

PEACE HARBOR RECOGNIZES VOLUNTEERS



COURTESY PHOTO

At the December meeting of the Peace Harbor Volunteers, three members received certificates of Lifetime Membership. This honor is awarded to those volunteers who have donated 5,000 hours. Pictured are (from left) Gloria Pinheiro, Jean Ryland and Linda Occhi. Both Pinheiro and Occhi are active members of the Tuesday Sewing group while Ryland is in charge of the hospital gift shop.

Rotary announces 2018 auction theme

Florence Rotarians kicked off their 2018 auction season with a salute to this year's South Korean Winter Olympics.

The official theme is traditionally kept under wraps until the official "reveal," which usually takes place at the club's first meeting in January, according to auction co-chair Kim Erickson.

In a lively version of the game show "Family Feud," the Olympic figure skating team competed against the Kardashians family. When the Olympians won the game, the theme was revealed: "Lighting the Torch for Our Kids' Future — Let the Games Begin."

Longtime Rotary auctioneer Bob Sneddon auctioned off the very first auction item of the season: a table for eight at the auction plus \$200 in auction spending money.

This year's auction will take place on Saturday, March 10,



COURTESY PHOTO

Rotary unveiled its 2018 auction theme.

at the Florence Events Center. Last year's auction raised more than \$115,000, which went to scholarships for students at Siuslaw and Mapleton high schools and Lane Community College, as well as other Rotary projects in the Florence community.

"Our anticipation is high for the continued success of our auction," says co-chair Kevin

McMullen. "It's the biggest event of our year and the Florence community always overwhelms us with its generosity."

For table and ticket information, contact Bettina Hannigan at the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce, 541-997-3128, Kevin McMullen at 541-991-7048, or Kim Erickson at 541-991-2070.

Education from 10A

And they could offer some classes in our spaces. Instead of just AP classes, some high school students could literally come to the college for classes."

And it's not just high school students that could benefit from the expansions. Classes could be held that would combine high school students, college students and continuing education students to work together in a classroom setting.

These programs could create more skilled workers of all ages, which could in turn create more jobs in the community.

But all of this hinges on whether or not they can obtain funding. If there's one shortcoming to Measure 98, it's that it's not fully subsidized.

Some hoped that Measure 97, which went up for vote at the same time as 98, would help float the costs. That measure would have removed the corpo-

rate gross sales tax, establishing a 2.5 percent tax on gross sales that exceed \$25 million.

But 97 was defeated. Because of that, Grzeskowiak and Pierson have to be very cognizant on what they spend and how they spend it. Grzeskowiak is holding off on hiring the Computer Technology and Business teacher because of the never-ending budget crunch. While the position is already budgeted, those funds might have to be used elsewhere.

"I'm waiting to start pitching and hiring that position until after the Jan. 23 Special Election," Grzeskowiak said.

He's talking about Measure 101, up for vote this month, which looks to tax some hospitals, insurance companies and other entities to make up for a Medicaid funding shortfall. It has nothing to do with education, but with the tight economic squeeze that Oregon is in, even the most peripheral of budget laws can have severe

effects on schools.

"If it doesn't pass, the state's going to have to make a budget correction. And schools are a significant part of the state budget. It would hit us. I don't know what that would look like," Grzeskowiak said. "I wouldn't want to start recruiting someone now and then have that election come through and say, 'Hey, we're going to lay you off before you even started work.' We have to be mindful of that."

If Measure 101 passes, Grzeskowiak will have a limited window to implement and grow the program.

All the strides that LCC and the Siuslaw School District are making are based on a razor thin hope that the economy will remain stable.

Historically, that's not realistic.

"RECESSION"

With an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent, strong consumer confidence and a seemingly

endless bull market, 2017 made the pains of the 2008 Great Recession almost disappear.

But every bull needs its bear. And this next bear may be particularly vicious, according to some economists.

America is in the 102nd month of economic expansion. Only two other expansions have lasted longer, one from 1961 to 1969, the other from 1991 to 2001. Both of those bull markets led to recessions. They were brief, and with the help of federal regulation (and in the case of 2001, the Afghanistan War) the pangs of the recessions were held at bay. But the economy, and the country as a whole, is more fragile now than it was in those periods.

As reported by The Atlantic in October, roughly half of respondents to a Federal Reserve survey said that they could not come up with \$400 in an emergency. A third of respondents reported that if they sold all of their assets, and asked friends or family for help, they still could not cover three months of expenses.

"Americans are no worse off than they were when the last recession hit," the report read. "But a decade of growth has not made them more secure, either."

How Americans will deal with the next recession depends on what causes it, and what the government does to curb the bear market's bite.

How the recession will occur is anybody's guess. An article written by the Brookings Institution in 2017 stated, "The fact is, most recessions are triggered by

exogenous shocks to an economy already weakening — for example, troubles in the Middle East that drive up oil prices, interest rate shifts that slow housing, and miscalculations and malfiance by financial institutions that jolt equity and bond markets. We do not know how the next recession will begin, but it's coming in the foreseeable future."

When it comes, the federal government is also hampered in the way it can respond to a recession. In 2001, President George W. Bush helped push a tax cut and rebate that was a factor in the economy's swift recovery. As the Washington Post pointed out in December 2017, Congress's passage of the recent tax plan renders that tool moot.

The article also points out that interest rates are "already near zero." The drastic cut in interest rates is one tactic that helped slow the bleeding of the Great Recession. But now, the Federal Reserve has very little to cut.

Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen said, "It does suggest that in some future downturn, which could occur for whatever reason, the amount of fiscal space that would exist for fiscal policy to play an active role will be limited."

It's this constant economic uncertainty that can keep school administrators on edge, and the constant monetary tightrope is difficult on both faculty and students.

"Whether the economy is up or the economy is down, kids always are in school," Grzeskowiak said. "If the state

economy dips by 6 percent, and my budget gets cut 6 percent, I don't have the luxury of sending 6 percent of the kids home. I'm able to send 6 percent of the staff home, but 100 percent of the kids show up. That's the reality."

And when 100 percent of the students show up with fewer teachers, it lowers the quality of education.

"Having these radical shifts from year to year, that becomes stressful on teachers as well as kids," Grzeskowiak said. "Kids walk into a classroom one year, it's 25 kids. The next year it's 35 kids. And then it's 25 kids the next year. At the high school, one year you have three electives to choose from, the next year you have eight electives to choose from, then the next year you have two electives to choose from."

Pierson said, "It puts us at the state's mercy, in terms of operational funding. Obviously, the legislature is a political entity."

And political entities can sometimes miss the broader picture.

While Measure 98 was a mandate for high schools, it didn't mention institutions like LCC.

"It's not really impacting community colleges, unfortunately. Hello, Governor Brown, help," Pierson said, waving his hand in the air.

While Pierson and Grzeskowiak believe that the ultimate fix to school issues would be to implement tax reform in Oregon, they do see other programs, like Measure 101, being implemented to help.

"We have the interest and intention of various levels of government," Pierson said.

Silver linings exist, too, in success stories the likes of which can be seen in the classrooms of Mapleton School District, where O'Mara's diligence has won the district millions of dollars in grant funding. That funding has gone straight into renovations and technological upgrades, providing a learning environment with richer opportunities for the district's youth.

As generations of graduates reaping the benefits of classroom advancements enter the workforce, their adaptability to the demands of next-generation jobs will be crucial to securing a prosperous local economy. And with economic shifts being inevitable, a degree of stability arguably lies in the flexibility of generations to come.

"The kids who have technology will be a lot more savvy with it," said Timpe as she looks over Mapleton students diligently working out math problems. "And when they get to high school, and then college, it's an advantage."

In the final segment of "Is Coast Living in Jeopardy?" next week, Siuslaw News will look at additional perspectives and solutions for the housing, job and economic issues facing the Siuslaw region.

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