



# VIKINGS OPEN TRACK SEASON

SPORTS — B

# Schools partake in ALICE training

INSIDE — A3



# Siuslaw News

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

## Woodbury’s work shows what’s ‘possible’

*Grocery Outlet owner to retire, continue to serve community*

By MARK BRENNAN  
Siuslaw News

Woody Woodbury and Casey Kawahara are employer and employee. The two men are nearly a half century apart in age and, perhaps most importantly, they are also friends.

Woodbury is the current owner of the popular discount food store and Casey is an employee with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The two have known each other for the past few years and have worked together at Florence Grocery Outlet during that time.

April is Autism Awareness Month and also the last month that Woodbury will own Grocery Outlet. His last day as the owner of Grocery Outlet will be April 24.

Woodbury began working with Casey and getting to know his mom, Kelly Kawahara, when Casey started working at Grocery Outlet as part of his education plan at Siuslaw High School.

Casey was participating in a program led by Teri Gehlke and designed to assist students in



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

**Woody Woodbury (right) and Casey Kawahara work together at Grocery Outlet in Florence. Woodbury hired Casey after he graduated from a special education program at Siuslaw High School. Now, the two consider themselves friends.**

gaining the skills and confidence needed to acquire and hold onto a job in a commercial environment.

“I think the individuals in the Special Education Programs at the high school have a lot to offer,” Woodbury said. “I’ve been doing this for around 10 years now. Casey was in the program for four years and he worked here a couple days a week. Then he turned 21 and could no longer participate in

the program through school, so I talked with his mom, Kelly, and she said Casey would really like to continue working. So I hired him and he’s been working here for going on two years now.”

Casey has several duties he performs as part of his job.

“I really like working here,” he said. “I have some stuff I work on each day and I get the chance to see my friends and to talk with

Woody. He’s been a great boss to me and he is a really nice guy, too.”

Kelly believes that the opportunity given to her son has changed his life for the better on many levels. She said she holds Woodbury in the highest regard, not only for what he has done for her son, but also for the Florence community.

See **POSSIBLE** 7A

## SVFR, WLAD receive positive audit report

*Auditor suggests minor changes to procedures to ensure future accuracy*

By MARK BRENNAN  
Siuslaw News

Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) and Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD) held board meetings Wednesday and Thursday this week, at the SVFR Main Station on Highway 101.

The most significant information discussed during the separate meetings was a comprehensive report delivered by Auditor Chris Mahr on the financial status of the two districts.

That report indicated that there were no serious issues that were unexpected or required any immediate action by directors of either body.

Mahr first went into detail about the process used by his firm, Chris Mahr and Associates CPAS, to assess both districts’ financial status. He then discussed his firm’s duty to comply with certain state mandated reporting requirements.

Mahr assured the directors that there were no issues of malfeasance or fraud found during the audit, and, most importantly, his report to the state would be positive.

“You were in compliance with all areas reviewed, so it is a thumbs up as regards ORS (Oregon Revised Statutes) requirements and statutes,” Mahr said. “Your staff was very cooperative and provided us with all requested information required by the state to be included in our report.”

He also mentioned that his firm had identified a number of areas that would benefit from minor modifications to the districts’ current accounting procedures.

He suggested that board members take a more active role in observing monthly vendor transactions and noting any obvious discrepancies in monthly financial reconciliations.

Mahr said the suggested changes would strengthen the oversight process for both districts and act as an additional check to identify or prevent any potential fraud in the future.

Directors for both boards accepted Mahr’s report, after asking a few basic questions. The directors then thanked him for the presentation and the work done by his firm on their behalf.

See **DISTRICTS** 7A

## Veterans need drivers for hospital trips

*Florence DAV needs additional drivers for Portland, Roseburg routes*

By JARED ANDERSON  
Siuslaw News

The Florence chapter of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is in need of additional van drivers to help transport veterans to medical facilities in Portland and Roseburg.

The volunteer-run program, which provides free transportation for vets to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers in the state, would ideally have 15 drivers for the Portland route and five drivers for the Roseburg route. However, as of now, there are only eight and two drivers for the routes, respectively.

The need for trips is high. With a high population of veterans in the area, coupled with an older population, the trips are a crucial for those needing VA medical care.

“Normally we run five days a week,” Jim Swant, lead driver for the Portland route, said.

But because of the driver shortage, veterans risk losing out on

get them to their medical appointment, otherwise they would be

**“You’d be surprised how many veterans don’t know what they’re entitled to. Some people think that they only get three years of medical care, but it’s not true. They get lifetime medical care if they meet the qualifications.”**

— Jim Swant, Florence DAV member

receiving vital medical care.

“If something comes up and I can’t drive, or the other person can’t drive, you’re out of a driver,” said Ken Casey, lead driver for the Roseburg route. “We try to fill in for each, but if you’re out of town, and if you don’t have anyone to back you up, a person’s not going to get a ride.”

“A lot of veterans don’t have the means to get to the hospital on their own,” Swant said. “Some of them don’t have cars, some of them don’t drive. Some of them are too old to drive. It’s a means to

dying left and right because of lack of medical care.”

The DAV operates a fleet of vehicles around the country providing free transport to VA centers, a vital service for seniors in rural or isolated communities. Florence acts as a hub for the Oregon coast, being the halfway point between Roseburg and Portland.

“We have 21 pickup points,” Swant said about his route. “We go up Highway 101 north of Lincoln City and cut through Otis. We have two pickups there in Otis, and one down the road.

Our farthest north pickup is Sheridan.”

Veterans also drive themselves to Florence for the van service, coming from as far away as Coos Bay for the transport.

“Some of them just go up for a routine physical or maybe they have a doctor’s appointment,” Casey explained about the veterans who use the program.

Some veterans only need transportation once every three months for routine checkups, but others need weekly trips. The trips can be particularly important for those needing care after complicated medical procedures.

Because the veterans are often too ill to travel, the van trips are particularly vital when the length of the journeys are factored in. A Portland trip can average 350 miles, with the driver’s day lasting up to 15 hours.

See **DRIVERS** 9A

## Lights out tonight for Earth Hour

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD  
For the Siuslaw News

Earth Hour, a one-hour event encouraging individuals and communities to turn off non-essential electric lights, will be held today, March 24, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. local time.

The worldwide event, organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), aims to raise awareness about environmental issues such as climate change and sustainable living.

Earth Hour began as a lights-off

event in Sydney, Australia, in 2007 and has since expanded across the globe to more than 180 countries and territories, according to the group’s website. Participants are encouraged to turn off what lights they can for the event, but to exercise common sense in respect to safety.

Though the exercise itself is not meant to reduce energy or carbon, the organization says, “Participation in Earth Hour symbolizes a commitment to change beyond the hour.”

Impactful energy reduction during the event is thought by many to be negligible, though a 2014 study pub-

lished in the peer-reviewed journal Energy Research & Social Science reported an average electricity consumption drop of four percent in 10 participating countries over a six-year period during Earth Hour events.

“While the goal of Earth Hour is not to achieve measurable electricity savings, the collective events illustrate how purposeful behavior can quantitatively affect regional electricity demand,” the authors of the study said. “The policy challenge is to convert these short-term events into longer-term actions, including

sustained changes in behavior and investment.”

Oregon has spearheaded such efforts toward long-term change. In 2016, Oregon legislators passed a clean-energy bill to eliminate coal from the state’s electricity supply and required that at least 50 percent of electricity sold by electric companies come from renewable resources.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, there are currently no commercial coal mines operating in Oregon and the state’s last coal-fired power plant is

due to shut down by the end of 2020.

Central Lincoln PUD, which serves electricity to 112 miles of Oregon’s central coast, embodies the spirit of the 2016 legislation.

“Our electricity is 95 percent carbon-free and almost all of it is renewable,” said CLPUD Public Affairs Manager Chris Chandler. “It’s not a matter of unplugging from coal-based energy because we don’t get any of our power from coal or diesel.”

See **EARTH HOUR** 8A

INSIDE

Classifieds	B5	Sideshow	B4
Community	A3	Sports	B
Opinion	A4	This Week on the Coast	A7
Records	A2	Weather Data	A2

THIS WEEK’S  
WEATHER  
Full Forecast, A3

TODAY  
50 36

SUNDAY  
49 38

MONDAY  
51 38

TUESDAY  
55 41

SIUSLAW NEWS  
2 SECTIONS | 20 PAGES  
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0 88267 02345 1