

## Community Chorus offering free community concerts

This year the Community Chorus of Florence will be presenting two concerts at the Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw on Highway 101.

Directed by Jennifer Weier, the chorus will perform traditional Christmas songs with presentations by several smaller ensembles, including the Florence Nightingales.

Weier will also perform a piano solo, along with performances by The

Presbyterian Bell Choir and the Siuslaw Middle School choir.

The concerts will take place Saturday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 11, at 2 p.m.

Both will be held at the Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw, 3996 Highway 101.

Although the concert is free to all, a donation is requested.

For more information, call 970-618-6307.

## Mapleton from 1A

"It helped to have peers and a support network around, for students and staff alike," said O'Mara. "We wanted to allow students to ask questions and express themselves. That's where the important conversations start."

"We focus so much on active threats from others, we forget about the threat others can pose to themselves."

In fact, in the average year, more Oregonians die at their own hands than at the hands of others — at a pace of one suicide every 11 hours.

And teenagers are the group at highest risk.

On Friday, the school continued to offer help from the crisis management team,

which will be available to students, faculty and the community through next week — or longer if necessary.

"This kind of grief comes in waves," said Wallace-Blanchard. "You can feel like you're getting your mind around things, then suddenly you don't. We'll be available for as long as there's a need."

To O'Mara, if there is anything redemptive to come from this tragedy, it has been the response not only from local agencies, but the community as a whole — Not just within Mapleton, but beyond.

"There is definitely a residual effect," she said. "So many of the students and families here are close with families and students in Florence, and the response has been amazing."

By Thursday evening, O'Mara said she had received dozens of texts and emails from Siuslaw students, faculty members and residents offering support, prayers and condolences to the community.

On social media, the Florence, Oregon Facebook page changed its header to an image of Mapleton High School with the words "We stand with Mapleton... Our sincere sympathy goes out to your community."

Accompanying it are dozens of heartfelt comments of support to Mapleton residents.

"The support has been overwhelming," said O'Mara. "It's so important for kids to see this kind of support from each other and the communi-

ty.

"It takes courage to have this conversation, but it's one we can't afford not to have."

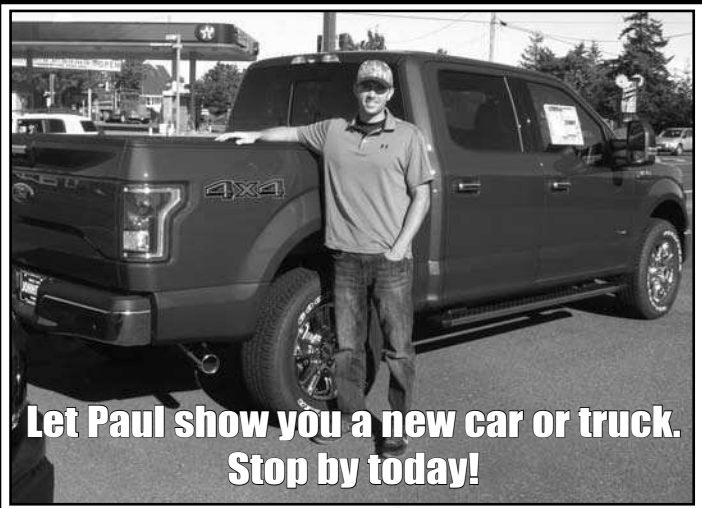
A memorial service for Brandon Kimble will be held at Mapleton High School on Friday, Dec. 9, beginning at 2 p.m.

For those who would like to help, a memorial fund has been set up at Banner Bank locations in Mapleton and Florence. Donations can be made to the Brandon Kimble Memorial Fund.

For information on suicide prevention, visit

[www.sprc.org/about-suicide/warning-signs](http://www.sprc.org/about-suicide/warning-signs), or call Eugene Crisis Intervention at 1-800-422-755 or 541-687-4000.

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attend school, but also to help them in other areas of their lives," he said.

This position is echoed by the state officials that were responsible for releasing the latest data.

"We know that students dealing with difficult life circumstances have a much harder time in the classroom," said Deputy Education Superintendent Salam Noor. "Our goal is to make the school environment as stable as possible for homeless stu-

dents through the hard work of school district homeless liaisons and their partners, who provide direct services to homeless families and youths in communities throughout the state."

The Siuslaw School District liaison for the homeless student population is Special Programs Director Lisa Utz.

Utz describes her role as one of councilor and facilitator, often suggesting additional support options available to the identified students and their families.

"Community assistance options are somewhat spread

apart. But we operate as a kind of hub, and because we are connected to various organizations like SOS (Siuslaw Outreach Services), Food Share, PeaceHealth, Community Coalition and local church groups, we can point the families in the right direction to receive the additional assistance they need," she said.

When asked to speak about the actual number of students identified in the ODE study Utz said, "Of the 61 students identified, approximately one third are getting direct supplemental services at this time.

And while we help in other areas such as clothing and hygiene supplies, food is an important vector for us, because every kid in this study is automatically eligible for free breakfast and lunch. And if they participate in after school programs they can also get dinner."

Asked for his reaction to the study Grzeskowski said, "This is a lot of kids, and when you consider the additional students that are living in a motel, car or RV, or staying with friends or family, the numbers can be higher. And our goal is to help as many kids as we can."

Utz can be reached at 541-997-5456 for information regarding available services for those in need of assistance.

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## Underwriter from 1A

"It has also kept us involved with our local community," added Clark. "We hope more businesses will step up and join the chamber to gain its benefits, and that current members will find ways to get more involved, whether through volunteerism or deeper levels of support."

Driftwood Shores General Manager Martin Alletson also serves on the chamber board.

"We are excited about Driftwood Shores' enthusiastic support of the chamber and our community," Hannigan said. "This is a win-win for all members, the community, the city and our other partners."

The chamber also added 28 new members since April, and some members have upgraded their membership level to distinguished sponsor.

At the same time, the chamber continues to work to bring additional support and marketing to its members and the entire Florence area. From recruiting Mapleton businesses to bringing in volunteers, Hannigan, Event Coordinator Nancy Pearson and the Chamber Ambassadors work to make each event, meeting and publication an opportunity for growth.

Hannigan said the website is also seeing additions — from specialty events in a wedding resource guide for the coast to prime locations in town, such as the Florence Antiques District — that will help show off the unique businesses, nonprofit organizations, locations and people in the area.

"Driftwood Shores is a key player in accomplishing the chamber's goals to grow and strengthen the Florence area, and we appreciate the confidence their support shows in helping to achieve those goals," Hannigan said.

Businesses, nonprofits, and individuals interested in more information about membership and volunteer opportunities can contact Hannigan at 541-997-3128 or email her at [bettina@florencechamber.com](mailto:bettina@florencechamber.com).

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