

Bones from 1A

Bones’ affinity to shorts and his lifelong disdain of long pants tracks back to his days in the navy and his 30-year career as a Honeyman State Park ranger.

“I don’t like long pants. I never have,” Bones explained. “I wore short pants in the navy over in Saudi Arabia. When I was a park ranger, I wore short pants in the summer, and in the winter, I wore coveralls over my short pants. They are comfortable.”

In addition to working as a park ranger and later as a casino greeter, Bones and his wife Kathy have operated Bones Nursery at 90379 Highway 101 north of Florence that specializes in rhododendrons.

“I have had the nursery now for 40 years,” Bones said. “It has always been a sideline, but I decided I’m going to go ahead and do this full time. I couldn’t work at the casino full-time and be here at the nursery full-time.

“I look at the nursery every day. I try to keep it up. This is my true passion, the rhododendrons,” he said.

Bones’ passion for rhododendrons explains his involvement in the local American Rhododendron Society.

“It’s all about the rhodies,” Bones said. “We have two big rhododendron flower shows coming up. The first one is April 16 and 17 at the Florence Events Center. It will

be the second largest rhododendron flower show in the world. The Kew Gardens in London is the largest.

“We had over 1,000 entries one year, and I think we are going to match that with this show coming up.”

According to Bones, there are 72 chapters of the Rhododendron Society around the world and the Florence chapter is one of the most active. It is the only chapter worldwide that has two-day flower shows.

Bones and his wife Kathy were voted Florence First Citizens in 2005. He also received the Boy Scouts Silver Beaver award in 1989, the highest award the Boy Scouts gives to volunteers.

Over the 12 years Bones has worked at the casino, he has made many friends and acquired a host of good memories.

“The casino has done wonders for this town,” he said. “I can see all the good things it has done. And, they support so many local nonprofit groups.”

Rose may have some material in mind for the roast tomorrow.

“We are going to miss him a great deal,” Rose said. “He brought lots of laughs and sometimes drove me crazy, but I would have never wanted anything different than having Mike around. His positive attitude has been wonderful for us and he will be greatly missed.”

Bridge from 1A

ODOT said the goal is for interested area residents to be able to purchase a section of the bridge so it can be saved.

“It’s awesome that Hamilton is very conscious of having the rails be reused,” said Judy Bryant, director of finance and operations at BRING.

Hamilton Construction first worked with BRING in 2009, when it donated pieces from Gold Beach’s historic Isaac Lee Patterson Bridge. BRING used several rails from the bridge in its Garden of Earthly Delights.

When the contractor moved on to another historic bridge,

the two agencies worked together to acquire enough rails to sell to civic and local groups.

“Hamilton Construction has really been a friend to BRING,” Bryant said.

BRING will keep some rails on hand to sell, but each piece is about 24 feet long and weighs 4 to 5 tons. The rest will be stored offsite.

“People need to understand that this won’t be quick, or something you can hop in your pick-up to come get. These are heavy,” Bryant said.

A small fee will be added for transportation if interested people are unable to provide their own.

“It’s a totally different experience working with objects

this size,” Bryant said.

She said that BRING has previously sold historic bridge rails to wineries and other areas, though she said they could work in private gardens.

Florence Public Works Director Mike Miller said, “We have a couple of projects in mind for the railings that we’ve secured.”

The city plans to repurpose the rails for several sites in Old Town, such as Gazebo Park, Old Town Way and an alley.

“I think the rails will dress the area up, make it look nice and add that historic element,” Miller said. “Once the projects are complete, it’s going to transform the area.”

ODOT’s restoration of the

Siuslaw River Bridge includes upgrading the bridge rail to current safety standards. Hamilton Construction is replacing the old deck railing with precast, reinforced concrete that replicates the look of the original but meets current standards for pedestrian and vehicle safety.

About half of the rail has already been removed and the contractor will remove the rest over the course of the restoration project.

For more information, or to purchase a rail, contact Bryant at BRING: 541-746-3023 x302 or judyb@bringrecycling.org.

For more about the Siuslaw Bridge Restoration project, visit www.siuslawbridge.com.

Plan from 1A

“This has been a significant and collaborative effort occurring over several months,” said Board President Mike Webb.

“We note that members of the Board of Directors, district staff and community focus groups joined together and did an outstanding job in committing to this project and seeing it to its final form.”

The district began preparing for its strategic plan process late last year. The district invited external stakeholders to meet with the consultation group on Jan. 19. Eighteen community members were involved.

“The process went extremely well. The participation of the

external stakeholders was excellent. They were able to articulate what they want to see from the district,” Burright said.

Seventeen internal stakeholders met two days later. Burright said that the “multitude of opinions” reflected many aspects of the community.

“I think the process gave people an opportunity to look at where we are now, identify what we need to focus on and show where we want to go next,” Burright said.

He said the priorities identified by the two groups were especially valuable to the district. Ensuring technical competence of responders, maintaining reliable equipment and continuing to be compassionate

were ranked highest.

“I was pleased in the order of the stakeholders’ priorities,” Burright said. “The community identified our need to be a reliable EMS system that meets the needs of our community as it grows and changes.”

The strategic plan also outlines action steps the district will take. Some of its needs are to assign a permanent director, implement a community presence, consider facility requirements, assess staff in light of the growing size of the community and identify funding sources and grants.

“Now the work has to happen,” Webb said.

The work is divided into categories — critical, short term, mid term and long term.

One of the first big projects is replacing Burright’s interim position. Western Lane is currently exploring the feasibility of sharing administration with Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue.

“This plan will be used as a living guide to lead us into the next several years,” Burright said. “It will serve as a valuable tool in determining the overall performance and success of the district. ... It will set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations and ensure that all are working toward common goals.”

Burright and the board of directors thanked the community and staff who helped with the process, including consultants Don Bivens and Jack Snook.

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School from 1A

More than 100 people have attended three open house meetings in Mapleton, Deadwood and Swisshome to hear how funds would be spent and to ask questions.

A second round of community meetings are scheduled for the district to discuss planned improvements and costs associated with the passage of the Mapleton School District Bond. The meetings are Tuesday, April 19, at 6 p.m. at the Swisshome Church, Wednesday, April 20, at 6 p.m. at the Deadwood Community Center, and Thursday, April 21, at 6 p.m. at Mapleton High School.

In addition, the district sent out fliers to district patrons in Mapleton, Deadwood and Swisshome explaining the bond amount, how much it would cost and answering frequently asked questions.

According to Mapleton School District Superintendent Jodi O’Mara, the 25-year bond length is comparable to other Lane County school districts. The upgrades and repairs proposed by the district, such as new roofing, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, septic systems and building exterior upgrades, would have a 40-year life expectancy.

According to a flier sent out to district residents, the bond rate would be \$1.59 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. That would mean a home valued for tax purposes at \$100,000 would have an assessed annual tax of \$159, or \$13.25 per month.

The matching state funds and the seismic improvement funds would not be part of the assessment.

O’Mara said, “The last Mapleton School District bond expired in 1961. We have not had an active bond or levy for the schools since 1961.”

Some work could begin this summer, but most of the work would be done during the 2017 summer break.

“Our goal is to be able to keep Mapleton School District functioning for our students and to be able to provide them the education they deserve,” O’Mara said. “It is pretty black and white. If it doesn’t pass, the issues are still going to be there and we are going to have to find a way to fix it.”

Information is available at www.mapleton.k12.or.us, or call O’Mara at 541-268-4312.