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FLORENCE, OREGON

FLORENCE FOOD SHARE IN CRISIS

Local food share faces uphill battle as it heads into holiday season with low cash donations, delayed programs

BY JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

“We are strapped for cash,” Florence Food Share Executive Director Norma Barton said in reference to the current fiscal health of the 37-year-old program.

The reasons for the financial concerns come from a variety of problems, from unexpected changes and reduction in corporate donations of food, to a sizeable decline in general cash donations from the public this year.

Florence Food Share program suddenly finds itself faced with an uphill battle, trying to figure out how it can provide Thanksgiving dinners to the public, keep the lights on, pay its employees and continue to provide

full pantries for the coming years.

“I don’t know if the public perception is that food share is rolling in money because of some of the remodeling that’s going on, but we really are not,” Barton said. “We’re very short in operating funds and are not receiving donations like we have in the past.”

That expansion was needed, according to Barton, because of a mandated increase in the population the program had to serve.

One of the major issues facing Florence Food Share is how to keep its operating funds full. These funds are used for various purposes, including maintaining insurance, paying utility bills and providing gas for its truck.

Along with these costs, the program

had to take out its full line of credit.

For years, Florence Food Share has maintained a line of credit of \$20,000, but last year it only needed to access \$100 of that due to robust donations. However, because of the current dramatic decline in donations, this year it had to take out the full \$20,000 to cover costs.

All of its operation costs are financed through donations.

These are different from restricted funds, which provides money for the food and other programs food share offers. These restricted funds cannot be transferred.

“We have a lot of restricted funds for different things,” Barton said. “We are extremely short on unrestricted funds to keep the lights on and the refrigerator going. We received grants

totaling approximately \$6,000 to maintain the garden this year. That’s great, but it is restricted to the garden.”

The organization’s operating funds are in danger right now. At this time last year, Florence Food Share had almost two months of operational funds. As of this writing, it has less than a week’s worth.

“We have to pay interest on the line of credit every month,” Barton said. “And then, when we have enough unrestricted cash, we can pay it back.”

But to get that unrestricted cash, the organization needs more donations.

“Our donations have slowed way down,” Barton said. “Typically, at this time of the year, we are receiving quite a bit more from the community.”

Last year, FOOD for Lane County,

which is the supervising agency for Florence Food Share, regulated that the rural food shares create a second program to serve more people.

Before the rule, the food share’s pantry was open to individuals living at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Those individuals were allowed to come in 18 times per year to stock up three to five days’ worth of food.

The purpose of the food share is not to provide daily meals to those it serves, but to serve as a stopgap in times of dire need.

But last year, FOOD for Lane County required an expansion of the people that the rural food shares had to serve.

See **FOOD SHARE 8A**

Shorewood Senior Living helps Florence Food Share

Shorewood Senior Living kicked off its November fundraiser Wednesday, working to fill the pantry of Florence Food Share. With two large bins and a smiling face, Shorewood Senior Living Community Relations Director Niki Hill (far right) asked Safeway customers for any food donations they could spare for the local pantry. “The two bins were full and overflowing,” Hill said. “Roby’s furniture brought us a shopping basket full of food.” To help Shorewood out, Safeway donated \$600 worth of \$10 coupons that day to entice donations, which Hill ran out of. “So many people signed their card back over to the food share,” Hill said. “We also had cash donations.” In addition, KCST Coast Radio Host Wayne Sharp sent out a call to action to support the drive. Once the day was over, Shorewood delivered the entire haul directly to Florence Food Share. “We’re just wanting to be a part of the community,” Hill said. “We feel so blessed here that we want to share that.” The fundraiser lasts through Nov. 20. Donations can be dropped off at Shorewood Senior Living, 1451 Spruce St., or Safeway, 700 Highway 101.



PHOTOS BY JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS



LTD coastal bus route delayed

Florence to Yachats service will begin when procurement process is complete

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Lane Transit District (LTD) officials are unable at this time to estimate precisely when the proposed and approved bus route between Florence and Yachats will begin service.

Originally scheduled to begin transporting riders last summer, the new start date for the coastal run is still unclear, but funding has been obtained for the first year of the project.

LTD Public Information Officer Therese Lang said she thinks the route will be popular once it begins along the scenic corridor of Highway 101.

“LTD is eager to begin our pilot project for service between the Florence and Yachats communities, and knows there is also significant interest in getting the service started as soon as possible,” she said.

The delay is due, in large part, to the process involved in the purchase of the vehicle that will be used on the route.

“The procurement process is indeed the reason for the delay, but it’s not just for the vendor/provider of the service,” Lang said.

See **TRANSIT 9A**

Siuslaw Valley, Western Lane boards make plans for future

Strategic Planning session examines need for new ambulance facility, increased cooperation in next year of the IGA

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

On Oct. 27, the boards of directors of Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) and Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD) held a joint meeting at the main fire station for the purpose of preparing a 2017 Strategic Plan and updating an implementation plan for their intergovernmental agreement (IGA).

“The workshop lasted just under four hours, was extremely productive and provided our management team with a lot of important feedback,” said Chief Director Jim Langborg. “The division chiefs and myself will take the comments from the meeting and use them to create a set of updated goals for the next year.”

During the meeting, directors received reports from WLAD

Operations Chief Matt House, SVFR Operations Chief Jim Dickerson, Administrative Chief Julie Brown and Langborg.

These reports detailed the accomplishments of the respective organizations over the past year. Suggested improvements and areas of concern were also included.

Langborg provided a summary of the IGA process and a series of recommendations to address what he considers to be the most pressing concerns from his perspective as administrative leader of both organizations.

Information at the meeting included feedback from SVFR and WLAD employees, volunteers, management and administrative teams. It highlight-

ed concerns, problems encountered and positive changes observed in the past year under the IGA.

“It is my opinion that the IGA is successful. Both Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue and Western Lane Ambulance District have made tremendous gains this past year and service levels are improving.”

— Chief Director Jim Langborg

Highlights from House’s presentation included updates on ambulance district staffing, district promotions, software upgrades and facility improvements.

He said one significant development is the recent EMT training class coordinated by the district, a class that hasn’t been taught since 1994.

“With the help of SVFR, we have

17 students currently enrolled in an EMT-Basic Class,” House said. “Earlier this year, Chief Dickerson taught an EMR class in Mapleton and we are planning on more of these important training opportunities in 2018.”

An EMR class trains personnel to deliver basic first aid and care.

Dickerson’s SVFR update included information on upgrades to the department’s security systems, purchases of new bunker gear and changes to the intake process for volunteers and employees.

Dickerson also reported on a grant received by the SVFR.

“We were awarded an Assistance to Firefighters grant for the purchase of over 40,000 feet of fire hose that will

be shared with Mapleton RFD and Swisshome and Deadwood RFD. SVFR will also be purchasing large-diameter supply hose which has been the industry standard for years,” Dickerson said.

Comments from the employees of both districts were part of the day’s presentation and included recommendations and observations for board members to consider.

Most notably, firefighters said they want to increase the district’s focus on wildland hazards and the training needed to become more proficient in the field.

The firefighters also requested more training exercises with mutual aid partners, additional training in pump operations and an increase in emergency medical service (EMS) training.

See **PLANNING 9A**