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INSIDE — A3

Council meeting raises new concerns over ongoing homeless issues

January incident prompts public comment, social media debate over unsheltered population

By JARED ANDERSON
SIUSLAW NEWS

Homelessness was a major topic of discussion during the Feb. 3 Florence City Council meeting, as a public comment regarding an incident near Safeway sparked a response from Florence Police Chief Tom Turner.

On Jan. 16, according to the Florence Police report on the incident, the department “received several calls reporting a fight on Eighth Street, adjacent to the Safeway store. Upon arrival of police officers, the fight was no longer in progress but several of the involved parties were still on scene.”

After conducting interviews with the involved persons and witnesses, police determined that this was a “mutual combat” situation and no arrests were made in relation to

the fight. According to the report, the parties involved were separated and “one female was placed in protective custody for detox due to her level of intoxication and was transported to the Florence City jail.”

issues with them as well. However, my beautiful daughter who has a traumatic brain injury was walking to Safeway to get something to go with dinner because it was sunny and a short walk there. She has fi-

trio about their dog and “before she knew it her head was bashed into the asphalt many times,” resulting in cuts, bruises a black eye and additional injuries.

“It is sad to see your child be attacked by these people,” commented Westrich, who said police took her daughter to the hospital because “Eight homeless people said my daughter started a fight ... It was her word amongst seven homeless men and one woman.”

Westrich then warned about “the man and woman [who] have two beautiful Australian mix dogs and another one rides a bike with a bright orange beanie,” adding “May they reap what they see. Homeless need to go [sic].”

The post was widely shared, receiving hundreds of views.

“Oftentimes, information reported second-hand and third-hand is not accurate to what actually occurred at the event. This particular event has been portrayed significantly differently to the public through Facebook than what actually occurred. That information usually remains private. It was very well documented.”

— Florence Police Chief Tom Turner

Shortly after the incident, Tammy L. Westrich posted the following on the Florence Community Crime Watch Facebook page: “I am not amused by our homeless status here. I know a lot of you have

nally been able to leave the house since her accident.”

Westrich went on to comment that her daughter “was beat up by two homeless men and one homeless girl” as she was talking to the

See CITY page 5A

Rhody Court gets a taste of etiquette



(From left) 1285 Restobar server Mercedes Gortz, Princess Kelsey Larson, Princess Madelynn Levi, Princess Shakina Grover, Princess Chloe Madden, Princess Brooklyn Cahoon, Prince Andrew Austin, Kay King, Princess Elizabeth Rosinbaum and Princess Taylor Winona.

STORY & PHOTO
By CHANTELE MEYER
SIUSLAW NEWS

The 2020 Rhododendron Senior Court attended an etiquette dinner this week at 1285 Restobar. Taught by community member Kay King, the court learned interview techniques and the best way to eat at a formal dinner setting.

Restobar server Mercedes Gortz served salad, a roll, chicken and mashed potatoes to each member of the royal court while King demonstrated how to use a cloth napkin, instructed on each item of the place setting and showed proper manners for each course. The meal concluded with a chocolate torte.

In addition, King talked about ways that the students can engage

with their elders during interviews and other formal settings.

Rhody Court advisor Jenna Bartlett said, “Thank you, Kay, for spending the evening mentoring our 2020 Rhododendron Court!”

She added that each member of the Rhody Court now has a sponsor and they will begin interacting with the community at the Siuslaw Awards on Wednesday, Feb. 12.

City, county prep for 2020 Census

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
FOR THE SIUSLAW NEWS

With the 2020 census around the corner, coordinators in Lane County and the Siuslaw region are ramping up preparations and outreach efforts for the decennial survey.

According to Florence Mayor Joe Henry, participants in the census will “help shape the future of Florence for the next 10 years. ... Florence’s census results guide tens of millions of dollars of federal funding every year.”

Local community groups, such as Siuslaw Vision and the Florence Area Community Coalition, have started sharing news and details about the census and why people should choose to fill out forms. In addition, the City of Florence Focus on Florence February Newsletter includes more information. These groups are connecting with the Census Partnership Program, which works with local governments and community organizations to encourage census responses.

See CENSUS page 7A

Siuslaw Awards honors businesses with nominations

By CHANTELE MEYER
SIUSLAW NEWS

Each year, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce’s Siuslaw Awards has sought to recognize the area’s top picks in business and community leadership. From Siuslaw High School students and passionate volunteers in the area to business innovation and achievement, the awards night on Wednesday, Feb. 12, at the Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St., will celebrate the dedication of Florence Area’s finest.

“This year’s slate is an amazing representation of our community’s best assets — our businesses and individuals that make a difference,” said Chamber Executive Director

Bettina Hannigan.

In January, business nominees were announced for Excellence in Customer Service, Curb Appeal, Non-Profit Achievement, Community Caring, Innovation in Business and the Stu Johnston Business of the Year Award. In addition, four area gentlemen were nominated by the community for First Citizen and four high school seniors were nominated for Future First Citizen.

In their own words, read why the following businesses were nominated for the 2019 Siuslaw Awards.

Nominees for the Community Caring Award:

• **The Archives:** “I believe The Archives deserves this award because of their commitment to cre-

ating joy by giving to the community,” said Shawn Penrod. He talked about founder Joshua Greene and his desire to produce photography and art books locally. “Once he decided Florence was his home, he put his personal and business efforts into the community.”

• **Jolly Egret/Periwinkles:** According to owner Glenna Martin, “For 19 years starting with my first store, I have been directly involved in community and chamber events, improvement projects and nonprofit charities including their fundraising efforts. We feel blessed that we have been able to help so many people, so many organizations and our town which we love.”

• **Shorewood Senior Living:** From allowing residents space to

garden, make art, live and play, “We embrace the community with passion,” said Beth Webb. “Shorewood is a great place for people to live and work. The minute you step in the door you feel the love, as we have been told over and over.”

• **Three Rivers Casino Resort:** “We are proud to donate to a variety of organizations that play vital roles in the social and economic wellbeing of Oregon,” wrote Director of Marketing Rich Colton. “Three Rivers in partnership with The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians have strong ties to the community and are dedicated to giving back.”

See NOMINEES page 8A

Siuslaw News
NEWS &
VIEWS THAT
DEFINE OUR
COMMUNITY
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FLORENCE, OREGON

WEATHER



Clouds and rain with a high of 48 and a low tonight of 35.
Full forecast on A3

COMMUNITY



CROW’s “Poppins” cast begins rehearsing
INSIDE — A3

SPORTS



Mapleton beats McKenzie
INSIDE — SPORTS

RECORDS

Obituaries & emergency response logs
Inside — A2

SIDE SHOW

Activities and comics every Saturday
Inside — B5

CLASSIFIEDS

Listings and public notices
Inside — B6

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