



SAILORS ENTER HEART OF SEASON

SPORTS — B

CROW BRINGS HOLIDAY MUSIC TO SENIORS

INSIDE — A3



Siuslaw News

128TH YEAR | ISSUE NO. 103

SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON



Now that's a wrap

STORY & PHOTO
BY JARED ANDERSON
SIUSLAW NEWS

A pile of presents from the community greets the 39 teens and their families who participated in this year's Twin Lakes Giving Tree.

Twin Lakes Store's annual Giving Tree fulfills Christmas lists for rural teens

It was 5:30 p.m. at the Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue's Sutton Lake Fire Station, and it was surprisingly calm. By 6 p.m., it would be a madhouse, filled with frenetic teenagers ripping open presents for the annual Twin Lakes Giving Tree program.

It's utter pandemonium. "The decibel level goes from

zero to 100," one organizer said. But just a few minutes before the kids started arriving, last minute preparations were being made: Setting out the chips and snacks, opening the pizza boxes.

"All the names are on the stockings," Vicki Ambrosio explained as she showed off what her and her crew had set up.

Almost 40 socks — actual socks, not the usual stockings — over-stuffed with treats and toys were hung on hooks where firefighter jackets usually rested. Just above, where the helmets were once located, were a long line of gift bags filled with donated food.

See CHRISTMAS LISTS page 8A

Teacher increases equity in computer science

Siuslaw High School offers a new computer science course for all

SPECIAL TO THE
SIUSLAW NEWS

At Siuslaw High School, Edward Mielke teaches a new class called Exploring Computer Science (ECS). It's designed to help increase equity and create opportunities for students who may have had no prior exposure to computers.

"Students have looked at real-world problems, like how to make cornrows, fast vs. slow ways of searching and sorting, and finally, efficient road-construction. It was upon this last lesson, 'Muddy City,' that a student, Will, commented that this was the 'funnest class in school!' Of course, I thought this was because I had just handed out Skittles candies to help them keep track of their road construction," Mielke said. "It was the same student, however, that first made a connection that when the



Students in the Exploring Computer Science class learn binary the fun way, with finger lights representing electrical impulses of on and off, or ones and zeros, which are binary numbers. Then, students role-play as "robots" that must build a sandwich. They are learning that in order for a computer to solve a problem, it must be divided into a sequential set of precise, executable instructions.

dents used Skittles as moving pieces to solve a sophisticated yet fun algorithm puzzle to figure out the least number of paving stones to connect every house in the muddy city; it's an example of how ECS teaches a classic computer science algorithm that is used in network routing protocols.

See SCIENCE page 5A

Solving the plastic dilemma

Plastic recycling subject of Jan. 2 workshop

BY MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

A letter writing campaign to bring attention to the need to address plastic recycling issues will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 2. The community is invited.

Members of Florence Precious Plastics (FPP), an offshoot of the activist group Florence ORganizes (FOR), will be discussing the many issues surrounding the plastic paradigm and writing letters to designated companies and their public relations spokespersons. The meeting will meet in the Bromley Room at the Siuslaw Public Library, 1460 Ninth St., from 5 to 8 p.m.

FPP members hope to increase the dialogue between consumers of plastic materials and the producers of those materials.

Eileen Angilletta, the spokesperson for both FOR and FPP, said, "The purpose of this event is to get people involved with solving the plastic dilemma here in Florence. ... Precious Plastics hasn't had a general meeting in over six months since the core team members have been working on getting equipment, raising money through donations, and looking for a location for a repurposing plant here in Florence."

In that time, FPP also completed the requirements to become a recognized non-profit.

The big problem that faces many companies involved with plastic is the adaptability and cost of plastic. Plastic can be used in many applications and can be shaped and molded into almost any form for any purpose. It is also remarkably affordable. However, many plastics are used for a single, short period of time or, worse yet, is simply removed from the items it surrounds and tossed in the trash.

FPP is one of the groups formed under FOR last year. Several of FOR's subgroups are focused on education, social justice and the environment. Each committee is tasked with assessing issues and crafting actions to stop or modify situations that they consider untenable.

Angilletta and her fellow FPP members have decided that the issue of recycling can no longer be ignored. The letter writing workshop is one way to participate in crafting a solution, especially since there hasn't been a change in the recycling rules or opportunities in Florence since recent global issues reduced the types of plastic still recyclable in the area.

"We have participated in other events such as the Master Recyclers' plastic round-up, Power of Florence, and others. It is time now to get the education piece together," Angilletta said.

See PLASTICS page 7A

INSIDE	Classifieds.....	B6	Opinion.....	A4
	Community.....	A3	Records.....	A2
	Kid Scoop.....	B5	Community Voices.....	A6
	Library Tidings.....	A5	Weather Data.....	A2

THIS WEEK'S
WEATHER
Full Forecast, A3

TODAY
50 42

THURSDAY
50 38

FRIDAY
49 41

SATURDAY
52 41

SIUSLAW NEWS
2 SECTIONS | 16 PAGES
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