

Van from 1A

"We are blessed by the many Van Fans and drivers that we have," Grove said.

The members drive the patients to and from the medical facilities, hold fundraisers and assist clients with other issues.

"However, we need new drivers on a regular basis and anyone wanting to get involved can call," Grove said.

Grove said although there are

no other members remaining from the group's inception in 1985, the need for the friends' services, as evidenced by the latest need for a new van.

Van Fans work in small ways in the community year-round to collect the money needed to continue offering trips.

"The Friends of Florence is a local organization that exists solely for the purpose of raising funds to keep our buses running. They hold card parties and ice cream socials every

Van Fans have been driving cancer patients to treatment since 1985, racking up more than 1.5 million miles on these trips of mercy.

year and have been doing this for around 25 years. To date, they have raised over \$350,000 dollars and are very important to our continued operation," Grove said.

The forces of time and nature cannot be denied, even for those doing the admirable work of the friends. Grove is asking

the community for help in continuing the important work done by his organization.

"The Van Fans are presently in



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

need of new members, as we are all getting older. Our oldest active member is 95 years young. ... New volunteers and new fund raising ideas are always welcome."

The friends meet once a month on the first Wednesday for lunch at the Shorewood to plan activities.

For more information on the Friends of Florence, or to find out how to get involved, contact member Barbara Filiatreau at 541-902-0505.

Millennials, Cont. from 6A

Despite an area population of over 10,000 people, only 2,600 full-time workers were employed in the city.

While the numbers would be traditionally considered stark, and all the millennials interviewed for this article believed more job opportunities were important, they weren't panicking.

27-year-old Brynne Sapp, who works as a part time gymnastics instructor for Coastal Fitness, believed the millennials were able to find their own way.

"I feel like more and more young people are moving here as there are more options avail-

able for us to make a living. Working online is a big one. Who wouldn't want to do that? Have your work at home, on your computer, and be able to live in this beautiful place in this sweet community," she said.

"I know people here who have jobs that are mostly online. I have one friend who writes for WebMd and National Geographic. My friend Kelly does a line of skin care products out in Ada. She makes them all herself and does them online. I think to be successful in a place like this you have to be creative."

Many community leaders are looking at bringing back blue-collar work to the area, but generally millennials haven't warmed up to these types of

positions.

"I think that physical labor is less and less the form of work we want," Sapp said.

Lokic believes that this may have to do with how millennials were raised.

"I think part of it has to do with the idea that you have to go to college out of school and that's something that has been ingrained in younger people's minds the last 20 or 30 years. After high school, you go to college and get a degree.

"Now we've seen this big push back to promoting these blue-collar opportunities with trade schools, but when all you hear is 'Go to college, go to college,' eventually you're going to say, 'Okay, I shouldn't be doing this, I should be going to college,'" he said.

Statistically, millennials are the most educated generation ever, with 40 percent of all 25 to 29-year-olds holding a bachelor's degree, compared to 26 percent of boomers at the same age, according to a 2016 Pew Research Center study.

Lokic found a deep satisfaction in city planning and his degree, but if he wasn't doing that, and his parents had pushed more blue-collar work, he would have become a carpenter.

This is not to say that blue-collar millennials are perpetually unhappy. Tanner Burnem, 19, doesn't have his dream job,

but he's not deterred.

Burnem, who grew up in Florence, works at the Florence Pharmacy as a technician.

"My job is nice," he said. "It's really fun, actually. When I first pictured the job I thought, 'Ugh, pharmacy technician. That's going to be really lame and boring.' I was just going to be one of those guys who is yelled at by angry customers. It turns out I am one of those who gets yelled at by angry customers, but my coworkers are nice and we have fun and a good laugh."

When asked if he could make pharmacies a career, he wasn't sure.

"I guess I'm not passionate about it, but I certainly could. I could decide to heck with it, this is what I want to do. Options are open. If something else crashes through the door, I might take it."

The "up for anything" attitude regarding work is prevalent throughout the generation. In some instances, there's almost too much opportunity.

While Sapp is currently working at Coastal Fitness, she's had a wide variety of jobs and volunteer opportunities throughout her life.

"I think millennials have been raised in a different reality. I think we've been given a lot of options. Times are changing. There is a lot of pressure to be successful and everyone wants to be, but there's so many options laid before us. In older generations, success may mean getting married, having kids, raising family, buying a house and having a good job with good pay, but success means something different to this generation."

For Sapp, success is finding something she loves doing.

"There are lots of things I love and am passionate about and would want to pursue. It

just depends on what comes first. There are too many things I want to do to stick with just one. To love life is to love many things. I think at this age I've been given the luxury of having some freedom in finding what it is I really want to do," she said.

Sapp is getting to the point where she feels she needs to start making more stable career choices, using her past experience as a roadmap.

"Personally, working with kids and doing gymnastics, I don't do it for the money, I do it because I love it," she said. "It gives me a sense of purpose. I've considered options like physical therapy. Just learning about the body or getting into that area because I want to learn. I would be excited for that, absolutely. It's a goal I would consider."

One of Sapp's biggest concerns in Florence, and the U.S. as a whole, is wages.

"It can be hard to make that happen and succeed and not just be paddling to stay above water," she said.

Burnem is having difficulties with this as well. At 19 years old, he's already married with one child. His wife, Hanna, is the co-owner of Lovejoy's Restaurant and Tearoom in Historic Old Town, but only pulls in an average of \$500 a month. Burnem only makes \$1,300 a month at the pharmacy.

While this low paycheck may be adequate if he was living with family, he opted for his own place because he felt it was important to raise their son, Harvey, in their own home. The rent is \$850 a month, nearly half their monthly salary.

This discrepancy isn't new in Florence, which is currently in a housing crisis.

"Rentals are a big problem right now," Sapp said. "People

are having a hard time finding prices that are reasonable."

The City of Florence is looking into ways of fixing this issue (see Siuslaw News Sept. 30, "City Works to Bring 'Hope for Housing' to Florence"), but development can take time.

Burnem's spirits weren't dampened, despite his tough economic outlook.

Burnem, like so many other millennials, has learned from the mistakes of the baby boomers.

A 2016 study by Northwestern Mutual Planning and Progress finds that 58 percent of millennials consider themselves "highly disciplined" or "disciplined" financial planners. They are saving more than any other generation, either through 401(k)'s or putting money aside on their own.

Burnem buys nothing with credit cards, instead putting away cash in envelopes for emergencies, a practice his wife started.

"If an emergency happens, we have savings and an emergency folder. If something happens, we have enough money to solve it or fix it."

And, like most millennials, he's optimistic about the future.

In a 2014 Pew Research Center survey, seven in 10 of all Americans felt millennials have it harder than previous generations in starting out, but millennials aren't deterred.

In a 2016 study by Northwestern Mutual Planning and Progress, 86 percent of millennials are confident they will achieve their financial goals.

Even during the Great Recession, a 2013 Gallup poll found that 80 percent of millennials believe their standard of living was getting better.

It's not the size of his house or the amount of possessions he owns that makes Burnem happy, a sentiment held by every millennial interviewed for this article. It's what you do with your life that counts.

"We're still happy," Burnem said. "We don't need much. We don't have Wi-Fi, but we just go to the library, rent something, and come back," he said.

"I mean, how can we not be happy?"

In the final part of this series on millennials, the Siuslaw News will look at community spaces, relationships and social factors surrounding this unique age group.

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