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Victory!

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Cottage Grove Sentinel

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Staff shuffle means fewer doctors at hospital

New physicians expected this summer, but securing appointments could be a problem until then

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Personnel changes at PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center have thinned the ranks of physicians there, said the hospital's Chief Administrative Officer.

According to Tim Herrmann, who took over as CAO in Sep-

tember of 2014, a longtime nurse practitioner has left due to retirement, and a primary care physician has returned to only part-time duty following maternity leave, leaving the hospital shorthanded, a condition that will likely persist until this summer.

"We're shifting in all sorts of directions," Herrmann said.

"The challenge is to continue to offer access to physicians and appointments."

Recruiting new physicians is a time-consuming process that can take well over a year, Herrmann said.

"Most physicians are pretty well established," he said. "So you spend a lot of time recruiting from the next upcoming class. Most residency programs end in June."

By that time, PeaceHealth expects to easily be able to recruit two new doctors, Herrmann

said, though in the meantime it may become more difficult to schedule time with a physician. The hospital will try to fill the gap with some type of local help between now and July, Herrmann said.

"We're exploring our options, because between now and July is a long time," he said. "There are no guarantees, though, because we need somebody that's available who has the right set of skills and qualifications."

Access to primary care physicians has long been an issue

in Cottage Grove, one partially addressed by the addition in late 2012 of a walk-in clinic that's seen heavy use.

"The walk-in clinic has been very busy," Herrmann said. "With this time of year and the viruses we're seeing, the clinic has been busy every day."

In addition to flu season and thinned ranks among physicians, new patients who have received access to healthcare

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TOGETHER AGAIN

Log House, Territorial team up on another innovative, exclusive product

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

In recent years, two Cottage Grove-based businesses have stepped to the forefront of the market for grafted vegetable plants, and they've taken their latest endeavor from the "what'll they think of next" file.

In 2011, Log House Plants, a wholesale nursery based near Dorena Reservoir, became America's first grower of grafted tomato plants for the home gardener, tomato plants that have been grafted to the rootstock of wild tomatoes to create one superior plant. Log House teamed with another innovative Cottage Grove company, Territorial Seed Co., to market grafted vegetables through Territorial's mail-order catalog, and the Mighty Mato soon began finding its way into America's gardens.

Alice Doyle, who has owned Log House along with Greg Lee for 40 years, said that experts there have

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Ketchup n' Fries offers tomatoes and potatoes — on one plant. *courtesy photo*

Freezing Nights coalition activates during holiday week

Volunteers tougher to come by due to holiday absences

Frigid temperatures early last week prompted the activation of Cottage Grove's Beds for Freezing Nights program, which seeks to provide a warm place to sleep for those who need it when temperatures dip below freezing.

Volunteers with the BFN coalition swung into action Sunday evening, Dec. 29 for a four-day activation that offered a warm sleeping place through Friday morning, though the holiday plans of many volunteers made finding enough help difficult.

The coalition reportedly served three guests on Monday, 5-6 on Tuesday, three people on Wednesday and four Thursday evening. It's these types of extended cold-spell activations that can test the 35 or so volunteers who aid the effort.

"With this many volunteers, it's pretty tight," said BFN's Janice Gutmann. "If everybody is here, an extended activation is OK, but with the holiday week, we were really scrambling."

About eight volunteers worked two shifts to help cover the need, Gutmann said. They set up shop at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, which has become the preferred location for the BFN shelter, although the shelter moves to First Presbyterian Church when the Catholic facility is unavailable.

Gutmann said BFN can always use more volunteers, and those interested in helping out or who may need a place to stay when temperatures drop can access more information at www.freezingnights.com.

Upcoming year critical for local salmon restoration effort

Spilled fish part of an attempt to reestablish Chinook locally, but tactics could change if fish don't return

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The crash of a tanker truck on the McKenzie Highway last Tuesday, Dec. 30 — a truck whose driver was later suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol — spelled the demise of over 11,000 Chinook salmon smolts spilled onto the highway during the wreck.

State Police later said that 45-year old driver Ray C. Lewis of Umpqua had a blood alcohol level of .29, more than three times the threshold of legal intoxication, following the wreck of the

tanker, which occurred when the truck left the highway and struck a power pole at about 3 p.m.

Lewis was transporting the fish from the nearby Leaburg hatchery to a destination in the Row River near Cottage Grove, according to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Fish Biologist Jeff Ziller. The smolts perished soon after the crash, Ziller said, and were the last of seven truckloads of young salmon slated for transplant into the Row at the Row River Nature Park just outside Cottage Grove that day.

"He was driving the final truckload of the day, and he wasn't carrying as

big a load as the other trips, so if there's a silver lining in all this, that may be it," Ziller said.

About 230,000 Chinook smolts were due to be placed in the Row, though a rather complex set of circumstances necessitated their early release, according to Ziller.

"These fish should've gone out in 2015," he said. A lawsuit alleging that ODFW is releasing too many hatchery fish into the nearby McKenzie River helped prompt the early release, in addition to fears over the viability of the spillway gates at the Leaburg Dam upstream, which gravity-feeds water to the hatchery.

"The lawsuit, the roll gate problems at Leaburg, some weather issues — it led to us needing to move a lot of these

young fish, and one spot we can bring a lot of fish is to the Row," Ziller said. "So that's where they went."

Without that set of circumstances, Ziller said the salmon would've likely been placed in the river in February or March as part of an ongoing effort to establish a Chinook fishery in the Row and the Coast Fork of the Willamette River. Fish and Wildlife first started reintroducing Chinook there in the spring of 2012, releasing 213,000 young fish at that time, followed by close to 300,000 fish in 2013 and 207,000 fish last spring.

Ziller said there are more fish scheduled for release in the Row, but unless their older counterparts begin returning to the river in decent numbers to spawn, the fish may be placed elsewhere.

"We have other batches scheduled, but the question is do we release them all there or elsewhere on the Coast Fork," he said. "We'll be looking to make those kinds of decisions in the next couple months."

The Army Corps of Engineers provides funding to ODFW to mitigate the habitat lost to the dams at Dorena and Cottage Grove Reservoirs. The desire to decrease the impact of hatchery fish in the McKenzie, coupled with a desire to reestablish the fishery in the Row, led to the concentrated efforts to place hatchery fish here using those funds. But unless quantities of fish start returning from the ocean this year, that could change.

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WEATHER



Mostly Sunny

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