

First grade flag day!



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

American Legion Post 70 Commander Bob Soria hands out flags to Evergreen Elementary students during the I.V. Lions American Flag presentation Tuesday, Feb. 20.

Special ed is not what you think

“Life skills would be those students that have multiple disabilities, sometimes mobility, sometimes sensory, sometimes cognitively. They are served ideally in their home school, but in a life skills classroom, although with access to the general ed curriculum.”

Stephanie Allen-Hart, director of Special Education and Student Services

Anita R. Savio

IVN Contributing Writer

Special education in the Three Rivers School District is not your parents' special ed. In fact, if your parents were born before 1975, special ed barely existed. According to the U.S. Department of Education, “U.S. schools educated only one in five children with disabilities, and many states had laws excluding certain students, including children who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded.”

That all changed with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, passed in 1975 and since amended in 1997 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates that schools provide an appropriate education to children with disabilities.

Stephanie Allen-Hart, director of Special Education and Student Services, spoke to the Illinois Valley News about how special ed works in the Three Rivers Schools and how the district serves different levels of need.

“In each of our schools we have two levels of special ed student. Resource students are those who maybe have speech-language concerns, maybe a learning disability. They are generally 100 percent in their grade-level classroom, but may get some services to help them out or may get some extra help outside of their classroom.”

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the general ed curriculum.”

The Three Rivers special ed program covers children from birth through age 21.

Allen-Hart went on to distinguish so-called 504 students from special ed kids.

“Section 504 is under the umbrella of civil rights. It's all about access. A student wouldn't need any specially designed instruction; they just need accommodation. So a student with diabetes might need snack breaks or insulin given. A deaf student might need an interpreter, a blind student a brailist.”

The law requires each student be educated in the “least restrictive” environment. For most students, according to Allen-Hart, that's their general ed classroom with their peers, but with extra resources brought into that classroom.

“Then there are some students where we say, ‘They're getting a lot of benefit from their general ed classroom but they're having a lot of attention issues ...’ We may give them an extra 30 minutes in a smaller, quieter setting.”

Allen-Hart said that 80 to 100 percent of special ed students are in the general ed setting, with at most a 30 minute pullout. Some 60 to 80 percent may come out for an hour or two. They might have physical therapy, occupational therapy or speech therapy.

Students who are in their general ed classroom less than 60 percent of the time are starting to spend more time in a life skills setting. “We probably have about 10 percent that are getting really intensive services.”

As readers might guess, special ed involves an alphabet soup of special terms. The keystone is the

IEP, or Individual Education Plan. Mandated by federal law, the IEP addresses what services a student will receive, starting at kindergarten.

The IFSP or Individual Family Service Plan is Three Rivers' early intervention program that serves students birth through age five.

“Our county does a great job,” said Allen-Hart, “between doctors' referrals and parent referrals and early intervention, of catching a lot of our little ones coming in. Every year we have 20 or 30 kids coming in who already have an IEP.”

She added that if the student arrives with an in-state IEP the district can accept it out of hand. But if the student comes from out of state, then what she terms the “long and difficult” process of developing the IEP has to start over from scratch, involving parental consent to evaluate, testing and so on.

Development of an IEP is a team process, including teachers, specialists and parents.

Three Rivers also serves special ed and 504 young adults, age 18 through 21, at the Jerome Prairie Transition Center. The Jerome Prairie program, according to the district's website, offers the opportunity to “incorporate strategies, techniques, employment skills, and environments that simulate what it is going to be like once the young adults leave ... and provide opportunities for developing adults to learn independence to the best of their ability.”

The program is open to anyone with a modified high school diploma or a certificate of completion.

SEE SPECIAL ON A-10

City tackles meters, chickens, tobacco and weed at regular council meeting

Derek Prall

IVN Contributing Writer

The Cave Junction City Council met Feb. 12 to discuss several items, including ordinances regulating meter-reading, domesticated chickens, marijuana business licenses, tobacco usage and petroleum extraction facilities.

The meeting opened with updates from the Public Works Department and the sheriff's office – both reports were business as usual. Planning updates, an update from the Municipal Court and a park use request for the 19th annual car show were also reviewed and accepted.

Then, after discussing potential uses for grants and hearing a letter of support for the I.V. Watershed Council, which would protect drinking water sources, the council read four ordinances. The first was to update meter-reading techniques i.e., to no longer round up to the nearest 10 cubic feet, and to set a limit on the use of short-term service requests. The motion passed unanimously.

The second ordinance would allow chickens to be kept by the residents of Cave Junction, undoing their current prohibition. The stipulations of the ordinance include how many chickens may be kept, what type of structures they may be kept in and how close these structures may be to neighboring buildings.

It was noted that this particular ordinance has a great deal of support in the community, however, Councilor Mark Dillinger pointed out that enforcement of regulations would be nearly impossible, and the public health risks associated with the animals' droppings are significant. “I very strongly advocate for keeping the ordinance the way that it is,” he said, and suggested holding a public forum to further discuss the issue with residents.

Rather than belabor the issue further, the council decided to limit the city's liability by adding a clause into the ordinance stating that a permit would be required to keep chickens, and that at the time of the permit application the resident would sign a waiver to take full responsibility for their birds and the potential consequences of keeping them. The motion passed 4 to 1, with Dillinger voting nay.

SEE CITY ON A-10

Max's Mission to freely distribute opioid overdose reversal medication

April S. Kelley

IVN Contributing Writer

Max's Mission, a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives in Southern Oregon through the education and free distribution of an opioid overdose reversal medication called naloxone, will be having a community meeting Feb. 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the Healthy U building at the Illinois Valley Family Resource Center, located at 535 E. River St.

Julia Pinsky, executive director of Max's Mission, said the meeting will provide attendees with free naloxone training and information regarding medication-assisted treatment facilities and other help for opioid abuse available in the area.

“Anybody concerned about somebody using opioids, either themselves or their family – we don't judge – should attend,” she said. “If you think you know somebody or you are taking opioids, you should have naloxone in the house.”

Max's Mission was

started in November 2016, a few years after Pinsky lost her son, Max, at 25 to an opioid overdose.

“We lived in a rural area, outside of Ashland,” Pinsky said. “Max died at home. We realized after the fact that had we had naloxone, things would have been different. We had never heard of naloxone then. It was only after he died, and I did a lot of research online that I came across this and realized that other states were using it.”

Pinsky said she could not find any information about naloxone locally, so she was concerned about people in Oregon being able to carry it.

“When Max died, there were three other young men also that winter that died which really drove it home,” she said. “Naloxone wouldn't have necessarily saved all of their lives, but certainly it would be good to have. There was another young man, if his father would have had it, that might have made a difference.”

SEE MAX ON A-10

Haven't you always wanted to know more about creepy crawlers?
Check out our new column on A-12