

Let it snow, and let us ski

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel



photo by Jon Stinnett

The view from Eagle Point is the reward for an uphill ski climb.

cade since my wife introduced me to the joys of cross-country skiing. Back then, my first

the trails appear to be groomed by skiers themselves and consist of little more than two packed ski tracks through the snow. There's a communal feel to it, really, as if those who have gone before you have paved your way, and you'll be helping to groom the trail for those who come after. It also fosters the notion that, as long as you stick to the trail, everything will be just fine.

Two Saturdays ago, we were among a rather large crowd that dusted off the skis to hit the slopes. While many headed toward Willamette Pass to whoosh downhill, we opted instead for the relative calm (not to mention the highly preferable cost, as all that's required once you've purchased your equipment is a \$25 annual Sno-Park permit) of a cross-country adventure. We brought our chocolate Lab Jack along, and from the first moment we freed him from the back of the car, he bounded about, turning circles in the snow, apparently unable to believe his good luck.

Over the years, we've encountered many people we knew from Cottage Grove out

Please see **SKI**, Page 9A

In the beginning, there's a hustle to round up all the necessary equipment, then a look around to gauge the weather and notice the fog of breath that confirms it — it's colder than you thought up here. The takeoff can be a bit awkward, but with boots tied, gloves and hat secure and skis pointed in the right direction, there's really only one thing left to do. With poles planted firmly in packed snow, the first push starts a rhythm that clears the mind and engages the entire body, a cadence that warms from the inside and directs one's energy outward and onward, toward the unknown that can only be found somewhere out there, among the tall trees, under an impossibly blue winter sky.

Whenever a friend from back east asks me what's so special about Oregon, I invariably point out the ease with which Willamette Valley residents can journey in the wintertime toward two distinct landscapes — either the sand and surf on the coast, or up into the mountains (and, whenever the mood strikes, back to level ground again) to enjoy piles and piles of snow. Recently, thanks to a visit from a relative able to keep our four-year old busy for a few hours and no small amount of wintry precipitation, the wife and I were able to gather up the gear and head toward one of our favorite wintertime haunts.

Gold Lake Sno-Park, located at Milepost 61 on Highway 58 just past the Willamette Pass ski resort, is the highest in terms of elevation of the area's sno-parks. It offers ski trails of various difficulties and three shelters for those who need a minute to take a load off and warm up, in addition to the best form of exercise that can be had this time of year in snowy environs (at least in my humble opinion).

It's hard to believe that it's been over a de-

experience involved a borrowed set of skis and the impossibly immaculate groomed trails around Ketchum, Idaho, where a veritable superhighway of forgiving trails within minutes of town can be tackled after work or anytime daylight permits. Awkward though that first day was, the seed had been planted, and much the way long-distance running helps clear the mind and engage the body with just a pair of sneakers, skiing has continued to work its own wonders in the snow — whenever busy schedules permit a trip to the mountains, that is.

Here in Oregon, I've yet to encounter such fastidious trail grooming; in contrast,

in the Lorane and Crow communities. Food boxes were given to 16 families in Lorane. Again, you made Christmas for many children and families.

The break is almost over for CAL students. School resumes on Monday, Jan. 4 with regular schedules.

Just a reminder that Lorane Grange meets the third Thursday on Jan. 21. The spaghetti dinner and bingo evenings return on Saturday, Jan. 23.

Happy New Year to everyone! Be sure to drive safely if you go out. I hope 2016 is good to you all.



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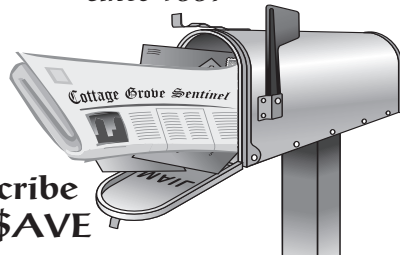
LORANE COUNTRY NEWS

BY LIL THOMPSON
For the Sentinel

Here's a special thank you to all who donated to the Angel Trees and food boxes. With your help, gifts and necessities were given to 20 children

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- Contest Rules
1. Parents must be residents of Cottage Grove and must notify the Cottage Grove Sentinel within 24 hours of baby's birth.
 2. Exact time of birth must be certified by attending physician.
 3. In the event of a tie, winner will be chosen at random. Decision of judges is final.
 4. All gifts must be collected within 90 days of baby's birth.



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