Confederated Tribes, Three Rivers Foundation celebrate giving

By Chantelle Meyer
Siuslaw News

On Feb. 22, people from Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lane and Lincoln counties trekked through the snow to attend the 7th annual gifting luncheon of the Three Rivers Foundation. The Three Rivers Foundation, established by the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians as the giving arm of its Three Rivers Casino Resort, announced gifts to 24 deserving nonprofit organizations in the Tribe's service district areas.

The luncheon was held at the Three Rivers Casino Resort event center in Florence.

The Three Rivers Foundation supports innovative ideas, collaborative approaches and grassroots efforts in the following areas: education, health, public safety, problem gambling, the arts, the environment, cultural activities and historic preservation.

During this gifting cycle, the Three Rivers Foundation received more than 150 grant proposals from nonprofits located in nearby counties and from communities throughout Oregon.

Foundation Chairperson Teresa Spangler cited data from the 24 organizations the Trustees selected.

"In those 24 organizations were 74,023 volunteer hours," Spangler said. "And even more amazing is that over 190,000 people were helped through these organizations."

The organizations also had a total of 550 employees.

"Our successes are a reflection of the commitment and passion of our dedicated leadership," Spangler said.

In Florence, three organizations received grant awards: the Florence Community PTA, Florence Food Share and Oregon Coast Emergency Repeater (OCER), Inc.

Three Rivers Foundation Trustee Tom Grove presented the awards to the Florence-area nonprofits.

"The PTA here is taking on a task that is something new to me," Grove said. "But then, back in my day they weren't drinking bottled water, either. … The PTA has picked up as one of its projects to put in a water dispenser in the Siuslaw Middle School so students can refill water bottles. I hope this will get kids to start drinking more water and keep those disposable water bottles out of our system. That alone will be a huge benefit for everyone."

Florence Community PTA President Tiffany Holdahl, two Siuslaw Middle School students and PTA member Stephanie Sarles accepted the award.

"The students are excited for their school to get not only one but two water bottle refilling stations," Holdahl said. "There will be one in the commons where they eat lunch and one in the gym, where they have sports practice, PE and games. This will encourage children to drink more water and hopefully save the environment. Our goal is to save our environment one bottle at a time."

According to Holdahl, Siuslaw High School already has water bottle refilling stations which have saved filled more than 20,000 water bottles — potentially preventing disposable water bottles to be used once and then thrown out.

Grove also presented an award to Norma Barton and Florence Food Share for a Community Outreach and Food Distribution Project.

"Food Share was founded in 1989, and since that time it has made a tremendous imprint on this community," Grove said. "Florence Food Share has unearthed an issue that I don't think anyone in this community had dealt with — and that was a need for people in this community to have food. I don't think most of us had any idea there were that many low income or people that needed assistance in our community."

The food share did not provide specifics to the project awarded the grant money, but it regularly distributes more than 2,000 pounds of food to clients each day.

"Every organization in Florence has Florence Food Share on their front list to donate to," Grove added. "Florence Food Share is always in line to support the community — and Florence is a very supportive community."

The third Florence-based organization to receive an award from the Three Rivers Foundation was OCER for a digital radio and camera upgrade.

PHOTOS BY CHANTELLE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS

Three Rivers Foundation Trustee Tom Grove presented awards to three Florence-area nonprofits, (clockwise from upper left) Oregon Coast Emergency Repeater, Inc., Florence Community PTA and Florence Food Share in February.

"What they have established in this community is a network of emergency communications," Grove said. "This type of organization is very, very valuable in the first hour after an emergency. We've seen how disasters can devastate communities."

OCER is also known as the Central Coast Amateur Radio Club and the West Lane ARES/RACES group. It is comprised of 104 members and serves Florence, Mapleton and Dunes City. Its mission is to provide reliable backup communications to the West Lane Emergency Operations Group and Siuslaw community in the event of an earthquake, tsunami or other disaster.

"They picked a good location for a repeater on top of Herman Peak," Grove said. "If Herman Peak goes under, I think we're all in deep water."

According to OCER Preside Bob Pine, the upgrades will update radios for the Florence Justice Center, Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue Main Station, Dunes City Hall and Mapleton.

"It will also allow us to do something for the fire department," Pine said. The radios can attach now to a digital camera, which can send a picture over the radio to the emergency operation center, so they can get an instant view of the disaster area. These are dedicated radios for that very purpose."

Three Rivers Foundation also awarded the following organizations grant dollars:

Coos County:

• Bandon Police Department, Bandon • Charleston Fishing Families, Coos Bay • Coos County Sherriff's Office, Coquille • Dolphin Players, Inc., Coos Bay • Friends of the Lakeside Public Library, Lakeside • South Coast Hospice & Palliative Care Services, Inc., Coos Bay;

Curry County:

• Harbor Rural Fire Protection District • The Gold Beach Senior Center;

Douglas County:

• Boys & Girls Club of the Umpqua Valley, Roseburg • Douglas County Cancer Services, Roseburg • Reedsport Public Library, Reedsport;

Lane County:

• Boys & Girls Club of Emerald Valley, Eugene • Goldson Food Pantry, Cheshire • RideAble, Springfield • Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4039, Creswell • Willamette Family, Inc., Eugene • Yujin Gakuen/Corridor Elementary School, Eugene;

Lincoln County:

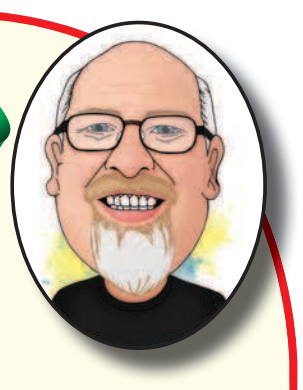
• CASA of Lincoln County, Newport • Eddyville Charter School, Eddyville • View the Future, Yachats;

And: The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

The board of trustees ensures that the Three Rivers Foundation continues to reflect the goals and commitment of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians to its local communities. The board consists of:

• Tribal Council Vice-Chair and Three Rivers Foundation Chair Teresa Spangler • Three Rivers Foundation Vice-Chair Jay Bozievich, Lane County Commissioner • Tribal Council Member, Trustee Beaver Bowen • Trustee Appointed by the Governor Tom Grove • Coos County Commissioner, Trustee Bob Main • Chief Warren Brainard, Chief of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Trustee • Stephanie Watkins, Director of Human Resources for the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Trustee.

Dave's RE-CORNER



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Rental

from 1A

Milner emailed the purported owner, who identified his or herself as Lynetta Smith in Hendersonville, Tenn., and Smith arranged a viewing in which the supposed agent met Milner at Florentine Estates' front gate and escorted her inside by car.

Four days after the viewing, Smith initiated contact by text message to tell Milner that she had been approved, though Milner would learn later that her references had not even been contacted. Elated and eager to move from her apartment, Milner agreed to pay first and last month's rent, $1,250, to secure the unit and was told she could expect the keys by mail. The nearest location Milner could find to wire the money was Walmart in Eugene and so she made the drive and sent the money.

The next day, Milner took her husband to see their new house but was unable to enter Florentine Estates without the passcode at the front gate. Milner texted Smith for the passcode, but Smith said her lawyer advised another deposit of $1,250 was needed before the passcode or keys could be released — but Milner was assured it would count toward future rent.

Soon after making another drive to a Coos Bay Walmart and another wire transfer, all communication from the supposed owner stopped. Realizing it had been a scam, Milner reported the issue to the Florence Police Department.

Linda Westphal, owner of Action Realty, has been working with Milner and her husband to find a rental since prior to the alleged fraud. Westphal hadn't heard of this sort of scam occurring in Florence before, but is familiar with the practice.

"From what I hear, all over the nation, it's pretty common," Westphal said.

A typical online rental fraud technique involves hijacking a genuine rental or real estate listing by posting the listing's information on another site — like Craigslist — and simply switching the contact information to the scammer's own. A fraudulent posting will often entice victims by asking for prices well below similar properties on the market. More sophisticated scammers may even have access to a unit with duplicate keys.

On its website, the Federal Trade Commission lists red flags for rental scams such as: a person asking for wire transfers; owners who claim they are out of the country and requests for security deposits or rent before signing a lease.

Because the supposed agent in Milner's case had access to Florentine Estates, Westphal speculates they are local and have knowledge of the area.

"I think they're looking for nice places that are vacant," she said.

Westphal recommends caution when house shopping on the internet.

"Don't rent anything from … any kind of internet posting where you're not going to meet these people in person." She added, "If it's too good to be true, it's not true."

Officer Denton Tipler of the Florence Police Department, who is investigating Milner's case, shares the sentiment. Though Milner's case is the first of its kind Tipler has seen in Florence, he advises people to exercise healthy skepticism on the internet.

"Craigslist is crawling with scams," he said.

Wire transfers are particularly hard to track, and Tipler has strong advice for those receiving requests to wire money: "Just don't," he said.

To avoid scams, Tipler recommends vetting and verifying the identification and credentials of online dealers before doing business with them.

Tipler also encourages victims of fraud like Milner to report cases to their local law enforcement, citing victim embarrassment and silence as obstacles to investigation.

"If people don't tell us, we don't know about it," he said.

Milner said she had initially felt too embarrassed to tell anyone, but eventually worked up the courage to call the police.

"I just don't want anybody else to go through what I went through," she said.

Members of the public with information related to such cases in and around the Florence area are encouraged to call the Florence Police Department at 541-997-3515.

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