

Keizertimes

SECTION A

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COUNTDOWN TO TOTALITY

A total solar eclipse will pass over the U.S. from coast-to-coast in **AUGUST 2017**. Keizer is right in its path. **IT'S TIME TO GET EXCITED.**

A TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE occurs when the moon passes between the earth and sun. It's been nearly **100 YEARS** since an eclipse followed a similar path. Totality will last **1 MINUTE AND 47 SECONDS** in Keizer.

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

The last time a total solar eclipse passed over the entirety of the contiguous United States Woodrow Wilson was president, stamps were 2 cents, World War I was ending and the first grocery bag with handles debuted in St. Paul, Minn.

All of that is to say, when the total solar eclipse arrives Monday, Aug. 21, 2017, it's going to be a big deal.

"It's something of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity — unless you are able to travel anywhere to go see one, and there are people who chase eclipses," said Chris Claysmith, an astronomy instructor at Chemeketa Community College.

Total solar eclipses aren't exactly rarities — the last one visible in a small portion of the U.S. occurred 38 years ago — but they happen over open ocean more often than not, which means laying eyes on them comes with a hefty price tag. This time around Oregon is one of only 12 states that will experience totality, meaning the moon will pass directly between the earth and sun. It will create a near-complete darkening of the sky and the possibility of seeing stars.

"It's something of a cosmic coincidence," said Tom McDonough, a semi-retired Chemeketa instructor who remains

involved with the Chemeketa Planetarium. "The sun is 400 times larger than the moon, but the moon is 400 times closer to earth. If aliens were to visit our solar system, they would come to earth to see the eclipses because of the show it puts on."

The partial eclipse will begin in Keizer about 9:05 a.m. and reach totality at 10:18 a.m. The totality will last 1 minute and 47 seconds in city limits.

The eclipse is also occurring at a prime time for viewing, said local astronomy enthusiast Norman Friedman, "In August, the earth is still pretty far away from the sun, which means that it will get even darker than it would at another time of year."

The constellation of factors making the Salem-Keizer area a prime spot for viewing has some locals expecting an influx of 30,000 to 40,000 visitors in the days leading up to the celestial event. Many hotels are reporting they're already booked solid.

In Keizer, the Keizer Parks Foundation is planning to turn Keizer Rapids Park into a hotbed of activity for visitors. Foundation members Donna Bradley and Rich Ford presented their proposal to the Keizer City Council at its meeting Monday, Aug. 15.

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Options for MHS parking impact
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New principal at Cummings
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Small gains, big sacrifices

Parks make do with meager funding

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

As Keizer's parks and facilities supervisor, one of Robert Johnson's most rewarding jobs is planting a tree.

"I can plant one and, in seven or eight years, drive by and there is a family having a picnic in its shade," Johnson said.

However, that one tree can command a lot of attention over the course of its life. Priority No. 1 is water. Many of Keizer's parks have built-in irrigation systems, but the head that delivers water to the tree might be 15 years old, and it had an expected life of 10 years. If the head is in a high-traffic area, it may be stepped on repeatedly during the course of a day and need regular adjusting to ensure proper flow. Trees also get sick or infested with any number of critters, and Johnson may need to enlist a tree specialist to diagnose a problem and then add the needed treatment plan into an already busy schedule. If the tree was planted near the park's edge and it grows into a neighboring yard, it's going to need to be limbed, and it may even need to be limbed regularly to ensure healthy growth. The grass around the tree also needs to be cut regularly to maintain usability. Weeds and invasive species in the area need to be removed. And let's not forget the leaves. Come fall, the tree is going to drop its haul on the grass below and, the longer they sit, the more damage they are going to do to the grass. Blowing leaves and hauling them out is going to require more time and money, instead Johnson and Don Shelton, Keizer's other full-time parks employee, keep mowers running well into November for leaf control if the weather permits.

All that is for one tree. Keizer has 240 acres of park space.

"I'm always looking for a better way to do something and tweaking things a little bit at a time, but I feel like we're running out of tweaks," Johnson said.

City officials are trying to

figure out a way to increase funds available for parks maintenance and improvements, likely through a fee added to utility bills. To understand how the fee would support parks employees' efforts, I accompanied Johnson as he made his rounds Thursday morning, Aug. 11.

The magic hour is 6:30 to 7:30 a.m.

Johnson, Shelton and one of the city's two seasonal workers start early to get a jump on some maintenance issues.

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— Robert Johnson,
Parks Supervisor

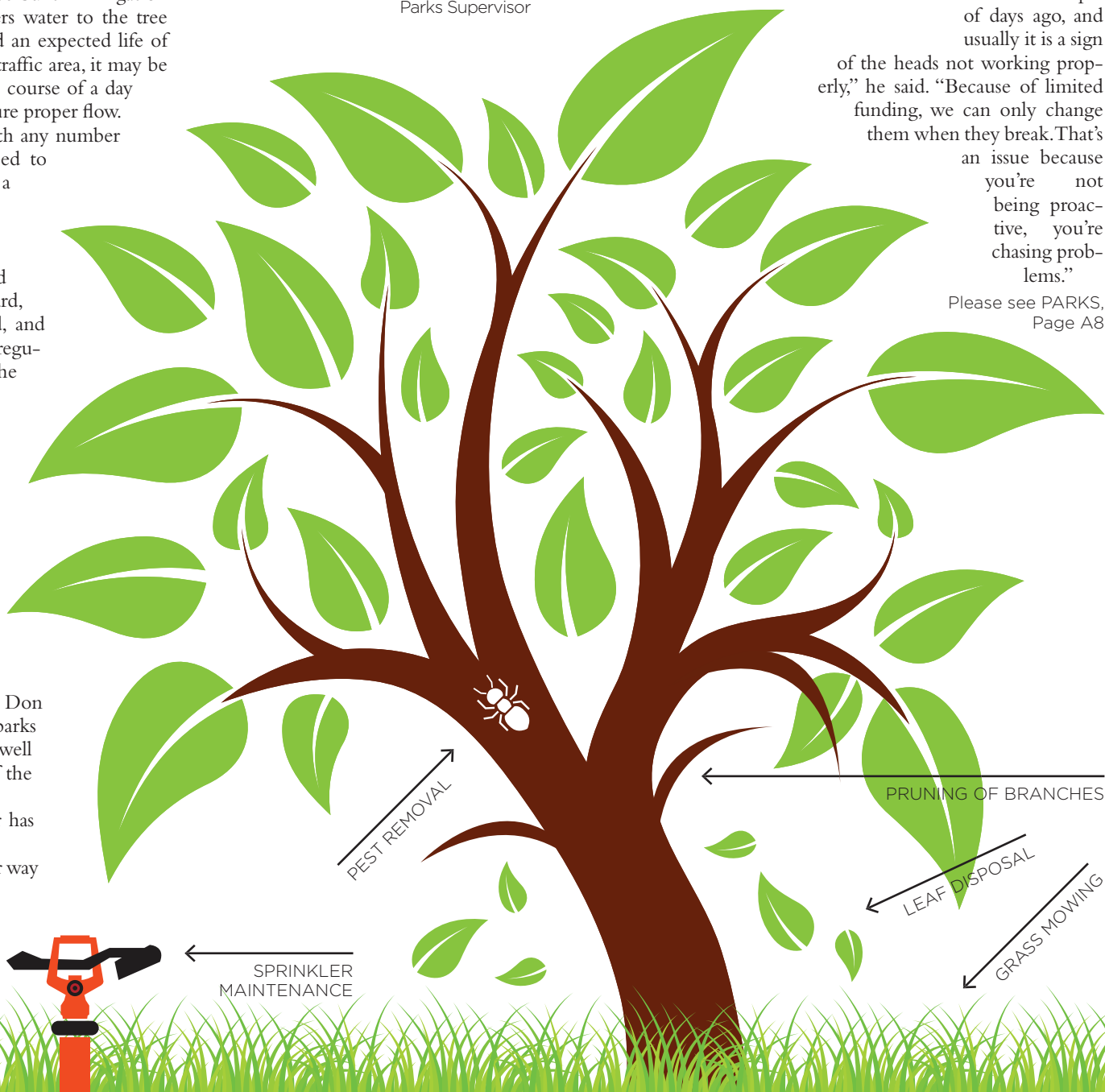
Shelton goes to the dog park at Keizer Rapids Park to fix a leaky dog fountain. Johnson heads to Claggett Creek Park to check on irrigation. After 7:30 a.m., residents start showing up with their pets for morning exercise and firing off the irrigation system can

drench an unsuspecting visitor.

Johnson drives up to the control box and points out some of the larger dry spots in the turf as he does.

"I noticed these a couple of days ago, and usually it is a sign of the heads not working properly," he said. "Because of limited funding, we can only change them when they break. That's an issue because you're not being proactive, you're chasing problems."

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KEIZERTIMES/Andrew Jackson



Repeal of marijuana distancing denied
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Tommy John surgery yields positive results for pitcher
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