

## AARP offers tax preparation aid

Anita R. Savio  
IVN Contributing Writer

Illinois Valley residents of all ages will soon be able to take advantage of free, local tax preparation services offered by the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) Tax Aide program. The Illinois Valley program starts Feb. 4 and continues through the end of tax season. The service is provided by IRS volunteer counselors at the offices of the Illinois Valley Family Coalition on Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Counselors are trained and IRS certified each year to keep abreast of revisions to the tax code.

According to district coordinator Kathie Saunders, the Tax Aide program is designed for low and moderate income taxpayers, and most types of returns are "in scope."

"However there are a few exceptions. For instance we can't do farm income returns, or businesses with a depreciation write-off."

Saunders said that last year Illinois Valley Tax Aide counselors assisted with 187 federal returns and 190 state returns, with refunds totaling \$311,000. In the county as a whole, over 2600 taxpayers received \$3.5 million in refunds.

Returns are filed electronically, with direct deposit of refunds.

Saunders has been with the Tax Aide program since 1985 and said she is most proud of the large number of people helped every year. She added that counselors are often able to help taxpayers take advantage of benefits they were unaware of.

"A lot of taxpayers don't realize that by contributing to an Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA), and combining that with the Retirement Savings Credit, the tax saving can actually equal the expense of the IRA contribution. This works especially well with lower income folks because the credit only applies up to certain income levels."

"Another thing we often see is that people haven't been using the most beneficial filing status, for instance they file as single rather than head of household. Or they haven't been taking all the dependents they're entitled to."

Saunders suggested that blended or multi-generational families make joint appointments for the whole family, because that can help counselors identify and maximize certain benefits.

"Another thing we see is that people are sometimes being paid as self-employed individual when they should be paid as an employee. We can help them correct that, and their taxes may be halved."

Saunders noted that, by using Tax Aide, taxpayers avoid unnecessary preparation fees and pitches for high-interest refund loans.

Appointments can be made via the website, [www.joco-freetaxes.com](http://www.joco-freetaxes.com), or by calling the following starting in mid-January:

- Illinois Valley Family Coalition – 541-592-6139.



(Photo courtesy of the IVFD Media Dept)

IVFD Division Chief Kamron Ismaili assessing his situation on Caves Hwy. Monday, Jan. 2.

## 2017 New Year's Storm is one for the record books

Annette McGee Rasch  
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

The 2017 New Year's Storm came in waves: A foot of the white stuff piled up Jan. 2; then another foot; and a few days later, another six to 10 inches fell - and in some locations, even more! The schools never opened last week. Many businesses and the Siskiyou Community Medical Center were closed much of the week as well. Phone lines went down and 6,497 Illinois Valley households lost power at the storm's peak.

"The Valley was the epicenter for this storm and was much harder hit than other areas," said Tom Gauntt, Pacific Power public information officer.

Spending several silent days - and nights - in the dark, thousands listened for snow-weighted branches snapping off and hoped falling trees would miss their structures and vehicles. While many got lucky - invariably, many didn't. And, with most people snowed in, it's been all hands on deck to dig everyone out.

"We've been going at it full steam, working till four in the morning, sleeping for a few hours and then getting back out there," said Barbara Howard, who with her husband Don, loaded up their

Caterpillar excavator and high-track loader to pitch in. After posting an offer to help on a community Facebook page she said, "Our phones just blew up with over 100 messages, so we've been trying to triage, to get to the most needy of folks: the elderly and those with medical needs, or those without food, water, wood or propane. And we didn't charge those who can't afford it." To work efficiently, the Howards, who own the Pomeroy gated community, networked with CJ Patrol, and Gary Ryder Sauer (another Good Samaritan with a tractor). Howard said that while out helping others, Sauer's 100-year-old barn collapsed, and she hopes the community will "come together to help him build a new one."

"It's been chaotic," said Marty Hertler, of Marty's Tree Service. "I've pulled some trees off of houses, but mostly, I've been hauling my cat around. I've dug 60 people out so far." Hertler networked with other local heavy equipment operators, including Mark Camp, Dave Anderson and Kyle Bearsto. "We're calling each other to figure out who needs help first, like when folks need to get medications." Hertler has charged less than his normal fee and

said he's not pleased that some plowing services from Grants Pass came into the Valley and charged "double their normal rates just because they could. I'm not saying that everything has to be a charity case, but they shouldn't be coming to our Valley to make money off this situation."

Once people finally made it to town Tuesday, they lined up at the Chevron gas station for propane and shopped at Shop Smart by flashlight. "Customers had to line up and wait for a store employee to walk them through," said store manager Jessica Clark. "My employees were awesome; some were out of power for five days and still showed up for work. You don't see that kind of dedication everywhere."

The Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) normally gets about 100 calls for assistance per month; but according to IVFD Chief Dennis Hoke, they received around 85 calls for help in five days. "We're doing whatever we can. Everything from power line problems, structure fires, medical problems, car wrecks and vehicles off the road. We called in the Applegate FD and Rural Metro. They brought trucks and people in to help us."

SEE STORM ON A-10

## 3 Rivers Chorale celebrates Mother Earth

Judy Hoyle  
IVN Contributing Writer

3 Rivers Chorale will perform "Missa Gaia, in Celebration of Mother Earth" Jan. 21 at 3 p.m. The concert will take place at Immanuel United Methodist Church, 200 Watkins St. in Cave Junction. Admission is by donation.

Much of the original 1981 recording of Missa Gaia was improvised by members of the Paul Winter Consort, including Jim Scott, Paul Halley, Oscar Castro-Neves and Kim Oler.

"At the invitation of James Morton, Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, these innovative creators brought their music together with nature and some of her strongest singers (humpback whale, Alaskan tundra wolf, the common loon, and baby harp seals as well as various songbirds)," according to 3 Rivers Chorale music director Kate Campbell.

The entire Missa Gaia is a blend of gospel, jazz, classical, African and Latin folk genres and rhythms. The 3

Rivers Chorale presentation offers both written score and musical instincts of all the players involved.

In addition to the choir and soloists, four members of Oregon Little Big Band will take part, including Tim Wallace on soprano sax and flute, Michelle LeComte on guitar, John Trujillo on bass and Tom Freeman on percussion, along with pianist Heidi Shepard, Abigail Wilensky on violin and Teresa Northcross on cello.

Gaia is the ancient Greek name for Mother Earth. The concept gave rise to the "Gaia hypothesis," which, according to scientists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, proposes that "the entire range of living matter on earth, from whales to viruses, and from oaks to algae, could be regarded as constituting a single living entity."

"If the 'Gaia hypothesis' is about synergy, then the process of our creation of Missa Gaia/Earth Mass is truly a manifestation of Gaia. For what developed was an interweaving of creative ideas from all the members of the Consort; and our process was self-balancing, by virtue of the common

instincts of taste we share in our little musical tribe. While no one of us knew all the threads with which we would weave the Earth Mass, together we found we did know," according to Paul Winter's album notes.

In addition to Missa Gaia, songs in Hebrew, Swahili, Zulu, Latin and more, will also be performed. "We are honored to partner with our co-sponsors, the Illinois River Valley Arts Council and Siskiyou Field Institute. The joining of the arts and science is a natural one, in my mind. As I have heard it said, science is actually just an organized form of wonder. It's all related," said Campbell.

Campbell concluded with, "3 Rivers Chorale has also received a generous grant from Josephine County Cultural Coalition, whose parent organization is the Oregon Cultural Trust. We are grateful for the support of our community and look forward to creating our musical performances in cooperation and collusion with our audiences."

## Changing of the guard at City Hall



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Ryan Nolan (left) swears in Councilor Mark Dillinger, Councilor Lindsey Gillette and Mayor Daniel Dalegowski at City Hall Monday, Jan. 9.