

Local VFW post in need of funds for ADA updates

By Caitlyn May
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It's a small building, VFW Post 3473. Set back from the road down a narrow, gravel driveway made more from use of heavy tires than with intention, it's easy to mistake the large wooden doors set against the sharp blue exterior as the entrance. But those that know, bypass the walkway, the ramp and the wooden doors and round to the back of the building where hospitality waits.

"This particular building has been here since 1976," said Dennis Twite. He's been a member of the post for six years and currently serves as its commander. Every Friday the post puts on a dinner. It offers rides to doctor appointments for no cost and tries to lend a helping hand to the community of Cottage Grove. But after seeing members struggle with a simple task inside its own four walls, VFW Post 3473 could use a hand itself.

"It was a member's wife who comes here a lot and she pointed it out to us how difficult it was to get a wheelchair through the doorway and then to the stall," said Ken Hunt, junior vice commander for the post. The door is just off the kitchen which leads to a twisting hallway. The stall is designated for handicapped visitors and sits in the women's bathroom at the end of that twisting hallway. To access it, a female guest must contend with an over-sized water heater that stands opposite the stall door and serves as the final obstacle in a sort of comedy of errors surrounding the normally

mundane task of using the restroom.

"It just makes it really hard to use the restroom and it's not ADA compliant," Twite said of the current situation.

The post and its auxiliary have applied for grants to fix both the men and women's facilities and bringing them into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The two grants would total \$2,000.

"It's probably not enough to get the project done but it's enough to get us started," Hunt said.

Except the auxiliary has already heard back and the news wasn't good: they had been denied the \$1,000 grant request. That leaves the post's request of \$1,000 if it's awarded.

"If we run into plumbing, than \$2,000 is going to be light and since the auxiliary heard back, \$1,000 won't be enough. It will get us started," Twite said.

The post raises money throughout the year through a variety of activities including a spot at the local rest stop, selling coffee. However, not everything the post has in its coffers is up for grabs. "Our biggest fund is the relief fund and that's used to help veterans," Hunt said. "We can't use that for anything else. If the money is designated for something, we have to use it for that. We can't use it for anything else."

For now, the group is holding its breath waiting to see if the approval comes through and Twite says the post is open to help from the community.

"If there are people that want to donate than we are open to that," he said.



The handicap-accessible bathroom stalls at VFW Post 3473 in Cottage Grove are in need of an update. After being denied half of the grant money it applied for, the post is open to community donations to bring the restrooms into compliance with federal code.

Karate Continued from A1



Photo Credit: Erin Lauraine. Dylan Dorchak, 11, proudly shows off his 2nd place medals in forms, weapons and combat weapons sparring.

By Caitlyn May
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Students from ATA Martial Arts Studio in Cottage Grove, under the instruction of owner Erin Lauraine, brought home more than a dozen medals.

The northwest regional competition was held in Eugene on March 11.

Several kids excelled including 11-year-old Dylan Dorchak. "Dylan has juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and had tested the night prior for his first degree black belt at a regional Black Belt testing with over 50 participants," Lauraine said.

Connor LeCompte, 13, took home his first, first place medal. "Connor has autism and this was his first tournament," Lauraine said.

For more pictures from the competition, turn to The Sentinel's Snapshots page.

Tobacco age upped to 21

By Caitlyn May
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The days of 18-year-olds in Lane County purchasing cigarettes legally just went up in smoke after the Lane County Commission voted to raise the minimum smoking age to 21.

The board of commissioners voted 3-2 on Tuesday, March 14 to increase the age county-wide which includes Eugene, Springfield and Cottage Grove.

Beginning April 13, those under the age of 21 will no longer be able to purchase cigarettes, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco or any other tobacco product.

While the commission had been considering a grandfathered clause that would have addressed current smokers between the ages of 18 and 21, no exception was granted to that particular group.

Individuals under the age of 21 who currently work in a licensed store that sells tobacco products as its main commodity have been smoking as part of their job, will be able to continue to do so.

The law mirrors a similar bill making its way through the legislature calling for an increase in the legal age to 21 from 18.

The efforts are part of a broader nationwide campaign to alter the legal smoking age after decades of research support claims of serious health issues being tied to smoking.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2015, 15 out of every 100 adults in the U.S. over the age of 18 smoked cigarettes. 13 percent of that, were people between the ages of 18 and 24. However, that number has continued to decrease over the last 10 years with the CDC reporting a 20.9 percent drop between 2005 and 2015.



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