

# Cottage Grove Est. 1889 Sentinel

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**WEATHER**

Clouds and rain with a high of 43 and a low tonight of 36.  
Full forecast on A5

**COMMUNITY**

Heather Buch named to chair of LCBC.  
A3

**SPORTS — B**

Lady Lions ready for league play.  
B1

- **RECORDS**  
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DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

One of several homeless campsites near the public Cottage Grove Disc Golf Course underscores the issue of homelessness in the area and how the latest court decision could impact local enforcement.

## Court decision on homeless stands

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD  
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A Dec. 16 Supreme Court decision to deny a petition to review *Martin v. City of Boise* has finalized a significant holding by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals which protects the right for homeless people to sleep in public spaces without reprisal.

The Circuit Court ruling held that if a homeless person has no option of sleeping indoors, a city cannot cite or punish him or her for violating an ordinance disallowing sleeping outside in a public space.

The decision effects how cities across the West may deal with their homeless populations.

“It gives us less tools to deal with perceived problems,” said Cottage Grove

Police Captain Conrad Gagner, though he added that the court decision is not a critical restraining factor for law enforcement.

“It hasn’t been a real pervasive problem since the decision was made in 2018,” he said.

The case began in 2009 when Robert Martin and five individuals challenged Boise’s ordinances restricting public camping and sleeping, alleging that enforcement of those ordinances violated the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

Years of legal wrangling culminated in the 9th Circuit Court reversing a lower court ruling in 2018, Judge Marsha Berzon writing that “imposition of criminal penalties for sitting, sleeping, or lying outside on pub-

lic property for homeless individuals who cannot obtain shelter” amounted to the unconstitutional criminalization of homelessness.

“As long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property, on the false premise they had a choice in the matter,” she wrote.

Critics of the decision feel the federal court has given homeless people the ‘de facto right’ to sleep on sidewalks.

The City of Boise states on its website that “the 9th Circuit’s decision effectively creates a constitutional right to camp, holding that cities cannot prevent anyone from camping until they first provide enough shelter

beds for everyone, thus exempting public encampments from a host of public health and safety laws.”

The court decision affects nine Western states, Oregon among them. Thus, cities like Cottage Grove with no permanent shelters must find alternative methods to solve the challenges faced by their homeless populations.

The state of homelessness in Cottage Grove is not easy to quantify and its location next to the I-5 corridor lends to a degree of the transient presence.

Even among the more rooted unhoused, true numbers are hard to come by.

“I think there are a lot more homeless people than are evident,” said Gagner.

Though there is a

See COURT 8A



COURTESY PHOTO

Officer Chris Joyce with one of his K-9 police dogs, Torq.

## CGPD officer retires after 22 years

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD  
DSHERWOOD@CGSENTINEL.COM

Cottage Grove Police Officer Chris Joyce started this year on the last day of his career.

After nearly 22 years with the Cottage Grove Police Department, 51-year-old Joyce retired Jan. 1, leaving behind a lasting imprint on the lives he guided as both an officer and a citizen.

Originally from Nyssa, Ore., Joyce began his career there as in officer in 1994 and continued to Madras before settling in Cot-

tage Grove in 1998.

Joyce’s first assignment in The Grove was to conduct D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) classes once a week, teaching the dangers of drug abuse to the town’s fifth grade classes. This led Joyce to eventually add school resource officer to his duties as well.

In 2004, Joyce became a K-9 officer, spending the next 13 and a half years handling police dogs JoJo and later Torq.

Joyce has also spent his 22 years in Cottage Grove as a wrestling coach, starting with middle

school then moving on to high school. In addition, he regularly coached football through the last two decades.

“Those were my two identities in this community, as police officer and as a coach,” said Joyce.

As a coach, Joyce developed strong relationships with staff and students. In particular, Joyce finds it rewarding to remember “the coaching, the interaction in the school itself and being able to have a positive impact with the kids and the adolescents.”

See JOYCE 9A

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