

Cottage Grove crews return from CA in time for holidays



Crews from Lane Fire Authority, Siuslaw and McKenzie returned home to Oregon from California's wildfires, landing in Cottage Grove. Below, the crews are given a debrief before being released to return home in time for Christmas.



By Caitlyn May
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A little before 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 20, the Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue vehicle made the turn from Gateway Blvd. towards Interstate-5. The deployment that saw two Oregon strike teams sent to California's Thomas Fire wouldn't be considered complete until they arrived home.

Siuslaw joined crews from McKenzie, Lane Fire Authority and South Lane County Fire and Rescue (SLFR).

The strike teams rolled into the Cottage Grove station early Wednesday afternoon, greeted by a camera crew and SLFR crew.

"It's good to have everyone home in time for Christmas," chief John Wooten said.

The Thomas Fire in California is being spurred on by Santa Ana winds and dry conditions. Nearly 100,000 people have been evacuated and the fire is on track to become the largest wildfire in state history.

During a debriefing session, minutes after arriving home, the strike teams learned they were sent home after a decision not to add an additional strike team from Oregon has previously planned. This is the first year, the state of Oregon has sent crews to California under a mutual aid agreement.

Fire officials asked for a moment of silence during Wednesday's homecoming for Cory Iverson, 32 and a California firefighter who lost his life on Dec. 14 in the Thomas Fire. He left behind a pregnant wife and two-year-old daughter.

Officials also noted that the Thomas Fire was a unique experience, describing people coming up to crews in the streets to hug them, thanking them for their service.

As of Sunday, Dec. 17, the Thomas Fire was 45 percent contained and is expected to burn until mid-January.

This is the second time SLFR personnel and equipment has been sent to California this wildfire season. However, due to mutual aid agreements and other contracts, SLFR is expected to earn an estimated amount between \$350,000 and \$400,000 for fighting out-of-state wildfires.



PHOTO COURTESY INCIWEB

The Thomas Fire in California has been burning since the start of December and isn't expected to be contained until mid-January. Crews from Oregon were dispatched to the area, including personnel and equipment from South Lane County Fire and Rescue. The two strike teams sent from Oregon returned home in time for the holidays on Wednesday, Dec. 20.

SLSD signs new agreement

By Zach Silva
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At the December school board meeting, the South Lane District school board unanimously approved Lane Education Service District's (Lane ESD) 2017-19 local service plan.

The service plan was presented by Tony Scurto who serves as the superintendent of Lane ESD and has been superintendent of the Pleasant Hill School District since 2008.

"Just an overview is that just having the second year of the two-year plan, that doesn't mean that it's automatic, it has to be voted on annually. But given it's the second year of a two-year plan there aren't many changes from the prior year," said

Scurto as he addressed the board at the December meeting.

"Just the overall look at this is that statutorily education service districts need to provide four things: special need services for districts, improvements in technology, services in school improvement and services in administration."

Changes in the service plan included an additional math specialist. Potential changes in funding included the "flexibility to access Core Services and annually select the amount of services needed to meet individual districts needs."

Scurto has been in his position at Lane ESD since July 1 and recently had his six-month review by the Lane ESD board of directors. This board is comprised with one member from each of the seven school boards around the state.

Sherry Duerst-Higgins, the South Lane School District representative and vice-chair, said in an email that "his performance was very good."

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Welcome to The Relay Corner! This will be a monthly section, dedicated to everything Relay! Any events, fundraisers, and news related to Relay for Life of South Lane County will be found here! You can also follow us on Facebook- www.facebook.com/SouthLaneRelay/

The 2018 Relay for Life season is upon us!

Teams are being registered, events are being planned, and sponsorship opportunities are being taken. This year, our theme for Relay is the **Sound of Hope**. It is scheduled for Saturday, June 23, 2018 at Bohemia Park. We are changing things up a little this year. It will be a 12-hour concert in the park, from Noon to Midnight, with lots of fun family activities available! So mark your calendars, and register your teams!

Visit www.relayforlife.org/cottagegroveor

Welcome to our already registered teams- Team Tuff, Team Zebra, Vintage Visions, and Rise Up For A Cure!! This is a great start, but don't wait too long to form your team. If you have a registered team, and are planning a fundraiser, you can add it to the relay corner by emailing SouthLaneRFL@gmail.com.

Join us February 3, 2018 from 7-9pm for our annual Relay Kickoff event. It will once again be held at the Cottage Grove Armory. This year we are doing a Relay Rally!! It will be a simple event, free to attend, with the simple goal of getting the community reignited and excited for Relay! We will have lots of displays for you to learn about all aspects of a Relay for Life. There will be light refreshments, and a few speakers to discuss what Relay for Life and the American Cancer Society has meant to them and their lives.

As we are moving forward, we want to take a final look back at our 2017 season, and thank our amazing sponsors- The City of Cottage Grove, The Cottage Grove Sentinel, Brad's Chevrolet, Beach Poker Club, Starfire Lumber, Lincoln Middle School, Edward Jones, Boyce and Sons, and Rising Phoenix Productions! Without your help, we never could have made it happen!

Be a Relay Warrior!! Are you a motivated sponsor or fundraiser? Not wanting to wait until the last minute to raise those dollars? At our Kickoff Event, we are going to recognize any Sponsors or Teams that submit at least \$500 prior to January 15th. If you want to be a sponsor for our 2018 Relay for Life, contact Betty Heine- bettyheine1@gmail.com

Interested in being a part of our Event Leadership team, or maybe just want to learn new ways to help? Join us at our Monthly Meeting the first Thursday of every month at El Tapatio! We will be there January 4th at 6pm in the back room!