



**Still missing**  
 Search for John Jarrell  
 continues, page 3A



# Cottage Grove Sentinel

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

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## County health assessment prioritizes needs

BY JON STINNETT  
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Members of the public were invited to Cottage Grove Community Medical Center last week to help determine Lane County's health needs and goals for the next three years.

An event held Wednesday, Feb. 10 to unveil the annual Community Health Needs Assessment also included the opportunity for attendees to choose from a list of priorities for the 2016-19 Community Health Improvement Plan, and the top priority as voted on in Cottage

Grove concerned the social and economic implications of poor health.

According to PeaceHealth Senior Communications Specialist Monique Danziger, Cottage Grove prioritized two items: Promoting access to the economic and social opportunities necessary to live a healthy life and promoting healthy behaviors and engaging the community in healthy living.

Danziger said it's notable that community members are recognizing the direct impacts that social and economic factors can play with regard to living healthy, including factors such

as high-quality education, secure jobs with good wages and housing that is both safe and affordable. Partners dedicated to community health could potentially focus on issues related to employment, finances, education, housing and transportation. With regard to healthy behaviors, the focus going forward will be on issues related to nutrition, physical activity, reducing substance abuse, sexual behaviors and stress management.

Representatives from United Way of Lane County, Lane County Public Health, PeaceHealth and Trillium came together to reveal the 2016

Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which lists both progress in the three years since the last Community Health Improvement Plan and improvement needed to sustain such progress. Danziger wrote that the most notable improvement to public health in Lane County involves access to healthcare, whether through additional numbers of those receiving care through the Affordable Care Act or the opening of the new Veterans Administration hospital and other facilities. Recruiting of additional primary health care physicians has also improved healthcare access for the Coun-

ty's residents, she said.

But there is still a long way to go toward a healthier Lane County, and chronic diseases and accidents remain the County's leading causes of death. Tobacco use, obesity, physical inactivity and alcohol use are still the most prominent preventable causes of death.

The CHNA surveyed 2295 Lane County residents, asking them what they enjoyed most about living here. The availability of parks and natural recreation issues figured strongly, as

Please see **HEALTH**, Page 10A

**Also inside:**



**No Camping**

Police attempting to contact offenders, page 3A

## Committee set to present Harrison design to School Board on Feb. 22

BY JON STINNETT  
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

A committee dedicated to the design and planning of a potential new Harrison Elementary building will present a report to the South Lane School Board at its Monday, Feb. 22 meeting.

South Lane Communications Coordinator Garrett Bridgens said the design planning committee will present its report in anticipation of the School Board's drafting of an official resolution to place a \$35-plus million bond levy to build a new Harrison on the ballot for the May 17, 2016 election.

School District officials have sought to replace the aging Harrison building — which was constructed in 1947 — for some time, and planning for a bond levy to replace the school began in earnest in early 2014 with the formation of a 40-plus member bond advisory committee. The School Board voted to pursue a 25-year bond that would be used to build a new school, provide technology and safety upgrades throughout the District and renovate the Warren H. Daugherty Aquatic Center. On Monday, the Board will vote whether to move forward with the bond, and if it does, the Board will have to file official ballot paperwork with Lane County Elections by March 17.

A flier that advocates of the bond levy have been disseminating throughout the community parcels out the intended use of the nearly \$36 million that would be raised if the bond is approved by voters: Construction of a new Harrison building at the Taylor Ave. site of the former Cottage Grove High School is expected to cost about \$18.9 million; safety and security upgrades district-wide, including security cameras and fire security systems, is slated at about \$1.45 million. Deferred maintenance projects such as roof replacements are listed at about \$2.3 million, and network and technology upgrades are expected to cost about \$1.25 million. The aquatic center upgrade is listed at \$2.9 million. Renovating the current Kennedy High School location to accommodate an early learning center is tabbed at just over \$1 million, and relocating Kennedy to the former Delight Valley building is expected to cost \$412,000. A \$6.1 million line item for "other costs" including furnishings, fees and permits is also included.

Bridgens said South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent had given 36 presentations to

Please see **BOND**, Page 10A



**Dorena Grange members circle five new inductees into their Grange on Friday. The Grange has struggled to find enough members to fill its offices in recent years.**

photo by Bruce Kelsh

## Dorena Grange fights to survive

BY JON STINNETT  
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Toward the end of a ceremony held Friday afternoon to induct five new recruits into their organization, members of Dorena Grange No.

835 surrounded their new Grangers in a welcoming embrace.

Though the circle that closed in around new members Jim and Sharon Kness, Bill Anthony, Marilyn Wilber and Steve Barnes was a regularly prescribed fea-

ture of the ceremony, the Grange had good cause to be extra thankful for their inclusion in its ranks. The Grange faces dangerously low membership numbers that could force the closure of its facility on Row River Road southeast of Cottage

Grove and its consolidation with another Grange Hall, and many, including longtime Worthy Master Joe Snook, hope such a move is not necessary.

Please see **GRANGE**, Page 10A

## Police change tactics regarding drug offenses

*With County prosecuting more felonies, attempted-possession misdemeanors become rare*

BY JON STINNETT  
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

A recent change in tactics at the county level has also altered the way the Cottage Grove Police Department charges those suspected of some crimes in the City, Interim Police Chief Scott Shepherd said.

Lane County District Attorney Patricia Perlow recently told the Sentinel that her office had prosecuted 80 more low-level, drug-related felonies per month since last August in an effort to intervene before more serious crimes can be committed and defendants can amass a lengthy criminal

history.

"We've been referring many of them to the County's drug treatment court," Perlow said. "The goal has been to intervene in criminal activity earlier so that we can stop referring so many people to prison."

The change came about due to grant funding made available by the passage of Oregon House Bill 3194, which has funded more lawyers to prosecute low-level offenses. In tandem with the recent passage of a levy to fund more beds at the county jail, Perlow said the new way of business has helped the County keep a handle on criminality, though the grant fund-

ing does expire in 2017. A 26-year veteran, Perlow was appointed to head the D.A.'s office last July after the retirement of Alex Gardner. She is currently campaigning for election to the position in November.

The fact that the District Attorney's office has been prosecuting drug-possession cases has not escaped the attention of the Cottage Grove Police Department, and Shepherd said officers with CGPD have largely curtailed a practice of charging those it finds in possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia with an attempted possession charge — a misdemeanor — so that they can be charged in Cottage Grove's Municipal Court as opposed to felony charges that the County would not be able to handle. "They're prosecuting many of those cases in the County's drug

court," Shepherd said. "Because of the added attention people get through the drug court and the ability to have those offenses removed from their record through successful interventions, we've stopped those types of charges except for the occasional attempt charge where it may be necessary."

Shepherd called the interventions available through the drug court a "good thing," though he added that it will take some time to see if the change in policy is really working.

"They're just restarting the program now," he said, "so it will be a matter of time before we see whether it makes a difference. My hope is that the added attention some defendants may get through drug court will be beneficial."



**Old Almanac**

Classic tome still has wisdom to share, page 6A



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