

Vandals strike at St. Pats

Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

St. Patrick of the Forest Catholic Church, at 407 West River Street, was “tagged” last week - that is spray-painted with graffiti that said “smoke meth and hail Satan,” and the community reacted fast to remove the obscene messages.

Church member Jimmy Evans, who also coordinates CJ Patrol (the neighborhood watch group that endeavors to keep the town safe from thuggery and thievery), was impressed by the collective reaction.

“A young man who we help now and then, who probably surfs couch-to-couch and spends time on the streets as well, took a can of white paint and tagged the tags to hide the offensive words,” he said. “We have troubled youth and we have great people.”

Then, without being prompted, Brandon Bennett, a Selma contractor who operates I.V. Custom Construction, came and re-painted the entire side of the church, Evans said.

“I’m saddened that people have chosen to vandalize instead of entering into a dialogue if they have a problem with our church,” said Father William “Bill” Holtzinger who has served the church for eight years. “But I applaud Brandon and Jimmy and others for their proactive responses to these events.

“For every act of darkness there is always an opportunity for light to shine forth,” he added. “For a long time, we’ve been aware, me and my fellow priests that serve St. Patrick’s, about the darkness in the area. But we have also been very impressed by the people who choose to serve others and live in light. And the churches, in particular in the I.V., have been striving to be those people of light and help the needy.”

Holtzinger went on to explain that the “struggle” becomes about how to dole out justice and mercy at the same time. “Forgiving people, which is our calling as Christians, does not mean absolving people of responsibility,” he said. “So we are praying for the perpetrators and hope that they find peace. I’d be happy to speak to whoever these people are to hear their concerns.”

SEE TAG ON A-10

Merkley tours fire



(Photo courtesy of Birdy for the Illinois Valley News)

Thursday, Sept. 14 a helicopter returns to the I.V. Airport from the Chetco Bar Fire at sunset.

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Sept. 16, Senator Merkley hooked up with Oregon State Representative David Brock Smith for the day and the pair toured the action around the Chetco Bar Fire.

They started in Brookings by receiving a fire briefing on the West Zone of the blaze from U.S. Forest Service personnel before taking a helicopter ride to assess the situation for themselves. Later, they drove into the Illinois Valley for another fire briefing delivered by east zone incident commander Lonnie Click, and then embarked on a driving tour to view fire conditions and community protection efforts near the Valley.

“People across the nation are aware of the fires,” Merkley said. “They’re aware of the hurricanes, but also, they’re aware of the fires.”

He went on to explain that he’s fighting for Oregonians, to make sure that federal financial aid comes into the state, that as he’s helped secure funds for citizens impacted by the recent hurricanes Florida and Texas, he now expects legislators from those states to likewise help secure emergency funds for

Oregon.

Merkley, a ranking member of the Senate’s appropriation committee, is pushing for the development of a “FEMA-type” program to ensure that states coping with the worst wildfires would receive funding in a manner similar to states dealing with other natural disasters like hurricanes. He also said, “We must stop fire-borrowing,” explaining that stiff demand for limited resources can compromise hazardous waste programs, campground and trail maintenance and preparation of timber sales. He added how a “buffer” of several million dollars for Forest Service’s firefighting efforts has been necessary to keep those other programs going. But now, he wants to “get ahead of the problem.”

Merkley said he’s been asking a lot of questions about wildfires in Washington D.C. regarding both forest management and funding future wildfires.

“Seeing it firsthand raises questions about how we get the funds for firefighting. And, how do we thin the fuels?” said Merkley, adding that it’s important to make sure communities and businesses have the funds to recover.

SEE CHETCO ON A-10

County comes to Cave Junction

By Laura Mancuso
IVN Editor

Commissioner Dan DeYoung fulfilled a campaign promise Wednesday, Sept. 13 when the county commissioners held their weekly business session at City Hall in Cave Junction.

Josephine County Board of Commissioners Simon Hare, Lily Morgan and DeYoung were all present for a full room of almost 50 citizens.

The first administrative action the commissioners considered was the approval of Real Estate purchase and sale agreement between the Josephine County and the Illinois Valley Senior Center, LLC for the sale of county property located at 102 S. Redwood Hwy.

Mike Watson, property manager was in attendance to comment on the Real Estate appraisal of the county building. The negotiations from the I.V. Senior Center (IVSC) were done primarily by Director Sam Nichols. Watson announced that the sale price went for \$340,000 and the IVSC put 20 percent down toward the agreed purchase price. The property was sold as is through a “Quick Claim Deed.”

Watson also mentioned that the sales agreement was scheduled to be signed the current evening, but they were in process of facing two “sticky situations.” One being the six month window in which they need to find new locations for

the county health services, and two being providing a separate meter for a radio communication tower sitting on the south side of the property.

SEE COUNTY ON A-8



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Simon Hare (left) Lily Morgan and Dan DeYoung held the county’s weekly business meeting in Cave Junction’s City Council Chambers Wednesday, Sept. 13.

Rains dampen Chetco Bar Fire

Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

While recent rains are not likely to have a season-ending impact on the Chetco Bar Fire, still, firefighters say the rain is “modifying” the season, and allowing some firefighters who’ve been on the front lines all summer to finally go home for a well-deserved rest.

“The rain really helps us,” said public information officer Karen Ripley, who’s been camped out at Lake Selmac with 280 fighters. “Except for it being wet - and it’s not that fun to camp in the wet - the mood is really upbeat here. This has been a long season and the Chetco fire has been a hot and grueling experience for firefighters. So it’s been nice that when they head into town they’re treated really well and shown a lot of appreciation.”

With the rain and the 30 degree change in temperatures from last week, the Level 1 evacuation alert affecting hundreds of Illinois Valley residents living west of Highway 199 has been lifted; and the Level 3 notice for people living along the Illinois River Road has been dialed back to a Level 1 advisory. And in Curry County, all evacuation notices associated with the Chetco Bar Fire have been lifted, although all Nationals Forest closures remain in effect.

At the time of this paper’s printing, the Chetco fire had grown to 189,787 acres and was 53 percent contained. A total of 1,580 firefighters were still assigned to the fire and many continue to work on increasing overall containment, however an operational shift toward rehabilitating fire-impacted lands is also now in the works.

“We’re getting started on mop up procedures,” Ripley said. “But firefighters will keep putting out any smoldering stumps or other smokes, but now, we don’t expect much fire movement.”

On Tuesday, sprinklers set up to protect structures on Illinois River road were pulled out, and Ripley said this indicates the level of confidence fire managers have that the fire won’t move into the Oak Flats area. However, if the fire acts up, she said protections would be returned.

SEE FIRE ON A-10

Youth supporter Mo Connolly loses house to fire

Read about it on A-5