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# Cottage Grove Sentinel

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## WEATHER



Partly cloudy with a  
high of 69 and a low  
tonight of 50.

Full forecast on A5

## THEATER



Review "The King Is  
Dead!"

A9

## SPORTS — B



Krokus claims state  
title.

B1

## RECORDS

Obituaries  
Police Logs  
State news  
A2

## LORANE NEWS

A5

## CLASSIFIEDS

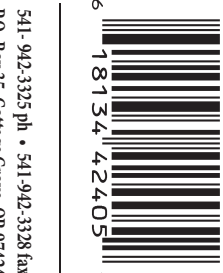
Listings and public  
notices  
B7-B9

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## Stage becomes home to immigrants' stories

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD

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Elena's uncle was killed by a cartel gang in Mexico.

Fearing a similar fate, her parents made separate dangerous journeys to America, all while Elena was still in her mother's womb.

Because she had heard undocumented women could be deported from hospitals, Elena's mother relied on the kindness of a neighbor to act as a wet nurse as she endured 18 hours of labor in a cabin before finally giving birth in Red Bluff, Calif.

Though playing a character in a



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Performers read from a script in the one-act play "We Are Neighbors" on Saturday at the First Presbyterian Church. Stories told during the play reflected some performers' real experiences.

play, performer Isabelle Hernandez did not have to dig deep to empathize with the experience of her character Elena.

"I'm a first-generation American citizen," she said. Both her parents came from Mexico. Her mother fled the

country with other family members and, while on her way to meet her brother at the border, he was murdered. She eventually gave birth in Los Angeles.

"I relate to Elena's story very much," Hernandez said. "My family could not go back to see my grandmother before she died."

The play, "We Are Neighbors," is a half-hour, one-act performance sharing real stories of immigrants in Lane County. It is a touring version of the longer "Now, I Am Your Neighbor," a one-hour show put on in fall of 2017 by the Community

See STORIES 6A

## Big Top comes to The Grove

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD

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Cottage Grove welcomed the return of the Culpepper & Merriweather Great Combined Circus last week for two nights of entertainment.

Situated on a southern plot of Bohemia Park, the company performed two 90-minute shows each night, displaying an array of animal and human talents. Over the course of about a dozen acts, classic circus sights wowed the crowd as jungle cats were tamed, fire was juggled, acrobats soared and a trapeze artist swung high above the crowd in a production peppered with comedic interludes by the circus' own Leo the Clown.

"For a circus, we're a younger business, but for a family-run business, we're an old business," said Leo Acton, clown and self-proclaimed "world's freest funnyman."

Cottage Grove is just one stop on the company's 32-week tour this year.

"We're going to cover about 15,000 miles over the western United States and we'll have been in 17 states by the time we're done," Acton said.

Culpepper & Merriweather Circus began in 1985 as a small show run by three men who alternated announcing, performing and selling concessions. Gradually, animals, staff and performers were added over the years.

Now in its 33rd season, the cir-



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Trapeze artist Miss Simone performs a swinging stunt as she soars above the crowd on Friday night. Nearly a dozen acts accompanied the two-night production.

cus employs a rich cast of human talent as well as two tigers, a lion, several dogs, ponies and a performance duo of a 1,800-pound draft horse and his pint-sized counterpart.

"It's a good combination of two-legged and four-legged stars," said Acton.

The circus boasts of being featured on National Geographic's "Explorer" TV series, "Entertainment Tonight," and on the A&E special "Under the Big Top."

Though turnout for the show was high, some in the Cottage Grove community were less than thrilled about the prospect of using wild animals for entertainment as some protestors stood by the circus entrance with signs.

"We believe they should not be kept in captivity and forced to entertain," said protestor Kylee McMahan. "We believe their exploitation is not our entertainment."

See CIRCUS 11A

## CG Bridge project swings into second phase

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD

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With the first phase of the Swinging Bridge Project completed, city councilors voted on May 13 to move ahead with Phase 2 of reconstruction at a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) of \$803,355.

Previously, at a Jan. 14 city council meeting this year, councilors selected Hamilton Construction

and Ausland Group to commence planning and reconstruction of the Swinging Bridge at a GMP of \$688,457.

The \$114,898 net increase from the original GMP raised some eyebrows among city staff, though the change was allowed under terms stipulated by the contract.

The contract allowed, before initiating Phase 2, the GMP to be revised as the bridge design pro-

gressed, enhancements were made by the city or materials increased in cost due to economic supply.

"Any modification to the Contract Price for Phase 2 shall be developed during Phase 1 on an 'open-book' basis," reads a line in the contract.

Open-book contracts ensure competitive pricing by allowing

See BRIDGE 7A

## Local postal workers help 'Stamp Out Hunger'

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD

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Letter carriers around the country were checking mailboxes for more than just mail on May 11 — they were also hoping to grab a bit of food.

Stamp Out Hunger, billed as the largest one-day food drive in the country, launched its 27th annual nationwide effort this year, led by the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC).

"The idea is, clean out your pantry," said food drive coordinator for local NALC Branch 916 Bruce Meier. "Anything you want to get rid of, put it in your mailbox."

The food drive restocks the shelves of area food banks, ensuring that local efforts have local impact.

"The fact that it stays in your own community is really beneficial," Meier said. "All your food stays in Cottage Grove."

While national tallies are not due to come in until next month, NALC Branch 916 reported that Cottage Grove has brought in 3,157 pounds of donated food, substantially less than previous years.

"It's been as high as 6 or 7 thousand pounds," said Meier.

See HUNGER 7A

## EARLY DEADLINES

Due to the upcoming Memorial Day Holiday deadlines for the May 29 edition are **noon** on May 23 for Classified Ads, Display Ads and Editorial submissions.

# UPCOMING AT OPAL SUMMER CAMP

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SESSION 2 • July 29-August 9

Theater Camp for ages 5-18

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