

FOOD from page 1A

“As amazing as it is to see the shelves absolutely stuffed, it’s sobering to realize how quickly all those boxes and cans will fly off the shelves,” Wobbe said.

On the cash front, the fundraiser initially brought in \$5,779, but a check for an additional \$500 was brought in the next day.

The largest donation is coming from Klaus and

Maria Witt, owners of Top Hydraulics. They vowed to donate \$1 for every pound donated during the event.

“The Food Share Pounding resulted in 23,410 pounds of food donations collected, which we are delighted to match with a \$23,410 cash donation,” Klaus told the Siuslaw News. “We feel very blessed for living in this generous and caring community!”

“I just hope people realize

what Cindy started, what she created,” Engle said. “She’s up for year 20, and it’s pretty amazing. It started so small. The first year just 1,200 pounds came in. It’s amazing how one person can make such a difference in this community. And then with Klaus, the two of them. ... Just wow.”

Wobbe had equal praise for the staff and volunteers of the Florence Food Share.

“An event like this can-

not happen without a lot of volunteers working in every direction,” she said. “We had people working the scales, sorting and packing the boxes, loading and unloading the truck, greeters and cashiers and runners and shopping helpers. It was exciting to watch and fun to be a part of. At the end of the day, we got the job done together and made a miracle happen.”

SOS from page 1A

stakeholders on both sides of the aisle.

However, the act’s 2012 renewal was opposed by conservatives, who objected to extending the legislation’s provisions to same-sex couples. It was eventually reauthorized after an extended legislative battle.

As a result of last year’s government shutdown, VAWA expired on Dec. 21, 2018. The act was briefly resurrected as part of a short-term spending bill in January 2019 but expired one month later. Last April, the House passed a VAWA reauthorization bill, which has yet to be passed by the Senate.

The House and the Senate did agree on updates to the over-arching program the federal government has crafted to deal with domestic violence, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act (FVPSA), Senate Bill 2259 — and it is those changes that are directly affecting SOS.

“There are many agencies across the nation that provide housing and utility assistance along with advocacy for victims of violent crimes,” Teter said. “However, all those agencies have separated those departments — in staffing and many times even location — for years. SOS has looked at this as being unnecessary in rural communities. Now we are forced to be like every other agency that provides the services we do.”

Based on 2018 statistics alone, the need for support services in the Florence area for victims of domestic violence is clear — and more than a little unsettling. The number of women and children assisted by SOS each year is in the thousands, with many of those having no other option when confronted by violence, homelessness or exploitation.

“In 2018, our current staff of 3.5 advocates responded to over 7,000 requests for service, including emergency shelter requests, immediate basic-need assessment, crisis intervention, community referrals, follow-up contacts, safety planning and transportation. Other direct service programs in

Oregon that handle this volume typically have triple the staff,” Teter said.

The uncertainty surrounding any modification to the bill that is passed by the Senate, and the newly updated FVPSA, have caused Teter to begin to plan for a way to continue to operate.

SOS is primarily a volunteer powered operation and the new requirements will mean major changes — and limitations — to the number of tasks that are currently being taken care of by a small group of dedicated individuals.

At the heart of the issue is that SOS relies on four major sources for funding: Lane County Human services Commission, Oregon Department of Justice, Oregon Department of Human Services and U.S. Office of Violence Against Women. The new language in the two federal acts means meeting requirements that create a conflict between Lane County funding and funds from the departments of justice and human services and the U.S. Office of Violence.

“In order to comply with this new language and continue to provide advocacy for victims and services to families in crisis, we must expand our program capacity and increase staff-

ing,” Teter said. “If we do not comply with this new mandate, we risk losing up to 40 percent of our funding. If that were to happen, SOS would have to close its doors.”

Teter also reported that the SOS Board of Directors has been meeting with federal, state and county officials over the past three months to try to work around this new language and mitigate the effect it will have on services.

SOS will continue to work with all involved agencies to implement a change to the new requirements, Teter said, but that may take longer than he would like. He remains concerned that unless a new funding option is discovered the impact on the individuals helped at SOS will be drastic.

“At SOS, our focus has always been in assisting clients to find solutions to their situation and provide them with the means and strength to overcome personal barriers. In doing so, SOS has worked hard to ensure your donations go to clients and families with the highest need and best hope of sustainability,” Teter said. “Because of our strong fiscal oversight and diverse programming, SOS has been recognized by Lane County, the Oregon Department of Justice and the Office of

Violence Against Women as one of the most comprehensive, cost-efficient and effective programs in the nation. With that said, we never thought we would be in the situation we are currently facing.”

To find out more about SOS or to volunteer, call 541-997-2816 or visit www.florencesos.org.



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