

# Editorial



By Rusty Savage

And here I am finally getting this February issue out to all of our readers. Ice-amegeddon 2024, that's what they are calling it, and good reason too. Oregon was hit pretty hard this last January and not everyone saw it coming. I sure didn't. And it wouldn't quit! Here in Drain, we missed most of the icy badness but the power outages were simply a pain in the butt.

Maybe some of you are like the Savages, here, and have wood heat so at least we didn't freeze. Can't say the same for Cottage Grove, Springfield, Eugene and the outlying areas. They lost power and it seemed to take forever to get it all back on. In fact there are still a few remote areas, at this writing, that have not been restored.

And travel was at an all time standstill like I haven't seen a very long time around here. I-5 from Eugene to Roseburg was a standstill for 4 or 5 days. Man those truckers tried pretty hard but there's no skating across the ice for those behemoths.

Although we did not have a prolonged outage here, the on and off and on again power fluctuations killed one of our computers here at the office. Another reason we delayed the February issue by a few days. Between business closures and some of our vendors delaying services, on top of our office malfunction, we persevered and here it is.

The North Douglas Herald is excited to announce another milestone after only 6 months we are increasing production to 4500 newspapers beginning in March. Last year, in September, we distributed about 2100 newspapers and by December we maxed out our 3500 print run and have spread from Winston to Eugene and from Oakland to Reedsport. With this months last 3500 run, we will only be able to stock out, over 30, pick up locations once. Usually we have been stocking them twice a month. Next month we will be able to stock twice a month again.

It's thanks to our readers that we can continue to grow. I believe the print media is still the best method of bringing news and information to the public. I think you like to read a newspaper, as long as it can inform and entertain and that is our goal here at the Herald. My only caveat is that I want to hear from all of you good people. I want to bring you the news that we are scouring the region for, but I want a personal interaction too. Tell us about your kids school and sports efforts and achievements, your community shortcomings and triumphs. Got a fight with City Hall or great idea for city improvement, tell us about it. Is there something that may be going on in your area that you can share with us? It's your newspaper, what do you want to see in it?

Not many free newspapers out there that I can see. The Eugene Weekly has been a free news paper up in Eugene area for over 30 years and last month they stopped production, laid off the staff and shuttered the doors. According to Eugene Weekly's editor, Camilla Mortensen, and EPD public information officer, Melinda McLaughlin, the paper was a victim of fraud and theft by a former trusted employee. Reportedly nearly \$100,000 was embezzled over a short period of time and was only discovered after vendors weren't paid and paychecks were at risk of bouncing. I spoke with Camilla and I can tell that the passion over there is a strong factor in their efforts to continue. Ms Mortensen plans to be printing a new issue by the end of this week. Kudos to them.

I also read the New York Times is in dire straights and cutting back on their production and coverage areas. The print newspaper business is a tough one. If you appreciate your free copy of the North Douglas Herald, you can thank our advertisers. Thank them by supporting them, spend some money over there, so that they continue to support us.

## 2 Teenage Shooters Arrested

### Lane County Sheriff Serves Warrants

**Eugene OR** - According to the Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) two young males opened fire with handguns at a passing vehicle on Saturday, January 27, 2024.

At approximately 7:00 a.m., a passerby in a vehicle asked the two males to clear the roadway in the area of Nantucket Avenue and N. Park Avenue, and were greeted with gunfire. LCSO tells us that the vehicle was struck multiple times, and the driver was nearly struck as well. LCSO reports that nearly 20 rounds were fired, with the victim nearly being struck, and at least one round entered a child's bedroom window nearby, striking an interior wall.

One suspect was identified and surveillance was established at a nearby residence in the 1300 block of Keller Street while applying for a search warrant. Once the search warrant was granted, the LCSO Special Response Team served

the warrant. Evidence was located that quickly led to the arrest of one suspect, and identification of the second suspect. The first suspect arrested was a juvenile, who was transported to the Lane County Youth Services detention facility on charges of:

Attempted Assault 1  
Unlawful Use of a Weapon

On January 29, 2024, LCSO detectives arrested the second shooter without incident, identified as Ty Houston Pflieger, 18, of Eugene. He was lodged at the Lane County Jail on charges of:

Attempted Assault 1  
Unlawful Use of a Weapon

The Lane County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the Oregon State Police and Eugene Police Department for their assistance, and especially the many residents who reached out with information to help quickly solve this case.

## Woman Indicted for Online Social Media Threats

**Eugene OR** - A federal grand jury has returned an indictment charging Elizabeth Ballesteros West, a 56-year-old woman from Cottage Grove, with one count of transmitting an interstate threat. This announcement was made by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon.

The investigation began in late September 2023 when the FBI received an anonymous tip regarding West's alleged threats against coworkers on Facebook. In November 2023, it was discovered that West also had an account on X (formerly known as Twitter), where she was reportedly posting and reposting memes, videos, and statements containing violent messages which targeted Black and Jewish people, as well as immigrants.

West's online posts included self-produced photos of firearms, including handguns, a shotgun, and an AR-style assault rifle. On January 3, 2023, West admitted to posting and reposting messages on X containing hateful and violent rhetoric. She also confessed to

possessing multiple shotguns and AR-15 assault rifles at her Cottage Grove residence.

FBI then, on January 9, 2023, executed federal search warrants on West's person, vehicle, and residence. Seized were 12 handguns, 16 rifles, thousands of rounds of ammunition, firearm accessories, and a journal containing writings and drawings featuring additional hateful and violent statements. As a result, on January 12, 2023, FBI agents arrested West without incident at her workplace in Eugene.

West made her first appearance in federal court on Thursday, January 18th before a U.S. Magistrate Judge and was ordered detained pending further court proceedings. This investigation involved collaboration between the FBI, Cottage Grove Police Department, Eugene Police Department, and Lane County Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Adam E. Delph, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

## DCSO Arrests Transient on 13 Charges

**Yoncalla OR** - The Douglas County Sheriff's Office jailed a transient who had 13 warrants for this arrest on Friday, January 26th. A DCSO report said at 5:20 p.m. a deputy contacted 20-year old Taylor Pennington in the 5000 block of Elkhead Road in Yoncalla.

According to a resident, Pennington was among those staying at the residence. After further investigation, the deputy learned about the warrants. The sheriff's deputy went up to the house and attempted to contact the suspect.

Pennington barricaded himself inside a room and refused to come out. It was learned that the individual accompanying Pennington was the

victim of a kidnapping case in Medford. She is 17 years old.

After speaking with Pennington for a lengthy amount of time, he eventually cooperated and came out. He was placed into custody and secured in a patrol vehicle. Pennington told the deputy that he had ingested 2 grams of fentanyl. Shortly after surrendering, the man became nonresponsive. The deputy then administered two doses (4 milligrams) of Narcan. Pennington came to and was transported to a hospital where he was evaluated and cleared to be lodged in jail.

Pennington was charged with the long list of warrants. Bail was set at \$132,500.

## Man's Body Discovered in Coiner Park

### CGPD Says No Foul Play

**Cottage Grove OR** - On Saturday, January 27th, the Cottage Grove Police Department discovered a body at Coiner Park. Two park patrons called 911 at 2:00 pm on Saturday. Officers responded to 1319 E. Main Street to find the 24-year-old Cottage Grove man unresponsive. Drug paraphalia was found at the scene. Officer Ryan Blalack administered one dose of Narcan (Naloxone) and performed CPR.

According to Cottage Grove Chief of Police Cory Chase, "There was no foul play involved. The first officer on-scene observed the male, later identified as Thomas Lynn Voigt, lying on the table. The officer saw a glass pipe in one hand and a lighter in the other hand.

We can't confirm without a toxicology report, but it appears to be drug related at this point."

The officer performed CPR until medics with South Lane Fire and Rescue arrived and continued efforts to resuscitate Mr. Voigt and he was declared deceased at the scene. The Chief added, "It's not being investigated as a suspicious death at this point."

The State Medical Examiner's Office has requested a toxicology screening. The drug paraphernalia at the scene was seized as evidence.

According to information officer, Captain Marsh, there are no further details available at this time.

## Former DCSO Deputy Arrested

**Roseburg OR** - The Roseburg Police Department conducted an investigation, at the request of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, of a former Douglas County Sheriff Corrections Deputy Peter Collins had embezzled money while serving as the union treasurer. During the investigation, Collins, a 44-year-old Roseburg resident, admitted to embezzling more than \$100,000 from the Douglas County Law Enforcement Association between 2016 and 2023. Collins was arrested on Tuesday, December 12, 2023 and lodged at Douglas County Corrections. Collins is charged with 1) five counts of Aggravated Theft in the First Degree. 2) five counts of Computer Crime. 3) five counts of Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card. 4) Falsifying Business Records. 5) Forgery 1. 6) Official Misconduct. The Roseburg Police Department says the investigation is ongoing.

## Fatal Car Crash on HWY 58

**Lane County** - On the morning of January 21st, Deputies with the Lane County Sheriff's Office responded to a report of a single vehicle crash into a muddy field along Edenvale Road near Highway 58, Pleasant Hill. Deputies located the driver deceased underneath the vehicle, a 2014 Nissan Altima. The driver is believed to have been the only occupant, and was likely not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash, resulting in her ejection from the vehicle. The crash reportedly occurred sometime the night before, but was not discovered by area residents until morning. The driver's identity is being withheld at this time.

## I-5 Stop yields 100 lb Meth

**Douglas County** - An Oregon State Police team with a K9 pulled the vehicle over around 12:15 p.m. on January 4, authorities said. The K9 sniffed outside the vehicle and alerted the troopers about the drugs.

When the vehicle was searched, officials said, they found 100 pounds of crystal meth in large bags in the trunk. Two people from San Bernadino were arrested: Edgar Rene Revolorio, 28, and 35-year-old Surely Nalley Molina Escalante. Authorities said the investigation continues.

## Fatal Pedestrian Crash on 101

**Florence OR** - A pedestrian is dead following a vehicle-pedestrian crash on HWY 101 near Honeyman Park. According to Oregon State Police, at 4:15 a.m. on January 22, 2024, officers responded to a vehicle-pedestrian crash on Hwy. 101 near milepost 193, just south of Florence. The preliminary investigation indicates that a southbound Toyota Tacoma, driven by 70-year-old Timothy Shane Sweet, struck 36-year-old Justin Robert Warmuth of Florence, who was wearing dark clothing while standing in the middle of the southbound lane. Warmuth was declared dead at the scene, Sweet was not injured and Officials stated that Sweet cooperated with investigators.

Hwy. 101, near Honeyman Park, was impacted for approximately 4.5 hours while officers conducted the on-scene investigation, as Western Lane Ambulance and Fire and the Oregon Department of Transportation assisted OSP at the scene.

## ND Park/Rec Manager Charged

**Drain OR** - North Douglas Park & Recreation district manager Judith Charlene Burnett, 38, of Drain, was arrested Jan. 4 on nine charges related to theft and fraud from North Douglas Parks & Recreation.

Burnett faces charges of first-degree aggravated theft, four counts of fraudulent use of a credit card and four counts of computer crime. It is alleged that Burnett stole more than \$50,000 from North Douglas Parks & Recreation between Aug. 1, 2023, and Dec. 1, 2023. An additional \$1,000 was alleged to have been used on a credit card belonging to the district during the months of August, September, October and November 2023. She is charged with using a computer systems or network "for the purpose of committing theft of money and/or currency." Burnett was also the cross country and track and field coach for North Douglas High School since 2019.

The parks and recreation district is funded through taxes and grants from local foundations. Board members with North Douglas Parks & Recreation did not make any comment at this time.

She was conditionally released from Douglas County Jail on Jan. 12 and is restricted to having no contact with the parks and recreation district.