



## VIKINGS, SAILORS SEE STATE

SPORTS — B

**EARLY PRESS DEADLINES FOR MEMORIAL DAY**

Siuslaw News will join other area businesses by being closed Memorial Day, Monday, May 28. Deadlines for the following Wednesday's issue, May 30, will be advanced to accommodate the shortened work week. All display advertising and legal publication deadlines move to noon Thursday, May 24. By-the-word classified deadlines advance to 5 p.m. Friday, May 25. Deadline for news articles and press releases is noon Thursday.

# Siuslaw News

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON



## 111TH ANNUAL RHODODENDRON FESTIVAL

# RHODY RENDEZVOUS

Residents 'rendezvoused' with tradition during Rhody Days celebration



**F**amilies, familiar faces and friends rendezvoused in Florence for the 111th annual Rhododendron Festival last week. Sunday's Grand Floral Parade concluded the "Rhody Rendezvous" festival theme, which ran May 16 to 20.

### RHODY FEST COMMEMORATIVE ALBUM INSIDE

"It was another exciting, fun-filled festival week," said Florence Area Chamber of Commerce Event Coordinator Terry Abeyta. "Florence truly showed all its color and spirit — especially with the rhododendrons in spectacular full bloom."

Davis Shows Northwest's Amusement Carnival opened the festival midweek at the Port of Siuslaw parking lot. It was a chance for youth, couples, groups and families to ride on the Ferris wheel, sample a tasty elephant ear, win prizes and return to this Florence tradition. The Davis family's carnival has been coming to Florence since 1950.

On May 17, the Rhododendron Court crowned Siuslaw High School seniors Lainey Goss and Trent Reavis as the 2018 Queen Rhododendra and King of the Coast. They were joined throughout the festivities by the rest of the Court, Prince Colby Waters, first runner-up Princess Denielle VanWinkle and princesses Thelma Gentry, Alex Saindon and Andrea Sanchez-Hernandez, along with the Junior Princess Court, Aleeya Thomas, Jasmine Krause, Abigail Galvan-Mendez, Kylee Stinger and Brittney Adams.

The festival really kicked off for the weekend with events and activities at Three Rivers Casino Resort, Florence Events Center and Historic Old Town Florence.

"For the most part, people were respectful and kind," said Chamber Executive Director Bettina Hannigan. "Businesses really changed up the game to welcome people to town and maximize the festival's impact."

See RHODY page 10A

## Building Code Division's new rules rescinded

BY CHANTELLE MEYER  
SIUSLAW NEWS

For many Oregon cities, panic brought on by a change in Oregon Building Code Division policy was largely alleviated over the weekend as new rules were adopted May 18.

According to the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), "Late Friday, the League learned that the Oregon Building Code Division has decided to rescind the recent emergency rules relating to local building inspection programs; rules which LOC have fought as too burdensome and unnecessary. The Building Code Division has instead decided that more consideration and analysis is necessary."

Florence City Attorney Ross Williamson said the new rules were delivered to cities on Friday at 4:30 p.m. in a letter via email.

"I was meeting with LOC staff at the time, trying to coalesce around a litigation strategy that I don't have to tell you about now," he said.

See RULES page 9A

## Concerning media bias

Documentary producer, media watchdog Jeff Cohen discusses bias in cable news

BY JARED ANDERSON  
SIUSLAW NEWS

Time magazine dubbed 2001 the "Summer of the Shark."

"All they talked about was shark attacks because they had some dramatic examples," Jeff Cohen, a media critic, journalist, professor and documentary producer, said.

Cohen is the founder of the media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR). He was also a regular commentator on FOX News Channel, MSNBC and CNN.

"All of the cable channels were talking about shark attacks," he said.

The media began fixating on shark attacks after an 8-year-old boy was bitten by a bull shark in Florida. Further attacks throughout the summer were extensively covered, but the hype didn't match the reality. Shark attacks had actually decreased in 2001 — 76 com-

pared to 85 in 2000, according to the International Shark Attack File.

"It was the chasing after ratings, the elevation of 'fluff' over real news," Cohen said. "At MSNBC every morning, the top producers would get the ratings from the previous night and we could see how the ratings changed every 15 minutes. There was a real obsession with finding anything that grabs the audience. If you could hook the viewers, you would just go with that story, hour after hour, day after day."

The constant barrage of shark coverage stories created a culture of unnecessary fear about attacks, which Cohen felt raised anxiety and garnered cheap, quick ratings.

"It turned viewers into spectators," he said. "What the hell are you going to do about shark attacks? Circulate a petition in Flor-

ence, Ore. about sharks? The reality did not change, only TV news reality changed. Not real reality."

By fixating on this type of fluff, instead of more substantive issues, the media can disallow citizens in taking an active role in democracy.

"What you learn in television news is that fear sells," Cohen said. "It gets ratings and grabs an audience."

Cohen will be arriving in Florence on Friday, May 25, at 6:30 p.m., to exhibit the recent film "All Governments Lie: Truth, Deception and the Spirit of I.F. Stone," which Cohen helped produce. The production covers a wide variety of topics, from how multiple administrations from both parties manipulate facts, to how mass media is complicit in deception.

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## RHODY DAYS LESS ROWDY THAN USUAL

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

Florence's Rhododendron Festival is the unofficial start of the summer season both for residents and for many visitors to the city.

Unfortunately, it is also a time that requires more from the area's first responders, both in the type of situations they will be dealing with, and the sheer number of people they are asked to monitor and protect.

This year was significantly less challenging than many of the previous festivals for members of the Florence Police Department and Western Lane Ambulance District.

Florence Police Commander John Pitcher feels the tone of the weekend and the demographics of festival participants may be shifting.

"Overall, it was a fairly calm Rhody Days for us. From my view from the Bay Street area, the carnival appeared to have at least as many people as the last few years, if not more. The number of people on Bay Street itself looked to be consistent with past years

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