


Cottage Grove Est. 1889 Sentinel

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WEATHER



Mostly rain with a high of 60 and a low tonight of 44.
Full forecast on A5

LIFE — B



Celebrating 99 years
B1

COMMUNITY



Celebrating our heroes
A3

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The Grove loses iconic councilor, community member

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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Cottage Grove lost a city councilor and committed community member with the passing of Bob Ehler on May 10 at age 67 due to complications related to cancer.

“My brother Bob was the kind of person who was so much involved in helping others that he didn’t have time to take care of himself,” said Ehler’s sister Shelly Duncan. “He will be missed by all who came into contact with him.”

Brothers fondly remembered motorcycle trips with Ehler while



COURTESY PHOTO
Cottage Grove City Councilor Bob Ehler passed away May 10.

other family members recalled his love for the outdoors.

“Our dad was an ‘enjoy the open road’ type of guy,” said daughters Adriana Morgan and Sabrina Ehler. “He loved it when we would call him and tell him we were picking him up to go on a drive. We never knew where we’d end up next, just that we needed a coffee, some old country music and the open road — even if he’d fall asleep every time. If we weren’t going to the coast, driving through Wildlife Safari, or taking a random back road, then we would be at his favorite fishing spot or watching a movie together. We were lucky enough get to spend our time with him outdoors where he loved it the most.”

Ehler spent the last years of his life serving Cottage Grove as a city councilor, a position he had been keen on for some time. After serving on the city’s Planning Commission and Budget Committee for several years, Ehler took the councilor seat of Cottage Grove’s Ward 2 in 2016 after a four-way race.

See **EHLER 6A**

City to offer loan program for small businesses

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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City councilors discussed the prospect of Cottage Grove establishing its own small business emergency loan program during a City Council meeting on May 11, ending with a unanimous vote to move forward with a plan.

Since the onset of the lockdown resulting from COVID-19, the city has been in talks with local entities such as the Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce, Community Development Corporation and the Economic and Business Improvement District to find financial solutions for small businesses struggling from the economic downturn.

“We’ve saved some money,” said City Manager Richard Meyers, who helped draft the program. “We’ve accumulated about \$100,000 ... to do loans for small business in Cottage Grove.”

Cuts to a planned “visioning” project, recent city layoffs and taxes from alcohol, cigarette and marijuana sales contributed to the city’s ability to establish the fund, according to Meyers.

The Program

To develop the plan, the city contacted Community Lending Works, a financial institution based in the Willamette Valley which works with organizations to create community loan and grant programs.

Under the proposed plan, companies within Cottage Grove city limits could apply for a maximum of \$10,000 during a set application window.

“Turning [applications] in the first day or

See **LOAN 9A**



PHOTOS BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

South Valley Farmers Market opened up May 7 to a handful of vendors and a turnout of masked shoppers keeping their distance.

Local farmers market returns with preorder options

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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South Valley Farmers Market took its first tentative steps back to the street on Thursday, May 7.

With the market restricted to just a handful of vendors, masked patrons perused homegrown and homemade wares down the market’s usual Seventh Street half-block stretch.

Opening amid a public health crisis, market organizers have instituted new rules of conduct for customers such as keeping a six-foot distance, refraining from food consumption, leaving pets at home, keeping hands off products, using washing stations and trying to avoid hugs. Guidelines also recommend wearing facemasks (though vendors are required to wear them) and sending one person per household to shop.



In addition to SNAP/EBT and Double Up Food Bucks still featuring at the market, organizers introduced a new online preorder system to the fold this week.

Produce, nuts, soap, pastries and fledgling plants make up the virtual aisle of the market’s latest online storefront, allowing customers to browse through the vendors from the comfort of their homes.

To allow farmers and producers time to prepare by Thursday afternoons, orders for each week’s market start the previous Fridays and close at 8 a.m. on Wednesdays. Orders after this deadline may be made by contacting a vendor directly.

Preorders can be picked up during

regular market hours at the information booth, but patrons who would like to maximize social distancing can have orders delivered to their vehicles at a parking zone on the corner of Main and Seventh streets.

Meanwhile, a number of local nonprofits and community-oriented programs recently received financial awards from the Taubert Foundation and Healing Matrix. Among the recipients, South Valley Farmers Market took in \$7,000, enabling the market to expand several aspects of its operations, including food equity programs, a kids’ produce club and a permanent storage site for market property.

Though recycling collection has temporarily suspended at the market, local recycling nonprofit EcoGeneration has announced plans to introduce a modified drive-through recycling system in the near future.

The farmers market new preorder site can be found at southvalleyfarmersmarket.square.site.

Lane County could reopen tomorrow

The county says it has met the metrics for Phase 1

By JARED ANDERSON
FOR THE SENTINEL

On May 8, Lane County submitted its proposal to the state of Oregon on its plans to begin the process of reopening after two months of restrictions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The 40-page submission lists details on the county’s preparedness, including rates of hospitalizations, plans for a resurgence of the virus and testing capabilities.

While at press time the state has not officially announced whether or not the county will be allowed to reopen on May 15, representatives have stated that the “majority” of counties that have applied will see applications approved.

“The health and safety of Lane County residents must be the top priority as Lane County prepares to relax restrictions implemented as part of Governor Brown’s Stay Home, Save Lives executive order,” the county wrote in its application for reopening. “While there is no expectation that COVID cases will get to zero in the near future, a phased approach to reopening the community and allowing commerce to resume will help limit the number of people impacted by the new disease.”

Lane County’s application stated that during the past weeks, it has been carefully planning and building capacity to limit the spread of COVID as the community resumes more normal levels of activity.

See **LANE 7A**




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Rotary members are making an impact in the fight against COVID-19 in our community. Rotary members around the world persevere. No challenge is so big that we can’t make a difference.

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