

2014 Year in review ... Continued

APRIL

• The volunteers from Josephine Community Libraries who reopened and operate all four branch libraries, and were working to form a library district, won the Governor’s Volunteer Award for the State of Oregon for their dedication and ongoing service to Josephine County over the past five years.

“Our libraries are busy with so many people coming in to use them every day,” said Nancy Hitchcock, volunteer, founding member and donor. “This state recognition means so much to us, especially as we are working hard to establish stable funding.”

In 2013, over 400 volunteers provided 29,133 hours of service to operate the libraries in Grants Pass, Illinois Valley, Williams and Wolf Creek. This equates to approximately \$563,000 dollars based on Oregon’s volunteer rate.

• The effort to build infrastructure to accommodate development of a light-industrial commercial business park at the Illinois Valley Airport, first initiated more than ten years ago, was revitalized, thanks to the efforts of the IV Airport Advisory Board, the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization, the Smokejumpers and support from Josephine County Commissioners. Now renamed the Illinois Valley Industrial Airpark, development first began in earnest back in 1999. The county paved the driveway, the area is divided into lots that feature underground electricity, and water wells were drilled. Now, the entire airport has been fenced in and even has a fuel truck, which enables aircraft to fly in and refuel. The biggest stumbling block was an adequate fire suppression system.

“The airport’s three wells don’t produce enough water,” said local businessman Cameron Camp, who serves on the Airport Advisory Board and the subcommittee for the development of the industrial park. “We’ll need a large capacity storage tank to sustain a high flow of water for a specific amount of time to meet performance standards to fight potential fires.”

• Longtime Illinois Valley resident Gordon Lyford was recognized by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as the 2013 “Ray C. Davis Volunteer of the Year” for Western Oregon. David Gross was also honored representing the eastern half of the state at the annual awards dinner held in Portland.

Molly Dougherty, Director of Oregon Volunteer Programs said, “I congratulate David and Gordon and offer sincere thanks for their dedicated support. Our success is only possible because of people like them.”

• The arrival of federal funds, the majority of it a one-time extension of former O&C funds that were promised last fall, will now allow Josephine County officials to designate specific dollar amounts to various departments and programs in the county’s 2014 fiscal bud-

get, which begins on July 1.

“We don’t count the money until it is in the bank,” said Rosemary Padgett, Chief Financial Officer for the county. “We learned last October that Congress approved it, but we were just told we’ll receive the money in April.”

Some \$5.2 million came in from the Secure Rural Schools Act that was “oddly” attached to the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013, which sets up guidelines to ensure federal access to helium resources needed by federal agencies, medical, scientific, and commercial industrial purposes. Had the one-time O&C funding vehicle not been attached to the larger helium bill that legislators were committed to passing, it’s unlikely that it would have passed muster with Congress, according to several county officials.

“There’s absolutely no guarantee that we’ll receive any more funds next year,” Padgett said. “This funding was an extension and there’s no expectation for future payments to be attached to any future legislation.”

• Cave Junction was updating its Transportation System Plan and big changes were promised for 2015.

“Cave Junction is updating this plan at a great time,” said Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) spokesman Gary Leaming. “ODOT has also green-lighted a paving project on Highway 199, from Slate Creek (near the Applegate River bridge) all the way through to Rockydale, just south of Cave Junction, so these projects will dove-tail together nicely.”

“The biggest issues we’re addressing pertain to traffic and pedestrian safety,” said Cave Junction City Recorder Ryan Nolan. “Too many people drive way too fast on Highway 199 through town.”

The current four lanes of traffic moving through Cave Junction will be eliminated, leaving only one northbound lane and one southbound lane, with a refuge lane in the middle for left turns.

“We’ve had complaints of people passing on the right at over 50 miles an hour,” said ODOT District Traffic Operations Engineer Dan Dorrell. “Drivers don’t need to be passing inside city limits and this project will slow the traffic where a lot of the bikes and pedestrians are. There’s plenty of opportunities to pass just north and south of town.”

• Rather than adopting a medical marijuana dispensary moratorium, the Cave Junction City Council voted on April 28 to request “injunctive relief” through a Declaratory Judgment. The process then moved forward to ask the U.S. Court, 9th Circuit to decide whether the federal Controlled Substances Act or the new Oregon law allowing dispensaries should be obeyed. At issue was whether the law complies with the Oregon and U.S. Constitutions. Also on April 28, Susan Hayes’ application for

a dispensary business license in Cave Junction was tabled pending resolution of the lawsuit.

MAY

• The theme was “Run for the Roses” as the Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce held a Kentucky Derby party and annual awards ceremony at Wild River Brewing and Pizza. Ladies wore “big hats” and the social hour included much good natured bantering and speculation around the outcome of the horse race.

During the awards ceremony, Citizen of the Year Tony Smith was honored for his many contributions to community causes over the years, including his most recent donation of wrestling mats for Lorna Byrne Middle School. Smith, the owner of Tony’s Appliance and other businesses, has also contributed \$3,500 toward the new skatepark at Jubilee Park as well as considerable in-kind donations of bulldozer work. Smith’s wife, Judy, his family and many friends applauded his recognition at the chamber gathering.

“I’m part of the community and I want to see the community do well,” Smith said. “I just give back a portion of what God gives to me. I think that’s what we’re expected to do.”

Oregon Caves Outfitters, part of the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO), was named Business of the Year for managing the Chateau at the Oregon Caves National Monument. IVCDO Executive Director and Chateau General Manager Menno Kraai accepted the award on behalf of the organization. In his remarks, Master of Ceremonies Jim Frick praised the organization for continuing to help bring visitors to the Chateau, which helps other businesses in the Valley as well.

First Community Credit Union Manager Christopher Smith was the newly installed president of the chamber. Smith presented outgoing president Bertha Miller, co-owner of Wild River, with a plaque and thanked her for her service. Additional 2014 chamber board officers are vice president Dan Mancuso and treasurer Lelo Kerivan. Fellow board members include Bertha Miller, Ryan Nolan, Jim Frick, Cary Riley, Mary Reynolds, Emily Nichols, Scott Thornhill and Jacqie Swift.

• In a stunning rebuke to multinational corporations Syngenta and Monsanto, the anti-GMO ordinances in Josephine and Jackson counties both passed. Despite radio and television ads which played on local concerns about limited law enforcement resources, grassroots Measure 17.58 passed by approximately 58 to 42 percent in Josephine County and Measure 15-119, which bans genetically modified organisms from being raised on Jackson County farms, passed by 66 to 34 percent. It’s estimated that the bio-tech giants spent nearly \$1 million to defeat these measures.

• Once again, Josephine County voters rejected a proposed property tax levy designed to restore some funding to the county jail and reopen the Juvenile Justice Center, which has been shuttered since the O&C payments program ended in 2012. Measure 17-59 proposed a tax of \$1.19 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Although a similar proposed levy of \$1.48 per \$1,000 failed by only 500 votes in 2013, Measure 17-58 failed by nearly 1,400 votes.

• A May 26 house fire in Takilma sent two people to Rogue Regional Medical Center with burns. The emergency call of a house fire in the 5200 block of Takilma Road came in at 11:27 p.m. on Monday, May 26. Responders from the Illinois Valley Fire District arrived on scene to find one structure and a fifth-wheel travel trailer fully engulfed.

According to Illinois Valley Fire District Chief Dennis Hoke, two people received second- and third-degree burns due to the fire. Both victims were transported to Rogue Regional Medical Center. One of the victims was airlifted by a Mercy Flights helicopter while the other was transported by an AMR ambulance.

JUNE

• Thanks to the generosity of the community, grant foundations, sound management practices and volunteer support, the Josephine County Fairgrounds were making a solid comeback.

“There’s no talk at all about closing the fairgrounds down anymore,” said Fairgrounds Manager Mary Groves. “We’re going ahead with planning this year’s fair.”

• Josephine County Commissioner Cheryl Walker found herself fighting back against a recall effort.

The recall petition against Walker was filed June 13 in the Josephine County Clerk’s office. William Hunker, the chief recall petitioner, along with Joseph Rice of the local Oath Keepers group, carried the petition to the clerk’s office.

“For more than a dozen years there has been a small group of disgruntled people who have tried to intimidate public officials and citizens from public participation in Josephine County meetings,” Walker said in a written statement. “Their mode of operation has been name calling and making disparaging comments about private citizens who disagreed with them, verbally attack county employees, demonize elected officials and create a hostile environment in the Anne Basker Auditorium where the county weekly business Sessions are held.”

Walker said the recall effort against her was just the latest in a string of attempts to derail county government and prevent any progress toward resolving real problems.



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Halona Jackson from IVHS has been invited to the 27th annual Down Under Sports Tournament on Australia to represent Oregon Track and Field in the summer of 2015. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and we wholeheartedly endorse Halona. Any assistance that you give with be greatly appreciated.

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