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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

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SPORTS

Darwin Terry prepares for new basketball season. B1

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

Reward offered for stolen Kiwanis wood splitter

By Caitlyn May
cmay@cg sentinel.com

When Gene O'Neil pulled into the lot behind Brad's Chevy car dealership last Tuesday, he stopped short.

He visits the lot two or three times a week to split wood, which is part of the Kiwanis effort to fund scholarships and provide wood for the community. But last Tuesday, something was missing: The wood splitter.

"Brad's has it leaving the lot at 10:35 a.m. Monday morning," he said. "They have video of it."

The video shows a black pickup truck exiting the lot with the wood splitter and has since been turned over to the Cottage Grove Police Department. Stills of the video have also been posted to Facebook with a \$300 reward for information that leads to the return

of the machine — funded by Walmart, Point S Tires and O'Neil himself.

The machine is one of two that O'Neil uses to split wood and he's been doing it for 15 years, sometimes with help and sometimes without. Since he's retired, he's been doing it more but the goal has been the same: collect and split enough wood to sell 40 cords to fund scholarships for students at Cottage Grove High School and Kennedy High School.

It takes 12 hours of labor from collection to delivery for one cord of wood and the wood splitter — purchased for \$600 a few years ago — made that work much easier. Now that it's been stolen, O'Neil said the other splitter and the new trailer the Kiwanis purchased has been moved from the lot behind Brad's.

According to local law enforcement, several tips have come in regarding the incident.

Anyone with information about the

incident or the pickup truck seen leaving the lot is asked to contact the Cottage Grove Police Department at 541-942-9145.



COURTESY SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS

Security footage taken the morning of Monday, Nov. 12 captured these images of a truck leaving Brad's Chevrolet with the wood splitter owned by the Cottage Grove Kiwanis. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Cottage Grove Police Department at 541-942-9145.

SLSD hears concerns from Latham parents

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cg sentinel.com

The parents of Latham Elementary School showed up to make sure their voices were heard.

While the state of the school is in flux, a group of about 20 parents gathered in the Latham library last Tuesday night to talk directly to the South Lane School District — represented by interim superintendent Larry Sullivan and communications director Garrett Bridgens — to voice their questions, concerns and hopes for the school that first opened its doors in 1853.

Sullivan and Bridgens came to Latham to get a closer look at the parent perspective so they can share it with the school board as they will soon be making a decision on whether to close the school of 86 students at the end of

See PARENTS 9A



Lighting up 'The Village'

PHOTOS COURTESY THE VILLAGE GREEN AND KELLI MATTHEWS

Xander and Braxton Graves pose during a preview event for the annual holiday celebration at the Village Green last weekend with walk throughs of the facility's famous light displays. Christmas at Village Green will open to the public on Nov. 23 with a \$5 admission charge and visits with Santa available beginning at 5 p.m. The event, which stretches just over a month, also features a market, carolers and live reindeer that will be featured on Dec. 8th. For more information, visit the Village Green's website at <http://villagegreengreenchristmas.com>.

Aquatic Center to include therapy pool

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cg sentinel.com

As the Warren H. Daugherty Aquatic Center is currently being renovated, the South Lane School District school board ensured Thursday this facility will include a warm water recreation and therapy pool.

The addition of the therapy pool was in doubt after it was seen that it would cost an additional \$524,000. The district then began fundraising around the community to come up with the additional funding and at last Thursday's meeting, interim superintendent Larry Sullivan showed the fundraising efforts have netted \$445,094 in donations and commitments.

These funds come from individuals, businesses and the City of Cottage Grove which committed \$200,000.

See POOL 8A

Locals deal with devastation from California wildfires

By Caitlyn May
cmay@cg sentinel.com

Lois Hughes lost everything in Paradise.

The Cottage Grove High School Class of 1978 graduate had lived in California since 2005 and had contended with the state's growing wildfires before but the latest fire to engulf the state forced her to flee.

"I was working," she said. Hughes works as a paratransit driver and had a bus full of clients when she first saw

the smoke. "I was by a canyon so I could see the smoke coming over the hills," she said.

Hughes radioed in and asked permission to drop her clients off and park her bus. But by then, she couldn't get back into her neighborhood and her roommate had already been given an evacuation order.

The Camp Fire is expected to be contained by Nov. 30, but has already burned 150,000 acres. Just under 1,000 people are still missing at 77 have been confirmed dead. News reports from

the area detail car tires of those fleeing the fire popping and steering wheels melting. Several deceased residents were found in their vehicles.

"It's true, that happened," Hughes said, noting that she was lucky and got out early but, like the majority of the residents of Paradise, lost everything.

"There's only a few houses, here and there, everything else is gone," Hughes said. Both Hughes and her roommate escaped to a family member's house in Chico with their dog but left everything else behind including their jobs

which may no longer exist.

Hughes isn't alone in having to rebuild from nothing. Several individuals in Cottage Grove have started gathering donations for California residents who faced the Camp and Woolsey fires. Combined, the fires have destroyed nearly 15,000 structures, burned almost 300,000 acres and killed 80 people.

Cottage Grove resident, Patty Nightingale had family in Paradise and so making the trip with an SUV full of supplies to her seemed a no-brainer.

"I was actually going to mail the donations but I didn't think I'd get so many," she said. Nightingale's God sister and her family lost their homes in the fire, escaping with just an overnight bag that was already packed for a preplanned trip and Christmas presents for her grandchildren — two advent calendars and a game. "Her children got out after her," Nightingale said. "They stopped to help their landlord, who's in a wheelchair, because he

See FIRES 8A

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