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“Wait till all the bubbles are on the top, and then you flip ‘em,” Rosie instructed. “But you don’t flip ‘em before, because it falls apart. You have to be patient.”

Just as the pancake got to the right amount of fluff and golden brown texture, she flipped the pancake on a porcelain plate and handed it out to those waiting to begin their day of work for the Power of FLorence.

Without a hint of dough inside, it really was the perfect pancake.

ZEN WEEDING

Julie Rassmann and Karen Perry have been at this for years. The Power of Florence pros have been beautifying the tennis courts and surrounding park area on 35th Street since the event began eight years ago. This project is led by the Delta Gamma organization.

The pair’s specialty has been the weeds surrounding the parks sign. “Each year, it’s been less and less,” Julie said. “This year there are far fewer weeds than there have been in the past.”

The two had different approaches to getting rid of the weeds, Julie by hand, Karen with a stand-up weed zinger.

“It’s either standing or sitting and scooting,” Julie said. “There’s no middle ground.”

Karen’s approach is better for the taller weeds, like dandelions, she said.

“You just get right on top of a weed like this, push down, and it pulls it out,” she said. “And if it doesn’t, you just go back and do it again. And again. And again.”

Julie took a more aggressive approach.

“Some people wear gloves, but I don’t because they just bother me,” she explained. “I can’t feel. You dig under, find the root and yank. You’ve got to get the root. If you’re going to do it, go for it.”

There’s no fast way to weed. If there was, they would have found it by now, the two suggested. Even spraying won’t take care of them.

“Weeding is an ongoing thing,” Julie said. “It’s sort of like housework. No end. The secret to weeding is just being diligent, and enjoying it.”

Karen added, “And doing it with a friend helps.”

Generally, Julie weeds on her own, at home in her yard. She stated there was just something about weeding that she found enjoyable, especially being outside and paying attention to detail.

“I’m a detail person anyway,” she said. “And you are just kind of in this calm, Zen zone. I don’t know what else to call it. It’s just yourself and nature. Zen weeding.”

“It’s just you versus the weeds,” Karen said — and one of them would go down by the end of the day.

“You can really take out aggression on these weeds,” Julie added.

“You have to focus and get in



PHOTOS BY JARED ANDERSON AND CHANTELE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS



the rhythm,” Karen explained. “You’re just focusing on that at the moment and nothing else. Unless we’re joking.”

And they joke a lot. They don’t share one-liners, as it isn’t standup. Generally, the jokes involve Julie scooting around the ground awkwardly, and Karen breaking out into laughter.

“It’s just a funny moment that you’re sharing with each other,” Julie said.

The pair have found that discovering friends and good humor is easy when everyone gets together to volunteer.

“We get the occasional helper that we don’t know, and they just come to help us,” Karen said. “Which is fun, getting to know somebody else in the community. They saw us working and came and join us.”

It’s that spirit of camaraderie that’s made the Power of Florence such an important part of the community.

“The person who started it, Kaylee Graham, her mom is a member of Delta Gamma, and her grandmother was a member of

Delta Gamma,” Karen said. “They would both come out and help weed as well. So it’s fun, that tradition.”

And it’s a tradition that’s being passed down from generation to generation, each one helping the other keep going.

“Having the community getting out and working for the betterment of the whole community is very special,” Julie said. “You don’t see that in every city, even small ones.”

It’s kind of Zen.

cut down or sheer off the invasive weeds that have taken over the dunes over the decades.

Brett Madsen’s tool of choice was a lopper.

He was attacking a mature Scotch broom. Loud cracks, snaps and creaks fill the air as Brett twisted and pulled of the branches.

“We just need to get to the middle of this plant, so I just plan to work my way in,” he said. “It’s actually fairly tough stuff, which is why it does so well.”

Brett explained that Scotch broom seeds last 20 years, and the real goal is to cut down the seed production as much as possible.

“We have to take these grandfathers out, and pull out the young seeds,” he said.

After lopping off the branches, all that’s left is a small stub of exposed wood, but he doesn’t bother digging out the entire shrub. It will die on its own, he said.

Brett comes out to these dunes four or five times a week, sometimes to get rid of the invasive weeds, but mostly to enjoy the splendor.

“I’m out here today because this is literally our backyard,” he said. “Watching the scotch broom eat the dunes slowly is too sad for me, so I need to step in. If you look back what was here 50 years ago, all of this was sand. And to look at the pictures today, at that change, I would just like to get it back to what it used to be and what it always did.”

To Brett, removing Scotch broom was very personal. If you had a bunch of weeds in your backyard, wouldn’t you go out to remove them too?

Most of the time he’s out there, it’s strictly leisure.

“We explore all the back trails, and all the byways and highways that nobody else finds,” he said.

His favorite place is an area he calls the secret valley, a deep valley covered in grass.

“You would never expect it in the middle of sand dunes, with ponds and water,” he said.

When asked where the exact location of the valley, he said, “Well, it wouldn’t be secret, would it?”

“Good answer!” another volunteer yelled with a laugh. “All of our old hiding spots are getting discovered.”

But finding the small, hidden gems is what makes Florence special to Brett.

“In my retirement, it’s almost a necessity to be out here,” he said. “It’s one of those places you don’t

have to deal with other humans. It’s just you and your buddy, taking a walk. It’s the best thing Florence has to offer.”

For Brett, taking care of the area is something that everyone needs to volunteer to do. He looked at the group of people surrounding him, discovering for themselves the secrets of the valleys hidden in the dunes. Did they disturb the peace and quiet of the land?

“I think that’s great,” he said. “I’m happy to have them out in my backyard. It’s all of our backyard.”

As for the location of the secret valley? It’s some point north of Joshua Lane and Nautilus Court, somewhere beyond the east fence and beyond the dunes.

If you do find yourself venturing out into the dunes to find it, make sure you take out some Scotch broom along the way.

LONG DAY

Kale Jensen looked tired from a long day’s work.

The fourth-grade going on fifth-grader had been working alongside a group of Siuslaw High School Interact Club members, the youth branch of the Rotary Club of Florence, digging up weeds and laying down bark at the school’s driveway entrance on Oak Street.

It was just before noon; the sun was out. The wind had been kicking in quite a bit and gave Kale a whiplash of bursts of cold wind mixed with the hot sun.

Kale had been doing a lot of raking.

“Well, we’re doing Power of Florence where we’re making the place better and fixing it,” was how he described his mission.

Right now, he was working on spreading the bark.

The day had been winding down, and now it was time to make sure all the bark was even. Kale took his rake, smoothed out the bark and then used his foot to pound it into the ground.

“You have to make it level,” he said. “You push and pull until it makes it level, so it looks flat.”

This wasn’t Kale’s first go-around with yardwork. He spoke of a time when he moved into his new house in Florence, where the front yard was nothing but sand and trees.

“We just dug up trees and the roots, and put them into a pile,” he said. “Then we burned the trees and stuff, and got the sand, leveled it all out and planted the grass.”

His favorite time spent outside is playing with his brothers and sisters, but he said he liked volunteering. It gives him a chance to work with his hands.

“I love things like that,” he said. “Just like making birdhouses and structures. My brother made a bench, and it is actually kind of fun to look at the things he makes. But right now, I’m making a yard at the high school.”

Kale is looking forward to getting to high school himself, eventually. He’s a bit apprehensive about middle school, but high school is where the real fun is at.

“You get to do what you want to do in high school,” he said.

Of course, he’s not there yet, but he’s preparing the place for when he finally arrives.

“It’s important for people and animals,” he said. “And it’s important so plants can grow and the animals and birds can be around them.”

When asked if he was having fun, he held the rake tightly and looked at the mounds of bark he had in front of him. He sighed, smiled, and simply said, “Yes.”

Kale Jensen was tired.

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SIUSLAW PIONEER MUSEUM
PRESENTS



A Collection of Fabric Woven by Alice Peckham of Swisshome and a demonstration of the antique 4-harness floor loom used in the Peckham family for 3 generations.

A 4-harness direct tie-up counterbalance 1951 Allen Loom, built-in Milwaukie, Oregon, and woven on by three generations of the Peckham family of Mapleton, was donated to the Pioneer Museum by Peckham with the hope that “[real words involving inspiring others to weave if I remember right].”

The warping process will continue every Saturday at the museum (noon to four) until the job is done and weaving commences. All weavers are welcome to come and help or share ideas, including (1) what we could do next and (2) what commitment we can collectively make to assure that the loom remains an active, interactive, part of our community. That four-hour window offers a good opportunity for Florence area weavers to get to know each other.

Spinners, there is room on the same floor of the Pioneer Museum to bring your spinning wheels to share your craft and maybe inspire some new spinners too. The museum has a few spinning wheels, none near operational.

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- ☐ Laxatives, diarrhea medicine
- ☐ Rubbing alcohol, petroleum jelly
- ☐ Soap, salt, baking soda
- ☐ Sanitary napkins, matches
- ☐ Triangular bandages
- ☐ Elastic bandages, pressure dressings
- ☐ Cotton balls, disposable diapers
- ☐ Scissors, needles, tweezers
- ☐ Popsicle sticks, splints, heavy string
- ☐ Thermometer, paper tape
- ☐ Syrup of Ipecac
- ☐ Personal prescription medications

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APPLE PIE

The west end of the Florence Events Center was packed full of people, sitting and conversing while digging into freshly made pies and chilled ice cream.

They were there for the annual Ice Cream Social, held by the Van Fans, in what has become the de facto end of the Power of Florence.

Weary volunteers from a hard day’s work, along with those who were just looking for a tasty treat, lined up patiently to pick out their favorite pie from the many volunteers who handed out the sweet confections.

One of those volunteers is Sandi Hennig. It’s her job to cut and hand out the multiple variety of available pies.

“A lot of cherry is going right now,” Sandi said, looking down the multiple empty pie pans. “And many people, bless their hearts, made pecan pies. We also have some blueberry, but it’s mostly pecan pies.”