

## Inside:

### Game on?

Council refers social gaming to voters

Page 3

### Sound off

News Website offers discussion board

Page 4

### Troopers score

Four pounds of pot seized on Hwy. 101

Page 9

### Cougar sports

Girls B-Ball, wrestling results

Page 10

## Airport museum lease back on county table

A group advocating a smokejumper museum at the Illinois Valley Airport on Hwy. 199 between Cave Junction and O'Brien has submitted a draft lease agreement to Josephine County.

But county officials expressed concerns about the document regarding the former Siskiyou Smokejumper Base during a Thursday, Jan. 7 meeting between the board of county commissioners and (Continued on page 4)

## Wyden tours Merlin-based Recoil facility

By SCOTT JORGENSEN  
IVN Staff Writer

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (R-Ore.) made a whistle stop in Josephine County last week as part of a larger tour throughout the state, which included town hall meetings in Ashland and Corvallis.

On Thursday, Jan. 7, Wyden visited the headquarters of Recoil Suppression Systems, a Merlin-based firm.

The company, an aircraft parts and auxiliary equipment manufacturer, recently received a \$3.2 million federal allocation to provide a wildland fire suppression fixed-belly tank system for the U.S. Army National Guard's UH-60A, L&M Blackhawk helicopter.

Approximately 50 people were present for the product demonstration, including members of the news media, the three Josephine County commissioners, Sheriff Gil Gilbertson, Grants Pass Chamber of Commerce President Jon Jordan, a representative from the office of state Sen. Jason Atkinson (R-Central Point) and employees of Recoil and other Merlin companies.

Joseph Rice, Recoil managing director, said that the company has been working on developing the wildfire suppression system for three years. He added that Wyden, the county, state and Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development Inc. (SORED) all have aided the company in its efforts.

Recoil was granted \$25,000 by the Josephine County commissioners in February 2009. The grant was used to draw additional funds from SOREDI and other public entities.

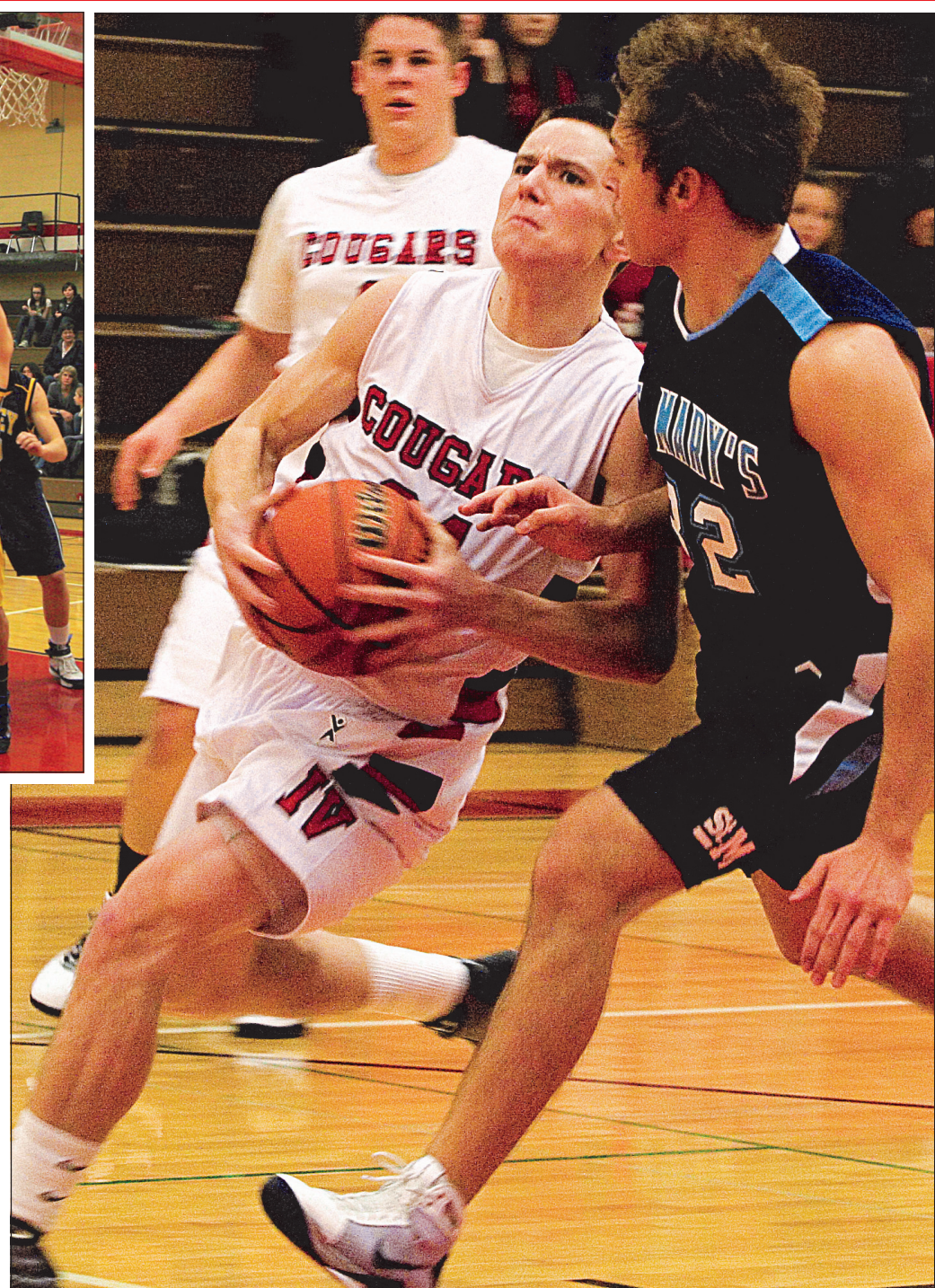
Wyden stated that the appropriation could create perhaps 30 jobs. He said that although Recoil's system still has to demonstrate its "air worthiness" to officials at the Pentagon, "We've got a good shot" to showcase the region's workforce and its skills.

During a presentation, Rice said that the 575-pound tank system has a 1,000-gallon capacity, a 30-second fill time and can be installed in 30 minutes or less. Rice also pointed out that Recoil uses several Grants Pass and Medford firms as suppliers.

(Continued on page 4)



Cougar Ben Kendall (right) strives to outpace a St. Mary's defender while concentrating on a layup; Tobin Mikels (above) executes a fading jump shot against Henley on Friday, Jan. 8. (Below, right) Roger Hults defends in the hard-fought loss to St. Mary's on Tuesday, Jan. 5. (Photos by Michelle Binker, *Illinois Valley News*)



## Cougars' play tough in two close losses at home

By SCOTT JORGENSEN  
IVN Staff Writer

A couple of close games found the Illinois Valley High School boys' basketball team coming up short last week.

The Cougar squad hosted St. Mary's School on Tuesday, Jan. 5 and lost 56-53.

Junior Jesse Bethke led I.V. scoring, with 19 points. Roger Hults, also a junior, scored 16. His brother, sophomore Fred Hults, scored 9.

Coach Jeff Winters said that the team improved its defensive game and its offensive rebounding in that showing and committed only nine turnovers. However, he said that the squad still needs to work on its shooting from the field and the free throw line.

On Friday, Jan. 8, the team hosted Henley High School and lost 48-41.

Roger Hults scored 12 points, and Fred Hults scored 11. Senior Tobin Mikels and Bethke each scored 4.

The Cougars committed 19 turnovers in that effort, and missed 50 shots.

"We're trying to cut those down," Winters said.

IVHS will hit the road on Friday, Jan. 15 to play North Valley High School. That squad failed to win any games last year,

but has a new coach and increased participation in its program.

"They seem to be getting competitive," Winters said. "They're on the way up."

But despite that, the Cougars have beaten NV in their last six contests.

"We usually match up pretty well," Winters said. "It will be a close game."

In order to win, Winters said that his team needs to concentrate on keeping its defense and rebounding strong, improving its shooting and limiting its turnovers.

"One of these days, we'll do all four of those, and somebody is going to be in trouble," he said.



## Commissioners choose to skip Cassanelli as board chairman

By SCOTT JORGENSEN  
IVN Staff Writer

Josephine County Commissioner Sandi Cassanelli thought that she might spend 2010 serving as chairman of the county board, as she was vice chairman last year, and insists that tradition dictates her advancing to the top spot.

But Cassanelli was un-

able to convince Dwight Ellis and Dave Toler — her two fellow commissioners — of that during the board's Wednesday morning, Jan. 6 weekly business session at the Anne G. Basker Auditorium adjacent to the courthouse in Grants Pass.

Approximately 60 people were present for the meeting,

including television news crews and most of the county's elected officials and department heads. Additionally, a deputy from Josephine County Sheriff's Office stood by in the auditorium foyer.

Ellis, current board chairman, called for nominations for the chairman and vice chairman positions. Toler, an

Illinois Valley resident, moved to nominate Ellis as chairman and Cassanelli as vice chairman.

Ellis asked for a second on the motion, and Cassanelli declined. In response, Ellis provided the second.

Cassanelli asked her fellow commissioners for an explanation. She held up a list of all the county board's chairmen and vice chairmen since 1962, noting that the "history has been for decades" that the vice chairman take over as chairman.

"That's the logical rotation," she said.

The only time the vice chairman didn't become chairman was because of recall or resignation, Cassanelli said.

She pointed out that Ellis and Toler served as chairmen after one year in office. She added that she received more votes than Ellis in the November 2008 general election, and more than Toler received in 2006.

"I think is an egregious procedure," Cassanelli said. "If it goes the other way, I am determined to fight this."

Ellis stated that he thought about this issue "long and hard for months," and

provided some of the rationale for his decision.

"I have some problems with her experience," he said.

Ellis cited his own experience as president of the Grants Pass Chamber of Commerce, and Toler's as a former longtime member of the Three Rivers School District Board of Education.

"We know how to run a meeting," Ellis said. He added that he thinks Cassanelli has a hard time making motions; is inexperienced in land-use hearings; has had ex-parte contact with a land-use applicant; and has a problem handling county employees in public.

"That's not a sign of a manager or a leader," Ellis told the audience.

He stated that he would "reluctantly accept the chairmanship if elected." Toler's motion passed 2-1, with Cassanelli dissenting.

The meeting was then opened to requests from citizens. Grants Pass resident Dale Matthews took to the podium and presented Toler a "crock of fudge" award, and implied that the commissioner would not be re-

elected to his office.

"By far, this belongs to Dave Toler," Matthews said. "It's well-deserved."

Selma resident Bill Waggoner stated that he has regularly attended public



meetings since moving to the area in 1972, and that he's seen all the rotations of the chairmanship positions.

"This is the first time I've seen it altered," Waggoner said.

Margaret Goodwin said that the motion sends a "very bad message." She decried the fact that the only woman on the board was denied her chance to be chairman.

Selma resident Mark Seligman, who has stated his interest in challenging Toler (Continued on page 3)



Josephine County Commissioner Sandi Cassanelli (center) defends her qualification to serve as chairman of the board as fellow commissioners Dwight Ellis (left) and Dave Toler look on. Toler (far right) later received a 'Crock of Fudge' award from Grants Pass resident and videographer Dale Matthews (Photos by Michelle Binker, *Illinois Valley News*)