

Concerning
Creswell
News and notes from our neighbor to the north

Whitehall receives life sentence for double-murder

Eugene man convicted of killing two men at Creswell-area farm last summer

The Eugene man charged with the murder of two men on a Creswell-area farm where the man once worked pleaded guilty to the crimes Thursday in a Lane County courtroom, the Eugene Register-Guard reported.

Eugene Whitehall also pled guilty to



charges of first-degree burglary, first-degree arson, unlawful use of a vehicle and methamphetamine possession in response to the July, 2014 slayings. Whitehall's guilty plea led to a sentence of life imprisonment and may have spared him the death penalty.

Whitehall, then 42 years old and described as a transient by the Lane County Sheriff's Office, was charged with murdering Dennis Michael Kelley, 65, and Rob McFarland, 69, whose remains were found in the burned wreckage of a farm on Bryant Road outside Creswell. It was eventually discovered that Whitehall had torched the home after killing the two victims, whom he had reportedly become acquainted with after working on the pig farm there. Whitehall reportedly told investigators that he had gone to the farm

to steal guns and jewelry, though he encountered the two men while burglarizing the home and killed them both; McFarland was strangled, while Kelley sustained a wound that could have been caused by a weapon wielded by Whitehall.

Deputy District Attorney Erik Hesselman praised the actions of investigators that had to piece together evidence in a burned-out crime scene. About 50 volunteers with the County's Search and Rescue department — a division of the Sheriff's Office — were called on to help sift through the debris after the fire. Sgt. Carrie Carver with the Sheriff's Office had earlier shared such a sentiment.

"To have gathered so much evidence in so short a time is nothing short of phenomenal," Carver said. "A lot of really hard work was put in by a lot of people."

Saturday's Chamber banquet to feature award announcements

BY JOEL HIGDON

President, Creswell Chamber of Commerce

The 46th Annual Creswell Chamber of Commerce Community Celebration and Awards Banquet will be held Friday, March 20 at the Emerald Valley Golf and Resort event center, and this year brings a exciting change in that the winners of the Citizen of the Year, Junior Citizen of the Year and Business of the Year awards will not be announced ahead of time.

Instead, all finalists will be honored and recognized for their achievement during the

celebratory banquet, and the winners will be announced at the event. We received a record number of nominations this year, and each finalist received several nods. We hope to convey that community recognition of excellence for each finalist by highlighting each one during the banquet. In addition, the Chamber will be recognizing some citizens from our community who have exemplified community service and outreach. The theme this year can be summarized by this statement: "The Creswell Chamber of Commerce's commitment to Creswell is 50 years

strong! Our annual banquet is a celebration of the Creswell community and that commitment."

The Creswell Chamber of Commerce's Community Celebration and Awards Banquet is our showcase event for Creswell's citizens, organizations and businesses, and our goal for the event is to showcase our wonderful community and shine a spotlight of recognition on the achievements of Creswell's citizens, organizations and businesses.

The following are the finalists and awardees for this year's Chamber Awards:

Business of the Year: Creswell Coffee Company, The Bean, Hopper Farmlands Market, Creswell Bakery, Siuslaw Bank, Ryan Hoffstot Insurance, Emerald Valley Armory.

Rose Barker Lifetime Achievement: Martha McReynolds Sr. (Awardee)

Citizen of the Year: Dave Stram, Kiwanis Club of Creswell, Jeremy Tolman, Linda Warner and Rick Zettervall .

Jr. Citizen of the Year: Madison Parsons, Hailee Mason, Hunter Patrick.

Educator of the Year: Anna Baltrusch (Awardee)

CRESWELL BRIEFS

Over-40 Club announces new offerings

The Creswell Over-40 Social Club announces that, beginning Tuesday, March 17, it will open the doors of the Creswell Community Center for Tuesday afternoon activities beginning at 1 p.m. Organizers say the expansion in hours come in response to the overwhelming requests to offer more educational speakers and social activities and to expand current offerings. The Creswell Community Center is located at 99 South First Street in Creswell, just a block south of City Hall.

Bill Kent will be offering Tai Chi every week, rotating from Thursday morning at 11:00 a.m. one week to Tuesday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. the next week.

Joanne Walker will be offering a crochet class on Tuesday afternoons from 1 to 2 p.m. Walker has been crocheting for over 57 years and loves to give her handmade lap robes and baby blankets to hospitals and nursing homes. This class will interest not only the beginner but also the experienced crocheter who would like to learn some new techniques. The first couple of classes will, however, be geared toward beginners, and the first project will be a dishcloth. Interested participants are asked to bring a skein of cotton yarn and a size H hook to class. Both are available at the Creswell Bi-Mart as of this writing.

Creswell Health and Rehab wins award

Prestige Care Inc., a leader in

senior living and skilled nursing and rehabilitation care, announces that Creswell Health and Rehabilitation Center in Creswell has been honored as a top participant in the Patient Safety Reporting Program from the Oregon Patient Safety Commission (OPSC). Prestige Care says the center exceeded the program's goals and exhibits a dedication to continuously improving patient safety, making a lasting impact in Oregon's health care community and being an active member of the state-wide safety-reporting structure.

This distinction ranks Creswell Health and Rehabilitation Center among the top 15 percent of the more than 100 participants in the program.

Each year, the OPSC reviews patient-safety reporting data and identifies leaders in the Oregon medical community. The reporting program recognizes the progress that health care professionals and organizations have made in patient safety, and draws attention to the remaining challenges.

"We are very proud of the team at Creswell for their exemplary work in promoting safety and transparency," said Melanie Matthews, Vice President of Operations for Prestige Care. "Across our organization, our highest priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of our patients and residents. This center represents a leading example of putting that philosophy into action."

Providers receive recognition by consistently reporting events when they occur, and in a way that effectively communicates how improvements can be made for the future. This reporting system allows Oregon's health care providers to easily share information and ultimately improve patient safety.

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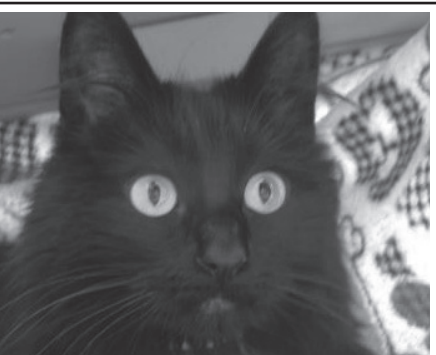
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