

Inaugural tree lighting



(Photo by Wendy A. Willams for the Illinois Valley News)

The inaugural lighting of the new Christmas tree at Caves Chevron Saturday, Nov. 24.

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Bells were jingling and Illinois Valley residents mingling as the 2018 Holiday season was kicked off in style with the lighting of the Christmas tree (s) Saturday, Nov. 24, at the Chevron Station on the southern end of Cave Junction.

Santa and Mrs. Claus arrived in style aboard the beautiful shiny-red fire engine #8901 (thanks to Chief Dennis Hoke and his elves) and promptly took his place on the Santa-throne where 130 plus children from the area were waiting to tell Santa their secret wishes! Thanks to the good folks at Krystal Kaleidoscope in Selma, there were wrapped gifts for every child in attendance. Mrs. Claus also made sure each child received a delicious cookie!

The children also had a craft tent, contributed by Elves Mary and Steve Pustay, where they created a gingerbread man keepsake ornament and received a candy cane and goodie bag. Complimentary hot cocoa was shared by the generous staff and owner of Coffee Heaven. The bake sale tent was filled with home-baked treats, all offered for a dollar per bag, with the proceeds going to benefit the Rotary Club of the Illinois Valley toy giveaway.

SEE TREE ON A-10



(Courtesy photo for the Illinois Valley News)

Abigail Velasquez, 14 months old, from Cave Junction visited with Santa and Mrs. Claus during the Nov. 24 tree lighting ceremony in CJ.

Straws pose threat to sea birds

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The recent wildfires in California, which claimed over 80 lives and destroyed upwards of 12,000 structures as of the most recent update, serve as not only a reminder of the fact that we are at the mercy of the environment, but that it is imperative to preserve it if our species is to survive going forward.

As time has gone on, it's become increasingly difficult for skeptics to deny that human-caused climate change is a reality. Therefore, the time for debate regarding environmental protection is nearly over, and the time for action is in full swing. Experts project that it will be impossible to curb the path of climate change and the associated environmental degradation without altering the way we use such products as those that require coal, oil, and other fuels, but, obviously, doing so would require changes to the very fabric of contemporary society. Until such drastic changes can be made, we would do well to alter our consumption of less essential products which are a hazard to the world's ecosystems; namely, plastic straws and utensils.

You may have heard that the

city of Seattle, Washington recently banned the use of plastic straws and utensils. The *New York Times* reported that Seattle joins several cities in Florida and California that introduced anti-straw regulations in recent years.

The movement against single-use straws is not limited to municipalities, but rather expands to global corporations including Starbucks, McDonald's, Marriott, and Alaska Airlines. These prohibitions are far from unwarranted, given the threat that plastic straws pose to the world's oceans, and the global environment by association.

According to the Strawless Ocean program, "Plastic straws are really bad for the ocean. It's estimated that we use over 500 million every day in America, and most of those end up in our oceans, polluting the water and killing marine life. We want to encourage people to stop using plastic straws for good. If we don't act now, by the year 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish."

Other recent reports allege that the 500 million figure is an overestimation, and the daily usage is likely half that. Regardless, the small and lightweight design of straws presents a problem that sets them apart from other plastic waste: "Most plastic straws are too lightweight to make it through the

mechanical recycling sorter. They drop through sorting screens and mix with other materials and are too small to separate, contaminating recycling loads or getting disposed as garbage."

Once in the ocean, plastic straws have some staying power, given the several hundred years it takes for them to degrade. During this time, they "attract and absorb" additional pollutants, boosting their harmful potential, according to Christina Caron, contributing writer for the *New York Times*. She goes on to state, "It is difficult to know how many straws or straw particles end up in the world's waterways and oceans, but plastic straws are one of the most common items found on beaches, according to the Ocean Conservancy, whose volunteers have picked up more than 9 million straws and stirrers from beaches and waterways."

As reported by Strawless Oceans, the long-term impact of plastic in our waterways could be catastrophic: "It is projected that by 2050, 99 percent of all sea bird species will have ingested plastic. Mortality rate can be "up to" 50 percent. And, already, research has shown plastic in sea salt, 94 percent of U.S. tap water, and shellfish.

SEE STRAWS ON A-9

Power outage can't stop Thanksgiving

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Just after 11 a.m. on Thanksgiving morning 1,500 Illinois Valley homes lost power, including much of Downtown Cave Junction.

As service was not restored until 2:37 p.m., countless households were plunged into the deep waters of Holiday Culinary Challenge. Though perhaps not surprisingly, for many, this lack of electricity didn't interfere too badly with getting their bird's baked.

"I had a feeling, with the wind, the power was going," Ahnka Coleman said. "Plus CJ is all about Murphy's Law, so I cooked the night before."

"When the power went out all I could think was 'whoop whoop whoop' my stuff is done!" said Pam Lenhart, who "baked all the goodies the day before" and got up at 5 a.m. to cook the meats. "I made the gravies and kept everything warm on the wood stove. We had a generator for lights and T.V. The day was filled with family and fun."

Dennis Hoke said: "I hooked the Traeger smoker grill to a generator and made a great smoked turkey." And Clyde Miller fired up a generator in his RV: "We cooked Thanksgiving dinner there, slow but effective."

Wendi Hiler and her family also rocked a generator: "Lucky for my family the generator pretty much runs everything, so really nothing was much different for us. We watched TV, made food together and had tons of laughs."

SEE TURKEY ON A-3

Clean your bird feeders to avoid spreading disease

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Feeding wild birds is a fun and rewarding pastime for many in our area, but it comes with responsibilities beyond buying and doling out seed. This is because feeders can increase the risk of disease transmission in the birds we love if feeders are not cleaned adequately.

Now that the rains have begun here in Southern Oregon, you'll have to step up your bird feeder cleaning schedule (or create one and stick to it). Most people do more regular feeder cleaning during spring, summer and even during fall migration. However, with our wet Oregon winters we have to be more dedicated feeder keepers because mold and mildew are our winter feeder banes. If you can't keep your feeders dry (for example, if you use platform feeders and/or suet cages versus rainproof enclosed feeders) make sure you only put out as much seed as your yard birds will eat in one day. Don't let wet seed sit overnight and buy platform feeders with screened bottoms for drainage.

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Feeder Watch program, "When you clean your feeders you soak or scrub them with a dilute bleach solution, rinse them thoroughly, and let them dry before adding bird feed. If your feeders have visible

debris, be sure to scrub them as long as necessary to remove all visible debris before cleaning them. Remember that prevention is the key to avoiding the spread of disease and that you should regularly clean your feeders even when there are no signs of disease."

Here's a detailed breakdown for weekly cleaning (yes, weekly):

- Scrub all debris from feeder using soapy water.
- Soak feeder in a solution of nine parts water to one part household bleach for 10 minutes. (Note: if you don't have the capacity to soak, thoroughly scrub feeder with bleach solution.)

- Thoroughly rinse with clean water.
- Completely dry feeder, then refill with seed.

You will also want to scrub down porch railings or the like where platform feeders attach with the bleach solution.

Keeping feeders clean goes a long way toward preventing the spread of two common diseases. First is house finch eye disease (pictured are two evening grosbeaks with this disease). This disease is also known as mycoplasmal conjunctivitis or FED. The disease affects house finch, goldfinch, evening grosbeak and purple finch. It is most prevalent on the East Coast, but came to Oregon in 2004.

SEE CLEAN ON A-10