

**Firefighters** from 1A

Captain Andy Gray was the leader of the second team dispatched to California. His team was involved in all three of the California fires.

"California wanted 15 strike teams," Gray said. "There is a difference between a strike team and a task force. A task force is more versatile and a strike team is more jobs-specific. So, we were pretty much the insurance policy for the local departments."

Gray's team went from the Creek Fire in Los Angeles to the Lilac Fire in San Diego, and then back to the Thomas Fire. They assisted with structural protection.

"We bounced around quite a bit, but it worked out that we were able to provide some needed back-up for local departments," Gray said.

Both team leaders said that supporting the California firefighters during this emergency has multiple benefits for SVFR moving forward.

Not only will California firefighters make their way here more readily to assist with emergency situations in Oregon, but the opportunity to work under different fire conditions adds to the experience for local firefighters.

"The fuel here in our fires is

completely different than it is in California. The trees and the other debris have an extremely different fire behavior. It moves a lot faster and the winds were crazy and very unpredictable," Larson said.

Gray agreed.

"Exposure to the different environments and the different fire behaviors was really helpful. The fuel model is different, but not that different, from a windy summer day at the coast with the beach grass, so there are some comparisons there," he said. "The other thing that was important was the scale of the logistics of the whole effort. So it was a learning experience in a lot of ways."

In addition, the deployment affected SVFR's finances.

"Our apparatus also made money for us. We received \$100 an hour for the engine and \$50 an hour for the Quick Attack (brush engine)," Gray said.

When asked to summarize their time in California, both Gray and Larson said the experience gained by district members and volunteers was valuable from a training perspective, but also from a team building perspective.

"It was a great opportunity to talk with firefighters from other areas, to share common experiences and to build communication among the different organizations," Larson said.

"SVFR was glad to be able to send the crews to assist the firefighters and continue to build our volunteer ranks to meet such requests, as well as offer uninterrupted quality service," SVFR Operations Chief Jim Dickerson said. "The strike team leaders sent accolades to our crews for hard work, professionalism and dedication."

Dickerson characterized the California deployment as successful.

"The seven firefighters that deployed worked a grueling '24 on, 24 off' schedule and worked side by side with many other agencies within the ICS system that helps our community when disaster strikes," he said. "The experience that crews gain in these deployments further solidifies our training and community preparedness programs."

To date, the Thomas Fire has burned 281,893 acres and has led to the destruction of 1,063 structures. One firefighter has been killed due to thermal injuries and smoke inhalation.

As of Jan. 1, the California Office of the State Fire Marshall and the U.S. Forest Department reported that 92 percent of the Thomas fire had been contained and personnel on scene had been reduced to 508.

**Development** from 1A

Henry said, "Our job is to try to make Florence attractive and visible. We have to get out there and market Florence, so people in turn will come and get it done."

"I do think our city can grow, and can grow economically. We're just getting started."

In October 2015, RAIN began holding regular meetings in Florence. RAIN itself is a startup founded by the governor's Regional Solutions Office to launch high-growth companies in the Lane, Linn, Lincoln and Benton county region.

Venture Catalyst Caroline Cummings said her job is to "catalyze other people's innovations."

"Oregon is really good at growing its own companies," she said.

Job creation is one facet of a "three-legged stool" that economic development movements target. This also includes recruiting companies to move to the area, retaining and expanding existing businesses and bringing in entrepreneurs and innovation.

Reynolds said, "While we are very caring about our existing businesses ... this is really looking at how we can grow and encourage a new way of thinking."

Florence Urban Renewal Agency retained Leland Consulting Group in 2015 to develop an economic opportunities strategy and to identify key development sites.

Chris Zahas, president of Leland Consulting Group, said, "I think you are in the pretty fortunate position that you have a lot of assets that are attractive. You have the ocean, river, lakes,

an actual authentic vibrant downtown — with the restaurants and retailers as healthy as they are — and you've got the dunes. The list goes on and on of exciting things. If they're marketed, packaged and presented well, they would make a really compelling case why a sole-proprietor business or small entrepreneur would think about Florence."

Henry gave his next State of the City Address, this time to a crowd at the Florence Events Center.

"In my first State of the City Address, I told you of a great many things to come. It is deeply fulfilling to be able to say we have accomplished many, if not most, of the goals we presented last year," Henry said. "A sneak peek into the City Council's goals for 2016 will be a continuation of the 2015 goals in a more condensed and focused manner. We expect 2016 to be filled with staff activity focused on completing the work that was started."

His address also encouraged the community to get involved. Florence's goals for 2016 were city service delivery; livability and quality of life; economic development; communication and trust; and financial and organizational sustainability. In February, Florence Urban Renewal continued to move forward with what would later be called the ReVision Florence Streetscaping Project on Highway 101.

"We promised you a year ago that we would be a city in motion. I think especially recently

Throughout the year, RAIN partnered with the city, Lane Community College Florence

Center and the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce. Meetings were held at City Lights Cinemas, Siuslaw Riverside Eats & Drinks, Homegrown Public House, Beachcomber Pub and Ocean Dunes Golf Links.

See **DEVELOPMENT 7A**

**Robbery** from 1A

When the man ran out the door with the money, Kaushik tried to rinse the pepper spray out of his eyes so he could call the police.

"I called the Oregon State Police and reported the robbery, and they were here in about 10 minutes," he said.

The police took Kaushik's state-

ment and proceeded to search for the robber. They were unsuccessful and, at this time, the suspect remains at large.

Kaushik's uncle purchased the Riverside Market in 2015 and Vedpal has been running the busy Mapleton store since that time.

The robbery has been a traumatic experience for Kaushik, who shared that he is still in shock about the incident.

"My family is from India and I have not seen my wife and kids for four years," Kaushik said. "I started thinking of them after this happened, and I just started crying. And then I was thinking, 'Well, at least he didn't shoot me and maybe I will get a chance to see them again.'"

Anyone with information pertaining to this crime should call the Oregon State Police.

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