

# 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW *continued*

## Review from 10A

### Renovation to help bridge span years

Construction signs are now up in Old Town — “Bridge Work Ahead” — following the start of a major renovation project by Oregon Department of Transportation on the Siuslaw River Bridge this week, and Bay Street is where it will all begin.

For the next five to six months, the small ODOT parking lot next to the river under the bridge will be closed and there will be some one-lane closures intermittently — but businesses on Bay Street will suffer only minor inconvenience.

Crews should be out of Bay Street by the Rhododendron Festival in May.

### The Art of Florence

Florence Regional Arts Alliance (FRAA) unveiled the first of what the group hopes to be many public art pieces on Sept. 19. The piece sits on a landscaped section of Port of Siuslaw property at the corner of Bay and Nopal streets in Old Town.

Artist Kat Cunningham hand-painted the three-sided, tiled column that represents three of the most well-known features of Florence: the Port of Siuslaw, the Siuslaw River and the dunes. It took her about two months to complete.

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

### Port manager resigns

Port of Siuslaw Manager Bob Forsythe submitted his resignation letter Sept. 23 to port board President Ron Caputo.

Forsythe, 65, has been port manager since March 2012. At the time he accepted the position, he agreed to serve as manager for three to five years. When Forsythe took over the management of the port, he and the board developed a list of 41 goals to accomplish.

“We have accomplished 37 of them,” Forsythe said.

## OCTOBER

### Case closed for Justice of the Peace

Local officials spoke Wednesday afternoon at a retirement party for Cindy Cable, now Cindy Forsythe, who retired as Lane County Justice of the Peace after nearly 25 years.



“With my retirement, I am retiring my name ‘Cable’ and I’ll be

‘Forsythe’ from now on,” Forsythe said.

In her term of service in the Lane County Justice Court, she counts more than 600 small claims, 1,200 weddings, 6,000 civil cases and 86,000 criminal and traffic cases.

“And I have a million memories,” Forsythe said.

Lane County Commissioner Jay Bozievich said Forsythe was instrumental in keeping a justice court in Lane County.

“We made sure, because of her advocacy, that this was the only Justice Court to remain open,” Bozievich said.

### #IamUCC

Lane Community College (LCC) Florence joined other community colleges around the nation in a solidarity effort Thursday at 11 a.m. to memorialize last week’s tragic shooting at Umpqua Community College (UCC) in Roseburg.

More than 1,130 community colleges participated in the minute-long moment of silence. According to LCC

Florence Interim Director Russ Pierson, LCC and UCC have a strong relationship and are sister colleges.

“I have felt here in Florence that there is a similar size and spirit to our two communities,” Pierson said.

### Hilden retires, councilor steps in

Dunes City administrator Fred Hilden has retired from his position after two years on the job. Hilden, 65, was promoted to city administrator in August 2013 after serving as city recorder since April 2010.

City councilor Jamie Mills was appointed to assume the role of interim administrator. According to Mills, Hilden, who turned 65 in May, had been talking about retirement for several months. She is uncertain whether or not this will be a permanent move for her.

### SOS burns mortgage

Fortunately for Siuslaw Outreach Services (SOS), Lane County lifted its burn ban in time for the non-profit organization to hold a “Burn the Mortgage” party on Oct. 28.



The third annual SOS Soiree was held Oct. 4 at Homegrown Public House and attracted more than 60 participants. A total of \$26,353 was raised, covering the mortgage balance of approximately \$23,400.

The original mortgage was dated March 14, 1994, and was for \$153,000. SOS Executive Director David Wiegand said SOS is “now debt free.”

## NOVEMBER

### Protecting a park

Lane County Parks (LCP) is working on a draft of its Master Plan Update, which indicates the proposed sale of Ocean Woods Park, a 40-acre undeveloped county park within the City of Florence’s urban growth boundary.

More than 70 area residents attended a meeting at the Florence Elks Lodge on Wednesday to discuss the park. A petition against Ocean Woods’ sale already has more than 300 signatures.

Many of the properties near Heceta South and Idylwood subdivisions border or have views of the park, located at the end of Heceta Park Way from the north and Saltaire Street from the south. The park provides seasonal birdwatching

opportunities and chances to glimpse bears, eagles, deer and other wildlife.

The meeting provided background information on the history of Ocean Woods Park — which has belonged to Lane County since 1940 — as well as on legal issues tied to past attempts to sell the property.

### B&G Club stunned by major gift

Approximately three weeks ago, John and Patricia Hardison walked through the doors of the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County and introduced themselves to club executive director Chuck Trent.

Trent was up front in admitting that if the club were to close, the Boys and Girls Club of America would never charter another club in the Florence area. John Hardison then told Trent that he had some good news and some bad news for the club.

“The good news,” Trent said, “was that John was going to give the club some money. The bad news was that the club

wouldn’t get it until he died.

You see, John has incurable cancer and told me, ‘My time is limited.’”

Trent and the other club board members had been saddled with the Herculean task of digging the club out of a financial hole that had been years in the making.

The Hardisons gave the club \$182,000 in cash, and an additional \$17,000 from an automotive transaction to fund scholarships.

### Applebee to retire from chamber

Florence Area Chamber of Commerce announced that Executive Director Cal Applebee will retire in February after nearly five years. Applebee, 64, moved with his wife to Florence in 2005.

Applebee first joined the chamber in 2009, after he left the title and escrow industry and started doing business development. He soon joined the board of directors, and, in 2011, became executive director of the chamber.

Besides working with chamber functions, Applebee and fellow military vehicle enthusiast Tim Sapp started the Veterans Day Parade. They were also integral in starting the momentum of the Oregon

Coast Military Museum, which opened this year.

While he has been executive director, the chamber has nearly doubled its business membership and increased the number of events it sponsors for the City of Florence and its constituents.

### 2 dead after dispute

An early morning shooting that police are calling a murder-suicide left two brothers dead Sunday on Hemlock Street in Florence.

“It is the first murder inside the city limits in 23 years,” Florence Police Chief Tom Turner said.

The police department received a call at about 2:39 a.m. on Nov. 15 reporting a shooting in the 400 block of Hemlock Street.

According to the police, Gary Circle, 51, of Dexter, Ore., went to his brother’s residence on Saturday at about 10:30 p.m. During this visit, the two men engaged in a dispute, allegedly over property.

Around 2:30 a.m., Gary Circle left the residence and got into his truck parked outside when his brother, Joseph Circle, 55, of Florence, came out of the home and shot him. Joseph Circle then went back into the residence and shot himself.

### Bells will ring

The Salvation Army will soon bring holiday cheer to locations in Florence, starting Thanksgiving Day. Geraldine Lucio and Old Town

Barbershop hosted the Salvation Army’s Kettle Kick-off Thursday.



Florence Mayor Joe Henry, Florence Area Chamber

of Commerce Executive Director Cal Applebee and Grocery Outlet owner Woody Woodbury joined local pilot Sam Spayd in supporting the effort to raise money for western Lane County.

Six locations in Florence will have kettles daily from Thursday, Nov. 26, to Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, including Fred Meyer, BiMart, Grocery Outlet, Safeway and Old Town Barbershop on Bay Street.

Salvation Army volunteer coordinator Janet Snow and director of planned giving Bill Olson are working to get additional volunteers in the Florence area. Their Red Kettle Campaign goal is to raise \$10,000 in the area.

## DECEMBER

### Dawn of a new age for Senior Center

Florence Senior Center will be able to host events for a larger age range starting Monday, Dec. 14, when the 60-and-above age restrictions are lifted.

The City of Florence received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to construct the Senior Center on city property at 1570 Kingwood St. It was completed in 2010.

The CDBG included restrictions that limited the use of the facility to seniors 60 years or older, as defined by the state and federal governments. According to the grant contract, the restrictions would end after five years.

The agreement now reads,

“The primary purpose of the facility is for seniors in our community, but it can be utilized by people of all ages.”

Once the restriction lifts, the center can rent space out to local groups for meetings and events, in addition to their regular programming.

### Storm toll continues

After a full week of heavy rains and high winds, the waters continue to rise in the Florence and Mapleton areas. Statewide, the storm caused Gov. Kate Brown to declare a state of emergency in 13 counties, including Lane, Lincoln, Linn and Benton.



Locally, the Siuslaw River flooded areas from Cushman to the Port of Siuslaw. Highway 126 at Cushman was closed for several hours due to high water.

Siuslaw National Forest closed South Jetty Road, starting at parking lot No. 5, about five miles from the Highway 101 intersection south of Florence, due to erosion. Ten Mile Road, north of Florence off Highway 101, was also closed due to a landslide and trees blocking the roadway.

On Friday, the U.S. Coast Guard closed all river entrances, including the Siuslaw River, indefinitely due to severe conditions and debris in the water.

Many state parks were also closed due to high surf and storm debris.

### Mercer Lake slide kills 1

Continuing heavy rains saturated the landscape this week and caused two landslides in the Florence area, including one at Mercer Lake and Santa roads that destroyed homes and left one woman dead.

On Friday, Dec. 18, Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) responded to a landslide at 3:15 a.m. on Mercer Lake Road near milepost 1.4 at Santa Road. On arrival, SVFR crews found a large landslide that had caused significant damage to two residential structures.

The landslide pushed dirt, trees and other debris into both buildings.

One of the structures was occupied by two adults and two dogs. Delores Miller, 70, and one of the dogs were killed. Her husband, who was also in the residence, suffered minor injuries and was able to call 911. The other dog was unharmed.

The other structure was unoccupied.

### Mapleton schools consider state grant

A newly passed state Senate Bill may allow the Mapleton School District to take advantage of a 2-1 matching fund grant offered through the Oregon Department of Education to pay for long overdue facility maintenance and upgrades.

The school district could be eligible for up to \$4 million in state grant funds, but in order to take advantage of the grant, the district must have voters approve a bond measure to cover one-third of the cost, up to \$2 million. That would give the school district up to \$6 million for badly needed improvements.

The last time the Mapleton School District passed a bond measure was more than 50 years ago when the school complex was built. ♦



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