

May 2018

COAST CENTRAL

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# Siuslaw News

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## Officials rule Mapleton school threat noncredible

*April 25 incident at Mapleton School District raises questions on publicly reporting school threats and student privacy*

**By JARED ANDERSON**  
Siuslaw News

On Wednesday, April 25, a student at Mapleton High School was investigated for a possible threat made against the school. The threat was not found to be credible, and the situation was quickly quelled.

In the aftermath, rumors spread about the incident and questions arose as to why Mapleton School District did not disclose the incident officially

to the public when it occurred. The answer to those questions lie in the delicate balance schools face regarding the act of students threatening violence, and the responsibility educators and law enforcement have in protecting student privacy.

“Last Wednesday, we received information from a student that they overheard another student make a potential threat,” Mapleton School District Superintendent Jodi O’Mara said. “I can tell you it was a threat of

violence to bring a gun to school. It was not specific, other than that.”

The comment was overheard by a couple of students, who soon reported the incident to school authorities, who quickly isolated the student.

“Any time there’s a threat, whether it’s violence towards others or to self, we act quickly to determine the validity of it,” O’Mara said. “In this instance, involving law enforcement was paramount. ... They are trained to ask the questions and read the body

language. That’s their job to determine if it’s a credible threat, or if it’s just a comment someone made.”

O’Mara contacted the Lane County Sheriff’s Office, which proceeded, in conjunction with the school district, with an investigation. The threat was found not to be credible, and the deputies escorted the student home.

Due to privacy laws, O’Mara was unable to say what disciplinary actions would be taken, but students “found in violation of the policy can be subject

to discipline up to and including expulsion.”

“I’m just really proud that students did what they needed to do,” O’Mara said. “They heard something, they said something. They told us. They reported. That’s what we need.

“Students are our best allies when it comes to any kind of threats towards schools or students. They’re usually the ones that are going to hear it.

See **THREAT 7A**

## SVFR begins new Fire Prevention program

*Captain Tony Miller oversees effort to provide businesses more information, feedback*

**By MARK BRENNAN**  
Siuslaw News

This spring, Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) began a new program that is focused on improving fire safety for local businesses, patrons and staff of those businesses.

Fire Prevention Captain Tony Miller is SVFR’s point man for this new, more robust communication effort, which strives to work more closely with business owners as they prepare for their annual fire inspection visits.

“As the community’s fire department, we are looking forward to working with our community to assist in improving fire safety — and we can only accomplish this with the cooperation of local business owners,” Miller said. “As we move forward with this program, we hope that everyone involved will do their part in making Florence safer.”

Miller added that SVFR has a responsibility and a duty to protect the public, employees, employers, any human life and the environment.

He also feels the business program is the area under his oversight needing the most attention.

Miller realized with the amount of businesses in the district, SVFR was falling short on inspecting every business every year, and district leadership felt this issue needed to be addressed for the safety of the community.

“Over the years, (SVFR Fire Marshal) Sean Barrett was the only person doing inspections for everything, from our coffee shops to our local hospital. Inside our jurisdiction we have approximately 300 businesses, so the need for additional help was inevitable,” Miller said.

He said SVFR now has several firefighters who have volunteered to receive training and certification in company inspections. The plan is to complete another training course in order to add to the list of qualified inspectors.

Miller wants the process of meeting fire safety requirements to be as straightforward as possible. The fire department has worked diligently to develop more ways for business owners and the department to work together in meeting those requirements.

For example, businesses can request a pamphlet with important information to help with fire prevention assistance. A business owner can also request for the department to send one or two of the inspectors for what is called a “pre-site inspection.”

“This helps the business owner understand what the inspections are about, what things we are looking for to prevent fires, and to answer any questions a business or building owner may have,” Miller said. “This is not a documented event, but this is a public service we provide.”

See **PREVENTION 6A**



## WINE • ART • JAZZ



STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY MARK BRENNAN  
Siuslaw News

## FlorenceFest ruled a success



Coast Radio’s FlorenceFest brought a premier level of wine, art and jazz to the Florence Events Center on Friday and Saturday.

**The second annual FlorenceFest, a unique combination of art, wine and jazz at the Florence Events Center last weekend, proved itself as a premier celebration of art on the coast.**

This year built upon the initial efforts of 2017’s inaugural event.

Jon Thompson, owner of Coast Radio and founder of the event, points to the team effort required to stage the festival as the key ingredient to success.

“A lot of people put in a tremendous amount of work on this festival and I think it shows,” he said. “The feedback continues to be overwhelmingly positive from those who attended the event — which means

there will be plenty of discussion about next year’s event, set for the last weekend in April 2019.”

The weekend involved star-quality jazz performances, wine from 12 regional vineyards and an Art Show and Sale hosted by Florence Regional Arts Alliance (FRAA).

See **FESTIVAL 6A**

## Patriot Place opens with Oregon candidate forum

*Conservative residents enter the political arena with new clubhouse, resource center*

**By MARK BRENNAN**  
Siuslaw News

In America and across the world, there is renewed interest and enthusiasm, on both sides of the aisle, in the realm of politics since the turbulent 2016 presidential election.

Until now, much of that energy has been generated by opponents of policies and statements made by President Donald Trump, with the grassroots group Florence Organizes spearheading local

efforts.

Last month, an energized group of constituents in strong support of the president emerged to provide a counterpoint to those efforts, as well as establish a meeting place for its own grassroots efforts.

Patriot Place, 175 Nopal St. in Historic Old Town, is the new home of these conservative activists and, this past Saturday, gubernatorial candidate Sam Carpenter, along with Oregon House District 9 contender Terri Grier, appeared before a packed

house of supporters at the clubhouse.

Patriot Place’s website invites people to “Come hang out with us, chat, read the news and shop.”

The mission of the group, according to its website [www.patriotplaceflorence.com](http://www.patriotplaceflorence.com), is supported by the Florence Liberty Alliance, a registered nonprofit Political Action Committee formed by citizens in Florence for the purpose of promoting their common values.

“We envision a community

where personal freedom is cherished and where all American citizens are treated equally, assuring our ability to pursue the American Dream,” the website’s mission statement reads. “We value personal accountability, the rule of law and the Constitution of the United States.”

Recognizing the growing divide in the political landscape, both nationally and locally, Patriot Place was established “for like-minded

See **PLACE 9A**