

By **ERIC A. HOWALD**
Of the Keizertimes

The year 2019 was anything but dull in Keizer.

Between big conversations about how the city will grow to resolutions in court battles involving a gun range and an eminent domain dispute, news in Keizer impacted every corner of the city. *Keizertimes* looked back over the past 360-ish days for what constituted the biggest news of the year. These are the stories that drew our attention and the attention of our readers.

million. The property, which is west of St. Edward, is currently being used as a construction staging area, but will eventually become new sports fields for the Celtics.

HOUSING CRISIS COMES HOME TO ROOST

Housing in Keizer was one of the two hottest topics at city hall all year long. Most of Oregon's

in late 2018 and the Oregon Legislature mandated meetings and commissioned a study examining what city officials might do to alleviate the problem.

Portions of the problem were addressed with the adoption of a new development

council held its final meeting on the topic in November its answer was: wait for the market to catch up.

A SORT-OF ANSWER TO THE UGB QUESTION

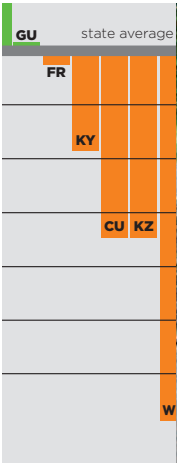
In addition to the housing crisis, how and whether Keizer should grow was the major question city officials wrestled with throughout the year.

end, both the task force and the Keizer Planning Commission recommended increasing density rather than forging ahead with a UGB separation, a process that would result in vast expenditures of time and money with uncertain outcomes.

However, planning commissioners also directed city staff to begin the long process of planning for UGB expansion — someday.

KEIZER'S READING PROBLEM
In February, *Keizertimes*

TOP 9 STORIES OF 2019



AN EMINENT DOMAIN BATTLE

The year began with the Salem-Keizer School District and St. Edward Catholic Church engaged in a court battle over a church-owned piece of land the school district wanted to make way for an expansion at McNary High School.

The school district paid for two appraisals and St. Edward rejected an offer of \$1.75 million. The church asserted that because it is a religious entity that it was harder to take their land than it would be for another owner.

The battle in the courts ended in a settlement in February with a deal for \$2.26

larger cities are experiencing a housing shortage of some sort and Keizer is no different. The city is about 500 acres short of what it would need to accommodate expected growth over the next 20 years and the minimal space available for the short term is driving up housing costs in every corner.

The city was labeled as rent-burdened by the state

code for the city's commercial centers. Additional changes enacted by the Oregon Legislature will revamp single-family development zones throughout the state and might address another piece.

However, when the city

Salem and absorb new spaces to the north. Another option was increasing density within the existing UGB.

A special task force was assembled and stakeholders were invited to provide their input throughout the process. In the

reported on the results of determined sleuthing on the part of some McNary High School administrators. An uptick in requests for spaces in remedial English classes led Assistant Principal Susane Stefani to dig deeper into the reading skills of the incoming freshman. What she found was that roughly 45 percent of the 542 freshmen could not read at grade level.

The responsibility for helping students catch up was also falling on the entire staff at the school. At the same time requests for remedial literacy classes more than doubled, the

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Long-time Keizer resident gears up for mission trip



Submitted
Doug Hoffman assists at a Rohingya refugee camp on a mission with Mercy, Inc.

By **LAUREN MURPHY**
Of the Keizertimes

Long-time Keizer resident Doug Hoffman is getting ready to leave for Bangladesh and Vietnam in January. As the executive director of Mercy Inc., a Christian, non-profit organization that focuses on gospel presentation and humanitarian acts, Hoffman is going on what he calls a vision trip — a trip to talk about and scout out future opportunities within the countries.

Mercy focuses not only on

meeting the current needs of the communities they connect with, but making a lasting change.

“We’re scouting out different businesses”

— Doug Hoffman

“We’re scouting out different businesses we can invest in,” Hoffman said. This trip is focusing on Business As Missions, or BAM, which trains local people on how to run a business and how to present the gospel.

Gospel presentation and compassion are two of the core values Mercy operates on.

“We generally try to do the

two together,” Hoffman said. “Every so often we go in and do just humanitarian, generally to build relationship,” he said. He cited an example of a tsunami in Indonesia where Mercy provided humanitarian aid and left the gospel presentation to the local missionaries who were trying to connect with a certain village.

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And the Crystal Apple goes to...

By **MATT RAWLINGS**
Of the Keizertimes

Jason Erickson says that there isn't a spot he has spent more time in his life than the music room at Clear Lake Elementary — where he has been a teacher for nearly two decades.

It is evident, however, that all of Erickson's hard work over the years hasn't gone unnoticed.

On Thursday, Nov. 14, at

the Historic Elsinore Theater in Salem, Erickson was one of 12 recipients of the Crystal Apple Award for excellence in education and for his significant impact on the lives of his students.

Erickson was humbled just to be nominated by the teachers and personnel that he has worked with.

“It's an honor, of course,

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Submitted
Jason Erickson with his Crystal Apple at a ceremony in November.



Jingle dashers
PAGE A4



Mavericks spoil Celts on court
PAGE A14



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