

## Strong job market aiding connections efforts

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Statistics compiled statewide showcase a stronger job market than has existed in Oregon for years, and the Goodwill Industries Job Connections site in Cottage Grove says it's working to connect that market with area employers.

The Oregon Employment Department reported in late April that businesses statewide reported 39,400 vacancies in the winter of 2015, an increase of 6,600 vacancies from the prior year. They say the growing number of vacancies reflects the strengthening labor market across Oregon in the past year.

In Cottage Grove, Ariel Smythe, an employment specialist with Goodwill's Job Connections effort, said job listings have similarly been on the rise.

"For the last few weeks, we've been non-stop busy," Smythe said. "These jobs are out there, and we think they need to be found."

Statewide, OED reports more higher-wage and less lower-wage vacancies, with health care and social assistance jobs showing the most vacancies at almost a quarter of the total listings. Occupations in demand



Ariel Smythe helps Rhonda Avants prepare job application materials at Goodwill's Job Connections site.

photo by Jon Stinnett

included personal care aides, social and human service assistants and registered nurses. Leisure and hospitality employers also reported many job vacancies, with recruitment for maids and housekeepers, waiters and waitresses and cooks.

Listings for general labor help, maintenance, caregiving and fast food dominate local listings, Smythe said, though listings for higher-paying jobs are increasing.

"We try hard to discover a variety of list-

ings for our clients," she said. "But people tend to rely on advertised listings, and we hope to help potential employees identify the hidden job market."

Last year, Goodwill Job Connections helped place 115 employees in new positions, and Smythe said activities have certainly been higher this year.

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## Work to repave Highway 99 pushed back to May 26

Nighttime paving of Cottage Grove Connector tentatively scheduled for June 8-9

Workers with Wildish Construction have pushed back the start date of a project that will repave much of Highway 99 between Cottage Grove and Creswell, according to Rick Little, a spokesperson with the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Overall, the project will repave two segments of OR 99 (Goshen-Divide Highway) from Creswell south to near the junction with Interstate 5, excluding Cottage Grove, with a two-inch pavement overlay. It will also repave much of the Cottage Grove Connector and Row River Road, on each side of Interstate 5 with a two-inch grind and inlay.

Wildish had planned to begin construction at the Hill Creek Bridge south of Creswell last week but reconsidered due to the Memorial Day holiday. Little said that work will now start on May 26, though he added

that adjustments may need to be made on the manholes and drains on the Cottage Grove Connector and Row River Road, adjustments that could occur this week.

Crews plan to start in Creswell and generally work south, Little said. Construction to repave the Connector and a portion of Row River Road will have to take place at night, and that construction is tentatively scheduled for June 8-9.

During construction, ODOT says that travelers can expect daytime, single-lane closures with traffic controlled by flaggers and pilot cars, with delays of no more than 20 minutes. They add that accesses to all businesses will remain open during construction with blue cones or "Business Access" signs.

Wildish was awarded the low-bid contract of \$1.16 million.

## Delight hosts a Magic tournament with a regional draw

BY JON STINNETT  
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A small room in the old Cottage Grove Hotel became the domain of wizards from throughout the region Saturday.

About two-dozen fans and players of the trading-card game "Magic: The Gathering" themselves gathered in Cottage Grove for a tournament that offered a chance for greatness on a larger scale for its victor.

First published in 1993, "Magic" continues to draw new

players, and regular Friday tournaments at card stores such as Delight, located on Main Street in Cottage Grove, consistently draw local players. Put (very) basically, the game involves a 60-card deck of cards featuring lands, creatures and spells; its players each start with a life scale measuring 20, and the player in a head-to-head matchup that reduces an opponent's life to 0 wins the match.

Tournaments like the one held upstairs above Delight last weekend are far less common than a typical gathering, accord-



photo by Jon Stinnett

Matchups in the trading-card game "Magic: The Gathering" last 50 minutes, and players try to reduce their opponents life down to 0.

ing to Ryan Wood, a certified judge brought in from Corvallis to oversee the event. The pre-

liminary tour qualifier offered a chance to graduate to regional competition for its winner, and every three months, the top four players in regional competition are invited to join the professional tour.

"The stakes are a lot higher here," Wood said, pointing out the need for an official judge and an entry fee as proof. Players competing Saturday had attained a Level 2 familiarity with the game, which Wood said takes about a year.

The crowd at Delight seemed to skew largely male and of a

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## Saturday farmer's markets cancelled

It looks like a Saturday farmer's market may not be happening this summer in Cottage Grove after all.

Last week, the Sentinel caught up with Coast Fork Farm Stand operator Scott Burgwin, who stated that the stand, in conjunction with the Cottage Grove Public Market next door, would begin offering a farmer's market on Saturday afternoons this weekend.

Shortly after this conversation, though, Burgwin said he was informed that the Public Market will not be participating in Saturday events and that he had made a decision to cancel the markets.

Cottage Grove's Farmer's Market previously flourished in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce's Wednesday afternoon Concerts in the Park series, but the relocation of the concerts to Bohemia Park, coupled with the permanent move of the Farm Stand to the

corner of 10th and Washington Streets nearby, made hosting the market in conjunction with the concerts unfeasible.

"It was the moves that killed it — our move and the concerts," Burgwin said. "It just didn't work for the few farmers we had attending. Even if we had it here in conjunction with the concerts, it doesn't really work. You can see the concert from here, but it's like it's miles away."

Burgwin said the Farm Stand has recently begun offering more produce from local farmers anyway and that few farmers could commit to a Saturday market. The Concerts in the Park series begins on Wednesday, June 17 with the classic covers of Brad Shepherd's "Perfect Flavor." Concerts take place from 6:30-8 p.m. each Wednesday evening until the Umpqua Valley Bluegrass Band closes out the series on Sept. 9.

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