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Inside:

IVHS to host Academic Masters

Page B-1

Bird Watching with Harry

Page A-6

Unregistered Sex offenders

Page A-5

IVHS Baseball

Page B-1



Little League Mudslinging results

Page B-4

Obituaries	A-2
Sudoku	A-3
Crossword	A-3
Blotter	A-5
Classified	B-2

Arts council rocks the Casbah

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

The Illinois River Valley Arts Council (IRVAC) 'Night at the Casbah' event entertained guests with dinner, dancing and silent and live auctions Saturday, March 26.

IRVAC President Judy Hoyle said the event "succeeded beyond our wildest dreams," filling all the seats and even requiring an extra table to make room for all the guests.

Hoyle said 'Night at the Casbah' would likely become a recurring event, and was one of the year's main fundraisers for IRVAC programs such as Learning Through Art and thrice-

yearly ArtWalks in downtown Cave Junction.

"I'm so grateful to our community for supporting the arts council and activities we do," Hoyle said. "We'll definitely do this again next year. We're already making plans to make it even better."

Guests started off with flat bread, three different spreads and olives, goat cheese, salad and fruit for appetizers. For dinner there was beef and butterbean stew and a dessert of cookies and Baklava.

Dancers also performed throughout the night, including "Wild Azaleas" Maelagh Baker, Claudie Gianfelice, Melissa Guion, Suzanne

Vautier and Sandra Whitten. Others performed in "Raqs Ahroosh" and "Tashkent."

"I think people were very positive about it," Hoyle said. "We try in our mission statement to create our own experiences and bring art to people in creative ways. I think this fulfilled that mission."

'Night at the Casbah' offered silent and live auction items from several local companies; Hoyle said the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation provided a gift certificate to a night at Seven Feathers Casino as just one of the many auction items.

For the silent auction, Hoyle said a handmade doll by Nancy Hall,

photography from Jim Lettis and artwork from Kay Elkwall were on display.

Michelle LeComte and Tim Wallace also serenaded guests throughout the night.

"I'm very appreciative of the efforts of our Learning through Art coordinators who volunteered time with setup and tear down, even bussing tables for us," Hoyle said. "It was a wonderful crew that Rebecca Pearson brought together to create the décor."

Future IRVAC events include the spring ArtWalk and a concert in June. In late October, Hoyle said IRVAC plans to host a masquerade ball, a first for the organization.



(Photo by Darcy Wallace, Illinois Valley News)

Members of the dance group Raqs Ahroosh perform for the packed house in support of the Illinois River Valley Arts Council Saturday, Mar. 26.

A spray delay Perpetua to meet with residents

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

A proposed herbicide spray by Perpetua Forests Co. near McMullen Creek and Lake Selmac has been stalled, at least for this week.

Perpetua president Jennifer Phillippi says she and a small group of concerned Illinois Valley residents will meet at the property this week with a facilitator to help the two sides listen to each other's concerns.

"We offered to give them a tour and tell them what we're doing," Phillippi said. "We won't be doing any spraying before we meet with the people who are concerned. We told them we'd hear them out."

Last week, concerned residents aimed to make their voices heard with a rally at Lake Selmac and a town hall in Grants Pass Tuesday, March 22, highlighted by Takelma Elder Agnes Pilgrim.

Pilgrim, the oldest known direct descendant of the Takelma tribe, is best known for her work advocating environmental protection, especially for salmon. Pilgrim and her late husband helped bring back the sacred salmon ceremony once held by the Takelma people.

"I'm praying that people will understand contamination is contamination," Pilgrim said just before the rally. "Poison is poison, and we have a lot of rain in Oregon, especially around here."

Many concerned residents have banded together in the form of Precious Dirt, a group that is seeking to learn more about pesticides and inform others of potential risks.

The proposed spray site is about three-quarters of a mile from Lake Selmac, causing residents to fear that some amount of chemical will inevitably run off into nearby watersheds or drift onto their property.

Precious Dirt members reportedly invited Perpetua Forests Co. to attend the Grants Pass town hall, but the company could not send any representatives due to scheduling conflicts.

"We're here because we care for human life, animal life and for all life," Pilgrim said before the rally. "There should be a better way to do things. Let us sit at the table and negotiate. Give us that opportunity to sit and collaborate together."

Some members of Precious Dirt have advocated increased environmental protections for years; others, like Selma resident Audrey Moore, are new to pesticide issues.

Moore said she learned about the spray from nearby resident David Bianco and began attending Precious Dirt meetings and doing her own research.

Though the EPA has safety requirements for thousands of chemicals used, Moore feels disquieted about an apparent lack of thorough testing from impartial sources, and feels there isn't enough transparent information about the chemicals and their use by private companies.

Moore said she spoke briefly with Phillippi about her concerns, but that she disagreed with the notion that using these chemicals on private lands, even while following the directions, couldn't harm other properties.

"My stand is, [herbicide] is chemical trespass," Moore said. "Where do we draw the line on the fact that what you do on private property might affect me?"

But Moore acknowledged that businesses such as Rough and Ready employ many residents. From the first Precious Dirt meetings, Moore and others have urged each other not to blame Perpetua.

Continued on A-7



(Photo by Darcy Wallace, Illinois Valley News)
Grandma Agnes at the Mar. 22 rally.

Wyden talks monument, pesticide with IV residents

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

Illinois Valley residents voiced their concerns at a town hall meeting Thursday, March 24 with Senator Ron Wyden at Rogue Community College in Grants Pass.

Wyden said he was working on bipartisan projects to improve the forestry management system in Oregon, balancing the needs of private owners and timber companies with environmental protections.

"We need active management of our natural resources," Wyden said.

Concern about environmental protection, herbicide use and expansion of the Oregon Caves National Monument dominated the conversation among Illinois Valley attendees.

Selma resident Audrey Moore said area residents have to pay for subscriptions to the Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF) to find out when private companies plan to spray pesticides, something Wyden said he wasn't aware of.

"Unless I'm missing something, that's just plain

wrong," Wyden said.

Wyden mentioned the difficult balancing act between the "checkerboard" of private and public lands in Southwestern Oregon. He said he negotiated a forest management plan with timber and environmental groups in Eastern Oregon to find new ways to use thinning as a way to increase timber production while reducing fire hazards from overgrown, dry branches.

The plan, called the Oregon Eastside Forest Restoration, Old Growth Protection and Jobs Act of 2009, reportedly called for preserving old-growth forests and streams and thinning projects.

Takelma resident Waves Forest said restrictions on herbicides practices were needed, as sprays could still spread much further than intended despite good intentions, causing health problems.

Wyden said he wanted more information about pesticides and suggested a conference call between those with related concerns.

Continued on A-7