



EASTER EVENTS INSIDE — A7

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NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY

FLORENCE, OREGON

WEATHER



Partly cloudy with a high of 60 and a low tonight of 47.
Full forecast on A3

COMMUNITY



USCG Sector North Bend plans public open house
INSIDE — A3

SPORTS



PRs at Prefontaine
INSIDE — SPORTS

RECORDS
Obituaries & emergency response logs
Inside — A2

KID SCOOP
Newspapers in Education every week
Inside — B5

CLASSIFIEDS
Listings and public notices
Inside — B6

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THE S I U S L A W N E W S . C O M

2 SECTIONS | 20 PAGES
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Suicide among Oregon vets is twice national average

Latest study shows that older veterans are at highest risk among state's veteran population

Editor's note: This is the third in a four-part special collaboration between the Cottage Grove Sentinel, The Creswell Chronicle, Siuslaw News and Newport News-Times focusing on the rising suicide rate in Oregon. Each Wednesday through April, the four newspapers in this collaboration will each be contributing a part to the series and will be publishing them together. The hope is that, by sharing our resources and readerships, we can begin establishing a dialogue within each of our communities about this important subject.

Special 4-part series

Breaking the Silence:
Shining a light on Oregon's suicide crisis

A collaborative series between the Cottage Grove Sentinel, The Creswell Chronicle, Siuslaw News and Newport News-Times

"I think about killing myself every day, I just haven't decided that today is the day." — Anonymous Florence veteran

BY MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

Suicide committed by veterans is a major problem across America and in Oregon, and it is a problem that, according to recent statistics, is getting worse rather than better. Because of this, suicide deaths among soldiers was a topic of conversation last week among Florence-area veterans, spurred primarily by the visit of the traveling replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, known as "The Wall That Heals."

Sadly, underscoring the memorial's visit was the unexpected death of local

See VETERANS page 8A

Region readies for Earth Day

BY JARED ANDERSON
SIUSLAW NEWS

The Siuslaw region is celebrating Earth Day in a big way this year, as multiple local and state organizations will be holding celebrations, work parties and films in honor of the world's largest environmental event.

The main event will be held on Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. as the Siuslaw Climate Alliance hosts "Earth Day on the Boardwalk," which will feature dozens of booths and activities in an all ages event. "There's just so much going on," said climate alliance co-chair Maureen Miltenberger. "People are just so enthusiastic and are wanting to share the knowledge they have on how we can help our own little part of the world."

The event, which will be held on the Port of Siuslaw Boardwalk in Historic Old Town Florence, will be larger than the inaugural event last year, with more than 20 organizations participating. The theme for the year is "Protect our Species."

See CELEBRATION page 9A

Healthcare Town Hall

STORY & PHOTO
BY MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio answers questions from the audience about prescription costs during his town hall at Siuslaw Public Library on April 16.

DeFazio discusses access to affordable health care, 'Medicare for All'

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio hosted a Healthcare Town Hall in the Bromley Room at the Siuslaw Public Library on Tuesday. PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Chief Administrative Officer Jason Hawkins appeared with the congressman and provided perspective from his role as a leader in the local medical community.

DeFazio, Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, represents the 4th

District of Oregon and convened the meeting to provide constituents with an update on a variety of health care related subjects. In February, he co-sponsored "The Medicare for All Act," H.R. 1384, which is intended to address issues that have arisen from the series of changes made to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by President Donald Trump's administration over the past two years.

The legislation is currently work-

ing its way through multiple committees to determine the impact the bill would have on the areas the committees are tasked with overseeing.

"Although the ACA dramatically reduced the number of uninsured individuals, it has been in great need of improvement since day one," DeFazio said. "In my opinion, a government-run, not-for-profit health

See HEALTH page 9A

'A DIFFERENT KIND OF POLICING'

School Resource Officer gives update on 2nd year of partnership between Florence Police, Siuslaw schools

BY CHANTELE MEYER
SIUSLAW NEWS

Last week, Florence Police Commander John Pitcher and Officer

Brandon Bailey gave the Siuslaw School District Board of Directors a report on the School Resource Officer (SRO) position at the school district.

According to board chair Suzanne Mann-Heintz, the board invited Bailey to speak after hearing about improved attendance rates in the schools.

"The board was hoping to get an update on your sense of our effectiveness," Mann-Heintz said to the SRO, who has served in the position since January 2018. "We'd like to know a little more from your perspective about the services you've been able to provide and the effectiveness in terms of our students."

Siuslaw School District and

the Florence Police Department initiated the SRO program in the 2017-18 school year by using grant funds and school resources. Now in the middle of its second year, the program has helped to improve school safety by having an increased presence in school facilities, to detect and apprehend students who miss school and to assist in traffic enforcement and safety around the Siuslaw schools on Oak Street.

Pitcher said, "We're in year two, and the program is evolving. We're learning what works for the administrators, works for the officer and works best for the kids."

Bailey agreed.

"It's been a learning curve and process for me on how to work with the administration here and my role in the school. We've just kind of been going along and seeing what works and what doesn't," he said. "I wouldn't lie and say everything has worked so far — it hasn't. I've made mistakes and I've learned from things."

According to Bailey, the schools haven't had an SRO in nine years.

"As a relatively new police officer to Florence, I didn't know what type of job this was going to be. I don't think anybody really did, unless you've done the school resource position. It's definitely a different kind of policing," he said. "You

go from the streets and dealing with adults and then going and working with children."

Now that Bailey has some time at the schools under his belt, he hopes to transition into a more proactive form of policing.

"Unfortunately, this year has been really reactive for me," he said. "We've really had a lot going on at the schools, not to put anybody on blast, but we've really not had a lot going on at the elementary school, it's been more at the high school and middle school. We've had a lot of minor in possessions recently. We've had a lot of the vape pens and things like that."

See SRO PROGRAM page 10A

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