



'Monster Mashup'.....9A
New firetrucks.....3A
Football playoff preview...1B

Cottage Grove Sentinel

photo by Jon Stinnett
The Centennial footbridge stands out against fall colors on a beautiful autumn Friday.

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Housing help may be headed this way

Cottage Grove's rental market is extremely tight, but progress on recent projects may provide relief

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel



photo by Jon Stinnett

Richard Gordon, who owns and will manage the old Cottage Grove Hospital building along with his wife, Nedora, said he's close to submitting plans for 27 apartments and office space for approval.

"You have to call the day of the opening," she said. "They're all gone within 24 hours of coming open."

Another local woman said her search lasted months, and she rarely even got to look at a prospective apartment.

"There were always five applications ahead of me," she said. "I've hopped around living with other people, and I'm getting ready to have to live out of my car. I've been here all my life, and I just don't know what to do."

In speaking with many people who have attempted to find a place to rent in the Cottage Grove area, it's become apparent that they're indeed difficult for most to come by, and many who can't find or have difficulty affording the rental they need are

forced to pay rent that's above their ability or move into something substandard.

And it's not a problem that's unique to the southern Willamette Valley, either. In March, U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley embarked on a tour of the state, which has seen its rental properties market lag behind demand as the economy improves and more people choose to move here — to delve deeper into what he described to the Mail Tribune of Medford as an affordable housing crisis. Merkley's office added that while the rental vacancy rate nationwide is seven percent, in Oregon, it's closer to three percent.

Please see **RENTALS**, Page 8A

Carousel project kicks off with animal distribution

Pieces of iconic machine placed around town to drum up interest, awareness

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Downtown shoppers may have noticed a few additions in decorations at several businesses in the historic district. Last Tuesday, Oct. 25, volunteers passed around carousel animals to raise awareness of an upcoming project to build a carousel near downtown Cottage Grove.

The project is headed by co-chairs Judy Cash and Don Williams. Nearly 20 years ago, Cash purchased a carousel with the purpose of operating it for Grovers. Initially, she ran into logistical challenges when trying to restore a home for the carousel. Cash shelved the project for several years until a group of carousel-enthusiasts realized Cash still owns the carousel. The "Friends of the Cottage Grove Carousel" is now the organization of people behind the project.

The group has identified a vacant lot between Sixth and Seventh Streets on the north side of Main Street. The funding of the project still has a way to go, but the Friends of the Carousel have a preliminary budget to purchase the property and to design a fully

enclosed building to accompany the carousel. The building will be used for a souvenir shop, a horse carving area, a maintenance shop and a meeting area big enough to fit roughly 60 people.

"We're still in the early stages, but we have our estimated budget," Williams told the Sentinel. The project leaders project the entire project to cost \$728,000. The main expense is the design and construction of the building, which Williams and Cash have estimated to be \$600,000. The carousel is an Allen Herschel carousel from 1926, so many of the parts have to be reconditioned and repaired, which can cost roughly \$20,000. The remaining \$108,000 is attributed to purchasing the lot along with grant writing, souvenir shop stocking and other miscellaneous fees. The project plans to raise its money through financing grants and local fundraising events.

A total of 12 carousel animals were delivered to 12 different businesses in order to spread the word and to excite the public about the upcoming project. The carousel is set to be complete for the summer of 2019.

Fertilab hosts 'Big Mix' for business owners

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

A Eugene-based startup company came to Cottage Grove Thursday to host a networking event at the Armory downtown. The Cottage Grove Community Development Corporation teamed up with Fertilab, a company that helps connect different entrepreneurs in the area, providing a platform for networking and educational experiences.

"The Big Mix" saw dozens of local business owners (old and new) pitch their business ideas to the rest of the attendees and shared and asked for guidance in different specific areas.

"We're here to connect the talent," said David Youngentob, representative from Fertilab. Some of the present entrepreneurs

were already members of Fertilab and shared their experience meeting new people to help them with their business. Local resident Kim Johnson gave her testimony of her experience with Fertilab.

"At my first meeting I had no idea what I was walking into, but I eventually made amazing connections, and now I've been able to take my business up to Portland," she said. Johnson runs an organic sushi business that she sells to different retailers. Johnson says that what she currently needs help with is developing a social media presence.

Wendy Johnson, a new Cottage Grove resident, has recently started up her own art studio and was asking for assistance with marketing her studio.

From Shampoo Dolls owners Danny and Candace Solesbee, to web designer Ethan Clevenger, businesses of all types and sizes were able to network with each other.

Fertilab hosts these forum-type networking meetings to get businesses of Lane County to communicate and help each other thrive and grow. However, signing up for a membership to Fertilab can give you a wider spectrum of entrepreneurs.

While the "Big Mix" meetings act as a forum for local businesses to network with each other, Youngentob says Fertilab's pri-

mary function is to serve its members by connecting and matching business owners based on certain needs.

Organizers said the Big Mix can prove extremely beneficial for the local economy. One of the first events happened in the Eugene/Springfield area that saw the largest gathering of tech entrepreneurs in September of 2015. Now the area has recently been dubbed the Silicon Shire. It is hoped that Cottage Grove businesses will now have a similar opportunity to grow.

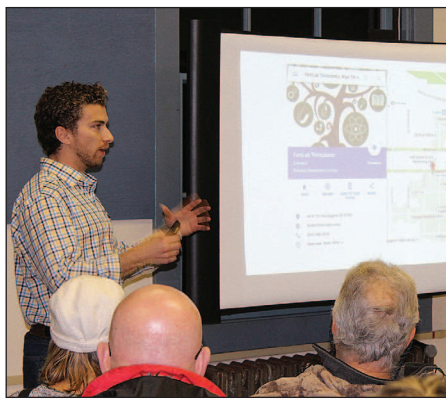


photo by Sam Wright

Fertilab's David Youngentob offers opening remarks about the Big Mix, which he billed as an opportunity to pitch, connect and grow their business endeavors.



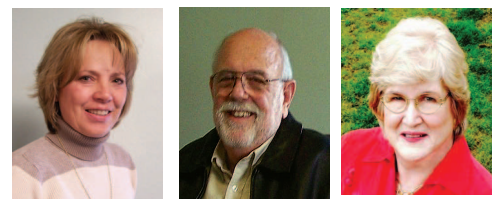
photo by Sam Wright

Russ McGuire shows South Lane Fire and Rescue volunteers how to mount the carousel animals.

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WEATHER



HIGH 67
LOW 49

Sunny

CONTENTS

Calendar.....9B
Channel Guide.....6B
Classified ads.....8B
Obituaries.....2A
Opinion.....4A
Public Safety.....5A
Sports.....1B



1 Dollar