

Firefighters sworn in, promoted at SLFR ceremony

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

On Thursday, South Lane County Fire and Rescue (SLFR) welcomed and recognized eight employees to the organization and to new positions within the organization.

Justin Baird was promoted to division chief; Aaron Smith was promoted to captain; Jason Gilberts, Tim Heuser, Doug Lyda and Joey Parsons were promoted to engineer positions, and Mike Dunn-Bernstein and Tanner Conner were sworn in as firefighters.

Tessa and Cliff Horton were also sworn in as volunteers.

Thursday's ceremony, which took place at the Cottage Grove station, is seen as just the latest sign of the organization's improved stability and financial health since the merger of the Cottage Grove, Creswell and South Lane Rural fire districts in 2003.

"It's a big deal to be hiring and promoting employees," said Fire Chief John Wooten. "And so it's very important to host these ceremonies, which are open to the public, so that people can see what we are doing with their financial support."

As a result of the hiring and promotions, SLFR added a full-time firefighter and a full-



photo by Matt Hollander

South Lane County Fire and Rescue promoted several of its own during a ceremony at its board meeting Thursday night, a meeting that also included the swearing-in of new firefighters and volunteers.

time paramedic and increased its service footprint by 12 hours per day. The new staff also allowed the organization to shift three positions to the Creswell station, which will dramatically increase service in the northerly area of the district.

"When you can have more people stepping into upper-leadership roles, that usually means you will be able to retain people for a long time, and that's very exciting for the SLFR culture," said Wooten, who was hired just over

a year ago.

Next on SLFR's checklist is a potential bond levy to replace an aging fleet of engines and apparatuses. The District has not been able to purchase a new vehicle since 2003.

"It's all coming together; one thing at a time," said Wooten. "We've made a lot of progress toward securing the financial future of the district. Now we just have to demonstrate to the voters that new vehicles are a valuable investment."

Williams sentenced on sex abuse charges

Grandmother also arrested in relation to case

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

A 23-year old Cottage Grove man was sentenced to five years in prison Friday on rape and sodomy charges following a guilty plea earlier last week in Lane County Circuit Court, and the man's grandmother has also been arrested in connection with the case, a Lane County District Attorney reports.

Brandin Michael Williams pleaded guilty to four counts of rape and two counts of third-degree sodomy, the Eugene Register-Guard reported, in connection with relationships Williams had established with at least three underage girls. Deputy D.A. Erik Haselman told the Register-Guard that Williams targeted girls in middle and high school, adding that the victims in the case were 13 or 14 years old at the time.

The Cottage Grove Police Department began investigating Williams last spring. On Monday, Detective Carlos Jones of the Cottage Grove Police Department said that Williams used Facebook to contact the victims through "friends of friends and acquaintances." Jones said Williams was able to go unnoticed by parents of the victims when he stayed overnight and for part of the next day at one of the girls' homes.

"He confessed to relationships with three girls, and two of the victims were cooperative," Jones said. "We have reason to believe there were other victims, but they were uncooperative as well."

Jones said Williams was "not the typical person" that CG Police encounter with regard to sex abuse charges.

"He was careful about getting acquainted with the victims and fostering an ongoing relationship," he said. "It demonstrates the effort he was willing to put into this."

Williams' grandmother, Mable Ann Young, has also been arrested in connection with this case on charges of witness tampering after she allegedly contacted one of its victims and urged her to change her story.

Jones said Williams' case is part of a recent uptick in person-to-person crimes witnessed by CGPD recently as opposed to a more traditional prevalence of property crimes such as theft.

"I'm not sure what the nexus is for that now, but in reality we may just be scratching the surface of the number of potential perpetrators that may be out there," Jones said.



Brandin Michael Williams



Mable Ann Young

Water levels still support boating at Baker Bay

Harms Park ramp, though, was closed this week

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Water levels in many of Oregon's reservoirs are dangerously low following a dry winter, spring and early summer, but a news release from Lane County's Parks Department last week sought to alert boaters that such is not the case at two Lane County parks.

Parks Manager Mike Russell wrote that Baker Bay at Dorena and Fern Ridge Reservoirs "have sufficient water levels for boaters to launch and are expected to have usable boat ramps through July

and into August."

"Spending time on and in the water is such a big part of summer for many Lane County residents, especially in this hot weather," Russell wrote. "We're glad to see that boaters will be able to keep enjoying Dorena and Fern Ridge reservoirs for the next several weeks, along with all the swimmers and picnickers."

According to the County, at Fern Ridge Reservoir, the current water level on Thursday was 370.5 feet, with full pool considered to be 373.5 feet. The reservoir is approximately six inches lower than it was in mid-July last year.

At Dorena Reservoir, Russell wrote that the current water level late last week was 825.5 feet with full pool considered to be 832 feet. This means that the reservoir is

approximately nine inches higher than it was in mid-July last year.

"At the beginning of the year, there was a concern we wouldn't have enough water, because other lakes were really low," Russell later said. "We're on a pretty good schedule to see the typical draw-down of water by the Corps of Engineers by the end of September."

The Army Corps of Engineers manages water levels at the Willamette Valley's major dams and reservoirs, while Lane County oversees operations at Baker Bay Park at Dorena Reservoir and Fern Ridge Reservoir. Russell said that, in times of extremely low water, the boat ramps at Dorena "end up on the ground," stressing again that this is not the case this year. Russell said both Dorena and Fern Ridge have been quite busy

so far this year, with many boaters and swimmers who may previously have recreated at Fall Creek near Dexter instead making the trip down to Cottage Grove. On Monday, Christie Johnson of the Corps of Engineers confirmed that the Corps has closed the ramp at Harms Park due to low water there. Corps spokesperson Scott Clemans stated, though, that levels at the county-managed Baker Bay are still about 65 feet above their useful minimum.

Lane County urged that boaters should check current lake levels against the depth needs of their vessels. Links to the Army Corps of Engineers' water level data and information about Lane County Parks marinas can be found at <http://bit.ly/1DjjTnb>.

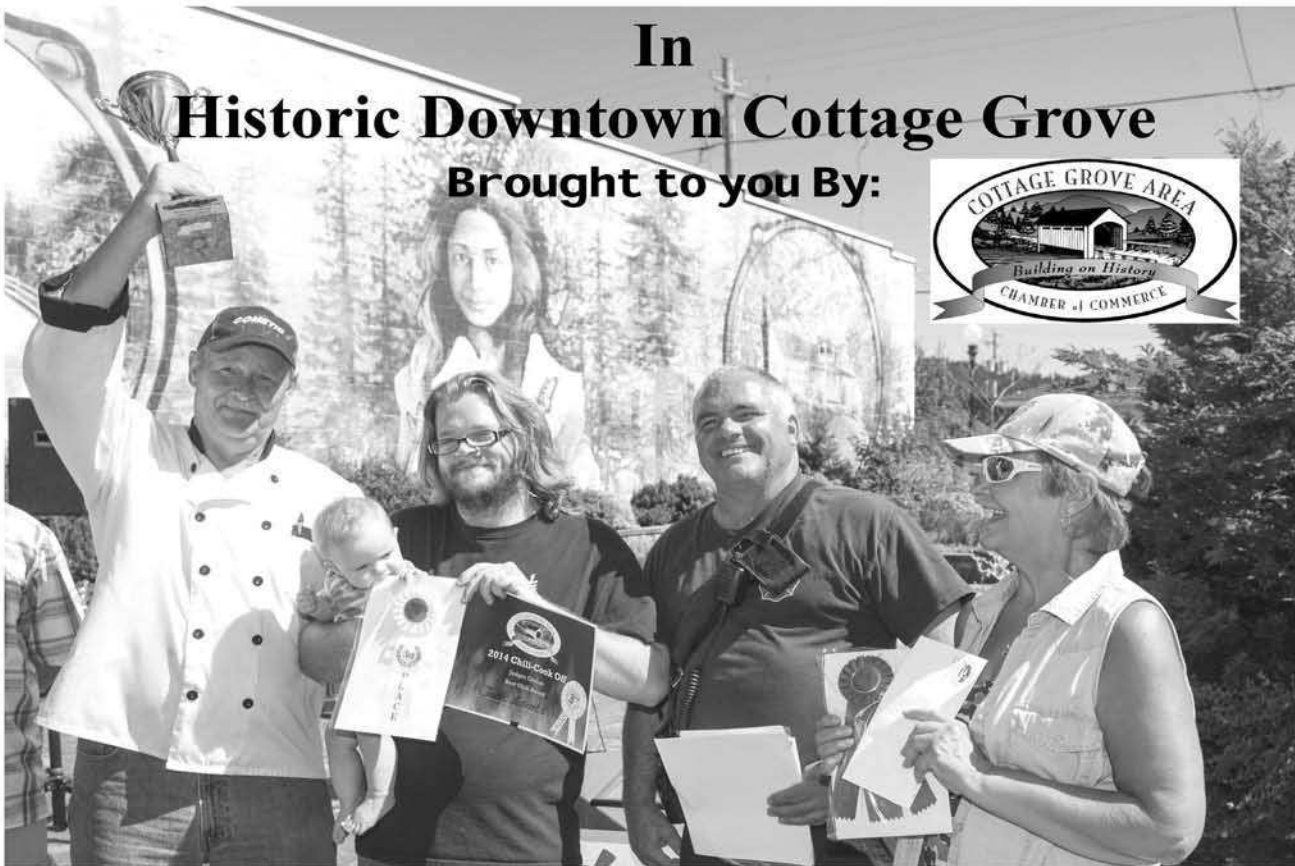
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