



VIKS CORNER CUBS IN OT

SPORTS — B

'Wee' bit of holiday spirit

INSIDE — A6



Siuslaw News

127TH YEAR | ISSUE NO. 98

SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

Firefighters return to assist with California wildfires

SVFR deploys 2 teams to assist a total of 15 strike teams from Oregon

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Once again, firefighters from Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) have left the district to assist in the most recent wildfire emergency in California. SVFR Chief Director Jim Langborg released a statement updating the community on the rapidly changing situation that currently has multiple fire fronts and has consumed over 200,000 acres.

"Initially, the California OEM requested 10 Strike Teams from Oregon to respond to the fires in Ventura County. Lane County put together a Strike Team of Brush Engines and departed from Cottage Grove Wednesday night," Langborg said.

SVFR sent a total of seven firefighters, including volunteers Kyle Orozco, Jeff Larson and Colton Griswald in a Type-5 brush-fire vehicle, along with Shannon Curry, Levi Green and full-time firefighters Captain Andy Gray and P.J. Crescioni in a Type-1 engine to assist with structural protection.

"I have been informed they are currently south of Sacramento," Langborg said. "We typically do not send two resources to an out-of-area fire, but currently our fire conditions are minimal and this is an opportunity for some of our firefighters to get experience they may never get again. We still have good staffing and response capabilities within our district."

SVFR sent crews and equipment to California earlier this year.

At this point in the fire season, local conditions allow SVFR firefighters to assist in an emergency situation and learn at the same time.

See **FIREFIGHTERS 11A**

'IT ALL ADDS UP'

Beachcomber scholarship raises more than \$30,000 for students, one dollar at a time



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Scott Waiss, owner of the Beachcomber Pub, is hoping to raise another \$10,000 this December for Siuslaw and Mapleton students and adults who are returning to school.

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Fundraising events in Florence come in many forms and are held for many reasons. There are art and craft silent auctions, concerts, dances, bake sales and even lavish parties held to raise money. All these activities are geared to generate interest in a particular cause or situation that needs the collective attention of the community.

Scott Waiss, owner of the

Beachcomber Pub in Historic Old Town Florence, has taken a different path to generate support for a cause that he deeply believes in: education.

With the Beachcomber Community Scholarship Fund, Waiss has raised tens of thousands of dollars to support the educational aspirations of local students by raffling off a bicycle.

"In the first six years of the fund, we have awarded 19 scholarships valued at \$28,000. These have all gone to Siuslaw and

Mapleton seniors to help them continue their education and to go to college," Waiss said.

Waiss has funded these scholarships through the Western Lane Community Foundation (WLCF), utilizing the foundation's application procedures to award the students.

Siuslaw School District Superintendent Andy Grzeskowiak believes the scholarship is an

See **SCHOLARSHIP 10A**

Cold weather shelter prepares for winter



With temperatures dipping to 32 degrees, volunteers gear up to warm those in need

BY JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

Florence's Emergency Cold Weather Shelter is ready for business as cold weather begins to descend on the coast.

"We are now prepared to open," Pastor Greg Wood, president of the program, said.

While the temperature has not dropped to levels that require the shelter to open this winter, it's been dangerously close.

"The weather prediction for a night this week was 34 and then 35," he said. "It was bouncing all over the place. If it had called for rain, we probably would have opened."

The shelter is opened when the temperature reaches 32 degrees or less. The reason for the cutoff, Wood explained, was due to advice from medical professionals.

"Originally the Emergency Cold Weather Shelter Board consulted with emergency room doctors at our hospital and they said 32 degrees, when it's freezing, is the most dangerous time for people out on the streets," he said. "That was chosen as the cutoff point."

But 32 degrees is flexible when rain is factored in.

"If it's 35 degrees and pouring rain, folks may not have the capability to dry out," Wood said.

When the temperature will lower to 32 degrees this winter is still anybody's guess, according to Wood. The first two years it was open, it was only needed three nights. Last year, it was open 22 nights.

See **SHELTER 9A**

Festival to 'brighten the days of January'

Winter Music Festival brings back favorites, debuts gospel day

BY CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

Florence Events Center (FEC) will showcase national, regional and local talent Jan. 12 to 14 during the 16th annual Winter Music Festival.

"The overall idea is to bring business into Florence at a time of year when the local establishments need it the most," said festival producer Howie Cusack. "We're trying to brighten the

dark days of January. We've got a three-day celebration of internationally known music and world-class artisans. No one else in our region has that."

The festival, presented by Friends of the FEC and Sea Lion Caves, has a whole slew of Florence-area and Oregon-based sponsors.

Cusack and his two teammates, Friends of the FEC President Kirk Mlinek and Kids Concert Producer Rachel

Pearson, create what he called "a triangle of energy" for the 2018 show.

"In 2016, we felt we wanted to move away from the traditional Bleeker Street folk type of sound and bring in something that might bring in a little bit of a younger demographic. So, we paired Jonathon Edwards and the Shook Twins. That breathed some life into it," Cusack said.

See **FESTIVAL 10A**

Upriver community plans future of healthcare

BY JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

The lack of medical or mental healthcare contributes to many of the problems the Upriver area has, including behavioral health issues, poverty, geographic isolation and a lack of preventative care. These issues were discussed at the Swisshome Church this week, as Mapleton School District Superintendent Jodi O'Mara held a town hall discussing the Western Lane Behavioral Health Network.

However, for every problem that was listed, a hopeful solution was offered.

The meeting's purpose was to get feedback on the problems facing the community, via the lens of healthcare, in hopes to build a blueprint on how to improve the lives of Upriver residents.

The genesis for the network came

from a Health Resources and Services Administration grant that PeaceHealth Peace Harbor was interested in, with the goal being how to improve access in Western Lane County. That process looked at a wide swath of issues that face the Upriver community and Florence, until it was decided that the mental health of children "womb to 18" would be the main focus.

Partners in the project include Oregon Family Support Network, Mapleton School District, Siuslaw School District, Trillium, Lane County Mental Health, the Child Center out of Eugene, Options Counseling and Peace Harbor.

The plan is to have behavior health counselors available to both Mapleton and Siuslaw school districts twice a week, with offices on school property.

For Mapleton, O'Mara is picturing turning the old Mapleton Middle School building into a small facility

where a counselor could work with students in a more private setting.

But the grant only covers behavioral health to children two days a week, leaving the facility empty the other five days.

O'Mara and her partners envision a future where medical professionals of all disciplines could fill the space on those extra days, from general practitioners to dentists, eye doctors to pediatricians. And the services would be available for all Upriver residents.

This is why, for the past two weeks, O'Mara has been holding meetings in Swisshome, Mapleton and Deadwood to get feedback on what issues the community is facing regarding healthcare, and what services could be added to the facility to help.

The Swisshome meeting began with a question from O'Mara: "What's going good with healthcare?" "I don't think there is (anything

good)," Pastor Bryan Moore said.

Currently, the only medical help that is immediately available in the area is the Swisshome-Deadwood Rural Fire Protection District. Dave Green, who volunteers for the district, talked about some of its strengths and weaknesses at the meeting.

"What I've been seeing is, we get these call outs for general illness," Green said. "They stay at home two or three days and then call the ambulance to come up there."

The district's responders, as well as medics from Florence, do treat the patients.

"Our people are there within 15 minutes," he explained. "It takes 30 minutes for the ambulance to get there. By that time, our people have been there, they've got them all assessed. The medics arrive and treat them. If they need something, they'll take care of it."

Behavioral health for kids could turn into a medical revolution

The reasons why the community relies on emergency services for even the simplest medical care are varied.

"People can't afford to drive to Florence," Moore said.

A one-way drive to Florence from Upriver can take up to an hour. Because of time, difficulty and cost involved with the trip, some Upriver residents simply wait until the illness becomes too extreme, in which time they call emergency responders.

Costs of the actual medical care can also be a barrier. Getting insurance can be difficult for those without knowledge of the system, or even access to it. Internet access is sparse in the region in even the best of circumstances, with cell phone service spotty at best. Because of this, programs like the Affordable Healthcare Act are difficult to apply for.

See **UPRIVER 8A**