

Skills *from A1*

trainable youth. With the help of other instructors, Gaines envisioned a skill center which would teach a variety of trades such as welding, mechanics and woodworking. "We could do all kinds of stuff with these kids if they want to learn something," he said. Gaines secured a building on Franklin Blvd. in the Glenwood area and spent about a year building the center. Backed by a team of volunteers and supported by local fundraisers, Gaines had set up two shops and eight classrooms. "We spent quite a few thousand dollars on the place," said Gaines. "We were getting really close to opening." Then the monkey wrench dropped. "The mayor texted me and said that I needed to do this trade school skill center somewhere else," Gaines said. "It angered me. I did all that work." The news came as a shock and Gaines chalked it up to the cold flow of bureaucracy.

"Springfield changed all the building codes in that area and we couldn't do anything - we couldn't use the building at all," he said. "They had plans for Glenwood and we weren't part of their plans." Despite the setback, Gaines had resolved to see the project through. One year ago, he sold his house in Springfield and moved to Cottage Grove with the intention to reboot his skill center on his own property. Again, however, Gaines ran into another hurdle. The proposed skill center would be constructed under the aegis of the non-profit Lane County Youth for Christ and would raise his own property value. As such, Gaines was told he couldn't construct there either. With the little money left over from his previous project, Gaines has begun searching for a building that could house and train area youth. Lately, he's had his eye on Latham School as a venue, starting with a small group of 10. "What I'd like to do is teach a few kids some skills and then have them help in training the next group," he said. "We want to bring

them in and house them and teach them the skill. And we'd have to have a controlled environment to do that." Touching the lives of disadvantaged youth is hardly a new project for Gaines. "I've been dealing with these kids for the last 31 years as a chaplain at the detention center," he said. "I've helped a lot of kids get turned around." Gaines works at the John Serbu Juvenile Justice Center in Eugene, a facility which helps troubled teens integrate back into society. His own experience as an abused child and drug user for 15 years, he says, is an accessible contact point for the youth he treats. "And I've turned my life around. And now I'm giving back," he said. "I've dedicated my life to working with these kids. And so that breaks open the door for me to be able to speak into their lives because they connect with me." Gaines recalled his own trust issues and hang-ups as a youth and what it would have taken to set him straight. "A lot of these kids are used and abused and have never had a chance," he

said. "They're just surviving and I want them to get on with their lives. ... They're no throw-away kids. They're just dealt a bad hand. A lot of times these kids are being turned on to meth and all kinds of drugs by their own parents, which is really sad. So I just want to give them a chance." If Gaines' skill center project gets off the ground, he's hoping to implement it countywide. "It'd be nice to get the kids out of their environment," he said. "If we can get them away, bring them up from Eugene into Cottage Grove, train them, and then we can try to find them jobs, set them up with school and clothes and try to help them have a start." As the Juvenile Justice Ministry Director with Youth for Christ, Gaines also couches his counsel to youths in Christian doctrine. "We share the Gospel also," he said. "It wouldn't depend on their being trained, but I want to speak into their lives about a different direction with their life." The proposed program

would be aimed at youth under 21 and focus on short courses that could set them up for their next step in life. "We're talking about weeks," said Gaines. "It'll probably give them just enough skill to get an apprenticeship job." Considering the inherent pitfalls of dealing with troubled youth, Gaines is also aware that certain precautions will have to be taken. "It's going to be a secured setup," he said. "The kid has to be willing on his own accord to stay there and not run off. If they run off, they're out of the program." In addition, the skill center would operate free of charge for attending youth. "If they want to learn a

trade, if they want to get off the street and they want to get on with their life, it'd be no charge," said Gaines. To see the project take root, Gaines is also relying on a community of skilled volunteers who will be able to donate services to the center. "I'm going to find people that are willing to teach these kids a skill. I can't teach everything. I can teach some," he said. "Most of these kids haven't had a chance. And they just have to realize that somebody cares about them and they're not out to take advantage of them." More information about Lane County Youth for Christ can be found at www.lanecounty.yfc.net.

Row *from A1*

Gilbert, executive director of the Watershed Council, the past years have shown a steady decline in garbage. But this year's winter storms likely uncovered garbage that added to clean-up weight. Before the day of the float, volunteer Doug Garletts, who coordinated the event, did a trial run along the six miles of river to mark places where it had changed. Garletts' reconnaissance helped the group anticipate trouble spots and areas that would need more attention. "He did all the work behind the scenes... it wouldn't happen without Doug," said Gilbert. The group began the day at about 9 a.m., work-

ing through about a six-mile stretch, utilizing the slow-moving current to cover a stretch from the Row River boat launch to Lynx Hollow State Park. Including intermittent stops along the way to pick up garbage from the side of the river, the clean-up continued until 4:30 p.m. There were challenges in the float but, according to Gilbert, no surprises thanks to Garletts' test run. Volunteers removed trash from the river and carried it on their kayaks or rafts, with larger items too big for personal floats being placed on a garbage barge. The largest item found? A car door. In addition, volunteers hauled a lot of tires out of the river, along with a shopping cart, all of which added to the overall

weight recovered during the clean-up. Gilbert compared lifting tires out of the river to cross-fit. "It's a workout, but it's a fun workout," she said. There were also smaller things recovered by volunteers, such as diapers and fishing line. At the end of the float, the whole group docked on the bank and piled the garbage in a staging area for Oregon State Parks to pick up and dispose of. Overall, Gilbert said she would consider the clean-up a success; the day's weather was great and, afterwards, the group went to the Brewstation to celebrate. "Any year where you get that much trash out of the river is a good year," Gilbert said. For more information, visit the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council's website at www.coastfork.org.

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