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With bells on
Runners, walkers take their annual Jingle Bell jaunt, page 10A

Cottage Grove Sentinel

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2015

SOUTH LANE COUNTY'S MOST AWARD-WINNING NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1889

VOLUME 128 • NUMBER 24

Addictions, lack of jobs cited as top health barriers

Survey polled residents about what CG needs to be healthier

Drug and alcohol addictions, a lack of well-paying jobs and too few activities for local teens were the top three barriers to Cottage Grove becoming a healthier, more vibrant community, according to a local survey of 500 area residents.

The survey was commissioned by "Be Your Best Cottage Grove," a cross-sector group of individuals interested in learning what Cottage Grove residents feel they need to help them be their best. A year ago, Eugene-based Lockwood Research (www.lockwoodresearch.com) conducted an initial polling of 400 randomly selected individuals by phone. Over the summer, Be Your Best volunteers helped Lockwood Research conduct in-person and on-line surveys of an additional 100 individuals, ages 45 and younger.

Jody Rolnick, former Sentinel publisher and an early proponent of "Be Your Best," said the survey sought scientifically valid data about the community's sentiments regarding its own health and vitality. "Be Your Best" had been initiating conversations around the topic with locals for about a year prior to the survey, Rolnick said, and the survey results are meant as a way to further the ongoing dialogue.

The survey is reportedly the largest professionally conducted poll of its kind in Cottage Grove.

The technology used to survey local residents uncovered a difference of opinion among the respondents — phone survey respondents were generally older (53 percent were age 65 or above) and had lived in Cottage Grove longer (71 percent had been a resident for 15 years or more) than the in-person/on-line respondents (all were 45 and under, and 38 percent had lived in Cottage Grove for 15 years or more).

Still, some of the same key challenges were identified by both sets of respondents:

Some 42 percent of the younger survey respondents felt that drug and alcohol addictions were the biggest obstacles in Cottage Grove becoming a healthy vibrant community, with a lack of jobs a distant second (26 percent), followed by a lack of positive teen activities (24 percent). Only two percent of online respondents said there were no challenges for Cottage Grove in becoming a healthy, vibrant community.

Meanwhile, in the survey of the older segment, the lack of jobs took prominence, with 32 percent of respondents identifying the lack of availability of jobs and 16 percent identifying the lack of higher paying employment as the two biggest challenges facing Cottage Grove in becoming a healthy, vibrant community. Drug and alcohol addictions were mentioned by 13 percent of the older group as a problem, and about 12 percent — or one out of eight phone respondents — felt there were no challenges for Cottage Grove in becoming a healthy, vibrant community.

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ANY REQUESTS?

Kira Carver, left, and Maia Wilhour perform under the gazebo at All-America City Square as part of a special Art Walk celebration held Saturday evening. Art Walk took place in conjunction with a host of other holiday-themed events, including a block party organized by the CG Faith Center, the downtown tree lighting, pictures with Santa at City Hall and more. The duo solicited tips to raise money for a trip to Washington DC planned for June of 2017.

More pictures of holiday fun can be seen on page 11A.

photo by Greg Lee

Also inside:



Big trip
Hill journeys to Hawaii for hoops, page 3A

School Board views rough Harrison design

Discussion of alternate site for Kennedy High School takes place, Delight Valley site preferred

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The South Lane School Board got its first look on Monday night at a rough design of what a new Harrison Elementary School might look like.

Mike Gorman and Greg McCracken, representatives of BLRB Architects, showed the board a mockup of a potential new Harrison at the Taylor Avenue site that's slated to become Harrison's new home, should a local option levy be approved by local voters in the May, 2016 election.

Supporters of a new Harrison building have been meeting since last winter to outline plans for the bond and, if they're successful, a replacement for the structure,

built on 10th Street in 1948, which houses three times the number of students it was intended to hold and is showing its age in many places. In addition to recommending a 25-year, \$29.5 million bond, advisory committees have also narrowed down a list of deferred maintenance and other projects that could be completed with bond funding.

On Monday, BLRB presented a mockup showcasing the features agreed upon that afternoon during a 4 1/2 hour design charrette that day that brought together the architects and the school's design planning committee. McCracken told the Board that an ambitious schedule will have to be kept to bring a recommended design back to them in February, a sched-



courtesy photo

This mockup shows the potential design of a new Harrison School.

ule that includes a "community conversation" on Jan. 13 and meetings Jan. 27 and Feb. 23.

McCracken said the design committee used "puzzle pieces" to fit the various attributes of a new Harrison together. He said his team looked over the conditions at the Taylor Avenue site,

including its soil makeup, existing facilities and the impacts of possibly relocating the buildings and programs already in place there, most notably including Al Kennedy Alternative High School, a school district maintenance facility and the South Valley

Please see **SCHOOL**, Page 6A



Narnia!
Young cast, powerful performances, page 8A

Higher-than-average water bill irks many

City says long billing period, end of summer sewer rate are to blame

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove residents who noticed a spike in the cost of their most recent water bill took to social media to vent their frustration, frustration that has also found its way to the City's utilities department.

A Facebook page dedicated to all

things Cottage Grove last week featured an impassioned thread about the mid-October to mid-November water bill for city customers. One commenter stated that his most recent bill doubled, while others described increases of \$30 or \$40 for the month. The utilities department workers at City Hall said last week that they've been fielding all sorts of inquiries related to the higher-than-normal bills. They say a rate increase has not been enacted and that the increase can usually be attributed to two factors.

First, the City said the billing period for the month was about five to seven

days longer than normal. About three or four City employees require three to four days to walk the streets of Cottage Grove reading each water meter, a process delayed by the City's annual leaf pick-up.

In addition to the longer billing period, the City said that a summer rate it uses to calculate wastewater charges ended in the middle of October.

"We understand that in the summer, people are watering their grass and filling swimming pools," said Jennifer Violette, and that not all that water goes right back into the sewer system."

In the summer, therefore, custom-

ers are charged the average wastewater rate for their previous usage from November to April. The City said that some customers may have used more water than usual this year as well because the dry season lasted well into October.

"They may not have noticed the change last year because they stopped watering earlier," one representative said. "It's natural that the higher bill would be noticed. But people don't seem to notice when the discount goes into effect."

The City said that rates should even out for the next billing period.

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WEATHER

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