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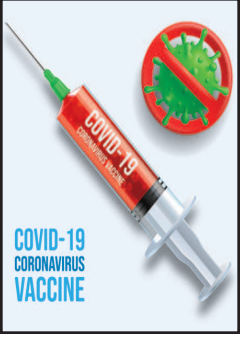
Siuslaw News
NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY
VOL. 131, NO. 77
SEPT. 25, 2021
FLORENCE, OREGON

WEATHER



Partly sunny with a high of 62 and a low of 52.
Full forecast on A3

COMMUNITY



Information on vaccine boosters
INSIDE — A3

SPORTS



Siuslaw takes first at XC Classic
INSIDE — B

RECORDS

Obituaries & emergency response logs
Inside — A2

SIDE SHOW

Activities and comics every Saturday
Inside — B4

CLASSIFIEDS

Listings and public notices
Inside — B5

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2 SECTIONS | 18 PAGES
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Emergency response organizations honor life of Sarah Susman

Western Lane Ambulance employee died Sept. 20 in Highway 126 accident

BY CHANTELE MEYER
SIUSLAW NEWS

“Volunteerism sometimes is just in your soul. And I think helping others was definitely in Sarah’s soul. She had plans,” said Fire and EMS Chief Michael Schick about Sarah Susman, a part-time Western Lane Ambulance District employee who died Monday morning in a car accident on Highway 126.

Susman was 25 and an EMT basic at Western Lane while being a volunteer firefighter/EMT at Lowell Rural Fire Protection Dis-

trict (RFPD).

She was born and raised in Portland before moving to Eugene to attend the University of Oregon. There, she graduated with a degree in biology and pre-med.

“Sarah started in March of this year as a part time employee with us,” Schick said. “She was well



Sarah Susman

Susman was certified as an EMT intermediate program through Lane

known with the crews already.”

Susman also previously worked at Mid-Valley Ambulance in Springfield.

“She’s really been very active in the emergency response setting for several years now,” Schick said.

Community College.

“We had several firefighters who went through the program with her, so they worked really closely with her,” he said.

Many of the instructors in the course were Western Lane Ambulance paramedics.

“This program has been great for us to have the instructors over there so we can offer positions to the best and brightest,” Schick said. “Sarah certainly filled that role. Our instructors knew her really well and, as soon as she completed her

See SARAH page 6A

Connect with neighbors ‘Nextdoor’

Platform promotes community through location-based chats

BY FERRIS HAUKOM
SIUSLAW NEWS INTERN

While most individuals who live in close proximity to one another have no physical limitations preventing them from meeting their neighbors, many have no opportunities for location-based social interaction unless they are heavily involved in community events. Nextdoor is a localized social bulletin platform seeking to change this by connecting people within a small area to facilitate discussion and connection.

The geographical locations listed are generally small to ensure that all posts are relevant to the users. While there is a location

listing for the area of Florence, Ore., it can also be further divided into 12 individual neighborhoods for the utmost specificity and



convenience: Baker Beach, Downtown, Driftwood Shores, Dunes City, Florentine Estates, Glenada, Heceta Beach, Mercer Lake, Munsel Lake, Sutton by the Sea, The Reserve Heceta Lake and Woahink Lake.

Many users, especially during the periods of isolation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, have taken to the platform to connect

with their neighbors, get recommendations for dock builders or handymen, report local wildlife sightings, or simply revel in the local natural beauty with daily photos.

Aside from being an informative tool to stay updated locally, many users prefer its social aspect and use it to form friendships with others in the area.

When a user creates a new Nextdoor account, they are first prompted to introduce themselves, an opportunity which many take to give a brief outline of their location, hobbies and interests, prompting responses from people with shared traits who often propose meeting in person for social gatherings.

See SOCIAL page 6A

Florence proclaims awareness month, approves agenda

BY MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

The Sept. 20 Florence City Council meeting was held virtually, with all council members in attendance and a brief agenda of items to consider.

The meeting was brought to order by Mayor Joe Henry, who then read into the record a proclamation recognizing October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Siuslaw Outreach Services (SOS) Director Bob Teter was on hand to accept the virtual proclamation and he spoke briefly outlining the problem and updating councilors on the situation in the Florence area.

“It is not a happy thing to declare October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, but it is a huge problem in our community. Adding the stresses of the pandemic has created the perfect storm; our numbers for domestic violence have increased over 65 percent in the last year and some of our other stats have doubled,” Teter reported.

This includes the number of sexual assaults and human trafficking. “People are on the edge. Domestic violence is all about control and it happens when someone feels that their life is out of control,” he continued.

Locally, 477 individuals sought assistance related to domestic violence from SOS in the past year.

Teter also provided information showing that while SOS continues to operate, other social service agencies have stopped offering assistance to some due to COVID and resulting staff shortages.

“A lot of agencies are stressed to the point of burnout and most domestic violence agencies have shut down their shelter programs because of concerns over the pandemic. We have not,” he stated. “In fact, our referrals that we receive from other agencies have increased over 200 percent because a lot of agencies do not have the capacity to handle domestic violence in their area in a large part due to lack of staffing.”

See COUNCIL page 8A

Debate precedes November vote on Western Lane Ambulance levy

BY MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

The Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD) Board of Directors has placed a levy request on the November 2021 ballot. The directors are asking voters to approve a new tax on local property owners to continue funding for the publicly funded organization, which would replace an existing levy which expires at the end of the year.

WLAD and Siuslaw Valley Fire

and Rescue (SVFR) have shared administrative costs since 2019 and the levy request from WLAD was first approved by the WLAD Board of Directors. It was then approved by select directors from both boards who serve on the directing board of Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority (WLFEA).

As it gets closer to autumn and the November vote, there has been some public confusion on the need for the levy and what the monies, if approved, would be funding.

According to Fire and EMS Chief Michael Schick, the levy is needed to maintain the WLAD’s current level of service and to adequately handle the ever-increasing number of calls answered by local EMTs.

“The WLAD Local Option Levy, first approved by our voters at this level in 2012, represents a little over 25 percent of our total annual revenue. Renewing this levy is critical in allowing us to maintain the emergency service levels our citizens and visitors expect and deserve,”

Schick said. “Calls for service have increased by 54 percent since 2012, and we have added three additional paramedics to help us handle the increase in call volume with no change in the levy rate. The levy, at this same rate, has been approved twice before by our voters, in 2012 and 2016.”

There has been a reluctance by some members of the public, and among some previous members of the WLAD board, to endorse the

See LEVY page 7A

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