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Siuslaw News

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FLORENCE, OREGON

Exploration and discovery



COURTESY PHOTOS

Third-grade students from Siuslaw Elementary School take the opportunity to get up close and personal with sea creatures of many types on a water-based field trip in Newport on Oct. 3. The class climbed aboard The Discovery for their "exploration voyage."

Siuslaw third-graders take a two hour exploration cruise with focus on learning

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Siuslaw Elementary School students from Susan DeVries' third-grade class recently had the chance to get out of the classroom and onto the water for a unique educational opportunity.

DeVries and her class took a trip to Newport as part of an Oregon Coast Education Program (OCEP) project initiated by STEP (Salmon Trout Enhancement Program) members Jim Grano and Dennis King.

The purpose of the trip was to familiarize the youngsters with the important role the ocean and the

coastal environs have played in developing the culture of Florence and the surrounding area.

An additional benefit was the chance to get outside and enjoy a trip that expands the classroom to include the coastal waterways and the inhabitants of those waters.

"Susan and I continued an OCEP project started by Dennis King and me last spring that involved using OCEP lesson plans for developing units of study. In August, we attended the four-day 'Finding the Hook' workshop in Newport that informed and inspired the project," Grano said. "We were able to use OCEP and Bandon Submarine Cable Council funds to take 24 students and 12 chaperones, including Dennis and

me, on the Marine Discovery Boat Tour's two-hour Exploration Voyage on Yaquina Bay."

Marine Discovery Tours is a regional leader in coordinating educational tours for Oregon public schools. A 65-foot long boat named The Discovery acts as an interactive classroom and floating laboratory for the students and their teachers.

Participants are able to observe and interact with marine creatures from small invertebrates to whales and larger animals, depending on the time of year and the conditions at sea.

The Discovery is equipped with all types of technologically sophisticated equipment that allows students to "see" the ocean floor using sonar and learn how the ship navigates safely

through the water.

There are also opportunities to observe sea birds and sea lions, porpoises, pelicans and bald eagles in their natural habitat.

Before the trip, guest speakers visited the class and talked to the students about different aspects of the marine culture that is an important part of the history of Florence.

STEP member Brian Hudson spoke on the commercial history of Florence's port, the Port of Siuslaw; Siuslaw Middle School Principal Andy Marohl discussed commercial salmon fishing; and Mapleton resident and retired Coast Guardsman Wayne Gage talked about the partnership between the U.S. Coast Guard and fisheries.

Beyond labels — Part II

Siuslaw region's diverse LGBTQ members discuss community, 'normality'

BY JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

(Editor's note: This is the second part of a two-part series examining the LGBTQ community in the Siuslaw region.)

"Different isn't scary"

Jason Wood is not sure if his drag queen character, Fanny Rugburn, is a force for LGBTQ rights in Florence.

Rugburn is a foul-mouthed, over the top hurricane of raunchy jokes, lively songs and 30 pounds of make-up, wigs, costumes and padding.

Wood performs her at least once a month in Florence, usually at Class Act Theatre. He also tones the character down for family shows where he sings Disney songs and makes puns.

"Fanny Rugburn is an even truer version of myself," he said. "The filter is cut off. In that sense, she's the truest form of myself."

Wood is not a cross-dresser, someone who feels more comfortable in female clothing.

"I have a definite femininity about me, but the only time you catch me in drag is in performance," he said. "It's not just because I want to wear this stuff. I have to wear four pairs of panty hose, and that's not fun. My fake breasts weigh 10 pounds, and I'm a big guy, so I get hot."

But he has always been drawn to strong female characters like Rugburn throughout his life. "Little House on the Prairie" was all about Nelly Olson in his opinion. Miss Piggy was his idol. And, as the gay stereotype goes, he loved "The Wizard of Oz." But for Wood, it was all about the ruby slippers.

He was coaxed into moving to Florence by his longtime friend, Melanie Heard, the artistic director for the Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshop (CROW), after Wood was recovering from a close friend's death from AIDS. Florence was a chance to reinvent himself.

Not long after he arrived, he was working with CROW, and was soon giving private lessons for singing and piano.

"My favorite thing is when I'm preparing someone for an audition

See DUNES CITY 10A

See LGBTQ 10A

Dunes City to revisit marijuana grow operations

Spurred by public comment, Dunes City Council will review applications by pot growers

In what councilors praised as a civil meeting, marijuana continued to be the major topic of public discussion at the Dunes City Council meeting held on Wednesday, Oct. 11.

As a result of the public comments, the council agreed to review at a later date the applications submitted by marijuana grow facilities located in the city.

The facilities, which have been a focus of a heated debate in the city, spurred the council to pass Ordinance 245 in September, which banned future marijuana growing operations but kept existing grows in tact.

Of particular concern during this Wednesday's meeting was a Land Use Conformance Statement (LUCS) for a marijuana grow that was approved by the city council months earlier.

Residents at the meeting, and in a guest viewpoint in The Register Guard on Oct. 11, requested the LUCS be reviewed by the city council.

The guest viewpoint read, "A citizen contacted Jesse Sweet, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission's (OLCC) process administration director, and Danica Hibpshman, the OLCC's statewide licensing director, who are now aware of the residential conflicts presented. The Dunes City Planning Commission has been invited to contact them. The OLCC has indicated that it wants them

to return the Land Use Conformance Statements for further review by the city."

After giving contact information for OLCC, the editorial urged citizens to write the commission and give their views on the effects the grows have on families, neighborhoods, property values and water.

It went on to say, "It is imperative that they hear from Dunes City residents. It was never the intent of the OLCC to thrust these commercial recreational grows into our neighborhoods."

The Siuslaw News contacted OLCC and spoke with Sweet about the LUCS.

BY JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

SIUSLAW SCHOOL DISTRICT REQUESTS LEVY RENEWAL

Administrators say current state, federal cutbacks make local option levy more important than ever

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

An important component of funding for the Siuslaw School District (SSD) is up for review and possible renewal by Florence voters on Tuesday, Nov. 7.

The SSD is asking the electorate to renew a local option levy of 75 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The current levy was initially approved by voters in 2008, renewed in 2012 and will expire in July 2019.

The SSD Board of Directors feels the Levy renewal is needed to continue to provide and maintain educational services at their current levels.

The requested renewal would be for five consecutive years, beginning in 2019-20, and would raise a total of approximately \$5,387,099, during that time.

The renewal of the local levy option would not raise current taxes

on residents, but would continue the current rate of taxation for Florence property owners.

"Without the levy funds, there simply would not be the level of programs and options for students that we have today."

— Andy Grzeskowiak
Siuslaw School District Superintendent

SSD Superintendent Andy Grzeskowiak wants voters to know the money raised by the levy renewal,

while only a small part of the district's overall funding, is critical to maintaining current levels of student support.

"The Local Option Levy is very important to our day-to-day operations here in the Siuslaw School District. Six-and-a-half percent of the general operating fund may not seem like much, but it is the piece that keeps many aspects of school operations going. It is the margin between running a full school year or cutting

days," Grzeskowiak said. "The Local Option Levy also helps to keep class sizes reasonable, with the most pronounced impacts at the elementary and middle school levels."

According to Grzeskowiak, the levy is also responsible for keeping more elective, enrichment and vocational programs available for students.

"Without the levy funds, there simply would not be the level of programs and options for students that we have today," he said.

See LEVY 9A

INSIDE Classifieds B5 Sideshow B4
Community A3 Sports B
Opinion A4 This Week on the Coast A10
Records A2 Weather Data A2

THIS WEEK'S WEATHER Full Forecast, A3

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