



December school activities

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WATCHING FOR WHALES

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Siuslaw News

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

ALL THE TRIMMINGS

Elks Lodge Christmas dinner offers traditional favorites



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Members of Florence Elks Lodge No. 1858 prepared and provided a free Christmas Dinner, with all the trimmings, to friends and neighbors on Monday.

By MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Florence Elks Lodge No. 1858's annual Free Community Christmas Dinner took place Christmas Day at the lodge on 12th Street, with some interesting changes to both the menu and the manner in which it was served to hundreds of appreciative residents.

Bob McDuffy and Larry Osgood have been volunteer cooks at the Elks Lodge for the last few years, and the two

shared some of the techniques and background information that make the free dinner one of the most popular community gatherings of the year. "It takes about 80 of us to prepare and serve this meal," McDuffy said. "To get the food ready, there are usually about eight of us and we start a few days ahead of time, so we can get every thing ready in time for the meal. This year we expect to serve more than 700 people."



The group provides 18 30-pound turkeys and six 18- to 20-pound hams.

Volunteers use every bit of the turkeys for everything from carved white and dark meat to gallons of stock for making gravy.

See **DINNER 7A**

Ancient timber recovered from the Siuslaw River



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

On Saturday, workers from Bartermover and Thomas Custom Docks reclaim pilings from the original Ferry Street landing on the Siuslaw River.

By MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

Some long-lost pieces of Florence history were recovered from an ancient, watery grave this past weekend.

Owners Al Thomas, of Thomas Custom Docks, and Chet Wilson, of Bartermover, spent much of the day Saturday removing dangerous and potentially destructive logs from the Siuslaw River, immediately west of the bridge.

Thomas has been hired by a local landowner to remove a number of submerged logs and trees from the river, and from around their dock, to eliminate

any chance they will interfere with ships in the waterway.

"What's happening is the pilings are breaking off and they are trapping logs and debris, which is a danger to navigation," Thomas said. "So, these logs are coming out and will be milled and turned into usable lumber. They will be valuable from a historical perspective, as these logs are a real piece of history."

Wilson is a salvage expert and colleague brought in by Thomas to assist in removing the logs from the river. He is planning on recycling and reusing the recovered wood for new projects.

"These logs and that dock

were placed in the river in 1937. It was the landing for the ferry that people used before they opened the bridge in 1938," Thomas said. "It took us about six months to get where we are now. We brought in the Army Corps of Engineers, state land officials and an archeologist. In addition, every thing had to be documented and permitted before we could get to work."

"We located and mapped every post, its longitude and latitude, and so we know where everything is, every piling. We had to since it's a historical site."

See **RECOVERY 7A**

THE JUGGLING ACT OF JOBS IS COASTAL LIVING IN JEOPARDY? PART VI

Businesses large and small struggle with the boom and bust of a tourist economy

By JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

Blaise Khufu couldn't find a job. When he moved to the Siuslaw region in 2003 with his wife and kids from San Francisco, he had no idea of the difficulties he would face.

"I was trying, but there was no employment," he said. "I couldn't believe it. I'd never had problems finding work before. I went from getting a job anywhere and doing almost everything to even not being able to get a job at McDonald's. And that feeling of, 'Oh my God. I have a baby. I have to do something.' It was really

tough."

Since then he's been everything from a weed puller to a bartender. His most recent role is that of entrepreneur, owning the Siuslaw Riverside Eats & Drinks, located in Historic Old Town Florence. It's the role he's most proud of.

"I run a little sandwich shop," he said. "We specialize in fresh made soups and sandwiches. Our specialties are sandwiches of the world: American, Vietnamese, Italian. We want to throw something new into the mix of Bay Street and Florence. That's pretty much our mission."

But it's a hard mission to accomplish.

Khufu, along with other businesses in the region like Fred Meyer, Breen Marine and Top Hydraulics, have seen some tough trends in the community to overcome when it comes to jobs.

But there's also optimism in the business community.

"This place has great possibilities and it just wants to burst into the future," Khufu said.

"Sink or swim"

Teri Easton has lived her whole life in Florence.

"In the golden years in Florence, we had the lumber mills," she said. "We had fishing. Tourism was not even

really thought of back then. There were various mills up and down Highway 126 which kept this community going. When we lost that, it was huge. At that time, my dad was superintendent for one of the mills in town, and he was making far more than I would even think about making now. Slowly, little pieces of the pie are going away. We just don't have the draw."

When Easton was growing up, she did various service jobs throughout town until, in 2000, she was hired as a part-time employee at Fred Meyer, which is now one of the largest employers in Florence. Now, she's the human resource manager and holds a unique insight into the "boom and bust" nature of the region's job market. She also knows why the workforce decides to move to the area.

"If you're from Alabama, why do you end up in Florence?" she finds herself asking new applicants. "What did you do, pick up a map and pick a place?"

She finds two groups of employees come to work for her. The first is retirees.

"We hire quite a few retired people part-time who are looking to supplement to their income," Easton said.

Supplementing retirement income is key to a city like Florence.

According to numbers provided by Lane County Regional Economist Brian Rooney, 75.6 percent of American household income comes from earning, i.e. bringing in money from a job. In the City of Florence, it's only 49.6 percent.

The largest economic driver in Florence comes from Social Security, which makes up 58.7 percent of a household's income, compared to 29.8 percent in the U.S. Retirement incomes makes up 35.1 percent, such as pensions or 401ks, compared to only 18.1 percent nationwide.

But, as the pension system disappears and retirement savings accounts waiver in bull and bear markets, "retirees" find themselves working later in life.

A 2015 study by the Pew Research Center found that 44.6 percent of Baby Boomers continue to work. In the Silent Generation, those 72 and above, 3.7 percent work.

However, most older people are generally not looking for full time work, from what Easton sees at Fred Meyer. The part-time work they look for is just to supplement their income, or to provide a social outlet. The

majority of the workforce at Fred Meyer comes from younger generations. Some of those younger workers have opted to remain in Florence after graduating high school instead of going to college.

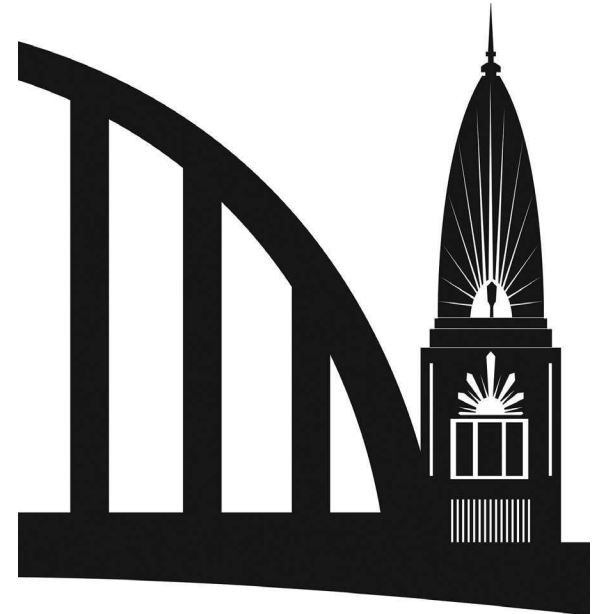
"Not every kid is cut out to go to college," Easton said. "There are the Fred Meyers and the casinos of the world that can offer a career to those kids. I was one of those kids. It's not that I wasn't smart enough to go to college, I just met my boyfriend and I wanted to stay here. This is where my family was."

As for the others who come in? They're moving in with their parents.

In a 2016 study by the Pew Research Center, 32.1 percent of people age 19 to 34 years, known as millennials, were living with their parents.

And it's not just millennials.

See **WORKFORCE 6A**



NOTICE

EARLY NEW YEAR DEADLINE

Siuslaw News is joining other area businesses by being closed New Year's Day, Monday, Jan. 1.

Advertisements, news items and display advertising, as well as line classifieds and legal notices, should all be submitted by 10 a.m. Friday, Dec. 29, to accommodate deadlines.

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