

Illinois Valley News

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Honoring our veterans



(Photo by Dale Sandberg, IVFD Media Dept)

Auston Sitton places a flag in honor of Veterans Day on Charles Bernard Brady's grave site at Laurel Cemetery in Cave Junction Friday, November 8.

CJ murder investigation nabs man wanted on warrant

Oregon State Police (OSP) Criminal Investigations Division (CID) detectives with the assistance of the Josephine County District Attorney's Office, Grants Pass Department of Public Safety, and Josephine County Parole and Probation, are continuing to investigate the Nov. 5 homicide of 39-year old Cave Junction resident Aaron Lee Clouser.

According to Sergeant Jeff Fitzgerald, a report was received at about 10:30 p.m. Nov. 5. that a man was lying in the road in the 200 block of W. Millie Street in Cave Junction. Illinois Valley Fire District personnel responded and confirmed that there was a deceased adult male at the location who was later identified as Clouser.

OSP troopers and detectives from OSP and Grants Pass Department of Public Safety responded to the scene to investigate. During the course of the first day's investigation, a person of interest identified as Cave Junction resident Michael Clyde McDonald, 60, was taken into custody on two felony warrants for a probation violation and dangerous drugs. McDonald was booked in the Josephine County Jail on the arrest warrant charges.

During the afternoon, investigators obtained a search warrant and executed it at 223 W. Millie Street. Per the Josephine County District Attorney's Office, the cause of death has been released.

Anyone with information regarding this investigation is asked to call OSP Southern Command Center dispatch at 800-442-2068. Tips can also be sent via email to crimetips2OSP@state.or.us.

Email tips will be monitored by the Criminal Investigations Division, reviewed and then forwarded to the lead investigators for follow-up. Emails should include specific details including the type of case and tip information. Even though tips may be received anonymously, the person providing a tip is encouraged to include contact information for follow up by the investigators if needed.

False rumors of school lockdowns spurred by social media

By
Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Contributing Writer

False rumors on social media about "school lock-downs" flew like wildfire around the Valley last week in response to a threat of violence targeting the Illinois Valley High School made months ago. However the high school remained open, there was no actual incident, and the other schools were unaffected.

Some parents opted to keep their kids home from school on November 5, the date mentioned in the threat made last August. Both school

authorities and the Josephine County Sheriff's Office are continuing to investigate that threat.

"We did receive a lot of phone calls from concerned parents and there was an increase in absences, but we operated as normal," said Illinois Valley High School Principal Casey Alderson.

"It's a tough position for parents to be in," Alderson said. "These are their kids. So, rightfully, it's their choice whether to keep their kids home or send them to school in a situation like this. Though we reinforce to parents that their children will be safe and that we take all precautions to ensure that we're providing a safe learning environment."

Drills for emergency response protocols happen monthly at the high school and safety preparations are ongoing and updated as needed. Students, teachers and school staff all receive training and rehearse responses to all manner of potential emergencies at the school.

"We have a zero-percent record for that sort of violence and we plan to keep it that way," Alderson added. "We take any threat about school-wide violence very seriously. We will continue to investigate to get to the source of this incident."

Oregon State Police and the Josephine County Sheriff's Office did investigate the initial threat but didn't find any cause to warrant closing

the school, according to Alderson. However, security was boosted at the school for the day, including an increased police presence.

"We push as many resources out to the Illinois Valley as much as possible," said Josephine County Sheriff Gil Gilbertson. "The kids' safety is primary to us."

Gilbertson also wanted Valley residents to know that his office is following up with an in-depth investigation to root out the source of the threat and that this sort of behavior will be dealt with seriously.

"If anyone has any leads or solid information that can help us get to the bottom of this sooner, they can call me and remain anonymous," he said.

Apparently the rumor of school lockdowns or closures started on Facebook and Twitter, according to Gilbertson. With the aid of social media, numerous people helped blow the incident out of proportion.

"There's no controlling what people are writing on social media, but we'd hope that people would exercise some common sense and care, especially where children and schools are involved," Gilbertson said.

People can pass along information concerning this incident in confidence to Principal Alderson at 541-592-2116 or Sheriff Gilbertson at 541-474-5117.

Learn Biochar techniques

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

A free hands-on opportunity to learn biochar techniques from an expert will take place November 15-17 in Josephine County.

Peter Hirst is a principal at New England Biochar (NEB), best known for its development of the Adam Retort biochar kiln. NEB has developed masonry units and mobile, stationary and multiple stationary versions of the original, award-winning design by Chris Adam.

Hirst has worked intensively with land managers to develop the open conservation burn as a transitional tool for biochar projects and as the best conservation alternative for projects where large amounts of woody biomass must be reduced and no other alternative is practically avail-

able to the open burn. He introduced the method this year in Sonoma County, where it is rapidly gaining recognition and adoption and approval among fire officials, foresters, vineyard managers and innovative farmers and ranchers.

Biochar is a form of charcoal produced from superheating biomass. It's found naturally in soils around the world as a result of vegetation fires. Biochar has also been created and used by humans in traditional agricultural practices in the Amazon Basin of South America for over 2,500 years.

Dark, charcoal-rich soil, known as "terra preta" or black earth, supported productive farms in areas that previously had poor, and in some places, toxic soils. Terra preta was discovered in the 1950's by Dutch soil scientist Wim Sombroek in the Amazon rainforest. Terra preta still covers 10 percent

of the Amazon Basin.

Similar sites have been found in Ecuador, Peru Benin and Liberia in West Africa.

Typically, jungle soils are very unproductive. After mixing biochar into the topsoil, the soil is better able to retain vital organic matter, plant nutrients and moisture essential for plant growth. The practice allows annual cultivation of the same fields, rather than slash-and-burn practices necessary to eke out crops on new land every few years. Given a stable location for agriculture and soils made fertile by char, a steady food supply was made possible, which allowed for the establishment of large communities.

An oak savannah restoration project at the Enchanted Forest near Grants Pass, has generated a number of woody debris burn piles.

See Biochar on A-11

Solid waste problem still here

By
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The package of four solid waste ordinances adopted by the county board last May went before Josephine County voters in a referendum election on November 5 and were rejected by an average of 78 percent.

The ordinances were designed to enable the county to deal with serious solid waste violations in months, instead of years. Another key objective was to hold violators, not taxpayers, responsible for cleanup costs.

The locally controversial ordinances mirror laws utilized by most jurisdictions across the nation, including the state and the City of Grants Pass. Cave Junction's solid waste ordinance also has more teeth and is better enforced than the county's current ordinance.

"Our city is proactive about these situations and we're always prepared to take appropriate steps to resolve these problems," said Waste Water treatment plant supervisor Mike Bollweg. "We have rules in place and they're enforced. It's about taking pride in where you live."

"It's just not fair when folks keep a nice

yard and maintain their properties but have a neighbor with a big mess," said Cave Junction Mayor Carl Jacobson. "With our city ordinance, if a situation gets to a certain point, we declare it a nuisance, turn it over to a lawyer, and people get 30 days to clean it up or go to court. When they realize it's going to hit them in the pocketbook, then they clean it up."

While the city does not allow disabled vehicles and trash to pile up, once a person gets beyond city limits it's another story.

"We really see the difference between the city and the county," said Annita LaGaux, a broker at Junction Realty. "There's a lot of properties throughout the county with excessive waste out in the open and this can present big obstacles for people living nearby trying to sell their properties. What about their property rights?"

"It seems like a lot of people around here have lost confidence in any form of government regulation and they don't trust the county government," LeGaux added. "Maybe part of that is because the better part of services always seems to go to the Grants Pass urban areas, instead of the Illinois Valley."

See Solid waste on A-11