



# Cottage Grove Sentinel

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### SPORTS

Volleyball makes a splash, spring sports underway. **PG. B1**

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## City names county commissioner to staff

### Faye Stewart will take over for Howard Schesser and Jan Wellman in new joint department

By Caitlyn May  
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Lane County Commissioner Faye Stewart will join the Cottage Grove city staff as the public works and development director. The hiring ends months of searching after previous community development manager Howard Schesser

announced his retirement and public works director Jan Wellman joined him. The city announced early last month that, as a result of the retirements, the two departments would be merged in a cost saving move. "It was a tough decision for me because I didn't want to lose a great county commissioner," said CG city manager Richard

Meyers. According to Meyers, Stewart bested six other individuals for the position. "What stood out was his skills in connecting citizens to solutions," Meyers said.

Stewart, who will earn \$87,000 a year, is scheduled to start work on March 31 and shape the format of the new joint department.

Please see **STEWART PG 6A**

## Local kids win big



Local students from ATA Studio competed with over 400 other martial arts students in Eugene on March 11, bringing home over a dozen medals.

Please see **KARATE PG A3**

## Roads at a dead end in CG

By Caitlyn May  
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There are just over 45 miles of paved road in the city of Cottage Grove and locals usually sum them up in one word: Terrible. Potholes and cracked streets line much of the city and while officials are well aware of the problem, they are also aware of the barriers to repairing them.

"Where do we get the money?" asked Cottage Grove City Manager Richard Meyers. It's a question floating around city hall and the state of Oregon at large after the American Society of Civil Engineers released its 2017 Infrastructure Report Card. While the report spells out a lacking infrastructure sys-

tem in general for the nation, it notes that in Oregon, drivers can expect to spend up to \$285 per year on vehicle damage caused by driving on roads in need of repair.

Residents of Cottage Grove voted down an increase in the gas tax last November that would have aided in the efforts to improve city roads but not completely solved the problem.

"Gas tax is affixed to gallons," Meyers said. "The number of gallons hasn't drastically changed." In fact, with advances in the automobile industry allowing motorists to get more miles per gallon, funds are dwindling and damage to roads is increasing.

Please see **ROADS PG A9**

## New changes for FireMed set for July 1

By Caitlyn May  
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Cottage Grove residents who are current FireMed members will see a change in their services come this summer.

"We haven't raised the price here since 1982," South Lane Fire and Rescue Chief Joe Raade said. However, that's about to change.

Currently, FireMed customers pay \$65 per year for unlimited, medically necessary ambulance rides. After the change, residents will continue to pay \$65 per year but will be entitled to just two ambulance rides. The change is expected July 1.

"We were at a large loss the last two to three years. This is an attempt to right FireMed," Raade said. The service, available to all Cottage Grove residents, also provided in-home medical attention such as addressing low blood sugar or bandaging a wound suffi-

ciently enough to allow family members to transport injured parties to the hospital and avoid the ambulance ride.

Changes to the nation's health care system, however, and the growing crisis facing hospital capacity had SLFR routinely headed out of town with FireMed customers in tow.

"If we have to take a patient to Portland, that's staff gone for eight hours, out of town," Raade said. SLFR is not the first unit to consider changing the way its FireMed program works. Sweet Home and Salem altered their programs five years ago while other counties are looking to do the same as health care costs and insurance parameters continue to fluctuate.

"Medicare is the only company that can say we're going to pay you this much and there's no recourse to get the rest of the money," Raade said, noting that

Please see **FIREMED PG A9**

## NEW SCHOOL PRICE TAG: \$22,860,497

By Caitlyn May  
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The South Lane School District Board approved the gross maximum price for the new Harrison Elementary School on Monday, March 20.

Hyland Construction submitted a price of nearly \$23 million to construct the school and a seven additional alternates that totaled just over \$800,000.

"We were aiming for \$23 million," said South Lane School District Superintendent Krista Parent.

The gross maximum price includes "divisions" such as electric, plumbing, furnishings and specialties which were described as white boards and oth-

er classroom essentials.

The board prioritized the alternate items to include lighting along Taylor St. from 8th to the highway and two covered play structures.

"I don't think you can have an elementary school play area without a covered area in Oregon," Parent said. Other alternates include snow guard and solar tubes.

Currently, the price of the school sit at approximately \$282 per sq. ft. but the price may come in lower depending on contingency costs.

The vote passed unanimously with a groundbreaking expected for Thursday, March 23.

## Group raises funds for Swinging Bridge repairs

By Cindy Weeldreyer  
For The Sentinel

Dana Merryday fell in love with Lane County after attending his first Country Fair in Veneta in 1992. After marrying his wife, Amy, the Berkeley, Calif. couple began their hunt for a house in Oregon. In 2011, a Country Fair friend suggested they visit the new Axe and Fiddle Pub. The couple immediately fell in love with Cottage Grove's natural beauty, friendly people and the uniqueness of the town.

Six years ago they purchased a 1910 vintage fixer-upper on the corner of Adams Avenue and Second Street. The couple committed to a five year plan to continue teaching in Berkeley and spend summers doing restoration work on the Cottage Grove house.

"As I worked outside each summer, I met many happy, healthy people of all ages who regularly walked on a route that took them past our house and over the Swinging Bridge," Dana said. "Amy and I are im-

pressed with the number of people who use the bridge daily for exercise, to catch the LTD bus to and from work, and for quicker access to downtown. Through the years they've all become our friends."

Those daily routines were interrupted on Oct. 24 when the city closed the popular bridge due to safety concerns with the deteriorating support structure. Since 1965, the Currin Swinging Bridge has spanned the Coast Fork of the Willamette River between River Road and

Please see **BRIDGE PG A10**



Amy Merryday, Melica Dunne, Dana Merryday, Brittany Corbit (with son William) and Grandma Shelly Corbit are members of the new Friends of the Swinging Bridge organization.

### COMMUNITY

#### Vigil held for Andy

Local car clubs and friends gathered to remember Andrew Dempsey. **PAGE A8**



### VETERANS

#### VFW needs help

Local VFW post wants to update bathrooms to ADA compliant. **PAGE A3**

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### Come chat about the community!

