

VALLEY ...

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Superintendent Valenzuela spoke of the challenges facing educators in helping students who come from 5 of the 6 poorest zipcodes in the state. Despite those challenges the graduation rate for highschoolers has increased from 66% in previous years to 74% last year and are projecting students to achieve an almost 80% graduation rate for 2019. The TRSD is working hard to give students the job/labor skills necessary for those not planning to go on to two or four year higher education, through career technical education (manufacturing, welding, etc. internships). Valenzuela said his other job is ensuring maintenance of the facilities or “keeping the lights on.” Deferred maintenance for TRSD is huge and the aging facilities in the Illinois Valley mean they will need the support of the community. Finally, Valenzuela outlined the board of education’s goals going forward, including a graduating student target of 85% by 2023; expanding early childhood education and a culture of care (outreach and support services); high quality communication, education and community involvement; and creating strong community partnerships.

I.V. Fire District (IVFD) Chief Dennis Hoke said, “The Predictive Fire Season Program has projected: It’s gonna be warmer, it’s gonna be drier, there’s gonna be a fire season, and there’s gonna be smoke. Given that they’re about 50% right, we’re probably going to experience all of it!” Hoke said the best preparation the Valley residents can do is create “defensible space.”

“Can we make a stand to save your property and save your house? Some houses are written off – in fact when I was in Alaska we had to write off entire subdivisions.” Hoke went on to say the Fire District is 144 square miles, an increase of 24% from 2014. But the IVFD only has seven volunteer firefighters and all responses are made from the Cave Junction firehouse. Thanks to the levy the IVFD has been able to hire one fulltime firefighter/EMT, and with the volunteers they have been able to reduce response time by one full minute, but they need more volunteers. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) does a phenomenal job and has the best program in the state. Hoke said they allow the CERT team to do nontraditional roles such as manning the air truck, bringing equipment to the scene as well as staff the rehab unit (a resource that provides

relief and prevention of the effects of cancer-causing agents inherent at fire events). There is also the Explorer program which currently has 20 students. According to Hoke, one of the biggest challenges is they need a training building. They can’t host a fire academy as well as other training. The project includes structure materials as well as gravel. Finally, Chief Hoke reminded everyone of the IVFD/CERT Pancake breakfast being held Saturday, May 4 and Sunday, May 5 at Fire Station 1 on Caves Highway, with the proceeds going toward the purchase of necessary equipment for fire rescue.

Mayor Meadow Martell spoke of efforts to find alternate methods of vegetation control along the 19 miles of roadway in Cave Junction. Martell commended resident Rose Sacco in being instrumental in suggesting cost effective methods that do the job without resorting to using Roundup/glyphosate containing products. Testing is currently being conducted at City Hall to determine which method is the most effective.

Roberta Lee, director of the Illinois Valley Branch Library spoke of the extended hours and improved programs that are available to residents, including more children’s craft activities, creation of a chess night and a community puzzle that parents enjoy while their kids are engaged in reading and other activities.

Josephine County Airport Director Larry Graves talked about all of the activities happening at both the Illinois Valley Airport and the Grants Pass Airport, which provide service to the community through Mercy Flights Air Ambulance, flight instruction, scenic flights and a wildfire fighting “Helitack Base.” The airports support both business and recreational flyers. According to Graves, “We are a money magnet! We receive millions of dollars in federal grants, hundreds of thousands in state grants and are an enterprise fund department (all of our operations are self-funded).” The airports provide jobs here in the Illinois Valley and in 2018 were the only airports in the state to win the Airport Excellence Award, which allows for upgraded airport electrical, runway lighting and parking at the I.V. airport. Graves said they have safely conducted more than 15,000 airport landings at the Grants Pass airport and have just installed a 45KW generator for backup electrical. They will also be implementing a \$500,000 project from an award projected to be made by the FAA. When asked by *Illinois Valley News* publisher Dan Mancuso about the recent sale of the Smokejumpers Museum, Graves said they are working on figuring that out, that the sale is not a bad idea but

has been put on hold as certain processes must be followed. Sarah Garceau, Josephine County Parks director, spoke of the fact that parks are vital to establish and maintain the quality of life in a community that “it’s important for you to get outside and enjoy the nature that parks give you.” Garceau spoke of where the revenue is generated (75% comes from camping fees) and of the upcoming projects the department is undertaking this year and going forward. Residents are encouraged to buy an annual pass for \$30 and “recreate more!”

The final speaker was Emily Ring, Josephine County Emergency Management director who outlined plans for emergency preparedness education for the county residents (using a zombie apocalypse as an example).

During the Q&A section of the evening Commissioner Lily Morgan spoke of the resolution the board of county commissioners passed to encourage the forest service to develop a policy to attack fires (rather than “let it burn”). Morgan said, “We want full suppression and expedited service!”



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, *Illinois Valley News*)

Three Rivers School District Superintendent Dave Valenzuela Monday, April 29.



IVFD FIREFIGHTER’s Association & CERT

Fundraiser Breakfast

Pancakes—Eggs— Sausage—Drinks

Saturday May 4th

Sunday May 5th



New vehicles have harden Boron Steel in the posts. IVFD needs a new cutter to quickly cut these post during an extraction. I know, if everyone would just drive as well as you and I, IVFD would not need any tools. BUT THEY DON’T. Help IVFD have the right tool, incase we need to cut YOU out of a vehicle.

From 8:00 AM to Noon At Fire Station 1

681 Caves HWY

\$8.00 Adults Under 10 years \$5.00

For Information Call 425.241.7400

FORKS ...

Continued from A-1

A project that has significant volunteer support is the expansion of the disc golf course from nine holes to 18 holes. Bob Chard, a former civil engineer who has designed local disc golf courses, has already drawn up two options for the new holes. His favored option would be built across the road from the front nine.

An issue that dominated discussion at the meeting was the possibility of opening

the trails on the west side of the park (across the Illinois River) to mountain bikers. Representatives of a local equestrian group at the meeting opposed the idea.

Cate Bendock, president of the Oregon Sourdough Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of America, said that even though her organization supports multiuse trails for all users, trail safety comes first. “That trail system has very poor sight lines and it’s steep,” she said. “If you bring mountain bikers in, you will displace the other users.”

To accommodate bikes, the trails would need to be widened, and switchbacks improved, but Bendock said the trails can’t be widened in some areas, and that widening would lead to more erosion damage. Instead, she said, bikers should look to the possibilities of a trail project on BLM land directly across Westside Road.

Those who are interested in volunteer opportunities that will help show their support for the park should look into the Adopt-a-Park program. An application is available on the Oregon State Parks website.



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