

Business owners' reviews mixed on Small Business Saturday

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove held its first-ever Small Business Saturday promotion on Nov. 28. Businesses all around Main Street took part in the event with blue and white balloons hanging outside of stores and each purchase earning a ticket for a raffle drawing held Monday. The event was organized by the Cottage Grove Main Street Program.

As this was the first time Cottage Grove has held a promotion like this, many business owners were pleased with the promotion but also didn't know what to compare it to.

Rob Scoggin, part-owner of Homestead Furniture on Main Street, said that the promotion is a nice idea, but he commented that the promotion brought virtually no new business. "We're busy all the time this time of year," he said. Homestead Furniture has been in business in Cottage Grove for around 48 years. He mostly attributes the store's recent 20 percent increase in sales to the holiday season, and also had concerns on how much of an impact the Small Business Saturday promotion had on his business.

"It's really hard to tell which customers came in because of the promotion, or if they would have come to us anyway," Scoggin said.

The owner of Kalapuya Books, Hal Hartzell,



photo by Sam Wright

Stores that participated in Small Business Saturday showcased blue and white balloons outside.

had a similar reaction.

"December is always a busy time of year for us," he said. Although Hartzell appreciates the idea of promoting and encourage residents to shop locally, he predicted an increase in sales during the holiday season anyway.

Some businesses did actually notice a surge in sales from the promotion. Su Rosenthal, owner of Pandora's Box, said the promotion has encouraged a lot of locals to shop at her store. Rosenthal says that her store, which has been at its current location for the past 16 years, has seen an increase in sales due to the promotion and the upcoming holidays.

Another Main Street business, the Crafty

Mercantile, greatly appreciates the promotion. The store has only been open for three years, and owner Michele Rose started the business because she loves this small town.

"The promotion is great because we get to celebrate being able to make it as small business owners in this economy," Rose said. She also noted that she has seen a huge increase in sales since mid-November.

It seems that there is no harm in promoting people to shop locally and keeping the money close to home, yet some long-time business owners questioned the effectiveness of such a promotion.

Oakridge, CG leaders meet to talk cycling 'connectivity'

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Two Oregon communities known as cycling destinations are teaming up to explore ways to promote the scenic mountain route that connects them.

Cottage Grove is known for its Covered Bridges Scenic Bikeway, which takes cyclists on a 36-mile tour of the countryside with views of the area's famed covered bridges. Oakridge has a similar connection to cycling, as its mayor, Jim Coey, points out that mountain biking is its "main industry right now," and the area is one of six Gold Ride Centers certified worldwide by the International Mountain Biking Association.

Still, Coey pointed out that Oakridge is still "missing out on the road bike experience," and Coey and others believe that a ride through the mountains from Oakridge to Cottage Grove could provide one aspect of that experience.

Coey, Cottage Grove Mayor Tom Munroe, Chamber of Commerce Director Travis Palmer and members of the cycling communities of both towns recently met to discuss the ride, a 60-plus mile trip that's challenging but totally worth riding, according to more than one enthusiasts' website. Only about one-tenth of a mile of the route remains unpaved, and it was included in the statewide Cycle Oregon tour that made a stop in Cottage Grove in 2007.

"Everybody I've talked to is looking for ways to expand their bike routes," Munroe said. "There's a lot of advantage on this route, places where people could potentially camp out along the way."

Palmer called the route "a great bike ride," particularly for the cycling enthusiasts that already exist in both communities. One commenter on the website rideoregonride.com agreed:

"Do. This. Ride." the comment stated. "It's fantastic: secluded, gorgeous, immaculately paved (mostly,) hard enough to really be worth it. It has some great views of Diamond Peak, but honestly the draw is the road — there's almost no flat sections, it's always going up/down twisty-turny."

Beyond the Cottage Grove-Oakridge ride, Coey said the possibilities to access other amazing Oregon locales are promising.

"This ride could connect people to the Aufderheide Scenic Drive or the McKenzie Bikeway," he said. "There could be rides to Lemolo Lake and onto Highway 138 near the North Umpqua. It creates a lot of advantage for road bikers, though not necessarily for beginners, and it creates a lot of economic development for local communities, as cyclists certainly like to eat and drink."

Coey said representatives from Oakridge and elsewhere have been meeting with state parks officials to try to expand local ride possibilities, and meetings between community leaders are expected to continue.

"There are a lot of conversations going on," he said. "Town mayors are talking connectivity from town to town; that's the buzz word."

Main Street soon to feature Five Flying Monkeys

Solesbees plan to continue selling antiques in Victoriana building

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Leslie Neufeld, owner of Victoriana Antiques on Main Street, recently announced plans to move back to Los Angeles to resume a career designing costumes for the film industry. A pair of Cottage Grove entrepreneurs, however, has stepped in to ensure that the

building at the corner of Fifth and Main Street will remain vibrant.

Danny and Candace Solesbee said they expected to finalize the purchase of the former Victoriana building on Monday, and their new venture, Five Flying Monkeys, will pay tribute to the five children the couple has between them.

Candace Solesbee, who also operates Shampoo Dolls Salon across Fifth Street, said that she and her husband always liked shopping for antiques at Victoriana and that Five Flying Monkeys will be "like an antique mall," featuring selections that are "retro, vintage and today."

"We didn't want it to go away,"

Danny Solesbee said. "We both love shopping there and hated to see it dissolved. We want to keep up with what Leslie got started."

"It's meant to be whimsical, like the 'Wizard of Oz' meets steampunk," Candace Solesbee said, which should include repurposed furniture and other items.

"It will still be a place where people can buy gifts," she said.

In addition, the back of the building will house Shampoo Dolls Too, which will further the offerings at Solesbee's nearby salon with facials, waxing, manicures and pedicures.

In addition to Shampoo Dolls,

Danny Solesbee also recently purchased and renovated the historic First National Bank building on Main Street, which currently houses First American Title. He said the couple plans to renovate the building at Fifth and Main throughout January, including new paint and rearranging its layout, starting with the salon setup first. They also plan to reopen the doors on the west side of the building, which haven't been used for some time.

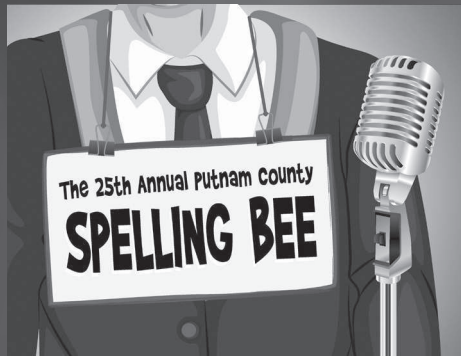
"There's never a dull moment," Danny said. "But I did tell her no more buildings."



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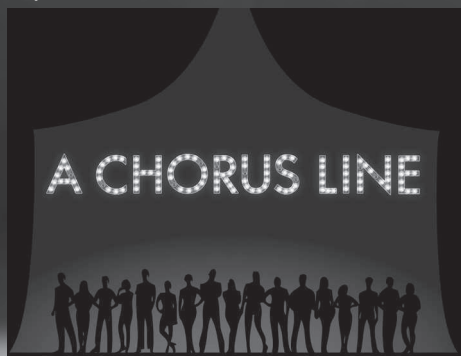
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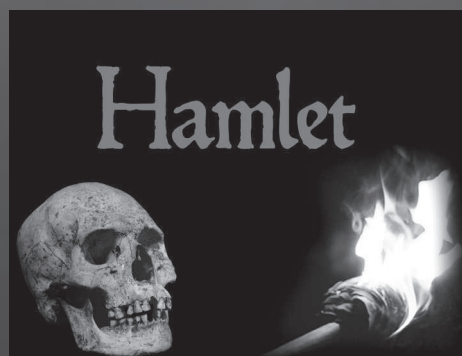
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