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SPORTS

N. Douglas, Elkton dominate. Cottage Grove falls short. **B1**

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2017

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HOW MUCH A MONTH?

Low inventory and high demand has caused rental prices to increase in Cottage Grove, creating a housing dilemma for residents

By Caitlyn May
cmay@cgsentinel.com

Five years ago, Cottage Grove realtor Darren Hemingway could have up to 30 rentals on the books. Now, it's not uncommon for renters giving their 30-day notice to bring a friend. "The second they turn in the 30-day notice, they put their application in so no one can jump ahead of them," he said. "It happens all the time now."

It's because the law of supply and demand is in full swing in Cottage Grove. The city has more renters than rentals and the prices per month are reflective of the change.

"They (prices) are definitely rising," Hemingway said. "The main reason is because the lack of inventory, there's just not a lot out there. It's also the value of the properties. A lot of the newer ones, the mortgages are so high, the rents have to be high to cover them."

On average, a one-bedroom apartment in Cottage Grove ranges from \$450 to \$600 a month. Two-bedrooms run anywhere from \$600 to \$950 and the monthly rent on a three-bedroom apartment can reach \$1,600. "Something special, can go up from there," Hemingway said.

A few times a month, Community Sharing Director Mike Fleck gets a list of available rental properties in Lane County. He scans the list for Cottage Grove availabilities and for a time, he'd come up empty.

"In the last month or two I have been seeing one or two available. Still, that's very, very lean,"

he said.

Fleck, who heads the city's largest food pantry and service that aims to provide services to low-income residents, says he's been concerned with the housing shortage in Cottage Grove for the last few years. That concern led to action after the hiring of former Lane County Commissioner Faye Stewart by the city. As head of the newly combined community development and planning department, Stewart was asked to meet with builders and realtors to discuss the concerns surrounding the city's housing shortage. The number one concern? The city's planning department.

According to Fleck, as a result, Stewart is working to streamline the planning process and addressed the most stalled part of that process—engineering—by hiring an additional engineer.

Other barriers to development include system development charges (SDC fees) and the availability of bank loans for construction projects.

During a recent trip to the League of Cities conference, Fleck said he hears several possible options to address the housing issue. "I've avoided advocating low-income housing because there's a

stigma around that," Fleck said. However, after the conference, he said there's several ways cities have taken on the controversial topic that he hopes to look into including applying for community development grants and exploring an urban renewal district.

The Cottage Grove City Council has already received a presentation on the ins and outs of urban renewal districts earlier this year and may see the topic on an agenda again later in the new year. In short, an urban renewal district would select an area of Cottage Grove, freeze property values within that area and as a result, as property values outside the district increase, the difference between those frozen values and increased values goes to the district. The

Please see **RENTALS PG. A6**



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK



PHOTO BY CAITLYN MAY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The movers and shakers of Cottage Grove gather for the PeaceHealth clinic's annual banquet. CEO Tim Hermann speaks on the facility's accomplishments before detailing the latest project and fundraising effort.

Banquet supports hospital improvements

By Caitlyn May
cmay@cgsentinel.com

2017 was a busy, strong year for Cottage Grove Community Medical Center according to CEO Tim Hermann.

Hermann took the podium at the organi-

zation's annual holiday banquet to preach the facility's accomplishments over the last year to approximately 70 residents, business owners and sponsors as well as unveil the hospital's latest fundraising effort; a \$150,000 conference room remodel.

The makeover would allow the space to

serve as an in-patient treatment area and expand services rather than direct patients to Eugene. According to Hermann it would also allow the hospital to better utilize its staff.

In an effort to raise the funds, the banquet kicked off with an auction that saw a private

Please see **BANQUET PG. A6**

'Tis the season, for package thieves

Tips for protecting online holiday orders

By Caitlyn May
cmay@cgsentinel.com

'Twas two weeks before Christmas when all through the town, deliveries vanished between dawn and sundown. The packages were dropped by Amazon, with care. Their drivers and drones unaware that thieves would soon be there.

It's a common story in Cottage Grove throughout the year—packages ordered online and delivered to residences routinely go missing from porches and front yards. As the holidays approach and Christmas gifts are delivered, residents may see an uptick in items stolen from their front yard.

According to the most recent data from Shorr—a packaging company founded in 1922 that serves several larger outlets—41 percent of Americans receive between two and five packages from online purchases a month. That number increases during the holiday when the report notes 49 percent of online shoppers will order an item that is more than \$500.

A glance through the Cottage Grove Police Department's daily report of incidents throughout the city show several suspected package thefts—often overnight. Residents concerned about the theft of their online orders join the 41 percent of shoppers who said they avoided some purchases online for fear of the item being stolen off their front steps.

For residents in Cottage Grove expecting to be part of the 70 percent of homeowners who will order holiday gifts online this year, Cottage Grove Police has a few tips on how to prevent package theft.

According to the department, most online retailers allow packages to be shipped to any address. This means shoppers can send

Please see **PACKAGES PG. A7**

SPORTS

Girls rule

Girls dominated in basketball around Douglas County this week. **PAGE B1**



GOVERNMENT

Goodbye 2017

City council holds last meeting of the year. **PAGE A6**

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cgnews@cgsentinel.com
(541) 942-3325 ph • (541) 942-3328 fax
P.O. Box 35, Cottage Grove, OR 97424
Corner of Sixth and Whiteaker, Cottage Grove

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Coffee with the Editor
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Come chat about the community!

Rain Country Realty Inc.
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RainCountryRealty.com • raincountryrealty@gmail.com
1320 Hwy 99 • 541-942-7246