

The Illinois Valley News 2014 Year in Review

JANUARY

• Josephine County Commissioner Cheryl Walker took over as chairperson of the three-member board in early January, replacing outgoing Commissioner Simon Hare. The position rotates annually.

“Our board is functioning very effectively,” Walker said. “The three of us work together well.”

• Illinois Valley resident Kandi L. Crow once again found herself under investigation for animal neglect. The latest investigation came just weeks after Crow completed her 40-day home detention sentence for an Oct. 2013 conviction on 22 counts of second degree animal abuse stemming from the highly publicized seizure of over 200 animals from her property in September of 2012. The new case resulted from reports of a dead goat and a dead chicken on Crow’s land, located in the 1700 block of White Schoolhouse Road. The incident was reported to the Josephine County District Attorney’s Office, according to Sheriff Gil Gilbertson. Crow, 63, was on probation and under court order to not handle animals.

• Rogue Valley Dutch Bros. Coffee locations and community members raised \$31,155 on Friday, Dec. 6, for local Boys & Girls Clubs. To raise funds, all 30 locations in Jackson and Josephine Counties donated proceeds as part of Dutch Bros. Coffee’s annual Buck for Kids Day.

“We’re really fortunate we get to use Dutch Bros. as a force for good,” said President and Co-Founder Travis Boersma. “We try to do all we can to help kids live better lives.”

• Illinois Valley Fire District responded to a single-vehicle rollover wreck on Thursday, January 2, at approximately 6:05 p.m. IVFD Division Chief Kamron Ismaili reported that seven emergency responders from the department along with two responders from AMR were called to the scene in the area of Caves Highway and Barnes Road.

Once on scene, they found Steve Ray Shinault, 20, had been ejected from the Toyota Tundra he was driving eastbound in the 4400 block of Caves Highway. Shinault was unable to answer questions regarding possible other occupants in the vehicle before being airlifted. Responders conducted a thorough search of the surrounding area and found no evidence of additional victims.

FEBRUARY

• The federal government began killing barred owls to help rare northern spotted owls regain territory. The robust non-native barred owl has rapidly taken over spotted owl habitat throughout the Pacific Northwest in recent decades, further threatening the survival of the smaller and shyer native bird.

“We anguished over this decision, but it’s the best of bad choices,” said Robin Bown, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist involved with the Barred Owl Removal Program. “The spotted owl has been coping with a double-whammy. Up until the 1990’s, throughout its entire range, habitat loss from over-logging was the problem. If we’re going to recover the spotted owl, we must address both habitat protection, and now, find ways to reduce the numbers of barred owls.”

The plan is to remove a total of 3,600 barred owls from four locations to discover if spotted owl numbers rebound enough to make a difference. Most will be shot. About 40 birds have been killed so far. According to Bown, procedures have been developed to ensure clean kills. Removals will only occur in fall and winter to avoid killing owls with dependent young.

• Susanne “Kindi” Fahrnkopf (Far-en-kof) published a new book called “Takilma Tales: The Hippie History of Takilma, Oregon.” The book was a result of Fahrnkopf’s long-held desire to write about the unique community, which

developed from a back-to-the-land movement of the late 60s and 70s. The basis of the book was a series of articles Fahrnkopf wrote for the Illinois Valley News between April and August 2013.

“I always wanted to try my hand at other forms of writing,” she said. “(Illinois Valley News Publisher) Dan Mancuso offered me the opportunity to write a few articles on the hippies of Takilma, and the project grew from there.”

• Urban Moore, owner of Eugene Skydivers, announced that his business has regained the right to land parachutes at Creswell Airport.

“The settlement with the city cleared all hurdles and now it’s official. We can land at the airport,” said Moore, who employs eight people, including pilots and instructors, at the company.

The decision ended years of controversy for Moore’s business, both in the Eugene area as well as the Illinois Valley.

• A school-wide assembly designed to help students develop social skills and avoid bullying was held at Lorna Byrne Middle School.

“We want you to show your big kind hearts,” Lorna Byrne Principal Rachael George told the kids. “How we interact with people really does affect our day. We all have a lot going on, so how we deal with each other is really important.”

When the main speaker, Tawana Grabarz, motored her wheelchair center stage and began telling her story, the kids all stopped fidgeting.

“How do you treat people with disabilities?” Grabarz said. “Just like everyone else.”

• The Illinois Valley Fire District named its award winners for 2013 at a special banquet. Lieutenant Kathy Koontz was named “2013 Fire Officer of the Year.” Robert Sitton received the “2013 Firefighter of the Year” award, and was also recently promoted to Lieutenant. The distinction of “2013 Rookie of the Year” went to firefighter Joe Lavta. And another key award, for “2013 Support Services,” was earned by Lieutenant Kris Ismaili.

A special award, the “Chief’s Commendation,” handed out when any member of the district stands out by their contribution, was presented to Valley resident David White, for regularly volunteering hours of computer support work, a critical contribution that helps keep the district up and running. A “Unit Citation” award was presented to the following for participating in a challenging cliff rescue situation: IVFD firefighters Melissa Smith, Sandi Humphres, Joe Latva, Shane Gordon, Dale Sandberg, Division Chief’s Kamron Ismaili and Kris Sherman, Deputy Chief Jeff Gavlik and Chief Hoke; AMR crew members Steve Scruggs and Mike Perkins; Rural Metro crew members Captain Mark Shay and firefighter Brent Hall; and Josephine County Deputy Cory Krauss.

Firefighters involved in several successful medical interventions earning a “Life Saving Award” included: Neill Kisiela, Justin Lewin, Captain Tom Zulliger, Battalion Captain Wayland Sherman, Division Chief Ismaili, Deputy Chief Gavlik and Chief Hoke. Hoke also handed out a few citizen awards to members of the community who made important contributions. Debbie Johnson was acknowledged for facilitating the much-appreciated donation of ten mattress and box spring sets to the district; and Kathy Jones was recognized for the great job she did painting new signs for three of the district’s stations.

MARCH

*Just a year after closing down, the nearly 100-year-old Rough & Ready Lumber Mill received a \$5 million funding package comprised of tax credits and a state loan to facilitate upgrades to its small log mill, which meant the business was set to be back on track by summer. The announcement was made at

Cascade Wood Products in White City and Gov. John Kitzhaber, who attended the news conference, said the funding will enable Rough & Ready, an important employer in Josephine County, to help extend the economic recovery occurring from Portland to rural Southern Oregon.

“The restart of a family owned business that provides family wage jobs for its employees is a reason to celebrate,” Kitzhaber said.

“We plan to have 67 people working sometime in June,” said mill owner Jennifer Phillippi. “We kept quiet about this because we didn’t want to raise hopes among our old employees until we knew for sure it would happen. The job openings will be posted with the state’s Employment Department in Grants Pass. Like any employer, we’re required to fairly assess all applicants, though I assume that our former employees, with all the skills they developed while working at our mill, will be good fits for the new jobs.”

“This is such great news,” said Cave Junction Mayor Carl Jacobson Jr. “It’s fantastic for those who will get their jobs back and their families, but also, the economic impact will spread throughout the whole Valley.”

The partnership that brought Rough & Ready back to life includes the state and federal government and several groups that focus on forest health and economic development. Commissioned by the Governor, the Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Cooperative completed a study that identified 27 million board feet of timber annually, for 20 years, that could potentially be logged off federal lands located within two hours of the mill, from thinning and ecological restoration projects that comply with current environmental regulations. Other groups involved include Portland based Ecotrust, which directed \$4 million in federal and Oregon New Markets Tax funds designed to benefit disadvantaged communities. Ecotrust has also helped finance mill renovations in John Day and Dillard. Additionally, a \$1 million loan with flexible terms to help finance technology upgrades at the mill, came from Business Oregon.

• After school lets out, kids at the Boys and Girls Club can be found roaming the track at Evergreen School on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. That was due to a new program started by club director Scott Thornhill. While looking through a running magazine he came across a story about another school back East that had started a similar program.

“I thought what a perfect way we could jump in and join!” said Thornhill. “We have the track, we have the kids. It’s a good way for the kids to get out here.”

The program is called the 100 Mile Club. The goal is for the students involved to reach 100 miles by going around the track as many times as they are able to in half an hour. The track is a quarter mile and the kids are allowed to accomplish this however they like — walking, running or even skipping.

• A flurry of activity was taking place at St. Patrick of the Forest Catholic Church in preparation for an important commemoration: the 150th anniversary of the dedication of the original church and its cemetery in 1864 – only 5 years after Oregon became a state. This was the first Catholic church in Josephine County; located in Allen Gulch, a mining community about 12 miles south of Cave Junction.

Almost two dozen volunteers assembled at the church on March 8 to landscape the grounds and spruce up the building. Special choral music was rehearsed and special guests, including Archbishop Alexander Sample of the Portland Archdiocese, would participate in the celebration. The sesquicentennial celebration took place on the actual dedication date, March 17, St. Patrick’s Day.

• Calling the police for help could translate into a long wait, so some Valley residents

were filing false reports of fires or medical emergencies with the Illinois Valley Fire District to get help fast. Emergency responders found themselves in “extreme danger” after being dispatched to a seizure call in Selma that turned out to be an assault in progress. The suspect had already destroyed a car, caused serious damage to a house, beat up a woman and then threatened the emergency responders.

“We attempted to extract the victim but she was scared and wouldn’t leave the house,” said IV Fire District Chief Dennis Hoke. “While trying to retreat, the suspect came at us, threatening to kill us. We were boxed in. My life and the lives of the ambulance crew were endangered. We were finally able to retreat, and later, a Josephine County deputy apprehended the suspect near Hayes Hill.”

This sort of incident was becoming more frequent. A few weeks earlier, the fire district was paged to a structure fire which turned out to be a burglary in progress. And before that, the district was requested to help Cave Junction’s contract deputy when he was losing a fight with a suspect, as back-up was 30 minutes away.

“We’re not cops,” Hoke said. “We have a very small career staff, and a crew of volunteers who love serving the community, but we cannot be putting our people in harm’s way by acting as law enforcement. We don’t have the training or the tools.”

• Perry Salvestrin was named the new park manager of the Rogue Management Unit, the largest management unit in the state, which includes Valley of the Rogue State Park and Illinois River Forks State Park, among others.

Salvestrin had been working with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) for seven years with previous assignments at Immigrant Springs between Pendleton and LaGrande, Round Butte Lake and most recently at the Joseph Stewart State Recreation Area, near Lost Creek Reservoir and Crater Lake.

• The outstanding efforts of Illinois Valley citizens were recognized on March 26, at the annual meeting of the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO). The annual membership meeting was open to the public and took place at the I.V. Business Entrepreneurial Center (BEC), located in the Kerby Belt Building. The BEC is one of the on-going IVCDO projects and it shares the space with the Southern Oregon Guild Gallery.

The Volunteer of the Year Award was bestowed upon the Illinois Valley Warming Center, located at Immanuel United Methodist Church on Watkins Avenue. The plaque was inscribed to both Pastor Charles Chase and volunteer Dan McLeod, who accepted the award. The ad hoc organization has been sheltering and feeding the homeless in Cave Junction for the past two winters.

The Organization of the Year Award went to Healthy U and was accepted by staff members Lindsey Gillette and Diane Chirrick. Healthy U associates write health related articles for the *Illinois Valley News* and offer classes and free workshops at their location at the I.V. Family Coalition building. Healthy U will sponsor the annual Moon Tree Run on June 7 at the I.V. Airport.

The Business of the Year Award went to I.V. Data Center owners Jessica and Cameron Camp. The business was lauded for their innovative development of Internet infrastructure to become a service provider for the community, including large data consumers such as valley schools. Only Jessica Camp was available to accept the award.

The IVCanDo Award was given to I.V. Forks State Park volunteer and S.M.A.R.T. volunteer coordinator Willa Gustavson. Ms. Gustavson’s volunteer contributions have also included developing and leading the first Junior Ranger program at the Forks and serving as a Cave Junction City Councilor.

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