

Willamette Eagles find home in Keizer

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BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

After being without a home for nearly two years, the Willamette Aerie Eagles #20801 are back in operation, moving from Salem to Keizer.

"We are slowly getting back into doing things," said Eagles secretary Ann Madsen.

Located at 4090 Cherry Ave. NE, Willamette Aerie #20801, which is a local precinct of the national Fraternal Order of Eagles Charity Foundation, is a non-profit organization that seeks to help others through fundraising, activities, social gatherings and volunteerism.

Their location on Cherry Ave. was the prior home to the Keizer Eagles, who merged with Willamette in 2009, according to Madsen. The property was used as a medical marijuana facility for 10 years before the deed to the building was transferred back to the Eagles in 2019.

After months of renovation, the Eagles were planning on opening in Spring 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to delay the opening for 16 months.

"That was volunteer labor. Our people worked themselves to the bone," said Eagles entertainment chairperson Shirley Howard.

However, on July 24, the Eagles #20801 location finally opened the doors to its new building.

"They invested heavily over the last two years on restoring and updating their building. Now they are ready to welcome

members and grow their volunteerism and charity work here in Keizer," Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark said in a Facebook post.

Despite dealing with COVID restrictions, and losing members due to being closed for two years, the Willamette Eagles feature a multitude of weekly enjoyable activities for their members, with bingo and dancing available on Wednesdays, dart league on Thursdays and poker tournaments (\$40 buy-in) on Thursdays and Fridays — membership is \$85 per year and volunteering at some events is required. Events often feature 50/50 raffle baskets on select items.

"The grand opening brought some of



them back, and the dances and activities are also bringing some of the people back," Madsen said.

There are also pool tables, lottery, foosball and shuffleboard, as well as an open

and over in an environment that presents opportunities for growth outside the individual's usual routine or habitat.

The Eagles currently have approximately 300 Aerie (male) and 106 auxiliary (female) memberships. Madsen admitted that most of their members are over the age of 70, but that they are beginning to attract some younger people — anyone age 21 and over is eligible to join.

"We're starting to get the younger generation," Madsen said.

With four Eagles groups shutting down around the state over the past year, the longevity of the Willamette Eagles will depend solely on member participation. But with the initiation of 75 people over a two-month stretch, Aerie President Dale (Goofy) Vanderzanden believes that the Willamette Eagles have a bright future.

"This is a charitable organization where people help people, and we want our members to be willing to do that. And we can supply a lot of fun along the way," he said/

For more information on the Willamette Eagles, visit their website at www.foe2081.org. To become a member, contact Madsen at salemeagkebeak@gmail.com or call 503-363-3212.

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— DALE VANDERZANDEN
Willamette Eagles President

bar. A pool league and cornhole league will be on the horizon in the Eagles future.

With the motto of "people helping people," the Willamette Eagles use their entertainment events as fundraisers for a multitude of different charities.

Each event, along with membership fees, serves as a philanthropic activity, with the money going to local charities in the area — bake sales and auctions are also a common occurrence. A new charity is selected for the Eagles to donate to each month. This month, funds will be going to UPWARD Bound Camp, an on-going Christian-based recreational and educational camp for people with disabilities that are 12 years of age

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