

South Valley All-Stars prepare for big stage

Little League softball team is ready for state

By ZACH SILVA
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After a successful regular season, a group of softball players in Cottage Grove aren't done yet. A group of nine, 10- and 11-year-old girls make up the District 7 Little League All-Star team that will be competing at this weekend's state tournament in Portland.

"They're all excited and ready to go. They're all working their butts off out here, it's crazy," said head coach Nicole Rook. "I've seen more effort out of some of the girls now than I saw all season long and it was like, where did you come from? It's been great. They're totally stoked."

Rook coached one of the South Valley Little League AAA (ages nine to 12) softball teams this past season. One of two softball teams in this division in Cottage Grove, the team also played against the three East Lane teams. Rook's team took second in the five-team league.

After the season concluded, the two Cottage Grove AAA teams paired with the local majors team (ages ten and up) to create an all-star team. While Rook wishes there were more girls playing, the small numbers made for an easy selection process.

"Honestly, most of the girls that showed up for tryouts made the team," she said. "Had we had more than 14 girls that came out, I'm only allowed to roster 14, we would have had to, unfortunately, make some cuts. It was nice, I didn't have to pick anyone."

With her team intact, the South Valley squad had a three-game series against the East Lane all-stars for a spot at the state tournament.

"It was kind of bittersweet to me and my coaches and my team because we had actually lost to that coach and that team in the championship game so then we came back and we kicked their butt the first three games and ended up taking it," said Rook.

In a tournament that stretches from Thursday to Sunday, the team will be one of five teams battling for a state title.

While the number of teams playing is small, Rook hopes that as her team continues to find success that they can grow the game of softball in town.

"It definitely would be nice to see more girls come out and get more interest in it. It is growing, I think the more that we win and they see it," she said. "It brings more interest and fun to it. So, I mean, and most of the girls come back for numerous years. Once they play they keep coming."

For pictures of the team, turn to B10

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT



A painted lady butterfly rests on a leaf in the butterfly pavilion at Elkton Community Education Center earlier this week. This butterfly was one of about a dozen painted ladies flying around the facility. PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Center in Elkton offers more than just butterflies to those who stop by

By ZACH SILVA
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There really isn't much in Elkton.

Driving down the Umpqua Hwy., it's easy to blink and miss the town of almost 200. There's a few restaurants, a couple wineries, the high school and then you're out of town in either direction. But tucked just past the middle school, there is a sign. More accurately, there are a handful of signs. There is a sign for the butterfly pavilion, one advertising the native plant nursery and others with butterflies on them.

All who drive by have been tempted by what this group, Elkton Community Education Center (ECEC), has to offer. The sign of this local nonprofit that simply states "Park Entrance" and features a butterfly has brought in scores of individuals passing by for the past two decades. And around 5,000 visitors last year.

That is certainly no accident as the unofficial slogan for ECEC seems to be simple: come for the butterflies, stay for the community.

The curious travelers who have wandered to ECEC's 30-acres of land are also supporting the local

employment opportunities that the group provides. And the tourism this organization brings across the town – all while receiving a first-class education on the flora across Oregon, the history of Fort Umpqua and, of course, the chance to see, and learn about, butterflies.

After Carol Beckley was diagnosed with cancer about 30 years ago, she was told by her doctor that she wasn't going to live. After a year of chemotherapy, the doctors said the cancer would return. So Beckley decided it was time to get out of Elkton.

"Everybody looked at me sad and I couldn't take that any longer. And so I bought an RV that looked most like our farm truck and I left town," said an enthusiastic 84-year-old Beckley earlier this summer. Having taught in Elkton for 17 years, and having lived in town since she was four, the diagnosis made her ready for some change. With her partner Jim at her side, the two drove around the country – stopping at each butterfly pavilion that they passed – for about four years going wherever the wind took them.

But throughout the long trips and in all the stops along the way, something was missing.

"I said, 'I can't make a life like this. We have to do something

meaningful,'" Beckley remembers telling Jim. So they packed up and made their way back to Elkton, ready to start fresh.

The first step in this process was looking at a piece of property that had just gone up for sale: 30 acres of sheep pasture right along the Umpqua Hwy. The man selling the property was looking for \$350,000 for the land but, in a rush to get to his next property, ended up cutting his asking price by over 40 percent and sold the land to Beckley for \$200,000.

At the time of the purchase, the first item of business for Beckley was establishing a preschool on the property to fill the need of the

community. After that, she knew she wanted to do something with plants. And maybe fulfill a lifelong dream of hers.

"I always had this dream of having all this representative flora of Oregon on our ranch. I was going to have it and then I thought well, no one will ever see it anyhow," said Beckley. With this new property she had visions of having a plant park and began working – with the help of student volunteers – on flower beds.

Like seemingly all of Beckley's ideas, it came to fruition. The plants came in and have been continuing to grow for two decades now. But

BUTTERFLY see B2



A sign outside ECEC tells motorists that the organization has milkweed – an important plant for monarch butterflies. PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Winebarger keeps winning at Speedway



Collen Winebarger and his family celebrate after his fourth victory at the Speedway this season. PHOTO C/O STEPHANIE DEATHERAGE

Local celebrations set to celebrate the holiday

By BEN DEATHERAGE
COTTAGE GROVE SPEEDWAY

The third and final night of the 2019 Hoppes Construction Freedom Cup took place on Saturday, July 6. The three same divisions that had raced all Independence Day weekend long including the IMCA Sport Mods, Mohawk Metal IMCA Modifieds and the Todd's Auto Body Sprints. Around 80 total cars would make the trip representing

Oregon, Washington, California, North Dakota and Colorado.

Meridian, California's Jason Ferguson got out the early race lead in the IMCA Sport Mod race. Travis Pruitt, from Molalla, was the car to beat for much of the race. Constructing a sizable lead over the rest of the field he would see it evaporated due to a lap twenty stoppage. Braedon Hand made the decisive pass on Pruitt on the 23 trip past the flag stand. Hand, of Cottage Grove, won the race to sweep the entire

Hoppes Construction Freedom Cup weekend and win the point fund title.

In the Mohawk Metal IMCA Modifieds, Corbett's Collen Winebarger took the lead on lap nine and never looked back. Winebarger led the rest of the distance for his first win of the weekend and enough points to win the 2019 Hoppes Construction Freedom Cup. It is his fourth total win at CGS this season.

To read more about the weekend of races, go to cottagespeedway.com.

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the golfers of Cottage Grove. The Middlefield Women's Club teamed up with the CGHS team last week to raise almost \$1,000 dollars for equipment for the high school program last week in a scramble event.



The members of the Middlefield Women's Club and CGHS golf team take a picture before last week's event. PHOTO C/O LINDA FRANKLIN