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Siuslaw News

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THE ECONOMICS OF VOLUNTEERISM Is COASTAL LIVING IN JEOPARDY? PART V

Volunteers discuss the ins, outs, pros and challenges of philanthropy in Siuslaw

BY JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

There are a number of things that catch a person's eye when walking into the Florence Food Share garden.

There are the 50 raised garden beds that dot the landscape, each at 4 by 20 feet. Those are dwarfed by the two 40-foot wide greenhouses next to them. There's also the three huge rainwater tubs that store 12,500 gallons of water for irrigation.

While the beds are bare for the winter, the spring and fall months bring a plethora

of vegetables from green beans, carrots, spinach, tomatoes and squashes. All told, the garden normally generates 10,000 pounds of food every year.

This is what volunteerism can create. Philanthropy, in relation to the housing and employment crisis the region is currently facing, is an important factor in alleviating many of those concerns. Volunteerism, as much as any employer or industry in the region, makes Siuslaw run.

According to the Florence Area

Community Coalition, 1,400 volunteers donated their time in 2016 for 20 organizations within the area, working a total of 109,000 hours in the community, equal to more than \$1.5 million in donated hours. And that's just for the 20 organizations they tracked.

Between 2012 and 2015, 58 nonprofit organizations in Florence filed a tax return, according to ProPublica. That's not including the scores of churches, clubs and other organizations that give up their time to the community, nor does it include those organizations outside Florence city limits.

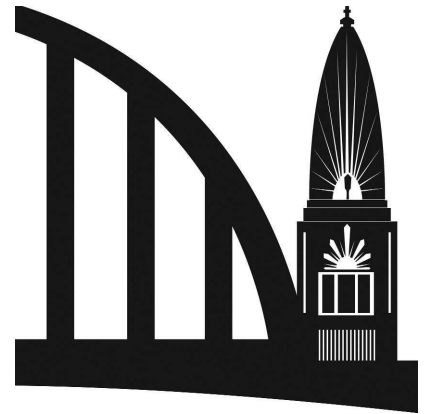
These numbers don't include the millions of dollars that are funneled through these organizations through grants, endowments and individual donations on a yearly basis.

While the sheer volume of community involvement is overwhelming, there are problems when it comes to nonprofits. Organizations rarely communicate with each other. Finding new, diverse board members can be a challenge. Fundraising is always difficult, and at times, the work these organizations do and how they operate can be misconstrued.

For the past 11 years, Bart Mealer has been volunteering at the food share garden, an instrumental voice in building it from meager beginnings to the grand operation it is today.

"Years ago, they told me I was the garden coordinator," Mealer said. The title really isn't important to him — he's basically just a guy that keeps showing up to grow stuff.

Mealer has had a whole host of titles



in Florence. He's the current vice president for Siuslaw Outreach Services (SOS), the current driver supervisor for the Friends of Florence Van Fansand former board member for Food Share. He volunteers at the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce from time to

See **COAST 7A**

Crews complete move-in to new Public Works Facility

City of Florence looks at long-range plan of current, former sites

STORY AND PHOTO
BY CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News



The new Public Works Facility provides more efficient work space.

By Christmas, Florence Public Works will be entirely moved in to its new Public Works Operations Facility at 2675 Kingwood St. The 2.75-acre lot now houses a 5,942 square-foot office building and a 7,754 square-foot maintenance building.

"It's been a long process," said Florence Public Works Director Mike Miller. "The light at the end of the tunnel is showing up. It's nice to be in a modern facility."

Public Works office staff and crew members all have workspace in the new office building, with room to spare.

Amenities include a reception area, customer service counter, training room, conference room, enclosed offices, open workspaces, storage and even a fully equipped kitchen.

Miller said that the facility was planned with the latest in energy efficient ratings in mind, from the appliances in the kitchen to the LED lighting throughout both buildings.

"With all the LEDs, our solar panels should supply most of the power for this building," he said. "There's no battery or anything. It meets the demand, and whatever is excess will go back to Central Lincoln PUD."

Design elements include the use of polished and sealed cement floors, high ceilings and exposed materials, including a white vapor barrier covered in sustainable

See **PUBLIC 8A**



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Families in the Florence area received toys distributed by U.S. Marines, along with local firefighters and members of the U.S. Coast Guard Siuslaw Station.

Toys for Tots comes to Florence for first time

New partnership with Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue means there will be another opportunity for kids

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

The first annual Florence Toys for Tots holiday giveaway took place at Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) Station No. 1 on Tuesday, Dec. 12. The event was a joint effort of the Marine Corps and SVFR.

The distribution took place from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. and gave toys to approximately 300 families.

SVFR Captain Pete Warren, who feels Florence is the perfect location to allow the Marine Corps to extend the reach of this nationwide program to the Oregon coast, coordinated the inaugural give-

away in Florence.

"The Firefighters Association got together and said yes, we think this would be a good thing to do. So this year we got other parties involved, like the Soroptimists, who have been doing a toy distribution for a long time in town, and we wanted to work together to make sure all the kids in our community that needed toys received them," Warren said. "They are doing their thing on Saturday and we are going to be helping them, and they had some folks here today helping us, so it has worked out great."

The Marine Toys for Tots program collected and

See **TOYS 10A**

Healthcare.gov enrollment ends Friday

Those wishing to receive health coverage through the ACA must register by Dec. 15

Friday, Dec. 15, is the last day to get 2018 health insurance during open enrollment. Oregonians who do not get coverage through their job or another program should go to HealthCare.gov and choose a plan before time runs out.

HealthCare.gov is the only place to get help paying for coverage.

"People who need coverage and haven't enrolled at HealthCare.gov could be leaving money on the table," said Chiqui Flowers, administrator of the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace. "They should go to HealthCare.gov by Friday and see if they qualify for financial assistance."

In 2017, more than 70 percent of Oregonians using HealthCare.gov qualified for financial assistance, and they received an average of \$346 per month to help pay for coverage.

This year, individuals making less than about \$48,000 annually or families of four making less than about \$98,000 annually may qualify.

A recent analysis estimated that many Oregonians who were eligible to use HealthCare.gov and receive financial assistance did not enroll last year, including more than 78,000 men and more than 33,000 people ages 25 to 34.

"Enrollment this year has been strong so far, but as the deadline approaches, it's essential to take action if you need coverage or, if you've already signed up, remind your friends and family that it's time to enroll and see if they can get help paying for coverage," Flowers said.

To shop for plans, visit HealthCare.gov or call 1-800-318-2596 (toll-free) (TTY: 1-855-889-4325). After the Dec. 15 deadline, people will be able to get 2018 coverage only in special circumstances, like when they move or lose job-related coverage. The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. DCBS houses both the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace and the Division of Financial Regulation, among other divisions.

For more information, go to dcbs.oregon.gov.

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