



**Siuslaw School District members of all ages participated in education this week, including students who helped decorate the schools; senior Elizabeth Luevano, who presented before the Siuslaw School Board; and district staff who greeted school arrivals Wednesday in support of fully funding Oregon's schools.**



PHOTOS BY CHANTELE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS

**EDUCATION from page 1A**

The site continued, "Most of our students will meet bus drivers, playground monitors, office staff, kitchen staff, custodians or small group instructors even before they enter a classroom. Once the school day begins, they are all in a safe and caring environment with highly trained and committed teachers. It is here they can be motivated to reach their greatest potential.

"We are proud to work with such a dedicated and professional group."

In addition, the Siuslaw School Board met for its May meeting Wednesday evening. The board heard reports on the upcoming Scholarship Awards Night on Thursday, May 30, at 5:30 p.m.; the Health Occupations Student Association's (HOSA) June trip to Orlando, Fla., for the 42nd Annual International Leadership Conference; Florence Community PTA's two recent awards and more.

During the public comments period at the beginning of the meeting, Siuslaw senior Elizabeth Luevano presented to the board the Senior Class of 2019's petition to have their teachers more involved with graduation night on June 7.

"Teaching takes a special kind of courage and compassion; and when it comes to our class, a very high patience level," Luevano said. "The Class of 2019 wouldn't have come this far without the teachers who were patient despite our impatience. The reason why we are here today is because we humbly request that teachers hand us our diplomas this year and the years to follow."

Luevano and her friend Hannah Freudenthal gathered 70 signatures from senior students — representing nearly three-quarters of the class — to include with their letter to the board. Eight of the students attended the meeting along with concerned community members.

"We understand the significance that the handing of the diplomas has to the board, and we would just like to be clear that our intent is not malicious or disrespectful," Luevano continued. "We greatly appreciate the hard work of the school board and we still would like you to be a part of our graduation — and that is why we are requesting this compromise. We request that two teachers of our class's choosing hand us our diplomas, and before we return to our seats, we shake hands with the board members to thank you for all the hard work you have done for our school district."

Board Chair Suzanne Mann-Heintz thanked the students for their participation. It wasn't until the end of the meeting that the board took a moment to discuss the issue.

"For graduation, we have John (Barnett) and Paul (Burns) who have agreed to present diplomas," Mann-

Heintz said. "At this point in time, if it's the will of the board, we might discuss the petition from students and what we think about their proposal."

The board restated that the students wish to have two teachers hand the seniors their diplomas, followed by handshakes with the school board representatives. A similar request came before the board last year, which Burns said the board had discussed "at length."

"I'm sticking with what we talked about last year — that it is an important thing for the board to do that," he said. "I think it's one of the few perks of this job that we get to do that."

Barnett described graduation as an "institution," with some practices going back to his own graduation.

"When I walked down that aisle in the very same gym that these students are going to be walking down in a few weeks, I personally went out of my way to thank my favorite teachers. I took that one-on-one moment and took that time ... face to face to thank those teachers that I felt had impact on my high school career. To me, that felt less pretentious and more genuine than standing in front of a crowd," he said.

While board members contemplated the way students might select their teachers, they acknowledged the 85 teachers in the district that helped students reach their senior year.

"It's the school's celebration," Burns said. "Our goal from where we start these kids moving through is to have them graduate. We're celebrating the whole completion of our task of why we're here in the first place."

He said that the board, elected by residents in the school district, represent the entire district.

Members of the public disagreed with Burns' sentiment, questioning how "it's not the seniors' graduation" and applauding when Siuslaw High School Vice Principal Garth Gerot said, "I'm always student centered. I think if the class feels this way, that's really important. It's their graduation. It's not ours."

Mann-Heintz agreed, saying, "I feel like it's their

graduation, and I kind of would like to comply in some way with what they requested. I know it's an important time and most of the students don't have a strong personal relationship with us."

She requested they come up with a compromise.

However, the board was unable to come to a decision during the meeting. Director Guy Rosinbaum said he felt blindsided by the fact that the petition wasn't placed on the board's agenda a week prior. He and others learned about the students' effort just that day in the Siuslaw News.

"We all are trying to work together here for the betterment of the schools. I like it when people get involved and I want them involved. But unfortunately, we have to follow a lot of rules up here. It would be kind of nice if others understood that once in a while and followed as well," he said.

Barnett echoed this, saying, "It's not like students didn't know this graduation was coming. Maybe they aren't the best versed on how things are done, but instead of being impulsive, I wish this would have been brought up to the board ... like last month, so we would have had time to figure out just what we want to do, have some time to discuss it and then we would be better prepared to make a decision."

In wrapping up the decision, Mann-Heintz said, "The board has a couple of choices. We can decide it, we can not decide it or we can decide at another time. Of course, the next board meeting is not until after graduation."

The meeting concluded with the decision to not make a decision. Afterwards, some board members checked schedules to see if a follow-up discussion could still be held before the senior students' final school day on May 31.

"Graduation is something we don't take lightly," Barnett said. "Graduation is a daily consideration. ... It's a k-12 celebration, because when we take our kids in (kindergarten), we plan on making them through until 12. We preach graduation rates all the way through."

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**FIRES from page 1A**

As the majority of fire personnel came back from the house fire and the Reedsport department was released, a vehicle fire was reported at 980 Tamarack St. Crews arrived to find the vehicle engulfed in flames and within a few feet of another vehicle, as well as a home. Firefighters were able to extinguish the fire quickly.

Florence Police also responded due to reports that the vehicle fire was the result of arson. After interviewing witnesses and discovering additional evidence at the scene, a suspect was identified, and police were attempting to locate the suspect as of Friday morning. The investigation into the arson is on-going.

Finally, around 9 a.m. on Friday, another brush fire was reported just south of Florence.

"It was a small burn pile, and the residents didn't know there was a burn ban," Schick said.

The region is currently under a temporary suspension of the outdoor burning, with a possible resumption of the season on Thursday, May 16, if rain comes.

"Right now, it's unusual weather," said Schick. "It's warm, it's dry and things can get out of control very quickly. Until we can get some rain, which looks like it might happen next week, people just have to be careful."

**Florence Food Share**

Ask us about volunteer opportunities.  
2190 Spruce Street • P.O. Box 2514  
Florence, Oregon 97439  
(541) 997-9110  
info@florencefoodshare.org

**Habitat for Humanity**

Construction Volunteers needed for each stage of the building process.  
Experience is a plus, but not required. Help us build a new home  
For information call 541-902-9227

**Helping Hands Coalition**

We are in need of volunteers on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. We need volunteers to serve food, set up for meals and also prepare meals beginning at 11:00 am and finishing at 2:00pm.  
New Location: Community Baptist Church, 4590 Hwy. 101, Florence  
(Across from Fred Meyer)

**Senior Services Advisory**

**Council Needs New Members**

Are you a senior? Have a passion for working with seniors? If yes, please consider applying for the Senior & Disability Services (S&DS) Senior Services Advisory Council. S&DS serves all of Lane County with a wide range of publicly funded services for older adults and persons with disabilities. The council advises S&DS on services and advocates on senior topics. Contact us at: sdsadvisorycouncil@lco.org or download an application from: http://www.lco.org/827/SSAC-Council-Membership Application deadline: April 26, 2019.

**Meals on Wheels and Cafe 60**

Meals on Wheels are available to people over the age of 60 who cannot get out much due to illness or advanced age and who are not eating properly, regardless of income. Cafe 60 is available for those who prefer to make new friends in a dining room setting.  
1570 Kingwood, PO Box 2313, Florence  
541-997-5673  
laneseniormeals.org

**Memory Care Respite of Florence**

Come join the team! Memory Care Respite of Florence is looking for new volunteers to spend time socializing, playing games, listening to music, and having coffee and lunch with our participating senior citizens. Our program depends on volunteer power to stay afloat and time is running out! If you're at all interested in socializing and relaxing with seniors while their loved one takes a break, please email us for more information. We need more volunteers like YOU to keep our program going. Contact us at memcarerespite@gmail.com

**Oregon Coast Humane Society**

relies heavily on volunteers.  
There are many opportunities to volunteer and a variety of skills and talents are always in need. Volunteer interest forms may be found online, at the shelter and at our Thrift Shop on Bay Street.  
www.oregoncoasthumane.org/volunteer/

**Peace Harbor Volunteers**

Join the Peace Harbor Hospital Volunteers, you will find an area of interest in a caring organization.  
400 9th Street, Florence  
541-997-8412 ext. 2218

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maribob@oregonfast.net  
www.ustooflorence.org

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