

Flying from 1A

around the airport and doing things.” Spayd said the “hands-on” approach will include air traffic control, drone demonstrations and even radio-controlled dogfights. “The radio-controlled group is going to do a demo where they’ll have streamers on the planes and do dogfights as the kids pilot,” Spayd explained. The whole class will end with the students having the opportunity to fly an actual airplane.

The idea for the program started with local pilots Spayd and Terry Tomeny, who fly for the local biplane ride attraction Aero Legends, which Tomeny owns. Spayd, who sits on Florence’s Airport Advisory Committee, was searching for a way to have the airfield become more a part of the community. “A lot of people aren’t even aware that we do anything at the airport,” he said. “We want more people involved in a positive way.” Spayd found a program in Grants Pass that taught kids the basics of aeronautics, but the topics were limited; it only had

two classes and the kids didn’t get to fly. “That was nothing like we’re going to do,” Spayd said. “They had a two-day course. We’re going all out.” While the high-flying excitement will keep the youth engaged, the point of the program is to inspire the teens to do more than what they think is expected of them. Boys and Girls Club Director Jack Davis said, “We want to get the kids in the club not to just focus on graduating, but focus on what life skills they want to develop to live the kind of life that they want. That allows these kids to become a better part of the community, and really

feel a part of the community. “Most kids of this age just see their world, but there’s so much more out there.” In addition, aviation goes just beyond being a pilot, Spayd explained. “I’ve got two flight attendants coming in to talk to the kids,” he said. “I have an airplane mechanic. I’ve got someone from the tower in Eugene. There’s so many different areas that aviation involves.” FAA will even bring in two former Siuslaw High School students who went on to become pilots for Delta and American airlines.

“It’s a way of setting a spark in the kids,” Spayd said. “We don’t want to see these kids just graduate,” Davis added. “We want to see them graduate with a purpose for the rest of their lives so they can be more.” But to set that spark, Davis and Spayd believe, it doesn’t hurt to get the students up in the air. The program is free to all teens that have signed up for the Boys and Girls Club teen program. For more information, call 541-902-0304 or visit the Boys and Girls Teen Center at 1501 Airport Road.



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Humane from 1A

“I have personally witnessed dogs being grabbed by the scruff of the neck and thrown into their kennels. I saw an air horn being used on a dog and dogs left in their own filth, as well as yelling and screaming daily — all of this by the same staff member,” said Pappas. Gervais said he and other board members have spoken with Pappas and other volunteers who support her concerns about animal care. He said these meetings resulted in disagreements about the acute nature of the concerns and ultimately led to Pappas’ release. It also led to the resignation of additional volunteers and board members. A June 29 meeting, during which board members Sandy Davidson and Berne Hill resigned “effective immediately,” was the catalyst for a new round of criticism leveled at the board. The resignations left a four-member board — one member short of what the by-laws required to conduct business. In her resignation letter, Davidson, who served on the

board for a year, cited several reasons for leaving. Among them, incomplete employee files and an overall lack of communication regarding budgeting, personnel and other administrative documentation. “We should have a process in place where all the information is organized so that anyone can make an intelligent decision based on the facts,” Davidson wrote, adding, “I can no longer justify working under the leadership of people who refuse to follow up on allegations made by volunteers or various members of the community.” With three of the remaining four directors’ terms set to expire one day later, board President Rob Bare and Vice President Gervais appointed themselves to new terms. This immediately raised questions of ethics and violations of directory duty loyalty. The following month, Rick Mills and Kim Russo were appointed to the board, with Russo resigning less than a month later after accusing the board of excluding her “on virtually all issues,” Russo said. That same evening, in a statement issued to the OCHS Board

and obtained by Siuslaw News, Pappas made her concerns clear: “I want the current shelter manager to be fired, along with the individual whose primary responsibility is caring for the dogs. I also want the entire board to be replaced. All of these individuals, staff and board members have had more than sufficient opportunity to address the abuse and neglect issues at OCHS and all have refused to do so. Board members have become corrupt and I believe they are mismanaging the shelter and the funds of the 501(c)3...” People also directed questions to the board regarding conflict of issues concerns and perceived failures of inter-personal communication. In subsequent interviews, most of these volunteers, who wished to remain anonymous, said they believe issues of care are more properly characterized as neglect rather than abuse. They also pointed directly at shelter management, staff and board members as the source of these issues. Part of the inherent problem for OCHS is the small size of the actual space within the shelter. It is separated into two areas, one for dogs and one for cats. In the

cattery, there are cages and bins with climbing and scratching poles tucked in corners and against walls. There are cat stairs and multiple levels of interconnected platforms all occupied by one or more cats. On the canine side of the structure is a short hallway off the main room with a dozen or so kennels. These cages have a small indoor area and a larger outdoor area — both with cement floors. The space designated for each individual animal is small. The lack of adequate space has been a continuing concern for Gervais, who said the board is working on plans that he hopes will provide alternatives to the overcrowding and limited space OCHS deals with each day. “We would like to reconfigure our kennels to allow the dogs to be able to move around. Unfortunately that is not possible at this time because of the cost,” said Gervais, who also said that a fund drive to enlarge the dog runs would be needed. The validity of this need is also a point of contention for Pappas and a number of past board members, who say that recent estate donations have already added more than \$500,000 in cash to the organization’s coffers — a number that Gervais corroborated. This has led to crux of disagreement between the current board and those who question its motives. In short: Why isn’t the money being spent to address the current facility and training issues at the shelter raised by volunteers and others? “There is a five-year plan in the works. It is important to plan for the future of the shelter and how to continue the valuable support of the community for the shelter,” Gervais said. “There currently is no plan to move the shelter from the existing location, but we have to ask the question of what would happen to OCHS in the event of a natural disaster?” Specifically, a tsunami. Given the facility’s location just slightly above the Siuslaw River, executing a full evacuation of staff and animals in advance of rising waters would be highly unlikely. “It’s something we need to think about,” said Gervais. In addition to what some have felt are a conflict of interest between current animal welfare and future needs, a series of leadership changes that have received mixed reviews from long-term supporters of OCHS has only added to concerns. Gervais said there are changes in the works to directly address those concerns, including the creation of an executive director position. Other changes in the works will include the installation of closed-circuit video of the facility, improved storage for animal food to address contamination from rats, and proper-sized beds for the animals. Of the 16 volunteers and past board members interviewed, all but two said they did not believe that outright abuse of animals was taking place at the shelter, but that various incidents of neglect were the secondary result of improper administrative structure, organization and management training — signs of a program that has outgrown the parameters of its grassroots beginnings. For Gervais, his first and foremost priority is making sure the community understands what is actually going on at the shelter and to dispel rumors and accusations of abuse. “We have many good things we do at the shelter, including the spay and neuter clinic and the bottle drop, which recycles cans and bottles to help pay for food for the animals,” Gervais said. “If OCHS is to be successful, we need the continued support of the community.”


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