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# Cottage Grove Sentinel

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## Hoping to make a dent

*Shorthanded in its investigations capacity, CGPD faces the rising use of hard drugs in Cottage Grove*

(Part one of a two-part series)

BY JON STINNETT  
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove Police Officer David Burgin opens the rear door to his patrol SUV, and out jumps the youngest member of the local police force.

At 2 1/2 years old, Kimber, the department's new drug-sniffing canine, still exhibits much of the energy of a puppy, though she's the product of weeks of intensive training that earned her and Burgin, her human partner, their official certification last month.

While Kimber wiggles excitedly, Burgin details what is to be her function with CGPD. She's trained to alert to the odor of three drugs, he says — heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine — a marked departure from the training of her father, Bo, also a black lab and a renowned drug sniffer with CGPD until his untimely passing last October. The elder lab had earned acclaim for his ability to locate marijuana, a drug that Kimber isn't even trained to detect in light of the recent legalization of the drug.

"She does the majority of the work," Burgin says of his new partner, who has been taught to sit when she detects these illicit substances and is rewarded with her favorite toy when the job is done.

"She has a fantastic hunting drive," he continues. "She'll help with nar-



Officer David Burgin with Kimber, the Cottage Grove Police Department's new drug-sniffing canine. Kimber is the daughter of Bo, CGPD's previous drug dog, who passed away last October.

photo by Jon Stinnett

cotics investigations, with interdiction on the highway and assisting other agencies."

As Burgin loads Kimber back into his cruiser, I ask if he really believes the pair can curb the use of illicit drugs in Cottage Grove.

"We're hoping to make a good dent," he says with half a smile, "or at least keep folks on their toes."

### A growing problem

From local police to county prosecutors to local first-responders and drug users, it's become common knowledge that, like many small communities nationwide, Cottage

Grove indeed has a drug problem.

"We've certainly seen an increase in use lately," said Interim Police Chief Scott Shepherd, who said that CGPD sees a lot of methamphetamine and an increasing amount of heroin in its interactions with locals. Shepherd said that many misdemeanor charges such as Theft III are also drug related.

"People will steal anything they think has value to try and get that next bag," he said. "People that purportedly take property in exchange for drugs aren't very selective as long as the property has some value — bikes, strollers, tools, etc. A huge percentage of local crimes are motivated by

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## Driver in Saturday hit-and-run comes forward to police

BY JON STINNETT  
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove Police say the driver of a car that sideswiped another vehicle near the Fire Station Saturday evening has come forward and been charged with a hit-and-run.

Kassandra Dexter and Brian Dodge, the parents of three children with one on the way, say they were returning to their vehicle following Saturday evening's free movie presentation at South Lane County Fire and Rescue's Station 2-1 on Harrison Ave. at about 9 p.m. when a car collided with the rear passenger-side door of their 2000 Dodge Intrepid and kept driving.

Dodge said he was pushing a stroller to the car and had unlocked the door. He and Dexter were buckling their children into their seats when Dodge said he walked to the back of the car and opened the trunk.

"I heard a car coming, and it came straight for us," he said. "I had to jump out of the way, and I felt a rush of air go by me."

Dodge said that the next thing he saw was that the rear passenger door of his vehicle was folded forward in half and nearly touched the driver's-side door. He said he was sure there would be something wrong with Dexter, who was standing nearby, but that she was unhurt.

"I was lucky the door was pushed out as far as it was," Dexter said. "The car hit the stroller first."

"I was yelling at the car," Dodge said. "It just kept going and going, and I never saw it again."

Interim Cottage Grove Police Chief Scott Shepherd said that, at about 8:30 Sunday morning, a woman identified as Barbara Raum reported that she had been driving near the Fire Station Saturday evening when she "heard a loud clunk." Raum didn't see anyone nearby, she reportedly told police, and attributed the noise to something that had gone wrong with her car, later identified as a 2006 Chevy Malibu. After a short interview, Shepherd said Raum was arrested and issued a citation to appear in municipal court for Failure to Perform the Duties of a Driver when Property is Damaged, a Class A misdemeanor. The citation indicates the failure of a driver to stop and exchange information, etc. with the other parties involved in a crash. When a hit-and-run involves a collision with a person, the charge is a Class B felony.

## Public input sought on possible Coiner Park additions

BY JON STINNETT  
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Little Ariana Phillips had a blast playing at Cottage Grove's Coiner Park on Friday, and Phillips seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the slides and other playground equipment she encountered there.

Nearby, her parents said that the park is great for their daughter because it has swings, unlike the nearby playground equipment at Bohemia Park. They also fondly recalled the merry-go-round and toy digging equipment that were once offered at Coiner.

These are just a few of the opinions of local kids and parents regarding Coiner Park, which is located across from Safeway on Main Street. But the City of Cottage Grove and local

Rotarians want to hear more.

City Planner Amanda Ferguson explained that the City is helping the Cottage Grove Rotary Club conduct a survey to see what new playground equipment Rotary could potentially bring to Coiner Park.

"They were just going to put in some new toddler equipment," Ferguson said. "But instead it was decided that we would do a survey to find out what people really want to see there."

The new equipment won't be the only changes to come at Coiner; Ferguson said the City plans to update lighting in the park's gazebo to better monitor any nighttime activities there. The nearby basketball court is due for resurfacing and new nets.

The addition of a full-time City staffer to handle parks is-

sues should help clear up a maintenance backlog with regard to parks and particularly Coiner Park, Ferguson said.

"We're working on irrigation and lighting, and it's a good time to ask people what they think about what else needs to be done," she said.

The opening of the new playground equipment at Bohemia Park, located four blocks from Coiner, has drawn crowds there throughout the summer and may have helped foster rumors that the City had other plans for Coiner Park (rumors that apartments are planned for the land there are baseless, Ferguson said).

Still, Ferguson said both parks are of value to the City and its residents.

"Coiner has a different character than Bohemia," she said.

"The tree coverage there makes it a much more pleasant place in the summer. It has more intimate spaces for gatherings. I think we need both, and I like that they have different characteristics. I'm not surprised that kids want to go to Bohemia — it's new and shiny. But I don't think we should let Coiner fall apart for that reason."

Ferguson said the City will also be looking into improvements at the Harrison park across from the Fire Station in the near future. The new additions at Coiner Park are scheduled for installation this spring. In the meantime, those who wish to comment on the need for new equipment at Coiner are encouraged to complete the survey located at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/RRBTCTX](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RRBTCTX).



photo by Jon Stinnett

Ariana Phillips enjoys a slide at Coiner Park, where the addition of new playground equipment is expected soon.

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