

Leadership cohort installs its first free libraries

Communities are invited to this weekend's grand opening

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Community leaders in Cottage Grove and Creswell have been gathering together for just over a year now, and this weekend, they'll be inviting members of the community to see the results of that collaboration.

Close to 40 members of the Ford Family Foundation's newest leadership training cohort began coming together last January to learn how to become more effective leaders in their communities. Throughout monthly meetings in the winter and spring of 2014, they worked to identify a project that could enhance the lives of those in Cottage Grove and in Creswell.

From a list of over 60 project ideas came the eventual winner, Little Free Libraries of South Lane County, an effort notably championed by the cohort's youngest member, Cottage Grove High student Allie Harris, and its oldest, Don

Strahan. Twelve free libraries will be installed at various locations throughout Cottage Grove and Creswell, for which planning, grant-writing and fundraising has been conducted by the group. The libraries are meant to foster healthy reading habits, in addition to community togetherness.

The libraries will operate on the "take a book, leave a book" system, as members of the surrounding communities trade reading materials at kiosks built by members of the cohort with help from students at Kennedy High School and designed by local artists.

On Saturday, about a dozen cohort volunteers gathered at Stewart Park at the corner of Eighth and Johnson Streets in Cottage Grove and White-man Community Park at H and Birch Streets in the Northwest Neighborhood to install the first two Little Free Libraries at their new homes. Volunteers also canvassed the nearby neighborhoods to let neighbors know about the



photo by Jon Stinnett

Ford Family Leadership cohort members, from left, Marjory House, Rob Dickinson and Lanie Grace position the pole that will carry the Little Free Library to be located in Stewart Park.

new kiosks and the party planned this Saturday, Jan. 24 that will serve as their grand opening and sorted through the Libraries' first book submissions.

The celebration will begin at Stewart Park at 10 a.m. and will continue at

Whiteman Park at 11:30. There will be food and drink offered, and guests are welcome to bring a book (and perhaps take one) to begin the Libraries' book-trading activities.

Walmart jewel theft may be part of a string of incidents

Similar thefts have occurred in Lebanon

Cottage Grove Police are continuing their investigation into a robbery at the Cottage Grove Walmart store that they believe could be part of a string of related crimes along Interstate 5.

Officer Jarrod Butler said a male and female suspect are sought in connection with the theft of about \$2400 in jewelry from the Cottage Grove Walmart at about 11 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 11. Butler said the suspects took advantage of light staffing at that hour and emptied a jewelry case of its contents.

Butler said there's reason to believe the suspects may have been involved in a similar heist at the Walmart store in Lebanon, where jewelry of about twice the value taken in Cottage Grove was recently stolen in three incidents.

"We have a picture of the suspects but no identification," Butler said. "It seems to be filtering south down I-5. I've been working with Roseburg police to see if they've had any recent thefts that might be similar."

A four-door white sedan, possibly an import, has been connected to the Cottage Grove incident, Butler said, though he added that outdoor surveillance footage of the vehicle was fuzzy.

More information on the incident is being withheld due to the ongoing investigation.

New film has a host of local connections

'Noble Fir,' filmed largely in CG, premieres in Oregon this weekend

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

If the scenery doesn't look familiar, perhaps the filmmakers will.

This weekend brings the Oregon premier of a film with a distinct Cottage Grove feel. Director Chris Graham of Last Light Pictures said he's excited to welcome his new film, "Noble Fir," to Eugene's Bijou

Art Cinemas for a three-night premier, the latest in a yearlong series of engagements supporting the film.

"We're working on getting a distribution deal for the movie," Graham said. "It's running a series of small theaters, and of course we wanted to bring it back to where

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Expansion of Baker Bay highlights County's five-year plan

BY MATT HOLLANDER
For the Sentinel

An expansion of the Baker Bay Marina is one of the largest projects in the five-year Capital Improvement Plan proposed by Lane County Parks. Officials estimate that it would cost \$500,000 to update the facility and increase capacity from 26 to 70 slips.

"The demand for more space at the marina is there," said parks manager Mike Russell. "There is a waiting list of over 75 people, several of whom have been waiting for many years. We want to identify that in our capital improvement program and work toward expanding the marina."

The draft of the proposed project, which can be found on the County's website, has the Baker Bay expansion penciled in for 2016-17. However, the timeline for the project remains fluid as the organization has yet to find a source of funding. Russell said that he is hop-

ing that it will be completed within the next five years.

One possible solution is a bond measure, similar to the one that financed an expansion of the Richardson Park Marina at Fern Ridge Reservoir.

"Bonds work very well with capacity-improvement projects," said Russell. "If you triple the size of the marina, those additional boat fees are going to help pay off the bond."

It currently costs \$500-600 per season to dock a boat at Baker Bay.

Russell said that the Lane County Parks would also target grant opportunities, and he is optimistic that the project will be attractive to many funding organizations.

Once a source of funding is located, Russell said that the project could be completed in four months or less.

Overall, the program will be used to plan capital improvements to about a dozen parks in Lane County. Projects will improve the safety, utility and ef-

iciency of existing facilities. The program will also further develop and add amenities that will improve the experience for park users. The Parks Advisory Committee held a public hearing for the program at the start of its Jan. 15 meeting. However, there was no one there to provide testimony.

Russell said that the lack of turnout was typical of recent years.

"When we have proposed a specific project, or there is a significant need in the community, a constituency typically shows up to get our attention," he said. "There was a strong showing when the Richardson Park Marina expansion was brought on the agenda, and that was part of how it got on the priority list and got funding."

There will be another opportunity for the community to provide input on the program when the Parks Advisory Committee presents the master plan draft to the Lane County Board of Commissioners in February or March.



Sentinel file photo

Plans for expansion call for an increase in capacity from 26 to 70 boat slips at Dorena's Baker Bay, which is operated by Lane County.

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Corps to improve Lakeside Park

Changes are coming to Lakeside Park, a popular summer recreation area on the northwest shore of Cottage Grove Reservoir near Cottage Grove, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently announced.

The Corps says it plans to remove old, deteriorating restrooms at the park and replace them with more efficient vault-style toilets that aim to be easier and less expensive to maintain.

Work crews will begin moving equipment to the site on Tuesday, Jan. 20, and demolition of the old buildings is likely to begin that week. The Corps expects the entire project to be completed before the park opens in early May.

Although the area of the park

under construction is closed for the season, the boat launch and nearby parking area are open year-round.

"Due to safety concerns, we are asking park visitors to avoid the work area during construction," said Park Manager Tami Schroeder. "We encourage people to use other areas around the lake for activities such as exercising and dog-walking."

Replacing the current restroom facilities with concrete vault toilets is expected to reduce operation and maintenance costs and decrease stress on the aging water and sewage systems at Cottage Grove Reservoir. The new facilities will also better accommodate people with disabilities.

This project is being funded through the Corps' National Recreation Adjustment Plan, which supports local projects that promote efficiency and sustainability while continuing to provide high-quality recreation opportunities. NRAP funding is awarded through a competitive process. The Lakeside restroom and Schwarz campsite projects were the top two projects of 37 submitted from the Corps' Northwestern Division.

Last month, the Corps announced that the volunteer host campsite upgrades at Schwarz Campground would begin soon. That project has been delayed until late January or early February.

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