

SAILORS BUMPED BY BRAVES

SPORTS — B



Boys and Girls stuff the bus

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

Remembering Brandon



More than 150 people gathered in the Mapleton High School gym Friday afternoon for a special memorial service in memory of Brandon Kimble, a Mapleton freshman who tragically took his own life the morning of Dec. 1. Organized by family members and school faculty, the service was as much a chance to honor the memory of the 15-year-old as it was for family, friends and community members from Mapleton and Florence to come together as part of the healing process. Mapleton School District Superintendent Jodi O'Mara (bottom right) opened the service by speaking about how every student was a part of the staff's lives, on campus and off, and the subject of conversation as much as family. "We care about every one of you," O'Mara said, addressing the large number of students who were in attendance. "It's what makes us 'Mapleton strong.'" Mapleton football coach Jeff Greene (above right), who coached Kimble earlier this season as a wide receiver and defensive back, noted that the freshman "had a great sense of humor and an incredible amount of character." Other speakers included Melissa Trombetta, outreach coordinator for Lines for Life Oregon YouthLine, and Evangelical Church of Swishhome pastor Brian Moore. The memorial included a moving slideshow of Kimble's young life, accompanied by the song "One More Day" by Diamond Rio. On the memorial program handed out to attendees, part of the inscription read: "You never said 'I'm leaving,' you never said goodbye; you were gone before we knew it; and only God knows why."



PHOTOS BY NED HICKSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Peace Harbor holds 2nd town hall meeting

Update on the search for replacement providers

During the second PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center town hall meeting, held Friday at the Florence Events Center, medical group representatives announced the addition of five new providers to the center's staff.

BY JACK DAVIS
Siuslaw News

PeaceHealth Chief Administration Officer Rick Yecny said, "Since the last town hall meeting we have been really focusing on recruitment."

The new providers, including one family practice obstetrician, two physicians' assistants (PA) and one nurse practitioner (NP), are replacing five physicians who have left Peace Harbor. One more PA is scheduled to begin practice in February.

See **HEALTH 10A**

Bond measure secures WLAD services

Interagency agreement between ambulance, fire districts showing benefits

In November, voters overwhelmingly approved renewal of a five-year bond measure to supplement the funding of Western Lane Ambulance District's (WLAD) budgetary needs.

BY JACK DAVIS
Siuslaw News

According to WLAD Board President Mike Webb, the district established its tax base on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements in the early 1990s.

"Now, more than 60 percent of our population is over 65 and most of our calls are going out to those people," Webb said. "The reimbursement rate is something like \$440 per call and the hard cost on that call is \$1,600 or more."

"We have a large funding gap. The purpose of the original tax base didn't cover that. Five years ago, the effort was made to shore that up. We received the bond. This year we went back out for the levy just to continue the service level at what it is now."

Brian Burright, consultant and interim director for WLAD, said, "If the levy had not passed, the district would have had to cut back on non-essential services, community outreach, public education and other services."

He added that personnel reductions and reduced capital expenditures also would have been necessary to balance the budget.

Webb said the number of annual calls WLAD responds to has gone from 600 to 700 per year in the 1990s to more than 3,400 last year.

Siuslaw Valley Fire Chief and WLAD Director Jim Langborg said, "I want to thank the public. The support that WLAD received with that levy said a lot. It passed with 77 percent approval. That speaks volumes to the service delivery that WLAD employees deliver. It also speaks volumes about the way the community feels about the paramedics here."

"We need to do everything we can to maintain and build on that trust."

WLAD paramedics are trained to a higher level than many other districts.

WLAD Operations Manager Matt House said, "On the state or national levels there is basic, intermediate and paramedic levels of training. In our community, we have gone one step higher. Nine of our 14 staff members are critical care trained."

See **WLAD 10A**

Time for toys and time for cheer

Soroptimists seek community assistance with holiday food, toy basket donations

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Imagine you are a 10-year-old child. Now imagine waking up on Christmas morning and there are no presents for you or your brothers and sisters. You have no tree or lights, decorations or toys. And later that day you have a sandwich for dinner. No ham or mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce or pie.

This scenario is a very real possibility for many of the area's residents, according to the Soroptimist International of Florence Holiday Food Coordinator Carol Bennett.

"For more than 30 years, the Soroptimists have organized a community Christmas basket and toy distribution. It started out with us giving food to people in need out of the back of a station wagon and has grown every year," said Bennett. "Hopefully, on Saturday, December 17, we will be distributing the 2016 baskets to approximately 425 families."

The rising costs of food have made the overall amount of money needed to meet demands grow dramatically in the last few years.

"This endeavor costs about \$20,000 and the community has always supported this effort," Bennett said. "Unfortunately, we are running way behind in collections this year and it is almost time to buy the food."

Bennett has been overseeing the food distribution for more than a decade. The reason she and the Soroptimists continue to donate their time and energy to the task is simple.



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Members of the Rhody Cruisers collect toys for Soroptimist International of Florence Community Christmas Baskets at A&W Restaurant on Dec. 8.

"We do it because there are a lot of hungry people in Florence and the surrounding communities," she said.

Bennett said that while other local groups give away holiday foodstuffs, there are limits and restrictions to the aid they can receive.

"One important difference between us and other organizations is that the clients are limited to the number of food boxes they can get per year. This distribution has no

forms to fill out and you can get as much food as you need," she said.

Bennett wants the community to know of this year's financial shortfall, so that they can respond in time to avoid having to turn some people away empty handed.

"We need cash donations to be able to buy the items to put in the baskets," she said. "We are about \$4,000 short now and the distribution is about a week away."

There is an urgent need for money so Soroptimists can purchase the food to fill the baskets.

See **BASKETS 10A**

"We need cash donations to be able to buy the items to put in the baskets."

—CAROL BENNETT,
SOROPTIMIST HOLIDAY FOOD COORDINATOR

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