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Organic Farmers Win Big in Farm Bill

Washington, DC – Marking a significant shift in American agriculture practices, the Farm Bill signed into law today included new provisions to promote organic farming, bringing much of the industry in line with conventional farming.

Co-chairs of the bipartisan House Organic Caucus, including Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA), Rep. Richard Hanna (R-NY) and Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI), applauded the provisions, which include:

***New crop insurance provision:** Under the bill, organic producers will be able to insure crops at prices consistent with their retail value. Currently, organic crops prices are set at a level with non-organic counterparts. This will ensure organic farmers are not disproportionately affected in case of a crop failure or other problem.

***Cost-share measure for farmers transitioning to organic agriculture:** The Cost-Share Program assists small farmers and handlers in offsetting a portion of the costs of annual certification. Obtaining organic certification can be expensive for small producers and without this assistance, being certified organic would be unattainable for many farmers and handlers. The House Farm Bill had repealed this provision but fortunately the final bill signed into law included renewal of this key program.

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Young man hit by vehicle



(Photo by IVFD Media Dept)

A 15-year-old boy was struck by a vehicle on Hwy. 199 at approximately 4:45 p.m. Monday, Feb. 10, near mile marker 29 in Cave Junction.

The young man was taken by Mercy Flights to Rouge Valley Medical Center in Medford after being attended to by crews from

the Illinois Valley Fire District and AMR.

The highway was shut down for an hour while the Oregon State Patrol investigated the collision and cleared the scene.

No other information was available at press time.

Candidates for sheriff, county commission still emerging

By
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Josephine County Sheriff Gil Gilbertson still has no official competition for his job and County Commissioner Simon Hare has two challengers for his seat on the county board.

The filing deadline for candidates is still a month away and County Clerk Art Harvey says it's likely that more candidates will emerge.

Only one race, for County Legal Counsel, has

taken solid shape, with State Representative Wally Hicks challenging five-term incumbent Steve Rich.

Gilbertson is seeking a third four-year term as sheriff.

"I thoroughly enjoy what I do and feel like I'm doing something positive for this community, and want to carry on for at least one more term," Gilbertson said. "We've accomplished a lot of projects, saved a lot of money and implemented many new efficiencies."

Gilbertson explained that from adversity comes

opportunity and he's tried to answer the fiscal challenges his office has faced by trying to "seize opportunities presented on the horizon, always with the goal of becoming a more productive organization."

Gilbertson also wants voters to know that he supports the limited public safety levy currently promoted by Securing Our Safety, the non-profit organization seeking solutions to the county's funding crises. This levy would fund the adult jail and juvenile justice services.

See Candidates on A-9

LBMS receives much needed wrestling mats

By
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This past year the LBMS wrestling team was gifted with new state of the art wrestling mats.

While the old mats were several years old and saw many practices and wrestling matches, they were no longer viable and had developed holes, which can cause many problems. Some of those include unhealthy conditions, harboring bacteria, fungi and other harmful microorganisms. Along with bacteria buildup inside the mats, holes also can cause an athlete to trip and potentially get injured. The mats were also very heavy and clumsy, making moving and storage difficult.

The current wrestling mats are state of the art, light weight, flexible and roll up for easy mobility and storage. The mats are called EZ Flex Mats. EZ Flex Mats come in many different styles and are used for a large variety of sports, everything from wrestling to dance to the martial arts. These mats are not only designed to be lightweight and flexible but are made to be moved and stored in cramped areas. Schools and organizations can also order the mats in their colors. For instance, Lorna Byrne's mats are green and gold. Mascots and logos are also an option to have put on the mats. The middle school is currently in the process of working with the I.V. News to raise the funds needed to put the school's mascot on the mats.

The new mats contain cross-linked polyethylene foam, which is designed for high impacts and absorbing shock. The mats are also slip resistant and contain antimicrobials which impede the growth of the not-so-friendly microorganisms. With these new added features to athletic mats, their longevity outpaces the

old style mats, ensuring the safety of athletes, coaches and referees.

Over the past few months it has been not only a school effort, but a community effort to raise the funds needed to replace the outdated wrestling mats. Many individuals and organizations have put in many long hours raising enough money to purchase the much needed wrestling mats.

Though there were many individuals that helped put the new mats in Lorna Byrne, there were some that went above and beyond the call of duty to help the junior high wrestlers. Some of those individuals include: Jay Miller, John Sinwell and Deana Engels who are with the I.V. Wrestling Club. They have been involved every step of the way. Tony Smith of Tony's Appliances helped tremendously with a \$1700 donation and Bill Culbertson, a parent, has been very helpful over the last couple of years in acquiring the mats. John Smith recently donated \$1,000 towards the purchase of new head gear. There have also been anonymous donors who have also helped with the fund-raising.

The Grants Pass Active Club provided seed grant money to help get things started. LBMS and IVHS hosted a gold wrestling tournament, LBMS wrestlers spent a few weekends bagging groceries at Shop Smart, earning \$600. The wrestlers have also held raffles and worked in the fireworks stand located in the Shop Smart parking lot this last July, all in an effort to have new mats.

With all the efforts the community, individuals and organizations have put forward to get the new wrestling mats for the Viking wrestlers, LBMS can safely hold many practices and meets for years to come.

The Vikings were slated to put those new mats to the test on Saturday, Feb. 15, during a junior-high tournament. Due to complications, the tournament has been canceled.

Volunteers promote levy for animal shelter, control services

By
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A motivated team of volunteers is working to gain a few hundred more signatures to put a three-year levy on May's ballot to help fund Josephine County's struggling Animal Shelter and Animal Control services. Both programs have been decimated in recent years and volunteers say animals are paying the ultimate price.

"We're only seeking eight cents per assessed \$1,000 of property value with this levy. For most homeowners, this comes out to about \$11 per year," said Toni Webb, one of the lead petitioners. "It isn't that much money to ask for when you consider the important services provided and the needs of deserving animals that can enrich so many peoples' lives."

It's estimated that the proposed levy rate would raise \$508,953 for the 2014-15 budget; \$546,204 in 2015-16; and \$562,590 in 2016-17.

Animal Control investigates cases of animal abuse, neglect, hoarding and abandonment and enforces laws that regulate stray dogs. While volunteers fill the gaps at the shelter, only Animal Control employees can handle these tasks and answer calls for assistance in dealing with nuisance or aggressive animals.

The shelter provides

food and care for homeless dogs, cats and other animals impounded under law and facilitates adoption services. Shelter staff has been reduced to just one lead person and on some days county Public Health Director Diane Hoover can be found shoveling waste right alongside the volunteers who have assumed the lion's share of shelter responsibilities.

"I'm so thankful that there's so many people in this county who care about animals," said Hoover, who supervises county animal services. "Ours is an open shelter. We cannot turn any animal away, and these animals need care seven days a week, every day of the year. Our volunteers are amazing. Without them, we wouldn't even have a cat program. They do it all, cleaning, working with the dogs, facilitating adoption events, licensing, manning the front desk and more."

Hoover is proud of how the shelter's dedicated volunteers pitched in after the shelter lost crucial funding, noting that adoption numbers now well-exceed euthanasia numbers, but worries that this success comes at a high cost to those who give so much of their time and energy.

"It's amazing what the volunteers accomplish, but I worry that the level of need could burn these folks out. We really need help," Hoover said.

One volunteer, Raleigh Smith, holds down a full-time job, yet spends hours each week facilitating adoption events and driving dogs to new homes as far away as Washington state.

"She's a one-woman adoption machine," Hoover said.

"There's no expiration date on these dogs' lives, so we keep working to find them homes," said Smith, who organizes through Shelter Friends, a nonprofit group dedicated to the welfare, rehabilitation and re-homing of displaced pets.

"Healthy happy families have healthy happy pets," Smith said. "All the way from children to senior citizens, pets play key roles in so many lives. Studies confirm how pets can stabilize health and provide emotional structure where it is needed. And it's so important to teach children to be responsible pet owners, those lessons extend far."

Pets and animals are crucial to the health and vitality of communities, says Smith, who adds how animal hospitals, groomers, pet-sitters, pet supply stores and trainers are all part of the economy. She also notes that in struggling communities, too many animals suffer.

Levy supporters say the idea is to buy some time until the county budget is in better shape or the shelter becomes self-sustaining.

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