

Florence teams up with National Child Safety Council

By CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

Business leaders and citizens of Florence received letters last week from the Florence Police Department (FPD) and the National Child Safety Council (NCSC) asking for donations to create safety education materials for children.

At the July 6 Florence City Council meeting, City Manager Erin Reynolds gave her endorsement.

"We are doing a solicitation for donations to support interaction and to increase the friendliness of our police officers to the public," she said. "There are some great educational materials we are going to be soliciting donations for."

The NCSC is a nonprofit organization that gathers com-

munity donations to fund professional educational resources on child safety and police appreciation.

Florence Police Chief Tom Turner said, "(The NCSC) provides materials I could hand out to youth, senior citizens and young adults. They provide this wide variety of informative materials with a positive bent. It has a law enforcement edge ... but the dominant factor is that it's about behaving."

According to 2014 statistics, NCSC produces more than 300 different pieces of educational material. Each city or service working with NSCS can tailor the materials to fit certain age groups and topics. The materials range from bicycle safety and bullying awareness to drug prevention, Internet safety and other important issues.

The NCSC also provides materials that can help prevent seniors from being victimized, with topics on driver safety, drug trends, domestic violence and identity theft.

"I worked with NCSC a couple times before," said Turner about his experiences as Lane County Sheriff. "I've been really impressed with the program and with the materials. One of the things I saw here in Florence is that I would love to have this as an option."

The letter that went out to businesses in the Florence area said that the NCSC materials cost \$1.90 per child. The letter then asked for donations to benefit groups of children from 30 to 200 students, or \$57 to \$380.

Those who donate may also choose to include their business

name on the material.

"One of the things that I'm pleased about with this group is that it is a force-multiplier. If it gets a small amount of money, it can actually provide more material than you might be able to do on your own," Turner said.

The NCSC also provides crafts, coloring pages and activities to make the learning more accessible.

Turner had been particularly impressed by a fold-out police car that children can put together.

"You can lay these materials out at a high school, and you'd be surprised by how many youth take advantage of this," he said. "Parents will take it because they want the information. The material is full of websites, informational activi-

ties and how to get something done."

The NCSC can send safety materials for 30 to 5,000 children at a time.

The materials Florence and the FPD chooses will depend on the amount raised by the community.

The deadline for donations is Friday, Aug. 7.

"Once the donations come in, we as a city can decide what materials we want to have," Turner said. "We get to use the materials wherever we want. In our schools, community, events — anything that's out there for the youth or seniors, whatever group is the target. It winds up being a very cost-effective activity for us in the police department."

He added, "People really respond to this. I was shocked

at the amount of money raised in Lane County when this was put out."

"It sounds like a great program to bridge a lot of gaps that we have in our society," Councilor George Lyddon said.

Florence Mayor Joe Henry said, "I definitely think we should support this."

He also suggested that the city council might be able to provide funds as well.

Depending on the success of this year's fundraiser, Turner said that he would recommend working with the NCSC on a yearly basis.

For more information, go online to www.nationalchildsafetycouncil.org.

If you would like to donate, contact the Florence Police Department at 900 Greenwood St. or call 541-997-3515.

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Board

from 1A

Scott said, "Jim had gotten a good performance review, and actually gotten a raise recently. He was caught unaware by this."

Scott added, "We went through a strategic plan formulation. ... They were interviewing citizen and district staff, and Jim came through that in good shape."

The "new direction" Carnahan wants the board and SVFR to take is, essentially, going back to basics.

"I would like to see us focus more on volunteers. I think we need to slow things down and get more volunteers. ... We also at this point need to get everybody on the same page."

The board decided to call on former fire chief John Buchanan to step into the interim role.

"I actually contacted him

this morning," Carnahan said on Thursday. "Buchanan had said in the past that he would make himself available if we ever needed him. He's always available if we had a question."

"Buchanan was there for 25 years. The whole group is kind of this 'old guard' that was there forever," Scott said.

He included former board member Steve Olienyk as a member of the "old guard."

Buchanan's transition back from where he lives currently in Woodland, Calif., is aided by the fact that he has a home in the area.

Carnahan said that Buchanan would assume the interim position most likely on Monday, July 20.

Until then, the SVFR duty chief will act as interim chief.

Carnahan noted, "I happen to be duty chief, but it will be rotated amongst all three duty chiefs."

The other duty chiefs are Fire Marshal Sean Barrett and Operations Officer Marvin Tipler.

"All three of us will be out working at this until we get done," Carnahan said.

Scott felt that there might be a conflict of interest.

"Carnahan as duty chief is paid through the department," Scott said. "That should recuse him from any action because he is an employee. That seemed to be a grey area. I think we need to get legal council's opinion on that, which I will do very shortly."

He also said that an issue of this importance should have been on the agenda.

"The board needs time to consider the issues that are on there," Scott said. "I'm not too sure of the legality of this."

Carnahan said, "It was a board decision. Each board member only has one vote."

Scott was disappointed with the results. He said that it blind-sided him, the community and Langborg.

"Well, you just don't fire somebody — and summarily fire them. There was no loving or kissing on that, it was just boom! Here's the hammer," he said. "I don't like to see anybody treated like that. Jim had made quite an investment in our community. ... He was in for the long haul."

Only six to eight people were present to hear the outcome of the vote. Afterwards, one of the volunteer fire captains resigned in protest.

The City of Florence's public information officer Megan Messmer said, "Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue provides a valuable service for our community. As a city, we work with the department and will continue to do so."

Langborg was hired at the end of 2013 when Buchanan retired. Before then, he was fire chief in Socorro, Texas, and Templeton, Calif., and the deputy chief in Whiteriver, Ariz. He has more than 20 years' experience in fire and emergency medical services.

Langborg did not return calls from the Siuslaw News asking for comment.

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Texting While Driving

Since text messaging is a relatively new issue in the world of driving laws, the ramifications of doing so are not yet universal.

Texting while driving is banned for all drivers in 45 states and the District of Columbia, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Additionally, novice drivers are banned from the activity in Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas.

Some drivers are still legally allowed to text while driving according to their state law, under specific circumstances.

In Texas, for example, drivers in school crossing zones and on public school property during the time reduced speed limit applies are banned from texting while driving. Drivers over 18 not in these areas, however, are allowed to text while driving. But many localities within Texas have enacted their own bans on using cell phones to text while driving.

You can see how this non-uniform approach could be confusing.

Check out the IIHS color-coded map on the organization's website (www.iihs.org) to find out where your state stands. Contact your local Secretary of State to find out how any related laws impact your city or county.

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seem to agree on the legality of texting while driving, we all should pay attention to the statistics.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and its "Stop

the Texts, Stop the Wrecks" advertising campaign:

- You are three times more likely to crash your vehicle if you text while driving;
- 49 percent of adults say they have been passengers in

a car when the driver was sending or reading text messages on their cell phone;

- 68 percent of teens and young adults disagreed that it is easy to text while driving and still pay attention to the

road; and

- 78 percent of teens and young adults say they have read a text message while driving, while 71 percent say they have composed and sent one.

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