

# RUNNERS SET THE PACE

SPORTS — C



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# Siuslaw News

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE FLORENCE EVENTS CENTER



PHOTO BY FIRST LAST/SIUSLAW NEWS

Florence Events Center wraps up its months-long celebration of its 20th anniversary with the Dancing with Sea Lions Auction and a special ceremony to burn its mortgage.

# Fanning the flames of the FEC

*Florence Events Center burns its 20-year mortgage at conclusion of Dancing with Sea Lions*

BY CHANTELE MEYER  
Siuslaw News

**D**ancing with Sea Lions came to a close on Saturday, Oct. 8, as the Florence Events Center auctioned off the last of the 7-1/2-foot artist-created sea lions and burned its mortgage, all as part of its 20th anniversary celebration. Two Florence mayors and other dignitaries spoke during the event.

"We're celebrating 20 years because we survived 20 years. We're very proud of that," said Florence Events Center (FEC) Director Kevin Rhodes. "It's a pleasure to be an employee of the City of Florence and to work for such a wonderful facility."  
The night gave Mayor Joe Henry the honor of lighting the mortgage on fire. "Tonight we would like to celebrate paying off the debt with a ceremonial burning of the mortgage. Fire away!" Henry said. "This signifies 20 years of debt payments that have finally come

to an end."  
A partnership with the Lane County Board of Commissioners made it possible to fund the FEC with transient room taxes in the early 1990s.  
City Manager Erin Reynolds said, "We're very thankful for the partnership with Lane County for making that possible all these years."  
Henry said, "I can't tell you how proud I am of FEC. Not only Kevin Rhodes and the staff for 20 years, but also Jennifer Connor and the Dancing with Sea Lions project. We're here cel-

ebrating both of these events."  
Former Florence mayor Roger McCorkle came forward to speak about the history of the FEC.  
"This facility really got started back in the 1980s when the community was starting to talk about needing a community center," he said. "We finally came back with an idea."  
A steering committee of seven members — Wilbur Ternyik, Ray Mans, Dick Gale, Richard Holcombe, Phyllis Maxwell, William Porter and Glenn Butler — with the help of Craig

McCicken and Rob Ward as city manager and mayor, formed to begin exploring options more firmly in 1989. According to McCorkle, they decided to include a 450-seat theater because it seemed to be the perfect size.  
"I think 20 years has proved very successfully that that was the right number. And Kevin has been here all the years making sure it worked besides," McCorkle said.

See **FEC 7A**

# Divers remove debris from Woahink



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Divers with Eugene Dive Club clear Woahink Lake of a year's worth of debris. Eugene club's annual dive yields interesting finds

**M**embers of the Eugene Dive Club recovered and removed more than 3,100 pounds of debris from the bottom of Lake Woahink on Saturday. The effort is in support of Project Aware, a joint effort of the U.S. Forest Service and diving organizations across the state.  
According to Michael Hollingshead, owner of Eugene Skin Divers Supply, more than 30 volunteer divers assisted in the day-long event.  
"We had a group of more experienced divers come out in the morning to prepare the area," he said. "Other less experienced divers came out later in the day to help float and remove the debris."  
Troy Knabe, a certified dive instructor,

BY MARK BRENNAN  
Siuslaw News

said the group has adopted Lake Woahink as the beneficiary of his group's clean up efforts.  
"It's kind of like the adopt-a-highway program, but for lakes and rivers. We all love the area and wanted to give back to the community," he said.  
The group also uses the clean up as a teaching and certification exercise and requires student divers to locate and map the debris prior to the actual dive.  
Knabe said, "We come out before the clean up and map the area, with compass coordinates and depth estimates, as part of



our certification training for dive students." Student divers then submerge and attach uninflated floats of different levels of buoyancy to the debris and fill them with air from their dive tanks.  
"We fill the bags with air and, with some help from the divers, the debris rises to the

See **DIVE 7A**

# Florence City Council approves 2 land deals

*Pacific View Business Park still potential manufacturing site*

On Oct. 10, Florence Mayor Joe Henry and City Manager Erin Reynolds discussed how two real estate transactions approved during the Oct. 3 city council meeting would benefit the city.  
According to Henry, the city held an economic summit in March 2015 to develop and expand economic growth in Florence. The summit identified three essential areas critical to economic development and growth; good paying jobs, skilled workers and housing.

BY JACK DAVIS  
Siuslaw News

"Unfortunately, two years ago, we were very short on any of those things," Henry said. "It is a long process. Many cities have one or two of them in place and it is tough then. But it is really tough to work on all three at the same time."  
The city began working with other job-focused initiatives like the Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (RAIN), South Coast Development Council, Lane County Economic Development Department and Business Oregon.  
The city also revamped its own website and added a link to a new state-of-the-art economic development website, florencebusiness.org.  
While the city continues to pursue businesses from outside the area, one of its first potential successes is closer to town.  
"We have a gentleman that has a business north of Florence. He has built it from working in his garage. He makes hydraulic parts for expensive cars. He wants to expand his business. We have entered into a letter of discussion of intent to purchase one of the lots in our Pacific View Business Park," Henry said.

See **LAND 7A**

**INSIDE**  
Classifieds . . . . . C6  
Coast Life . . . . . B  
Library Tidings . . . . . A5  
Opinion . . . . . A4

Police . . . . . A2  
Scoreboard . . . . . C3  
Sports . . . . . C  
Weather Data . . . . . A2

**THIS WEEK'S WEATHER**  
Full Forecast, A3

**TODAY** 63 56  
**THURSDAY** 61 56  
**FRIDAY** 60 56  
**SATURDAY** 60 55

**SIUSLAW NEWS**  
3 SECTIONS | 24 PAGES  
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