

Poetry events set for October

October celebrates the spoken word with The Break-Beat Poets’ special performance and workshop Tuesday, Oct. 6, at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance Art Center.

The workshop will be from 4 to 5 p.m., followed by a question and answer session at 5:30 p.m. Four members from the group of 78 nationally known poets will wow Florence with this new wave of poetry.

Break-Beat excites the Hip-Hop generation. Poetic rhythm has long been appreciated, but this new brand of verse captures the lyrical and rhythmic quality of today’s music.

The first 20 students from ages 13 to 17 will receive free tickets. A \$5 fee covers the performance and workshop in Hip-Hop poetry. Bring a clipboard, notebook or laptop.

Purchase tickets at the FRAA Art Center, 120 Maple St. in Old Town.

The event is sponsored by Three Rivers Casino Resort, Florence Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and Organic Pest Control.

For more information, visit www.fraaoregon.org, or call Bettie Egerton at 503-910-3625.

Watch for the quarterly poetry contest Friday, Oct. 9.

Art from 1A

The three-sided, hand painted tiled column represents three of the most well known features of Florence: the Port of Siuslaw, the Siuslaw River and the dunes.

“Off and on, it took me about two months to complete,” artist Kat Cunningham said. “I went out and shot photos of actual scenes so that people could recognize that this is the town they live in.”

FRAA President Harlen Springer first presented the public art project to the Port of Siuslaw in November 2014. The port was already discussing locating art along the boardwalk area east of Bay Street.

After the positive response to the initial presentation, FRAA decided to approach the City of Florence as well.

“We took that presentation to the city council and showed them what FRAA had done already,” Springer said. “The city passed a resolution that formed a citywide, city-sponsored public art committee. Hopefully in years to come there will be a lot more public art around.”

Once port commissioners had approved the concept, funding became the next hurdle to overcome.

“The port has been completely supportive,” Springer explained. “It donated this piece of land. Following that,



JACK DAVIS/SIUSLAW NEWS

FRAA public art steering committee members Bob Forsythe, Bettie Egerton, Jennifer French, artist Kat Cunningham, Sharon Stiles, Ron Hildenbrand and Harlen Springer celebrate the unveiling of the group’s first public art project last Friday. Other members (not pictured) include Wendy FarleyCampbell and Kelli Weese.

we had very generous contributions from Bob Forsythe and Western Lane Community Foundation.”

In total, \$7,500 was raised to fund the project.

In March, FRAA issued a call to artists to solicit proposals for the public art piece. In June, Kat Cunningham’s proposal was selected by FRAA

and she began work on the project.

Friday afternoon, the artistic labor of love was unveiled to an appreciative crowd that included port and city officials and many members of the Florence artistic community.

A reception at the new FRAA Art Center in Old Town followed the unveiling.

“Someone told me, ‘Now we have a place to tell people where to meet. We can meet at the Florence scenic column,’” Cunningham said. “I love that.”

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City from 1A

The city’s interest in increasing economic development goes hand-in-hand with local state and county governments that are creating initiatives in energy and resources.

According to Henry, government support is there, but the city first has to step forward with potential projects.

The focus of those projects,

he hopes, is to “attract some entities or companies that can create jobs that provide a living wage. That will allow people to buy a home, stay here and raise a family.”

One supporter the city may partner with is the Eugene-based RAIN: Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network.

Another is FertiLab Thinkubator, from the Eugene-Springfield area.

Both services help entrepreneurs develop products, network, find mentorship — and FertiLab also provides workspace.

If those programs worked with Florence, they would provide local residents with resources that aren’t currently available to people who have creative ideas, but no outlet.

Reynolds is scheduling two informal “Coffee Meet-Ups” to start to grow support among the local population.

“They’re going to help us and show us how to do it,” Reynolds said. “I think we can go out and make this work. If we can get one business going because of it, it’s great.”

Henry said, “What might work really well in Florence is that start-up, encouraging atmosphere for entrepreneurs and people that are innovative. I think that what we have as a resource is the mentors.”

He wants to work to create the environment where innovators can meet with mentors.

Reynolds said, “The reason why Florence is more premier — and we like to be competitive — than some of our counterparts on the coast is because we were successful in turning from a resource-based economy, with the fishing and the timber. It was a very strategic and intentional thing that they did with Old Town, tourism

and capitalizing on the recreational tourism and being a full-service city here. You have what you need here to survive and live and flourish.”

She added that Florence appeals to people because of its affordability and mild, temperate climate.

“I don’t know if it’s something where you can say it’s going to be like it ever was before, but I think every one is OK with that. (Our economy) won’t be like it was before. And there are talents and resources left over that add to who we are today and what can work well here,” she said.

Currently, the city is working to create a climate where developers want to come in.

Reynolds described the Florence Planning Department’s strengths in working with developers on a seven-acre plot of land near the Florence Events Center.

This new construction, which could begin in the first half of 2016, will bring senior housing and medical and building jobs.

“This is our first success in our fledgling economic development,” Henry said.

Florence is also trying to work closer with other local taxing authorities, like the Tribes, Dunes City, schools and the Port of Siuslaw.

They have many of the same goals, Henry said, so working together creates an economy of scale.

“I think the key to our success will probably be something we haven’t thought of yet,” he said. “That’s where those innovators come in.”

Reynolds followed with, “Which means you have to create the environment that the mayor has created by saying, ‘Hey, we’re here and we’re open to business.’”

They hope this environment for change, growth and development will bring small-scale manufacturing, transportation, energy and more art to the area.

“Our job is to try to make Florence attractive and visible,” Henry said. “We have to get out there and market Florence, so people in turn will come and get it done.”

“I do think our city can grow, and can grow economically. We’re just getting started.”

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