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Church at London bell to ring again July 4

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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For the first time in more than a decade, the Church at London will sound its bell this Independence Day following a rallying effort by community members to ensure its restoration.

“Our bell tower, I believe, is very important,” said congregant Donna Holbrook, who associates the sound of the bell with her childhood. “I know that the hearing of that bell opened my heart to the Lord. I know that. And I think it can serve the same purpose today.”

Photos archived by church members date the bell tower as far back as 1910 and the church itself is thought to have been constructed in 1859.

Around 15 years ago, church members stopped ringing the bell due to an odd development — flies had made their home on the bell’s rope.

Pastor Ron Smith made the decision to cease bell



COURTESY PHOTO

The new bell tower on the Church at London was installed Sunday and is slated to be ceremonially rung on July 4.

ringing.

“I would ring it and the sanctuary would get full of flies,” he said.

By the congregates’ accounts, pulling the rope would swarm the church with thousands of the little insects and, with no other discernable remedy, the bell was simply left alone.

Church member Chuck Berggren was bewildered by the strange nesting place.

“To this day I can’t tell you why they like that rope,” he said.

Just as the bell fell into disuse, the exterior of the church had fallen into disrepair. When Gretchen Spears first moved to the area, she took notice.

“The church was very, very dilapidated, to the point where when I first

See **CHURCH 10A**

Family relief nursery marks 25 years

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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Family Relief Nursery celebrated 25 years of operation at its annual Sigh of Relief benefit on June 25.

Past and present leaders of the local nonprofit took the stage in the cafeteria of Cottage Grove High School to honor the organization and its contributors over a breakfast buffet.

“Twenty-five years we’ve been working to keep kids safe and families together and our community healthy,” said Board Chair Jacque

Robertson at the event.

Family Relief Nursery provides services to children under the age of six with families who have multiple risk factors linked to neglect and abuse.

Since its inception in 1994, the group reports having helped 2,500 children. This year alone, a reported 145 families have been aided and so far zero children have been referred to foster care.

“That’s one of our goals, is to help families not go into the system,” said Executive Director Peggy Whalen.

Last week’s event began with Rob-

ertson welcoming the crowd and sharing memories of growing up in the Creswell and Cottage Grove area. She recalled her mother’s role on the board of Family Relief Nursery and desire for a classroom to open in Creswell. The summer after she passed away, one was opened.

“She left me a legacy of love and passion for things that are a good deal. And Family Relief Nursery is a good deal. It works,” Robertson said.

She also praised the community’s enthusiasm for addressing the need

See **NURSERY 6A**

Alternative living option nears for veterans

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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About an hour’s drive west from Cottage Grove, the snaking forest byway of Siuslaw River Road briefly unfurls into a treeless pasture where a former inmate work camp has turned into a haven for veterans in need.

The camp, dubbed Camp Alma, is a recent purchase by the local nonprofit Veterans Legacy. The group’s executive director Dan Buckwald has spearheaded its revival in a befitting return to the camp he’d served at for 13 years as a corrections officer.

“I’m a little connected out here,” he said, pointing to trees he’d transplanted in 1994. “So for me I get to retire after 29 years at the sheriff’s office and come back home.”

Veterans Legacy received its nonprofit status in 2016 with a mission to provide veterans with a safe, supportive environment for healing and eventual reintegration into their communities. The group takes aim at veteran issues such as suicide,



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The entrance to Camp Alma, a new veterans wellness center aimed at helping those with PTSD transition back into society.

homelessness and unemployment by addressing afflictions such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse and associated traumas.

At Camp Alma, the group is taking a unique and visionary treatment approach, stressing “therapeutic ag-

riculture” and construction projects which are intended to lead wayward veterans down a skill-driven path of personal ownership and agency.

“This is going to be an opportunity for people to find themselves and

See **CAMP 7A**

Improv classes coming to Opal

For those who love being on stage in front of an audience, the Opal Center is offering a class perfect for you. Or even for anyone who is a little uncomfortable in front of a group and would like to feel more relaxed, the Opal Center for Arts and Education is offering a six-week class in Improvisational Theater.

The class will be 6 to 8 p.m., July 7, 14, 21, 28, Aug. 4 and 11.

Those unfamiliar with improvisation, think of the popular show “Whose Line is it, Anyway?” Players are given a situation, a character or a prop and asked to create a short scene — usually comedic.

The class will be geared for beginners but will also be good for those who haven’t been on stage in a while or for simply sharpening improv skills. It will cover basic improv rules, games and progress through some creative twists on old, familiar games. Participants will need to wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

The class will conclude with a free show for friends and family.

Class size is limited to 14 students. Register for the class at Opal Center, The Crafty Mercantile or by calling 541-623-0513.

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WEATHER



Sunny skies with a high of 78 and a low tonight of 53.

Full forecast on A5

COMMUNITY



CG Rotary donates to local watershed

A3

SPORTS — B



Vintage airplanes, cars and motorcycles made their way to CG

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UPCOMING AT OPAL

IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER

-6 week class with-Howard & Andrea Hummel

JULY 7, 14, 21, 28 & AUG 4, 11

From 6-8PM \$60

VISIT US ONLINE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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