



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

A private hangar and the Florence Municipal Airport served as class space for the Air Academy.

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“Retired colonels Sam Spayd and Terry Tomeny approached the club with an idea to create the opportunity to help young people, especially those who need it most, develop passion and an aptitude for careers in aviation,” Trent said. “Their goal was to inspire kids and to share with them the love of aviation.”

Ultimately, the two pilots, Spayd, the founder of Aero Legends, and Tomeny, the current owner, wanted to give students a taste for flight and help them learn what it takes to be a pilot.

“The Florence Air Academy was designed to show kids what careers are possible,” Trent continued. “STEM does not necessarily mean being a scientist. Sam and Terry are famous for telling our kids, ‘If you find something that you are good at, something that you love to do, you will never work a day in your life.’”

The Air Academy was held at the Florence Municipal Airport, 2001 Airport Lane, in a private hangar that serves as the students’ classroom.

Tomeny, Spayd and other licensed pilots taught the students basic aeronautical theories, simple airplane maintenance and other skills not directly related to avionics, which the instructors hope will translate to other areas in the students’ lives.

“The Air Academy was really Sam’s idea,” Tomeny said. “Last year, I teamed with him as a flight instructor. Our goal was not really to encourage the kids to be pilots, but rather to encourage them to pursue something that they are passionate about that they can enjoy for a lifetime.”

Trent also believes the concept of providing the reasons that the world works in the way it does, will inspire and motivate young people, even when school is not in session.

“Research has shown that the out-of-school environment — after school and during the summer — advances STEM knowledge and increases interest in STEM-related careers. The challenge is getting our kids to understand careers in STEM exist, that there is opportunity all around them and that they have what it takes to be successful in STEM jobs,” he said. “It’s important to help kids understand what’s underneath the everyday things that they love: what’s underneath the games, the apps and the devices. It’s math, science and engineering. BGC’s mission is to create ladders of opportunity and help our kids climb as high as they want to go.”

Trent and Tomeny were both pleased with the turnout for this year’s Air Academy, which is held at no cost to the participants. There were about 10 total participants from different grades.

On graduation day last Friday, all of the students did pre-flight inspections on the four aircraft they would be co-piloting and then all took a ride in the planes.

According to Trent, all of the students expressed appreciation for the chance to learn about a subject they were interested in finding out more about, while getting a chance to fly.

Tomeny feels the first two seasons of Air Academy were a success and wants to add to the classes available to students

during the summer.

“In the future, in addition to the Air Academy, we have ideas for a similar Builders Academy or Automotive Academy,” he said. “I also have another idea called Microds (miniature hot rods) for the kids and local businesses and the community.”

He added, “Aero Legends is very interested in helping the BGC help the youth of Florence. They do a fantastic job. We could either just donate money — or get personally involved. We chose the latter, and to be honest I think we get more out of it than the kids do. It’s very special when you see a spark lit.”

Trent was particularly pleased with the response from this year’s attendees. He sees the effort as a way to instill in students a sense of their place in the world.

“For me, the best part of the

Florence Air Academy was graduation day, when each of the kids got to go up with a licensed pilot. Standing on the flight-line with parents and grandparents listening to the kids making the radio calls during the flight was fantastic,” Trent said. “As each plane landed, watching the joy, excitement and sense of accomplishment for each ‘Young Eagle’ confirmed that the goal was achieved.

“There is no greater sense of accomplishment than to see kids come into the program shy, apprehensive and unsure, but walk out of the program curious, confident and excited about the possibilities ahead of them.”

For more information about the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County, visit bgcwlcc.org.

SHELTER from page 1A

Robbers is well aware of the furor surrounding the euthanasia issue and points to the organization’s website, which has a description of the protocols and procedures in place to determine if, and when, an animal should be euthanized.

“We have a very active animal welfare committee and we have updated the animal welfare and euthanasia information on our website,” Robbers said. “It spells out very clearly the process we have in place to determine what is best for each animal.”

One of the most repeated claims on social media platforms states that the end-of-life policies that govern the assessment and determination of an animal’s long-term health and quality of life at OCHS are being ignored.

Some have also accused the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) of not following past practices with end-of-life decisions for some shelter animals. That claim, however, is not consistent with the OCHS policies currently online and not within the guiding principles indicated by the shelter’s policies.

Robbers said that any individuals with concerns about an animal’s adoptability or health circumstances has the opportunity to make their concerns known and participate in the deliberations surrounding that animal’s ultimate disposition.

The OCHS website states that any party may refer any

shelter or foster care animal to the AWC for deliberation by submitting an Animal Referral Form, or any other written means, that states the name of the animal and the nature of concern. The AWC referrals are available at the shelter and must be turned in to the shelter manager. A copy will be forwarded to the committee chairperson. The validity of the referral is for the committee to determine.

The AWC policy goes on to say, “It is the responsibility of the AWC to conduct meetings and make recommendations for or against the non-emergency euthanasia of an animal. When euthanasia is considered, a quorum of the AWC must be present, of which a majority must vote for euthanasia in order to issue a recommendation to the shelter. All ballots regarding euthanasia shall be conducted by written secret ballot with the shelter manager or designee as the neutral observer to validate the ballot. The final decision to euthanize shall be made by the shelter manager or, if the shelter manager is unavailable, by majority vote of a quorum of the board of directors.”

In addition, one of the suggestions made by the Department of Justice seems not to

have resulted in achieving the department’s desired outcome.

Barbara Butzer was hired by the department in April to oversee and manage the situation at OCHS. Her primary goal was to help the organization and to implement the Department of Justice’s suggestions for replacing board members and, secondarily, to find an individual to run the organization. She was hired on a short-term basis but was unsuccessful in finding a replacement for her position who she felt was qualified to run OCHS.

At the annual OCHS membership meeting held in June, Butzer stated that she was widening the search and was hopeful that a suitable candidate would be found before her contract was concluded. Unfortunately, that was not accomplished before her departure, but interviews for the position are underway.

Robbers said she believes an executive director for OCHS will be found soon.

According to Elizabeth Grant, the senior assistant attorney general at the Oregon Department of Justice, OCHS has been diligent in its efforts to implement her department’s suggestions. She also believes the organization has adequately addressed their major concerns.

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