

Over Sucker Creek New bridge work slated for spring

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

A \$3.2 million project to replace the bridge spanning Sucker Creek at the east end of Holland Loop tentatively is scheduled to begin in the spring.

The Josephine County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with Salem-based contractors Carter and Company for the project during its Jan. 31 meeting in Grants Pass. The county sent a notice to the company last week and is awaiting a response, according to Josephine County Public Works Manager Charles DeJanvier.

"They have a couple of weeks to get a schedule back to us," DeJanvier said.

The \$3.2 million project became necessary after a state inspection six years ago prompted a weight restriction on the bridge. Funds were granted to the county through the Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA), and will be paid entirely by the state.

The county is fortunate to have such a massive project funded through OTIA, said Josephine County Prop-

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April on tap for ArtWalk

Besides delighting the senses with visual arts, foods, and music, Second Friday ArtWalk in and around Downtown Cave Junction contributes substantially to the overall valley image and is a showcase for the entire community.

Also, note sponsors, ArtWalk contributes to the valley quality of life and stimulates increased visitation, participation, and economic activity.

Surveys conducted during Cave Junction's ArtWalk in April and August 2006 by the Arts Council of Southern Oregon showed:

*A 30 to 50 percent increase in visitors and sales on those nights.

*Attendance by approximately 150 to 200 people at each event.

*Some 20 percent of attendees reported purchases totaling approximately \$2,000 for the event.

*Participants spoke of the event as "the place to be," a "quality-of-life reason to live in Illinois Valley," and "the most positive image-maker for our area."

*About 15 percent were on vacation or came from elsewhere specifically for the event.

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Cougar wrestlers take Skyline again; sending 11 to state
Qualifying for state competition (from left) Quayde Fisher, Matt Duran, Lance Tausaga, Dusty Culver, Adam Miller, Jacob Miller, Timothy Pope, Jesse Swift, Chris Culver, Jerrad Miller and Tony Miller. Story on page 3. (Photo by Scott Jorgensen, 'IVN' staff reporter)

Public safety levy scheduled May 15

Rotating library staff viewed as way to keep sites open on limited basis

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

Josephine County officials plan to spend the next week with legislators to bring more attention to bear on the county's pending funding crisis.

The likely discontinuation of federal O&C funds has prompted the county to pursue a public safety levy on May 15. According to Chairman Jim Raffenburg of the county board of commissioners, the three-year levy will be for slightly

more than \$2.49 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The current county rate is 58-cents per \$1,000.

Raffenburg said that the median assessed value for homes in the county is \$125,000, or approximately half the fair market value. As such, the average property owner will pay \$312 per year, or \$26 per month in additional taxes if the levy passes.

During a series of recent public meetings, county officials presented three pos-

sible scenarios; no levy, a basic levy and an enhanced levy. Raffenburg said there was not enough public support to pursue an enhanced levy, which would have cost between \$2.75 and \$3 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Raffenburg said that under the levy proposal, the Josephine County Sheriff's Office (JCSO) would be able to provide five patrol deputies around-the-clock. JCSO currently has between

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ILLINOIS VALLEY CHAMBER of Commerce held its annual awards banquet Saturday evening, Feb. 10 in the Junction Inn with some 150 attending. Leonard Frick (top, center), flanked by his grandson, Brandon, and his wife, Mildred, received a Lifetime Achievement Award. His son, Jim Frick, related his father's numerous community contributions during the past decades, including his service in the U.S. Marine Corps. Leonard has served on many chamber, city, county and state boards to benefit Illinois Valley. Rick's Copy Express, run by Rick Derringer (at right) and his wife, Deovon, was honored as Business of the Year for continual chamber and community support. Dulcie Moore, (below, right), chamber office manager, received the Citizen of the Year Award for her continuing efforts to boost the community. Mark Rodgers (below, left-center) was recognized by Sheriff Gil Gilbertson (left) and Undersheriff Don Fasching for his CJ Citizens Patrol leadership. The gathering was presided over by chamber President Alice



Schaffer, and Vice President Terri Hill. ('I.V. News' photos by Dale & Elaine Sandberg, and Scott Jorgensen)



Increased valley patrols, jail capacity in top cop's early accomplishments

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

Six weeks after taking office, Josephine County Sheriff Gil Gilbertson is already making big changes.

Last month, Gilbertson announced that he had raised the Josephine County Jail inmate capacity from 120 to 140. According to Undersheriff Don Fasching, that was accomplished by reassigning a few deputies and cutting expenses for inmate programs.

"We did that by restructuring some staffing," Fasching said. "By doing that, we were able to increase bed capacity."

Josephine County Sheriff's Office (JCSO) also has started stepping up patrols in Illinois Valley. Fasching, a Selma resident, said that Gilbertson has directed deputies to have more of a presence in the area.

"The Illinois Valley is an important part of the entire county," Fasching said. "The deputies, I think, have taken more ownership with the valley and making more of an effort to get out there."

Fasching said that he's been getting "positive feedback" from his neighbors and Cave Junction merchants because of the increased patrols.

Lines of communication have been opened between JCSO and other police agencies, Fasching said. They include the Jackson County Sheriff's Dept., Oregon State Police and the Douglas County Sheriff's Dept.

Fasching said that those contacts will help JCSO with interagency operations.

"I think we're going to

get fine cooperation," Fasching said. "There are no egos here as far as mutual aid is concerned."

JCSO also will be assuming control of the county's Animal Control operations during the next few months. Animal Control has been a division of the county's Public Health Dept. since 1994. Prior to that, it was under the Environmental Health Dept.

Fasching said that plans for the transfer are in "administrative limbo."

"It's an unofficial proposal right now," he said.

A timeline for the transfer has yet to be determined, but the switch will happen "sooner rather than later," according to Belle Shepherd, interim public health manager.

"We want to make sure all the pieces are transferred correctly," Shepherd said. "We've taken baby steps, but we're moving forward."

She said that the change is entirely appropriate, as animal control operations are typically handled by sheriff's departments.

"I think it will be a good fit," Shepherd said. "It's proven to be so in other counties, so I'm fully supportive of that transition."

Fasching and Shepherd said that Animal Control will be self-sufficient by the time JCSO takes it over. As such, assuming those operations will not put much strain on the agency.

"I don't look at it as a huge burden," Fasching said.

He said that during the last six weeks, Gilbertson has put in several 10- and

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IVFD aims at upgrading its emergency response units

Using a \$210,000 federal grant to acquire a new water tender means that upgraded apparatus will be shifted to improve protection at stations in Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD).

And it means that all water tenders in the district will be "up-to-date," said IVFD Chief Harry Rich.

Relocating equipment also means that a rescue unit will be placed at O'Brien Station 3 to augment the existing engine, said IVFD Rich. Rescue equipment now is aboard the O'Brien first-run engine.

Station 3 also will get a newer engine than it now has. And Station 3's existing engine, newer than the one currently assigned to Takilma Station 6, will be placed there, he said.

Deputy Chief Jeff Gaviglik told the IVFD Board of Directors about the new tender during the board's meeting at administrative HQ on Thursday night, Feb. 8. He said that a committee has chosen a chassis and is completing some details before sending the package for bids.

It is hoped, he said, that the new unit will arrive in time for the 2007 fire season.

Rich later said that the motive power for the new water tender will be a 2007 Volvo. The truck and tank are being ordered separately. IVFD district only has to pay \$21,000 as its share, with the amount coming from budgeted reserve.

He added that it's all part of a long-range plan to continually upgrade apparatus "without breaking the bank."

In another matter, the board without discussion approved 5-0 a new one-year contract with Rich, as his current pact expired Dec. 7, 2006. The motion was by Chairman Joe Malcolm, and seconded by Vice Chairman Larrick Jones.

Directors had reviewed contract details with the chief during a one-hour executive (closed to the public) session during their Jan. 11 meeting.

Rich officially was hired on Dec. 16, 2003. Under the new agreement he will be paid \$67,000 per year, which includes a \$2,000 per year raise, the first increase since he began.

Rich, who retired after 34 years experience as a firefighter in Southern Cali-