

# Cottage Grove Sentinel

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SPORTS

Woods takes home two titles for CGHS track team. **B1**

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For a complete six-day forecast please see page A5.

## SAVED BY THE VOTE

### Mildred Whipple Library to re-open thanks to grassroots effort

*Drain residents approve a new tax district, funding the library previously closed as part of a county-wide funding shutdown more than a year ago.*

By Caitlyn May  
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The Friends of the Mildred Whipple Library were together when they heard the news. The ballot measure they had worked on for months with the intention of re-opening the library that had been closed for over a year had passed. By a lot.

"It's nice to win but it's even nicer that we have that support behind us, that overwhelming, 'Yes, we want the library back,'" said Valerie Johns, a member of the group, its designated spokesperson and as of May 15, a member of the newly formed library district board. The May 15 vote asked Drain residents to institute a special tax district levying 44 cents for every \$1,000 of

assessed value to re-open the library shuttered in June of 2016. The measure passed with 76 percent of the 609 ballots cast. In the winter of 2016, the Douglas County Commission voted to shut down the county's library system citing insufficient funds to continue operating the facilities. When county residents voted down a ballot measure in 2017 that would have provided the funding needed to save the library system, buildings from Reedsport to Yoncalla began closing in and by June 1, Douglas County did not have a library within its borders. While some facilities, like the library

in Yoncalla, opted to re-open on a limited basis with the help of volunteers, Friends of the Mildred Whipple Library in Drain did not have the resources to follow suit. Instead, the group opted to build a grassroots effort and consulted with the city and an attorney on how to get a new ballot measure to voters. Measure 10-162 proposed the same 44 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value as the failed initiative voted down in 2016. However, not everyone said no the first time. Polling results showed that Drain residents voted in favor of the 44 cent tax in 2016 and so, the library group offered a measure under the same terms

with a new jurisdiction. The newly formed special tax district follows the same borders as the school district in Drain. "This community supported us all the way through financially and with volunteers and then getting that vote, we're ready to get that library open," Johns said. But, it's not quite that simple. While Drain residents voted to impose a new tax, those funds won't be readily available until after the vote is certified and the tax officially instituted.

See **Library A11**

## UPDATING HISTORY: Titanic coat gets upgrade



PHOTOS BY CAITLYN MAY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

**HISTORY—** The empty case that will display the "Titanic coat" again in the winter of 2019.

Marion Woolcott had been in bed for 10 minutes when she heard a crash. "I put on my dressing gown and thick coat...I was met on deck by a gentleman to whom I had often talked and he said an iceberg had struck us but there was no danger," she wrote in a letter, one of a handful she wrote to her parents before being reunited with the man who would become her husband when the survivors of the Titanic landed in New York in 1912. More than 100 years later, visitors from as far away as Ireland make their way down the narrow neighborhood streets of Cottage Grove dotted with historical homes on either side and a church that has come to house

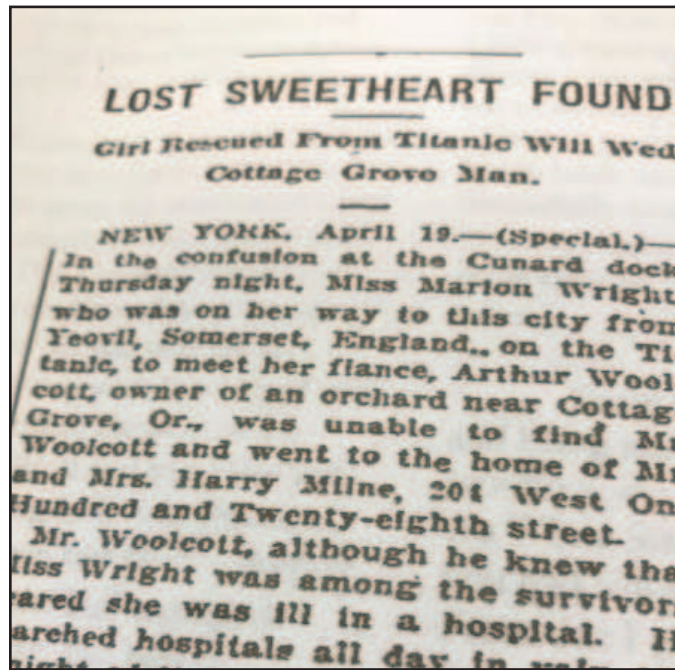
history. "The kids come in and they get a big thrill out of it. They say, 'That's Rose's coat! That's Rose's coat! They think it's from the movie 'Titanic,'" said Tara

*"When her sons went to war, she cut pieces from the coat and wrapped bibles in them."*

—Cathy Bellavitta  
Museum volunteer

Sue Hughart, who volunteers at the Cottage Grove Museum, a Roman Catholic church established in 1897 before community members banded together to purchase the building in 1961

with the intention of preserving Cottage Grove's heritage. It's what made Woolcott's voyage on the doomed ship unique; she wasn't destined for California or an extended stay in New York like the majority of the passengers. She was headed for a small town in the Willamette Valley to join her future husband Arthur where they would eventually buy an orchard, have children and be buried. But not before finding a bit of local celebrity and subsequently, handing down history. In the middle of the Cottage



A copy of a newspaper clipping describing Marion Woolcott's rescue from the Titanic.

Grove Museum there's an empty glass case that usually houses the coat Irish tourists and movie-watching children come to see. It's the coat Woolcott wrote of in letters home as she made the journey from the sinking Titanic to New York. It's the coat she had in her possession when she landed on dry land again and the coat she passed on to her sons and eventually, the Cottage Grove Museum. "When her sons went to war, she cut pieces from the coat and wrapped bibles in them," said Cathy Bellavitta, a volunteer with the museum. All three sons made it home but the bibles have never been found and in 1967, Woolcott's oldest son, John, donated the coat to the museum. "His wife was actually on the museum board," Bellavitta said. The coat is currently on loan to the National Geographic Museum in Washington D.C. after having finished a stint at the Ronald Regan Museum. It's due back in Cottage Grove in January of next year. In exchange for allowing the coat to be displayed, the museum will receive a new dress form and case to house the coat when it returns home. It's also been awarded a \$5,000 match-

ing grant and professional guidance on how to display the coat that has been a part of the draw to the museum for decades. "I would say that at least 10 to 15 percent of the people who come through are coming through looking for the coat," Hughart said. The attraction is credited to Woolcott's story of survival, the popularity of the Oscar-winning film but also, the improbability of the coat's existence. "It's a coat. She gave it to her kids and they slept on it and camped with it and drug it around, it's amazing that it survived," Hughart said. Bellavitta added historic textiles, in particular, due to their nature are rare and textiles from the Titanic, even more so; something the museum discovered when the coat was appraised. The museum has since had a substantial upgrade in security. When the coat returns, it will be to a new display and, hopefully, an increased interest. "Thousands of people went through the exhibit at the Reagan museum," Becky Venice, president of the museum board said. "And this coat has just been quietly exhibited for 30 years."

## Williams, Buch advance to general election

By Caitlyn May  
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Early results on May 15 showed current East Lane commissioner Gary Williams leading the race for the seat he was appointed to on the Lane County Commission as he was ahead of Heather Buch by less than one percent just after 9 p.m. Williams, who was appointed in 2016 after Commissioner Faye Stewart resigned to take a position with the city of Cottage Grove, earned 31.07 percent of the vote. Buch got 30.69 percent. By 10:30 p.m. they were tied: 31.03 percent percent to 31.03 percent. Tuesday morning, Buch had pulled ahead, 31.27 to Williams' 30.73. Because the race for the commission seat is non-partisan, only candidates who earn more than 50 percent of the vote secure the seat in a primary election. If no candidate garners more than 50 percent of the vote, the top two earners are placed on the general election ballot. "Last night, voters decided that they are ready for a new perspective and experienced leadership on the Lane County Board of Commissioners. I look forward to talking to even more voters over the coming months to learn about the issues that they care about," Buch said in a press release May 16. If elected, Heather would be the first woman to serve on the Lane County Board of Commissioners since Cindy Weeldryer was elected to this seat in 1998. Buch is the Special Projects Director for the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, where she works primarily in the development of affordable housing. She is also a small business

See **Elections A11**

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| <p><b>COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>Lion Pride</p> <p>Lion pride Pageant raises nearly \$15,000. <b>PAGE A6</b></p> |  | <p><b>SPORTS</b></p> <p>New basketball coach</p> <p>Cottage Grove High School names new girls coach following resignation. <b>PAGE B1</b></p> | <p><b>INDEX</b></p> <p>Calendar ..... B11</p> <p>Channel Guide ..... B5</p> <p>Classifieds ..... B7</p> <p>Obituaries ..... A2</p> <p>Opinion ..... A4</p> <p>Sports ..... B1</p> | <p>cgnews@cg sentinel.com</p> <p>(541) 942-3325 ph • (541) 942-3328 fax</p> <p>P.O. Box 35, Cottage Grove, OR 97424</p> <p>Corner of Sixth and Whiteaker, Cottage Grove</p> <p>VOLUME 130 • NUMBER 43</p> | <p>18134 42405</p> |
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The **THIS THURSDAY** from noon to 1 p.m.

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