

# CLAIMS ...

Continued from A-1

According to Zillow, a popular real estate browsing website, the Zillow Home Value Index of Josephine County, which is essentially a median of estimated prices, has increased from a low of \$156,000 in December 2012 to \$251,000 in October 2017. Although Josephine County direly needs affordable housing, with the commissioners even having declared a housing emergency Nov. 21, Schmelzer is concerned that they may potentially be in for a shock when faced with an abundance of

foreclosures and abandoned properties from cannabis growers being forced out of business.

As the cannabis industry gets turned on its head over the next year, and with state changes primarily aimed at quelling Oregon's surplus cannabis from entering the black market, Schmelzer theorizes that many legitimate workers will be out of a job without the skills to find any other type of well-paid position.

"Businesses report a lack of labor," Schmelzer said, "Either people can't pass a drug test, or they don't show up for work— various reasons being they can make more money trimming. Our workforce issues are well known and are a deterrent to anyone

looking to relocate a business to the area." Should wholesale cannabis prices maintain or continue to plummet, growers who survive the sweeping changes may no longer be able to pay their workers as much, thereby relieving the suffering of businesses that currently offer non-competitive wages.

According to Schmelzer, cannabis farm employees make an average salary of \$29,000 while dispensary workers make \$35,000. The per capita income for the county as a whole is \$22,470.

The labor pool also faces another curiosity. According to Schmelzer, children are dropping out of school, or make no plans

to further their education, because they believe they can make more money in the cannabis industry. According to statistics available on Oregon.gov, the dropout rate for all schools in the county have risen about 20 percent since 2012 but showed no change after legalization in 2014. The statistics for the 2017-2018 school years have yet to be released.

As for the positive economic effects of the cannabis industry: construction contractors, lumber yards, storage container firms, soil companies, water delivery services, retail stores and service establishments have seen great boosts to their bottom line.

# IVFD ...

Continued from A-1

The IVFD, asking only those who were both certified firefighters and state licensed EMTs to apply, initially received 15 viable applications but whittled it down to eight after a vetting process that included a physical agility and written test. Panel interviews made the final decision as to who would be the best for the job.

Although the IVFD has four new faces on their team, four are still in Ventura County, California battling the devastating Thomas Fire which claimed the life of San Diego firefighter Cory Iverson Dec. 14. Hoke reported that the team was stationed only a mile away from where the man lost his life and that they're set to be demobilized Dec. 20. "We're happy to get them home safe and sound," Hoke said, adding that the IVFD is mourning the death of their Californian colleague.

According to Hoke, Oregon deployed a total 75 fire engines, the most of any state lending assistance, to put out the six major wildfires which have thus far destroyed more than 1,000 structures since igniting.

Hoke estimates that California will be handing the IVFD \$90,000 for their assistance and will also reimburse the district for the team's time spent on deployment. "It's a win-win for everybody," Hoke said, adding that California is even paying the team's volunteer personnel.

So far, the IVFD has used some of the money to replace a brush truck and are looking into replacing the oldest staff car in their fleet with a used but low-mileage suburban. "We would like to replace another brush truck but we'll see how much money we have," Hoke added. "We have plenty of time before fire season to do that."

# Letters to Santa

## Ms. Gladding's second grade

Dear Santa, I want a Nintendo 3Ds for Christmas. I want a real baby kitten. I want a real stapler. I want food for the world. How many elves do you have? Love, Ra'Jeanna

Dear Santa, For Christmas I want a fingerling, a Shopkins, and a horse. One thing I want for the world is pizza. Which reindeer is your favorite? Your friend, Brooklyn

Dear Santa, For Christmas I want a fingerling, and the big baby doll set. My favorite reindeer is Rudolph. I also want a real horse, a baby puppy, a toy puppy, a new backpack, and gloves. Your friend, Natalie

Dear Santa, For Christmas I want a mastering Minecraft book, a water bottle, and a PS3. One thing I want for the world is peace. One question I have for Santa, is how many toys do you have? Your friend, Jacob

Dear Santa, For Christmas I want fingerling, a Shopkins, and a baby fox. One thing I want for the world is pizza. Which reindeer is your favorite? Love, Samantha

Dear Santa, Do you know why I need all of that? I want Pokemon cards, and I want 100,000,000 dollars, the last one and an Iphone ten. From Jeberiah

Dear Santa, Love, Hi Santa, please I want a phone, my own room, and in my own room I want my own bed, tv, and a hat that my Dad can use. I also want five dolls,

a big doll, a Barbie doll, and a Barbie house. I want a lot of snow. I want a horse, a pony, a tablet, a iPad, yarn, a dress, paint brushes, soft tissue paper, I want the tissue paper in red, green, blue, purple, and orange. Why are you so fat? Love, Sary

Dear Santa, I want roller skates, snow boots, and a snow coat. Which of your reindeer do you like best? Which kid do you like best? Can you please make it snow? Can you please give me peace? Love Ozara

Dear Santa, I want a dirt bike, pony, saddle, a halter, and I want it be outside. Merry Christmas. And I want the world to have doughnuts. And I want a nerf chainsaw. Merry Christmas. And a nerf sniper rifle. Love, Brandon

Dear Santa, Can I have a phone? Can I have a rabbit? Can I have toys? I also want a rabbit cage, rabbit food, a fidget spinner, a few clothes, and a new house. Love Aurora

Dear Santa, For Christmas I want a Nerf gun. My brother wants a spider-man set. My sister wants a my little pony set, and 12,000 Pokémon cards. My sister and brother want a blue tooth speaker. From Demien

Dear Santa, Are you big? I would like to see you. It would be cool to see you. I want a toy pony, a makeup set, a toy car that I can drive, a video game, the new My Little Pony movie, a new dress, a new backpack, some shoes, and an IPod. From, Fiona

Dear Santa, I want a real kitten and a real puppy.

For the world I want peace. Why do you have a white beard? I love your holiday. Do you have a favorite reindeer, or a favorite elf? From, Sam

Dear Santa, I want a land crc, a little motor control fish, and a RC car. I want for people to give the world money. How much do you weigh? Why do you only eat cookies and milk? From, Logan

Dear Santa, I want overdrive, for people to be good, a mini drone, and a big nerf gun. Do your elves sleep? Love Caulder

Dear Santa, Can I please have a whole set of coloring stuff? Can I please have an American flag? Can I please have a whole set of pirate stuff? And can I please have a Hatchimal? Please and thank you. Love, Reanna

Dear Santa, I want a Ninja Turtle truck. I want a guitar. I want a piano. I want the world to stop killing bears. What is your favorite elf? Love, Blaze

Dear Santa, I want a robot monkey, dolls, a three layered doll house, a coloring book with a lot of pages, and a big bear. Which reindeer is your favorite? Thank you for giving me that stuff. Love, Rylee

Dear Santa, I would like a doll for Christmas please. I would like a baby cat for Christmas please. I would like a princess box of all the princesses, and I would like a baby fox please. I want for the world to stop fighting. Which reindeer is your favorite Santa? Love, Jocelyn

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