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Fire claims home, family of five safe

By Caitlyn May
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Community rallies to help family of five after home is consumed by blaze

On June 22, Elalah Smith and her husband Isaac left their home on Highway 99 to visit her mother. Less than 30 minutes later, their roommate called, panicked.

The house was engulfed in flames.

"That's the strangest thing about it," she said. "We could have been in the house."

The Smiths and their three sons, ages 10, eight and four, weren't in the house that night but everything they owned was including the laptop 10-year-old Phoenix received for his birthday three days earlier and all of the recipes Isaac,



PHOTO COURTESY SOUTH LANE FIRE

Firefighters work to create ventilation after knocking down a structure fire at the home of the Smith family last Friday off of Highway 99.

a cook at Jack Sprats, had spent years developing.

"We're starting over and it's

really strange," Elalah said. "I keep thinking, when people ask what we need, I think 'Oh,

I have that.' But we don't."

Since the fire, the family has seen an outpouring of dona-

tions and Isaac's sister has set up a GoFundMe page for the family that has raised \$885.

The morning after the fire, Elalah said she was grateful for the donations because she didn't have new clothes for her sons to wear, their wardrobes having burned in the fire.

"It's funny," she said. "There were only a few things not destroyed and one of them was the suitcase full of photos of the family and they didn't even get wet. They weren't stuck together or anything and it's literally all of what I had of the boys growing up and it was all in one place."

Elalah, who was born in Cottage Grove when the city still had a maternity ward, said the family is staying with her parents until they can get back on their feet.

They were renting the house

See FIRE A8

Council votes to cover 'Habitat' fees

By Caitlyn May
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The Cottage Grove City Council agreed to cover the permit fees for Habitat for Humanity's latest project, house number 14.

Linda Oxley, field operations manager for Habitat for Humanity, appeared before the council Monday night to inform the board that the organization had approved a homeowner for its 14th house to be completed in Cottage Grove.

The house, which will be located on Harvey Lane on the last of three parcels owned by the organization, will have two bedrooms and, in total, be comprised of approximately 936 square feet.

"The individual that was approved is currently living in substandard conditions," Oxley told the board, noting that the organization helps those who can't afford a home by offering an affordable mortgage and a no-interest loan.

Last year, Habitat for Humanity completed "lucky house number 13" and, according to the city, the latest project's permit fees should be less than the \$3,074 paid on house 13.

Councilor Jake Boone inquired as to the exact amount the city was agreeing to cover but, according to city manager Richard Meyers, the exact amount cannot be calculated until the plans are submitted to the city.

Oxley informed the board that plans are due into the city by July.

"With our new building inspection program, we will not be paying a contracted inspector to perform the plan review or inspection," Meyers wrote in his recommendation to the board. "All the services would be performed with staff. We would only have to pay the state surcharge." Habitat for Humanity

See HABITAT A10

New mural carries national cause

By Caitlyn May
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A new mural has landed in Cottage Grove and it's carry a cause.

The butterfly mural that has attracted attention on 10th St. is part of a larger project that was presented to the city council Monday night.

Planning and development director Faye Stewart presented a resolution to the council in support of the Endangered Species Mural Project being coordinated by Portland-based artist Rodger Peet.

"Peet reached out to Kim Johnson, an old friend and owner of the Bohemia building at the corner of 10th and Washington streets, to see if she might be interested in hosting one of the murals on the wall of her development Food Hub," Stewart wrote in his recommendation to the council.

The mural project, sponsored in party by the Center for Biological Diversity, is a national effort to create murals featuring endangered or threatened species in the areas they're found.

The resolution passed Monday night aims to support the project's goal of raising awareness and the

See MURAL A10



CAITLYN MAY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The dream of turning the area on Row River Rd. into a BMX track could become a reality with community support.

Getting BMX 'back on track'

The grassroots project hopes to bring BMX racing back to Cottage Grove with the community's help

By Caitlyn May
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Brandon Britz has had a BMX track on his mind for years. He grew up near a track in Eugene and when his oldest son recently took an interest in the sport again, he approached the city.

"It had been on my radar for a couple of years, ever since they flattened it" he said. "I heard that the city might be ok with building it again, so I called the city, met with Richard Meyers and they're totally down with it."

Britz, a five-year resident of Cottage Grove, works full-time and has taken on the BMX project with a few other "solid" dads. But according to city manager Meyers, there's no city funding to replace the track.

"It's going to be really expensive," Britz said, estimating a total cost of between \$50,000 and \$100,000. "It's going to be a very big project. It will depend on the community to get

See BMX A8

EARLY DEADLINE

The Sentinel will be closed in observance of the Fourth of July holiday. Deadline for the July 4 edition will be June 28 at noon for all editorial and advertising submissions.

COMMUNITY

Grovers Relay for Life

Community members show support for cancer survivors

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HISTORY

Wedding Tree topples

High winds knock over a local iconic tree

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