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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

Peace Harbor caregivers vote to join SEIU

Vote still needs to be certified by National Labor Relations Bureau

Peace Harbor Medical Center caregivers and employees narrowly voted to join the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Wednesday, June 28.

By JACK DAVIS
Siuslaw News

Of the 185 Peace Harbor eligible employees, 78 voted "yes," 72 voted "no" and 35 did not cast a vote to join SEIU Local 503, based in Salem.

According to PeaceHealth Oregon Strategic Communications and Engagement Director Marcy Marshall, the vote will not be official until certified by the National Labor Relations Bureau. That certification could take seven to 10 days, or more, from the date of the vote.

Marshall said once the vote is certified, first-time union contract negotiations could take up to 18 months from the date of certification.

"PeaceHealth appreciates the respectful manner in which our eligible caregivers considered this issue and one another's point of view. The open, honest dialogue that accompanied this process is a true testament to our people and the culture we have created here," Marshall said.

SEIU and its members are separate from the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and its members who are currently in contract negotiations with Peace Harbor.

Marshall said, "Once the election is certified by the NLRB, we will honor our caregivers' voice and continue our good faith bargaining relationship with the union."

See **UNION 7A**

Sparkle on the Siltcoos

Rich and Lori Olson obtain permits to present official fireworks show at Darlings Marina

By MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Tonight, the community is invited to make the short trip south to the picturesque Siltcoos Lake to participate in the first ever "Sparkle on the Siltcoos" Fireworks Display.

The interplay of water, sunshine and boating has drawn picnickers and anglers to the Siltcoos to relax and recreate for decades. The lake's robust fishing opportunities and its pastoral environment has long made for the perfect place to spend all or part of the Independence Day weekend.

There has also been a long tradition at Darling's Marina of honoring the spirit of the holiday with an "unofficial" fireworks display. A tradition that will continue this evening, in a slightly different way, in that it will be legal and professionally managed.

The current owners of the marina, Rich and Lori Olson, wanted to support the Dunes City community's desire to celebrate at Darling's on the Fourth of July.

The Olsons had concerns with safety issues associated with the shooting off and exploding of hundreds of technically illegal fireworks over the marina's docks and the lake.

"When we first purchased

Darlings Marina two years ago, one of the first questions we were asked was, 'Are you going to have fireworks off the dock?' We realized there was an expectation that we would continue a long-held tradition of fireworks on Siltcoos Lake. We wanted to oblige our customers while providing a safe and legal venue for the event," Lori said. "So, my husband Rich began the process of training for his pyrotechnician's license and signed on with a display company out of Canby, Ore. Now the show is legal and professional, and we have the necessary permits and insurance."

To that end, Rich has been working with Western Display, the fireworks company that will oversee the show, to obtain the necessary training to become a state certified pyrotechnician.

"I've been studying and I've shot at three shows now. After this show, I will have finished my training and I will be taking the test to become certified by the State of Oregon," he said.

Since purchasing the marina, the Olsons have undertaken extensive upgrades that have involved a substantial investment of time and resources.

The results are noticeable immediately upon turning into the gravel parking lot that sits across from the lodge, which looks markedly different than in recent years.

"Thanks to the tremendous support of the local community, we



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Lori and Rich Olson have owned Darlings Marina for two years. During that time, they have refurbished the lodge, docks and the campground areas. Now, the Olsons invite the community to a free fireworks show at dusk tonight.

can safely say that Darlings is well on its way to its former glory as a local gathering place. The lakefront is looking beautiful with the split rail fencing and repaired docks," Rich said. "The pub is serving some of the best American home-style food and craft brews around, and the store is ever-expanding as neighbors discover

an easy alternative to driving into town. In addition, everyone is enjoying the safe, clean and family-friendly environment."

The fun at Darling's culminates with the fireworks display at 10 p.m., which will be overseen by Western Display.

See **FIREWORKS 7A**

Planning Commission denies Helping Hands; coalition plans to appeal to city council

By CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

Florence Planning Commission denied Helping Hands Coalition a temporary conditional use permit during the commission's meeting on June 27.

Commissioners cited issues with parking, occupancy, crime and the commercial zone of the building at 1790 Highway 101 as reasons to deny the resolution.

Now, Helping Hands will appeal the decision to Florence City Council during a meeting on Monday, July 31, at 5:30 p.m. at Florence City Hall.

Helping Hands is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization dedicated to serving hot meals and providing laundry and shower vouchers to those in need and others who require temporary assistance. It currently operates out of Florence United Methodist Church, 333 Kingwood St. It previously operated out of a building at 1339 Rhododendron Drive.

Planning Commission first heard from Helping Hands during its June 13 meeting, when

the organization presented plans to convert a building at 1790 Highway 101 into a location for providing hot meals three times a week.

Commissioners requested additional items including a site plan, parking requirements and crime data. They also chose to leave the public hearing open to allow additional written public comment.

"Staff has received significant written public testimony during the period," said Florence Planning Director Wendy FarleyCampbell.

Staff received 36 verbal and written testimonies regarding the land use decision.

Commissioner Clarence Lysdale said, "We've heard some really passionate positions, and read some passionate submittals from both sides of this issue. I've been a commissioner for a long time and I don't think I've ever seen any issue that has such complete, passionate and well-stated arguments on both sides."

Commissioners referenced following Florence City Code and the Comprehensive Plan as they deliberated over several



JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Helping Hands Coalition petitioned Florence Planning Commission for a temporary conditional use permit for this building at 1790 Highway 101.

issues of the application, including the building's zone and crime issues.

The staff report shows that Helping Hands requested a conditional use to change the zone to allow for social service use with a free meal program within the historically retail building.

"Staff made the interpretation that this is most similar to a public facility, not as a city facility but more like a county facility. Counties typically pro-

vide services for the homeless in a community. It is also similar to a church, since churches often provide these services, but not as a rescue mission since there is no housing on site," FarleyCampbell said.

She then introduced Florence Police Commander John Pitcher and Code Enforcement Officer Dan Frazier to discuss public safety issues with the suggested Highway 101 property.

See **PLANNING 6A**

SPECIAL SERIES (PART 1) — Issues with 'Helping' complicated

By JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

Nomada Lawson has suffered from depression all her life. She has a son that she worked hard to take care of, but sometimes her illness becomes too extreme for her. There were days when she couldn't get out of bed.

But one day she found a reason to get up. She would bring blankets to Helping Hands Coalition once a week and get lessons on how to quilt from one of the founders. Nomada thinks they saved her life. She had found, in a small way, another purpose for her life. Simple and altruistic.

"I'm the blanket girl. I give blankets to people, to the homeless. So that's how they roped me in," said Nomada.

Five months later, she became homeless herself.

On June 27, at the

Florence Planning Commission meeting, a permit for Helping Hands to lease a commercial building at 1790 Highway 101 was denied.

The decision has brought to light some of the complex issues within the quiet retirement community of Florence.

Helping Hands is planning to appeal the decision in July.

Over the years, the program has faced issues with finances, staffing and housing, but refused to give up.

The program's current dilemma began 11 months ago.

At the time, it had its own building at 1339 Rhododendron Dr., surrounded by other businesses. But when the owner of the building died, his children were forced to sell the property.

See **HELPING 7A**

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