

# Acts of mischief keep cops hopping

Chief believes several recent incidents may be related, urged witnesses to call police

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Recent acts of criminal mischief have peppered the police blotter and kept Cottage Grove Police busy in the last couple of weeks, and Police Chief Mike Grover said many of them are likely related.

Perhaps the most visible act of vandalism concerns the "Welcome to Cottage Grove" sign on the northbound ap-

proach to town on Highway 99. City officials say the sign is at the City's shop for protection and repairs after vandals pulled the roof off the sign last week. Other mischievous acts involve graffiti scrawled on the buildings at Automotive Specialties and Oletsgo Automotive; windows broken at Harris Machine Shop; damage to signs and lights at Jefferson Park Apartments; a destroyed mailbox on Washington Ave. and the dam-

aging of five maple saplings at Bohemia Park, the remains of which were allegedly removed from the park, according to City Manager Richard Meyers. Other acts of vandalism were recently reported at Living Faith Assembly, Pinocchio's Pizza and Cottage Grove High School, among other locations.

Grover attributed the mischief to "a bunch of kids, young adults out raising hell." He called the vandalism a series of "crimes of opportunity," whereby youths wandering through neighborhoods find mischief in their

travels. "They think it's perfectly OK to destroy somebody else's property," Grover said. "There's nothing new about it, no explaining it."

Grover said CGPD has no definitive information regarding suspects but recommended that those who witness such acts call his department.

"Don't be afraid to call us," he said. "That's about 90 percent of the problem in this town. People think we're too busy. Just pick up the phone and call."

# Learn correct fruit-tree pruning at OSU Extension workshops

BY KYM POKORNY  
OSU Extension Service

Anyone who buys or inherits a fruit tree faces the intimidating crossroads of how, when and if they should prune.

"It's one of the most difficult things for people to understand," said Ross Penhallegon, horticulturist with Oregon State University's Extension Service. "Ultimately, they make a few cuts and think, 'Oh, I'm going to hurt the tree' and run back into the house to watch TV."

But without the proper maintenance, production of fruit falls off, diseases increase and frustration goes off the chart. The key at that point is to clear out the center of the tree to let sunlight in, or cut the tree down and plant four dwarf varieties that get to be 10 feet rather than 40. Anytime December through February is a good time for pruning.

"I call the big ones man-killer trees," Penhallegon said. "You have to climb up to the top and spend hours and hours pruning out suckers. You can do that every year or take a lot less time to prune smaller trees. After all, how much fruit do you eat? If a tree produces 20, 40, 50 pounds, most of it hits the ground and you don't pick it up."

For 25 years Penhallegon

has taught hands-on classes on pruning fruit trees to hundreds of people annually, handing out more than 15,000 of Extension's Training and Pruning Your Home Orchard. Several workshops are coming up later this month and February in Benton, Linn and Lane counties.

It's important to read up on pruning, but it can be confusing.

"The key is coming to the class," Penhallegon said. "Read about pruning, do some pruning and then read about it again. The lights come on, and that's so liberating."

Unless you've got an emotional connection to the tree, he recommends cutting down out-of-control trees. But if you want to keep it, he'll teach you to rejuvenate one, too. Anytime December through February is a good time for pruning.

"We let people know that they can prune their trees fairly hard and still get fruit and not hurt their tree," he said. "The answer is that every time you prune a branch ask what happens where you've pruned. It grows back. Even if you cut it back to six inches, 99.99 percent of the time it grows back, especially apples and pears."

Before cutting down a tree, check with your city for local regulations.

## SIMONS

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of Parent Partnership, she could only describe its condition as "kind of dismal."

"We lost ground in applying for grants," she said. "We didn't really start asking until this fall, and the winter cycle means there won't be any new awards announced until May."

Parent Partnership has been awarded the two grants it applied for, Simons said, and it

continues to conduct community outreach in the hopes of securing donations to keep its programs afloat.

Still, Simons thinks things are better off at Parent Partnership than they have been, due mainly to the new human energy that's signed on to help.

"I'm here now, and I certainly have the enthusiasm," she said. "We have a rejuvenated focus with several new board members right now, and all four programs

are going full-throttle. People have been seeking, demanding the services we provide, so it's not like we're a has-been. We're essential to this community, and each program has a specific clientele."

Simons hopes a pool of federal funds can aid matters, especially dollars earmarked to combat student homelessness and foster early literacy, and she's reaching out in person to local service organizations for help.

She believes that, if Parent Partnership can "make it through this year," a new grant cycle will provide an opportunity to right the ship. And, despite the daunting nature of the task, she said she believes it can work out.

"I believe things are more hopeful than they have been," she said. "I believe that the glass is half-full and that it's going to work, that things happen for a reason."

## SLSD

Continued from page 1A

rations for a bond measure that could be listed on either the May or November election ballot in 2016. At this point, the District believes that the focus of the bond will be to replace Harrison school, but there are other things that could be included as well.

"It's coming up pretty quick," Parent said of the timeline. "We have to get a lot of input, develop plans and survey the committee on what they're willing to spend and their priorities: Is it just Harrison? Or are there other things they would like to include?"

Parent said that the district is still looking for bond advisory committee members. Interested parties can fill out an application online or at the district office. The first meeting is scheduled for Jan. 29 at 5 p.m. in the

district office.

In other school board news: SLSD was pleased to report that in addition to being clean and free of non-compliance issues, its 2013-2014 financial audit received the highest-level rating.

In mid-December, the school district also passed its food-service audit with "flying colors." According to Parent, this is a very intense process that occurs every 3-5 years and that Monica Yoss and her staff did a "phenomenal job." The focus of the audit included the nutritional facts of recipes and administration of the free/reduced meal program.

A potential buyer recently inquired about the Delight Valley School property, which is located adjacent to Interstate 5 on Saginaw Road. Although the

parcel is not currently on the market, the inquiry urged the school board to seek a new market analysis.

Head Start has been leasing the property for the past five years, and this has generated \$50,000 a year for the district. Parent said that the district is in no hurry to sell the property, but they would consider a big offer.

SLSD received a sizable grant from the Oregon Education Association for an employee wellness program. The district will receive \$25,000 in each of the next three years to offer fitness and nutrition classes for 400 employees.

The school board continued its ongoing discussion on policies for personal electronic devices and social media, both for staff and students.

"The last thing we want to

do is discourage kids from using modern-day technology, but we obviously want them to use it appropriately," Parent said. "I think our district is pretty progressive. We have a lot of teachers that utilize kids' personal electronic devices as part of their lessons."

Cottage Grove High School Dean of Students Gary Roberts provided an updated attendance report: Approximately 25 percent of CGHS students are currently considered chronically absent — as defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year. Through Dec. 12, 2014, 10 percent of the school year was equivalent to seven days.

This level of chronic absenteeism is consistent with past years. However, Roberts noted a high rate of illness, and that the number of unexcused absences are down.

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