

Recital supports dance school after recent break-in

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

A trying week ended on a triumphant note for South Lane Ballet Academy. On Saturday afternoon, Academy Director Mandy Conforth told a capacity crowd at Cottage Grove High School's Cafetorium that the school's headquarters on Sixth Ave. in downtown Cottage Grove had been broken into on Wednesday, Dec. 9. Conforth later said that \$359 had been stolen during the break-in; she said volunteers helped clean the broken glass from the dancers' costumes that was scattered when the school's front window was broken. About 100 dancers from

each of the Academy's classes participated in Saturday's recital, with two groups composed not of regular dancers but of interested youth contacted through school visits. Admission fees to the recital supported the Academy's operations. Conforth also told those in attendance a little about South Lane Ballet's new home. The school is expected to take up residence upstairs in the Boots and Sandals Square Dance Barn after its renovations are complete. Last week, Greg Yoss of Big Picture Construction estimated a March, 2016 reopening for the barn, which Conforth said will allow dancers double the room they are used to downtown.



From left, South Lane Ballet Academy Advanced Tap students Megan Schneider, Madeleine Sisson, Kenady Conforth, Natalee Brink and Cyra Conforth perform in the "Toy Shoppers" skit during the Academy's recital on Saturday, which raised funds to support the school's operations. A packed house at the CGHS cafetorium attended the recital.

photo by Jon Stinnett



Organizers planning CG Half Marathon

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Early on the morning of March 5, 2016, groups of fitness-minded locals and visitors will board buses in downtown Cottage Grove that will transport them to Dorena School. They'll journey the 13-plus miles back to town on their own two feet.

This spring will bring the first-ever running of the Cottage Grove Half Marathon, a 13.1-mile jaunt that should function as an excellent early-season race, especially for those training for the Eugene Marathon in May, according to organizer Mike Ripley of Oregon Trail Runs.

Ripley, who also organizes the Oregon Gran Fondo, a road cycling race that draws about 400 participants to Cottage Grove in June, said the impetus for the Cottage Grove Half came about five years ago, when he was planning a full marathon in Corvallis.

"I got the entire course approved, but it was tabled," Ripley said, which led him to realize that Cottage Grove's Row River Trail was an "amazing resource" that didn't feature a lot of the restrictions he encountered in Corvallis. Perhaps the biggest challenge to putting on the race involved busing its participants out to Dorena, where they will gather on a closed roadway before journeying onto a traffic-free bike trail, though finding "flaggers" to indicate changes and road crossings along the journey will also be challenging.

Buses will begin transporting runners/walkers to Dorena at 8 a.m. for a 9 a.m. start, and Ripley said the four-hour limit should give walkers plenty of time to finish the course.

"Just walk it," he advises those who would participate but are unsure of their abilities. "With the time limit, you could finish with an 18:32 pace per mile."

The race, which is sponsored by Banner Bank and will benefit the United Way in Lane County, should provide "good exposure" for Cottage Grove and the Row River Trail, Ripley said, and he's capping participation at 1000 runners.

"It's a unique little town," he said of Cottage Grove. "Because the half is so early in the season, it should be a perfect situation."

Registration for the half marathon opened on Oct. 30, and there are separate prices for team and individual competitors. More information on the race can be found at cottagegrovehalf.com.

Hazen named interim Nursery director

The Cottage Grove Family Relief Nursery Board of Directors, chaired by local resident Isaac Hovet, announced last week that founding board member Diane Hazen, L.C.S.W., assumed the interim role of the Nursery's executive director effective Nov. 30.

Outgoing Director Cindy Vitelli said on Monday that she's not leaving the organization but merely transitioning to a position that will have her providing "direct service" to its

clients. "I still love the Nursery, and I'll be here forever," Vitelli said. She assumed the directorship of the Nursery following the departure of 16-year veteran Heather Murphy in 2014.

Meanwhile, Hazen will utilize over 15 years of social work management, community leadership and non-profit organizational experience to provide leadership to the staff of the Family Relief Nursery and act

as liaison to the Board in order to support a smooth transition during the hiring process for a permanent director.

"I believe this transition is an opportunity for the Nursery to experience renewal by updating the vision and strategic direction," Hazen said. "Setting clear goals for the future and identifying the skills needed by a permanent Executive Director to lead us toward those goals will be an important step. I am excited to be a

part of this process."

In its more than 20 years of existence, the Cottage Grove Family Relief Nursery has served thousands of children from hundreds of families. The board is confident that Hazen's presence will be very helpful for the Nursery to continue meeting the needs of the South Lane County and North Douglas county communities. It also wished to thank Vitelli for her work as Executive Director over the last year.

Local show dog's offspring already dominating as a puppy

'Annie', daughter of Vallhund champion 'Gus,' recently took home best-in-show honors

The offspring of a famed Cottage Grove show dog has already made her mark in the show ring — at just 10 months of age.

In early 2012, the Sentinel relayed the news of a historic win at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show by Gus, a Swedish Vallhund owned by Cottage Grove's Charlene Sayles. Gus cleaned up the competition among his peers, easily taking home best-in-breed honors among the Vallhunds, a breed long prized for its herding abilities in Sweden but only recently recognized as a

distinct breed by the American Kennel Club. Now retired, Gus finished 2015 as the number two Swedish Vallhund in the U.S., but his daughter, Annie, more properly known as "Akutchi's If You Could See Me Now at Kanouse," recently made breed history as the first Swedish Vallhund ever in the country to win a best-in-show.

Sayles, who called the win a "huge deal in the dog show world," said that Marilyn Thell, the first woman to bring a Swedish Vallhund to America in 1989, was on hand to see the win.



courtesy photo

Gus' daughter recently won best-in-show as a 10-month old puppy.

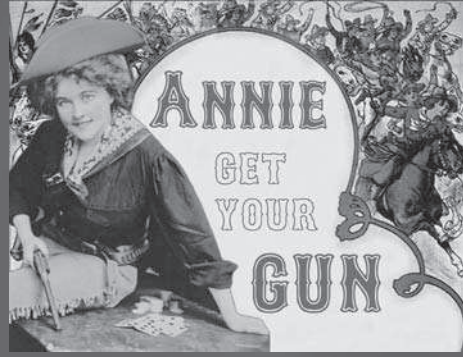
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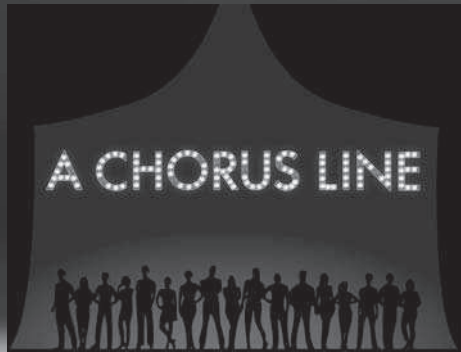
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