

# GOLFERS STAY COOL

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# Siuslaw News

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

## Three Rivers terminates top management

COO Michael Rose, Assistant General Manager Bob Garcia among three let go

BY JARED ANDERSON  
Siuslaw News

Three top employees of Three Rivers Casino Resort were fired on Wednesday, Aug. 9, including casino Chief Operating Officer Michael Rose, Assistant General Manager Bob Garcia and Chief Finance Officer Jim Herman.

The decision was made by the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians.

“The Tribal Council earlier this summer determined it was time to change the management team,” a statement from the Tribal Council read. “The change in direction, however, is in no way associated with any security matter.”

No further information about the firings, including what new direction the casino will be heading, was provided.

The statement also said Jerry West will take over as CEO.

West has been working in the casino industry since 1992, working at Harrah’s, Hard Rock and Oregon’s Spirit Mountain Resort, among other organizations.

He was recently the vice president of gaming operations at the Player Performance Group, a “Native American-owned professional services firm specializing in performance improvement and strategic resource development for the gaming industry,” according to the company profile.

“As the new CEO, West brings 25 years of experience in training and mentoring to thousands of employees in large gaming operations,” the Tribal Council said. “He also has a proven record with casino expansions, renovations and delivering results within time limits and budget constraints.”

Rose, who began working at Three Rivers in April 2004, has had a long history in the business, including as general manager for the Key Largo Casino and Hotel, owned by President Donald Trump.

Garcia has been associated with the Confederated Tribes since at least 2001, serving as Tribal Council Chairman and assistant general manager for Three Rivers, among other titles.

Three Rivers has two locations: a resort and hotel in Florence and a casino-only facility in Coos Bay. Both are owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes.

The Florence location was opened in 2004 as a casino-only facility, but became a full-service resort in 2007. The Coos Bay expansion opened in 2015.

The Florence facility has undergone drastic remodeling during the past year, including splitting up the casino floor into smoking and non-smoking sections and renovations to the bar and arcade.

## A community walk down Rhody Drive



City of Florence completes upgrades, shoulder expansion of Oregon Scenic Route

BY CHANTELLE MEYER  
Siuslaw News

The City of Florence invited community members to “take a walk” Thursday during a celebration for the long-awaited completion of the Rhododendron Drive Project, which improved roadway quality and bike and pedestrian safety, as well as increased water flow.

“It’s been a great two-and-a-half years,” said City Manager Erin Reynolds. “It’s been fun to see these improvements come to life and make



Florence residents and area officials tour improvements to Rhododendron Drive Thursday as the city celebrates the project’s completion.



PHOTOS BY CHANTELLE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS

Florence able to reflect the true character of our town.”  
Florence City Council, Lane County

Commissioner Jay Bozievich, city staff, community members and area representatives  
See RHODY 8A

## Boys & Girls Club Teens take to the skies

New Florence Air Academy brings high-flying dreams

SOARING over the Siuslaw region, the new pilot grips the joystick, hands steady. A gust of wind tilts the aircraft ever-so-slightly to the left — the pilot has a small whiff of panic. They look over to their instructor who quells their fear; it’s going to be safe. The pilot steadies the plane, the instructor smiles. It’s time to soar.

The pilot’s age? 13 years old.

Starting Aug. 14, the teens of Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County will have the opportunity to learn the ins-and-outs of aeronautic adventures through the Florence Air Academy (FAA) and its inaugural class.

This two-week course, provided free to teens who sign up, will be teaching the power and freedom of flight.

The breadth of the topics covered in FAA’s class is massive: Principals of flight, airplane mechanics, meteorology, aviation charts and maps, drones, civil air patrol, eclipses and how to plan a cross country flight.

“We’ve got some really cool and interesting things that we’re trying to get together to keep the kids entertained,” said pilot Sam Spayd, co-creator of the academy and class. “I’ve mixed it up so there’s some classroom stuff, and then there’s some things when we get them out



Florence pilot Sam Spayd prepares to teach Boys and Girls Club teens the power of aeronautics.

See FLYING 7A

## PAST AND PRESENT VOLUNTEERS, BOARD MEMBERS CLASH OVER CARE

Rumors of neglect, mismanagement at Oregon Coast Humane Society prompt investigation

BY MARK BRENNAN  
AND NED HICKSON  
Siuslaw News

In recent weeks, a volatile combination of complaints, accusations and rumor swirling in and around social media and community conversation has raised questions about animal care and management at the Oregon Coast Humane Society (OCHS).

For more than 20 years, the organization has been a no-kill animal shelter providing temporary and long-term care for stray, abandoned and neglected cats and dogs. But recently, the nonprofit shelter has come under fire from dismissed volunteers, former board members and dues-paying members of the organization.

Accusations of physical abuse of

animals and even killing of animals at OCHS have been circulated through social media platforms and in anonymous letters received at Siuslaw News.

The OCHS-related posts on social media have included disturbing pictures, reportedly taken at the facility, of animals in neglect or as the subjects of abuse.

These accusations come at a time when the shelter has benefitted from several monetary bequeathments over the past few years that have dramatically shifted OCHS’s fiscal narrative from that of a fledgling program to a financially viable organization.

Siuslaw News has spent the past month investigating the claims of neglect and mismanagement by con-

ducting interviews with volunteers and board members (past and present), examining documents and email exchanges, and conducting inspections of the facility in an effort to clarify the validity of each allegation.

Board member and long time volunteer Ed Gervais, spokesperson for OCHS, responded to inquires, as well as individuals involved in voicing concerns regarding what they regard as issues of neglect or mismanagement.

OCHS is essentially member driven, operating with a small paid staff and a large group of volunteers, some of whom say they have brought their concerns to board members.

Many of these volunteers have been involved in animal rights issues for years and primarily assist staff

members in feeding, grooming and cleaning up after the animals.

One of the most outspoken of these volunteers is Lisa Pappas, who was recently released from her volunteer position after two years following what she said were questions she raised about animal handling techniques and the management skills of the current facility manager.

“I put in 1,650 volunteer hours and was named Volunteer of the Month, so I’ve put in the time and I can see what’s wrong,” said Pappas. “From day one, I’ve had serious concerns about the care, or rather lack of care, provided for the animals.”

Pappas said she brought her concerns to the attention of Shelter Manager Tanya Garrett, as well as the

Animal Welfare Committee and the OCHS Board.

“In virtually every instance, my concerns were ignored and I was threatened if I tried to shine a light on the abuse and mismanagement,” said Pappas.

Gervais said he feels the criticisms leveled against OCHS staff are unfounded and misguided.

“The dogs and cats in our care are cared for every day by dedicated staff and volunteers and procedures are followed to insure their health and safety,” he said.

Pappas disagrees with Gervais’ assessment and said she feels the problems stem from management.

See HUMANE 7A

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