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officers resulted in Floyd's death and sparked protests in more than 400 cities across all 50 U.S. states — eventually expanding into a global movement.

Florence Indivisible is a group at the center of local efforts to publicly recognize the death of George Floyd and bring the issue of racial inequality forward for broader discussion.

Beverly Sherrill coordinated what she and other local social justice activists hope will become a weekly vigil in support of changing the way law enforcement often interacts with citizens of color.

"Florence Indivisible felt the need to support this moment in our country and we will continue to support the POC (people of color) community. There is much work to do in the policy arena that Indivisible groups, including ours, will be focusing on," she said. "We will also continue to stand in solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter."

Florence City Councilor Ron Preisler was the only elected city official at the event, and he shared with *Siuslaw News* his reasons for attending the somber public vigil.

"We are living with the consequences of yet another black man being murdered by our police forces. This time it happened right in front of our eyes," Preisler said. "How many other minorities' lives were lost that we were not aware of? Black and brown children having to be taught to be afraid of the police and maintain a low profile in the 'white man's world' is a deep stain on what this country was founded upon."

Floyd can be seen and heard on the videotape, which was recorded by a bystander. The recording shows him begging for mercy while being restrained by former officer Derek Chauvin, who has been fired and charged with murder.

Floyd's death came as a result of Chauvin kneeling on the neck of Floyd, who appeared to be compliant and cooperative while declaring repeatedly "I can't breathe" until becoming unconscious and unresponsive.

Minutes pass and Floyd lapses into silence, unmoving, for almost three minutes at the end of the video.



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

None of the four officers on the scene rendered any type of aid to the unresponsive Floyd, ignoring his condition and waiting for an ambulance and its EMTs to assist the unmoving Floyd.

The length of the video, at nearly nine minutes, appears to provide clear evidence of Floyd's death, and has been cited as sufficient evidence by prosecutors to criminally charge Chauvin and the three other officers that assisted him in the detainment resulting in Floyd's death.

The recording, which went viral, was shocking to viewers around the globe.

In the days that have followed, Floyd's death has become a rallying point for hundreds of thousands now taking to the streets of America.

The resulting protests that began in Minneapolis have spread to dozens of American cities, as well as throughout Europe and beyond.

Differing levels of anger and outrage expressed by protesters have erupted into violence in Los Angeles, New York, Atlanta and Washington D.C., as well as Portland and Eugene.

In contrast, protests in Florence are being designed as non-confrontational. Participants include members of the Florence Area Democratic Club, whose Chairperson Karin Radtke says she has often seen the results of racism

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COVID-19 is spreading through Lane County," said Lane County COVID-19 Incident Commander Karen Gaffney. "Given the complexity of our current situation, Public Health is working harder than ever to investigate cases and isolate contacts. It's through this work and our community's willingness to prioritize health that we prepare for this next phase."

In order to be approved and maintain its position in the phases, Lane County must have been in Phase One for a minimum of 14 days and be able to demonstrate and maintain several key things, including:

- Timely Follow-Up: A minimum of 95 percent of all new cases must be contact traced

within 24 hours as reported in the state's system over the previous 7-day and 14-day time periods.

- Successful tracing: A minimum of 70 percent of new COVID-19 positive cases must be traced to an existing positive case over the previous 7-day and 14-day time periods.

- No increase in incident cases or positivity; there cannot be a 5 percent or greater increase in new cases in the county over the past 7 days; or a significant increase in the percentage of positive cases out of total tests taken in your county over the past seven days.

More information, including a copy of Lane County's blueprint for reopening can be found at www.LaneCountyOR.gov/blueprint.

Florence City Councilor Ron Preisler was just one of the local activists sporting signs in support of #BlackLivesMatter, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. To learn more, visit blacklivesmatter.com: "The official #BlackLivesMatter Global Network builds power to bring justice, healing and freedom to Black people across the globe." See more photos on B1.

since arriving in the United States in the 1960s.

"In the summer of 1967, when I first came to this country, I drove by and around cities that were burning — Newark, N.J., and Detroit, Mich. — because of racial unrest. I had

experienced racism in Europe, I knew about apartheid in Africa, and I had always known of the history of American slavery and the Civil War," said Radtke. "But I was shocked to find out that the American Dream seemed to mainly be for the privileged — and mostly white people.

"Fifty years later, some want to keep it that way — but I know from experience that they are in the minority."

Radtke said that at Tuesday's protest in Florence, she was "very heartened by the constant expressions of approval from passers-by. We are in this amazing digital age, when we can see similar events going on in other small and larger towns, where groups have been gathering peacefully and interacting with law enforcement officers without the use of force."

Sally Wantz, another participant at Tuesday's vigil and a prominent progressive voice in the community, said she was pleased with both the turnout for the event and the response from the passing cars.

"I was overwhelmed with emotion as passers-by waived and shouted and offered thumbs-up in such a positive response to our appearance on all four corners in support of all lives that matter," Wantz said. "As I recall, there was no hostility towards us, which is a first for all the times

I've stood on the corner to share my passion for what is right and what is wrong in our country and the world. I appreciated the fact I could peacefully assemble to share my thoughts."

Florence Police Commander John Pitcher was aware of the Floyd Vigil and the turmoil surrounding the actions of other police departments, noting there were no problems at the local vigil that required police attention.

"They exercised their rights in a peaceful and professional manner and there were no issues that we had to deal with," he said, adding that the feedback that his department has received in the wake of the Floyd death has been mostly positive.

"Our community is very supportive of the department and our officers, and we appreciate that support. The protesters have every right to express themselves and the Florence Police Department recognizes and supports that right," Pitcher said.

The shift in many areas of the country from peacefully protesting to looting and arson has been attributed to differing levels of prior police conduct in cities where protests have turned violent, as well as local law enforcement reactions to those ongoing protests.

There is also an element of true criminal behavior using the protests as an opportunity to steal and vandalize.

In a radio interview Friday afternoon on KCST Coast Radio, Florence Police Chief Tom Turner addressed social media speculation suggesting that individuals from other locations were traveling to the Oregon coast to participate in vigils and protests.

"We just haven't found any of those rumors to be credible and we haven't heard of any of that being true anywhere along the coast," Turner said. "It is hard to combat the information put out on social media platforms because most of it is misinforma-

tion — or just wrong — and I am saddened by it."

Turner also said there is no reason for the public to act in any way that would interfere with or compromise the work being done by trained police officers under any circumstances, but particularly during the mix of COVID-19 and civil uncertainty.

"Let the public safety professionals do their jobs. That's what we are trained for," Turner said.

Many of the 50 or so individuals that have been gathering at the intersections of Highways 126 and 101 believe there are opportunities for growth in this difficult time.

Some of the vigil participants have decided that there should be an official recognition, or clarification, of the city's policy regarding protests and the use of force in those situations.

According to past city council candidate Maureen Miltenberger, the protest was accomplished while recognizing and maintaining proper social COVID-19 protocols by wearing masks and staying six feet apart.

"Many of us know one another from other protests, marches and vigils and were glad to have a chance to actually see each other in person and to share our concerns over what is happening in our nation," Miltenberger said. "We are not done and will continue to stand and hold signs regarding equal rights, Black Lives Matter and Vote for Our Lives until we can actually see permanent change."

Change did seem to be the focus of the protestors as the signs being held up and the comments provided to *Siuslaw News* were hopeful rather than combative.

"I see a difference today. The protesters by the millions are from all walks of life," Preisler said. "Our younger generations are far more open than most of us older folks are. We are running out of time; our country can't keep this hatred contained. We need to make significant changes in our society."

"Our country was founded on the principle that all are created equal. We need to start believing that all people are created equal and acting on it. It is not going away — nor should it."

The next anti-racism vigil is being held today, June 6, beginning at 1 p.m. on the corners of Highways 101 and 126.

'Dress Up Your Pet' costume challenge ends soon

CROW (Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshops) is working to come up with ideas to break up the monotony of people staying at home during COVID-19.

This time, CROW is challenging all kids and adults to dress up their pets as one of the characters from one of CROW's shows. People can pick any character from:

- "Beauty & the Beast"
- "The Music Man"
- "The Little Mermaid"
- "Once Upon A Mattress"
- "Shrek"
- "The Addams Family"
- "Tarzan"
- "The Wiz"
- "Mary Poppins"

There will be a prize for the top entry, with the winner receiving a \$25 gift card to Mini Pet Mart. The top two runners up will re-

ceive a pet toy or bag of treats for their pet.

All dogs, cats, birds, lizards and otherwise are eligible for entry.

"CROW does not discriminate based on fur color, belly size, claw length, nose wetness, appearance of scales, growl volume or fluffy tails," said CROW Artistic Director Melanie Heard. "This contest is open to all in the community, and we encourage everyone to play along."

CROW will share pictures of all of the entries on the CROW Facebook page, www.facebook.com/crowtheatrekids/, and will send them out all by email to our list of 1,000+ supporters and fans.

"Your adorable fluff ball can be



These dogs are dressed as "Beauty and The Beast"

famous," Heard said.

All entries are due by Sunday, June 7, at the end of day.

People can send their photo submission to crowtheatrekids@yahoo.com. Each entry should include the pet's name and character. For more information about CROW, go to crowkids.com.

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