

**CHAMBER from page 1A**

For Hannigan, the chamber is all about “making the circle bigger” and “moving forward together.” By partnering with other communities, organizations and chamber members, the chamber leverages the maximum amount of resources to support local businesses, grow the economy and bring in outside money. In the past year, tourism revenue has brought \$136.9 million into the Siuslaw region.

“Our community really does an amazing job — and the chamber is part of that, our city is part of that and our people are the biggest part of that. People come to vacation here because they want an authentic experience. They get that in Florence, and they meet the nicest people they’ve ever met,” Hannigan said.

The event’s special guest was Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Vonnie Mikkelsen.

“My favorite people are chamber community folks,” Mikkelsen said. “We’re hardworking, solution seeking, problem solving and change making. Most important of all, we’re just darn good people doing pretty remarkable things.”

“We can do hard things” is one of her favorite sayings, so she invented the term “Can-Do-Hard-Things” to describe the people who help communities such as Florence.

“Chambers of commerce are the go-to pool for communities,” Mikkelsen said. “You are action seeking, game changing, solution seeking, champions of community development. You can do, because you are Can-Do-Hard-Things.”

Mikkelsen, Hannigan and 2017-18 Chamber Board President Bobby Jensen gave parting gifts to outgoing members of the chamber board: Jenna Bartlett, Tom Basset, Jennifer Connor,

**CELEBRATION from page 1A**

There will also be activities to “draw in families,” Waggoner said, such as kid activities, live music, entertainment and an art table to create designs with a local painted rocks art project.

“We’re hoping to have BJ’s ice cream and cake — because that makes a party,” Waggoner said.

Florence Mayor Joe Henry said, “This is an exciting presentation on our 125th birthday as a city. ... But we also get to talk about the Oregon Mayor’s Conference, which, through a lot of hard work on the part of our staff, we were able to bid on and get to come to Florence this year.”

The Oregon Mayors Association Summer Conference will be held July 26 to 28 in Florence, with events at the Florence Events Center and Driftwood Shores Resort. The League of Oregon Cities estimates about 60 mayors and their spouses come to this annual event.

“The mayors will be here that week for the Oregon Mayor’s Conference, and they will be invited to our block party,” Messmer said. “You’ll see representatives from cities all across Oregon there, and we are very excited to have them all at this event.”

She added that “the coast is a very good draw” for the conference, and that the conference room block at Driftwood Shores already has a good amount of reservations.

Moving forward, Florence City Council will vote to approve the street closure at the next council meeting in July.

“It’s a Friday night, and there are some businesses down there that will be in operation and have clients and customers coming, so we are creating some literature to take to them to work to preserve access,” Messmer said.

Through it all, the City of Florence hopes to keep the event positive as it reflects on the history of the area and its people and plans for the future.

“We’re excited,” Messmer affirmed. “125 years is a lot.”

Dee Osborne and Robbie Wright.

The board members have served on the board for anywhere from less than a term to eight years for Bartlett.

“Jenna has been the one to walk me through the whole entire experience of being on the board and my presidency,” Jensen said. “She is such a special person to this community, and we need to give her a very big round of applause.”

The evening also signaled the end of Jensen’s term as president. He will now serve on the board as past president while Russ Pierson fills the role of president.

The Florence Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors for 2018-19 consists of:

- President Russ Pierson
- Past President Bobby Jensen Jr.
- President Elect Nancy Bosket
- Secretary Shauna Robbers
- Director Martin Alletson – returning
- Director Lynda Colter-Bergh – new

• Director Rich Colton – appointed by the board in May 2018

- Director Neil Ecker – new
- Director Janet Engel – new
- Director Susy Lacer – new
- Director Dan Lofy – returning

“Being on the board, you get to work with Florence’s finest,” Jensen said. “Those are the people who make the chamber great.”

As Mikkelsen welcomed the new board members to the stage, Hannigan presented them with a special gift, a small plant.

“To thrive, one needs water, a balance of life and nutrients,” Mikkelsen said. “You need to tend, prune and enjoy to grow. ...



We are so blessed that you choose to serve on our board.”

Each board member got a different plant with a variety of puns and jokes included.

“Russ, you are a sup-herb choice as the new president of our board,” Mikkelsen read. “A sincere thank you for your leadership and service.”

Pierson made a small presentation to end the evening.

“We need to work together to ensure that when we gather next year, we have found ways to not just survive, but thrive. The best way to do that is together. ... Most any chamber focuses on parties, parades and pageants. ... But we want to do more,” he said.

He offered the words “catalyst, convener and champion” as new things to focus on.

“Each of our members are the winners, and we’re your champions. The chamber staff, volunteers and boards are your champions. We’re the ones aiding you along the way and highlighting your successes,” he said. “We are champions not only of individual businesses ... but as we champion our entire community to make the Siuslaw region a community we can all be proud of.”

Both Hannigan and Pierson talked of one challenge for businesses in the year ahead, as the ReVision Florence Streetscaping Project begins in August and completely changes the Highway 101 corridor from Highway 126 south to the Siuslaw River Bridge.

“It’s a little bit of good news and a little bit of lemonade as this streetscaping project starts here

in August,” Hannigan said, referencing the “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade” proverb. “It’s going to be difficult, but we can do hard things. If we can do it together, we’ll get through it together.”

Pierson echoed this.

“All of us are better when we’re doing things together,” he said. “Your chamber of commerce is up to the challenge. We can come out of this year having enhanced our brand as Oregon’s Coastal Playground. We can have stronger member businesses and more businesses than ever committed to our common purposes as chamber members reaching across every business sector and reaching every age group, from millennials and their children on up to the greatest generation. ...

“We’re all collaborators in building the local economy and constructing the destiny of Florence and the entire Siuslaw region. Thank you, all of you Can-Do-Hard-Things.”

During the meeting, Hannigan also shared some good news about the chamber’s upcoming Fourth of July Fireworks. The show will again be in Historic Old Town Florence, with the fireworks launched from a barge on the Siuslaw River.

Thanks to a generous donation from Banner Bank, Hannigan said the fireworks display would be “better than ever” as it will be synchronized to music.

Banner Bank Branch Manager Dee Osborne said the bank’s recent remodel to include a community room led to the donation.

Central Lincoln PUD is currently occupying the space as an office, and offered a rent of \$5,000. Banner Bank accepted the money in order to pay it back into the community.

“Thank you PUD for paying rent to us so we were able to donate it,” Osborne said.

“What an amazing community that we live in,” Hannigan agreed.

The Chamber Annual Report event was sponsored by Darcie Clark – Keller Williams Real Estate and Windermere Real Estate/Lane County.

In addition, the chamber recognized its corporate and distinguished sponsors, volunteers, Chamber Ambassadors and guitarist Denny Weaver.

“We couldn’t do this without our team,” Hannigan said.

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