

Coast from 9A

have just said, 'Where do I sign up, I'll be there.' The co-chair came to me and said, 'Hey, will you do this for us?' And I said, 'Sure, why not.' That gave me the buy-in and made me want to be more involved.

"Just because somebody's new to the community or younger in the community, doesn't mean they can't be great for the community."

When people are working several jobs just to feed their family, it can be hard to volunteer, but that doesn't mean they don't want to, Erickson believes. While they might not be able to put the full-

time commitment in for a board, they can still help out. And in time, they could perhaps grow into larger positions, like on a board.

"I'm always looking to see who would be a good fit," she said. "As a service club, you should be looking for people to join, because in turn those people are going to look for more, who in turn are going to look for more."

Getting people who traditionally aren't considered for these types of positions involved can create a better community.

"Volunteering is very important because you're giving back to your community. I see all those organizations in Florence and what they've done, and how many people they help. To me, that's amaz-

ing. And nobody knows when they're going to need that help. I can always say I gave back to my community. And if I need help from an organization, I can say, 'I know there were people that I helped at that point, and now it's time for me. Maybe I need that help.'"

"Hey, lookie"

Volunteering is the foundation for a community, Mealer and Erickson believe. It's a bedrock that holds the foundation of everything that makes people feel connected. And it's not just working for an organization.

What gets Mealer excited about solving the problems the region is facing?

He pointed to the Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO), a program he found out about in October.

Based in Springfield, the organization helps with a wide variety of issues that the Siuslaw region is facing. It trains people how to save money, matching their savings by a 2:1 ratio. It helps people get into affordable housing.

Mealer discovered about the program at a seminar and became elated.

"Nobody in this area has been a part of this program. It shocked me," he said. "I didn't know about this either. Now that I know about this, I can go to the SOS board and say, 'Hey, lookie.'"

Programs like that can make

Florence a better place, he believes. And if programs are implemented, organizations like SOS and Florence Food Share would no longer be needed.

"If our client list was going down every month and the job market was going well, that's the best of both worlds," Mealer said. "If we were out of business, that would be great."

According to Mealer and Erickson, volunteerism isn't just an organization like Rotary or Kiwanis or the Elks. It's not just special programs like Siuslaw Vision 2025.

It's small groups of people taking the initiative to help, organized or not. It's the person looking for different ideas and bringing them

to the community. It's the people who can set aside differences and notions and work together. It's the person who can find their passion and make it a reality. It's the person who shares their experiences of the good work that they've done, and it's the person who asks if they can help, too. It's all of these things, and so much more.

"To help your community doesn't mean you have to have money," Erickson said. "Help means time. It means your energy. Your thoughts. Your ideas."

"It can mean so many things." Those things, they believe, can make the region a better place. Not just for the problems it faces now, but for the betterment of generations to come.

Public from 1A

could begin in January.

"We're seeing a two-year plan," Miller said. "Once all the projects are complete and everything is moved out, then we'd be talking about demolition of the facility. ... It needs to go away. It's served its purpose."

Miller explained that the neighboring Gallagher's Park will encompass the Spruce Street location.

"We'll go through a planning process to develop it as a park. It is deed restricted to be used as a park once police and public works move out," he said.

During that planning process,

the City of Florence will look at the needs of the area and usage of the park. This could mean an expansion of the park's Rhododendron Garden, an increased presence of the Salmon Trout Enhancement Program on Munsel Creek or even courts for tennis, pickleball or basketball.

Another unused aspect of the Spruce Street site is the old water tower, which Miller said "will never" be brought back in use.

"It's at the wrong elevation - too low. It doesn't match the other reservoirs," he said. "There's a lot of talk about what to do with the tank. It's going to cost money to take it down."

It would take \$80-100,000 to remove the tower and gain "scrap value" from any metal, after the

removal of lead paint and the cold tar lining.

"It is pretty iconic to come into town and see the structure. The Public Art Committee is very interested in it, and they know what it would cost to renovate it," Miller said. "It would probably be a \$350,000 to \$500,000 prospect to paint the tank. That includes taking care of the ladder climbs, metal loss, repairs and safety."

He said he hopes the city looks into unique ways of repurposing the tank, just as he hopes Gallagher's Park can add something by expanding into the property.

"There's definitely something there to look at, and not just say, 'It needs to come down,'" he said.

As for the City Hall remodel,

Florence City Council is expected to look at bids during the Dec. 18 council meeting.

"We'll know then where we stand, and then hopefully everything is placed, they accept the bids, award the contract and give notice to proceed. The contractor should get started toward the end of January, which just gives enough time to get people moved out of City Hall and get everyone settled again," Miller said.

During the City Hall remodel, the new Public Works facility will also house the Planning Department and customer service. City Hall's other functions will go the Florence Justice Center.

Toys from 1A

distributed 18 million toys in 792 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in 2017.

Marine Staff Sergeant Opetaita Sitafine is the Toys for Tots coordinator for Lane County and he is glad to have the opportunity to

include Florence in the Marine's nationwide toy distribution effort.

"Florence is an important part of Lane County and, until now, we haven't been able to establish a place to do distribution from. This year we were able to work with the fire department and they let us know they had a great site for us to use, so we were happy to be able to include this location as a distribution site," Sitafine said.

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