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Siuslaw News

126TH YEAR | ISSUE NO. 26

SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

HOSPITAL EXPANSION

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT PHASE ONE OPENS



PHOTOS BY JACK DAVIS/SIUSLAW NEWS

Peace Harbor's \$5M project stays on budget and on time for September completion

By JACK DAVIS
Siuslaw News

PaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center staff gave a tour of the newly completed phase-one section of the hospital's new 5,000-square-foot emergency department last Friday to Rotary Club of Florence members.

The department began accepting patients on Monday. Paving for the new ambulance bay is scheduled to be finished this Friday, April 1.

Peace Harbor Medical Center Chief Executive Officer Rick Yecny said, "We are on budget at this point in time. We still have the remodel of the back half to go, but we spent 70 percent of the budget so far and we are on budget."

The \$5 million campaign was the largest fundraising effort in the history of Florence. The new emergency department includes nine private rooms, two dedicated triage rooms, two large trauma rooms, a private consultation room and a separate waiting area. The expanded area is expected to meet the needs of the community through 2030. The entrance to the emergency department is now directly off the main hospital entrance. More than 300 tons of concrete and 17,750 bricks were used in the project.

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Above, Nena Harvey, director of PeaceHealth Medical Group Operations, and Peace Harbor Medical Center Chief Executive Officer Rick Yecny stand outside the entrance to the new Emergency Department. With the completion of phase one, the department began receiving patients on Monday. Tours of the facility were given March 25, including a look at the new nurses' station (far left).

Concerns rise over land reassessment

Additional 832 properties are now required to pay for wildfire protection

By CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

Oregon Department of Forestry Western Lane District held an informational meeting before a town hall with Sen. Arnie Roblan and Rep. Caddy McKeown on March 28 to "put out fires" about new forest patrol assessments for hundreds of properties from Dunes City to Heceta Beach, north of Florence.

According to District Forester Link Smith, each district reassesses land designations every 10 years. This year,

Wildland Fire Supervisor Tom Soward evaluated the Western Lane District from the ocean to 15 miles inland and discovered that 832 properties would now fall under forest patrol assessment.

According to ODF, these properties should have been paying for wildfire protection for the past 10 years, even if they are in the "urban interface" classification, meaning homes mixed with wildlands.

"People say 'I don't own forestland,'" Smith said. "They are picturing the forestland out here in the coastal area being mostly Douglas firs. That's a forest,

but forestland by definition is anything that can carry fire."

Soward said, "It wasn't a subjective selection. ... It's based on criteria that's written into law. If the law says there is a risk, we need to assess that to provide protection."

More than 45 people attended the meeting at Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue's main station. Several speakers expressed frustration of finding out about the assessment through a letter and without further information.

See **LAND 10A**

Police chief updates council on crime stats

By CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

Florence Police Chief Tom Turner recently presented local crime and public safety statistics to the Florence City Council.

At the council meeting on March 21, he said that despite

social media making incidents public quickly — and sometimes blowing things out of proportion — Florence is still a safe place to live.

Concerns for public safety arose after an assault occurred in Florence earlier this year. A group of citizens formed Old Town East Neighborhood

Watch to discuss issues of safety.

"I'm not trying to underestimate crime in our city," Turner said to the councilors. "Overall, we live in a safe community and we will try and continue to keep it even safer."

According to Turner, his

department receives around 300 police response calls a month. In comparison, Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue receives 20 emergency calls and Western Lane Ambulance District receives 160 emergency calls.

See **COUNCIL 10A**

EGG-CELLENT SURPRISE



JACK DAVIS/SIUSLAW NEWS

The rain held off just long enough for hundreds of local children to participate in the annual Florence Community Easter Egg Hunt at Miller Park March 26. The Siuslaw High School Interact Club organized the event with help from the Rotary Club of Florence. More than 4,000 candy-filled plastic eggs were gathered up by eager hunters, ages 1 to 10.