

# Community Voices

INSIDE — A8

## WELCOME INTO THE SIUSLAW HALL OF FAME

SPORTS — B

# Siuslaw News

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON



## Of Parks and Pickleball ...

*How to build a rec center in the Siuslaw region*  
Part I

BY JARED ANDERSON  
SIUSLAW NEWS

“Welcome to tonight’s big crowd ... and many pickleballers,” said Lane County Parks Division Manager Brett Henry, looking across a crowded room at a public meeting on Aug. 2. He was revealing the county’s newly drafted Parks Master Plan, which will work as a guidepost for the department over the next two years.

It wasn’t immediately clear why the pickleballers, or “picklers” as they call themselves, had shown up. The sport of pickleball was not on any previous literature distributed about the meeting beforehand, and the 88-page master plan mentions nothing about the game.

“Maybe they got the wrong room?” one person posited before the meeting.

The picklers made up the majority of the audience, which was the largest the Parks Division had ever seen at a community meeting.

During the meeting, the county team members went over their hopes for what the parks would become and the six goals that they’ll implement to see their plans to fruition: Collaborate, connect, create vibrancy, generate economic vitality, protect resources and reflect our values.

They talked about some of the economic and staffing factors that were affecting the department, the shortcomings of the previous plan and what they needed from the community to succeed.

It was a robust presentation, but by the end no mention of pickleball had been made.

“I think we can wrap up now,” said Charlie Conrad, Lane County parks supervising analyst, at the end of the presentation. “John, do you want to talk? I’m interested to hear about pickleball.”

At that point, John Griffin, local coach and pickleball extoller, stood in front of the room. He spoke with an enthusiastic command as he addressed the room.

“This is the greatest thing that’s ever happened to me, I love this game,” Griffin said. “Not everyone is capable of playing the major sports, but we still want a feeling of team camaraderie. Pickleball gives us that. We have team camaraderie. We laugh, we throw friendly insults to each other, it’s just a blessing.”

The crowd cheered him on, clapping with every statistic about the sport, cheering when he spoke about how it could revitalize the local economy.

Griffin explained that the picklers do have access to a public court at Rolling Dunes Park, located at the corner of 35th Street and Siano Loop in Florence. But as the years have gone by, the picklers have outgrown the park’s capacity.

See PARKS page 6A



Students enjoy aerial summer school

PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Students in the second annual Florence Air Academy learn about STEM and future careers.

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

There are many different ways that students on summer break can spend their free time. One of the most interesting, exciting and unexpected ways may be to learn to fly.

This opportunity is offered through a partnership between Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County (BGC) and Aero Legends, a local

company that is deeply involved in aviation on many different levels.

The “Air Academy,” as it has been dubbed by program coordinators Chuck Trent and Terry Tomeny, was created to showcase the scientific elements of flying, but also to help area youth discover their passion, whatever that may be.

It is the second summer for the academy.

“Every child in America deserves a great future,” said Trent, the local executive di-

rector of BGC. “STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education is critical to the ultimate success of our young people, as STEM jobs in the United States are expected to grow nearly twice as fast as other fields in 2018. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of both interested and adequately prepared kindergarten through 12th-grade students in STEM subjects, especially among minority youth and young women.

“To meet the demands of the changing world, and develop the leaders of tomorrow, we must help our youth build the necessary competencies and skills to pursue STEM careers.”

Trent is always on the lookout for new ways to engage the students involved in the programs at the BGC and was intrigued by a proposal he received last year from two prominent local aviators.

See ACADEMY page 10A



## OCHS moves forward with process to hire shelter manager

*Board clarifies No-Kill Policy*

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

Oregon Coast Humane Society (OCHS), still faced with the changes brought about by a new board and lack of an executive director, has announced a significant addition to the organization’s leadership team with the hiring of a new shelter manager.

OCHS Board President Shauna Robbers said she is glad to have one of the main elements of the recently reorganized group hired and expected on site soon.

“We are pleased to have hired a full-time shelter manager with a great depth of experience,” Robbers said. “Her name is Marina Lewis and she is in the process of moving here from Plano, Texas. We expect her to be here to start in her new position as early as next week, and we are really looking forward to working with her. She will be an important hire for us moving forward.”

There have been a number of changes at the OCHS as a direct result of an inquiry into the shelter’s practices, which was initiated by the Oregon Department of Justice late last year.

Lewis’s hiring addresses one of the board’s major problems, which has been a lack of leadership at the OCHS shelter, while board members are continuing to work to implement other suggestions made by the Department of Justice.

The position of thrift store manager was filled last month and the search for an executive director, to supervise all operational aspects of the organization, is ongoing.

The humane society’s current board members were selected by a vote of the membership of OCHS in April.

There have also been some contentious issues, in addition to unanticipated personality conflicts, that have created new concerns within the OCHS ranks.

Some of these concerns have been expressed in letters and emails sent to the Siuslaw News and posted on social media platforms, and during protests and petitions organized against the current board.

There has also been confusion and anger generated by the unclarity and misinformation shared surrounding the recent euthanasia of two long-term canine residents of the shelter.

The OCHS No-Kill Policy, which lately has been criticized on social media platforms and among board members, has resulted in disagreements on the intent of the policy. These disagreements led to the resignation of directors Jack Hannigan and Judy Roth last month.

A new director, Jackie Parker, has recently filled one of the empty positions on the board.

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