

City participates in annual 'If I Were Mayor' contest

This month, the Cottage Grove City Council approved participating in this year's "If I Were Mayor" contest, a statewide youth-oriented competition sponsored by the Oregon Mayors Association (OMA).

Area youths are encouraged to share their creative ideas about what they would do as mayor in the form of posters (elementary school), essays

(middle school) or digital media presentations (high school).

Cottage Grove's Youth Advisory Council will be helping promote and prepare youth to participate.

The City of Cottage Grove will be holding a virtual workshop on March 1 at 6:30 p.m. for youth who want to attend and learn more.

Mayor Jeff Gowing will be present and will answer

questions and discuss ideas for the contest.

The virtual workshop information can be joined by computer, tablet or smartphone.

Information about the meeting will be available on the Youth Advisory Council webpage at cottagegrove-or.gov/yac.

Local entries for the contest must be submitted by 5 p.m. on April 16 to the City Manager's

Office.

The mayor and city council will judge the local entries and announce winners at the April 26 city council meeting.

Local prizes will be:

- Poster contest (grades 4-5) — first place \$50, second place \$25.
- Essays (grades 6-8) — first place \$75, second place \$50.
- Digital Media Presentation (grades 9-12) —

first place \$100, second place \$50.

The local first-place winners will be submitted to statewide competition.

Judging by OMA members will occur in early to mid-June and statewide winners and their mayors will be notified shortly after the judging takes place.

First place winners and their parents will be invited to attend the awards luncheon held during the OMA Annual Conference in North Bend at the Mill Casino on July 31, where they will receive their prizes — a gift valued at \$500.

For more information, visit online at www.oregonmayors.org/special-programs/page/student-contest.

Crafty Mercantile, Opal Center team up to sponsor student art contest

The first-annual Crafty Mercantile & Opal Center Student Art Contest is now open for submissions.

Student artists ages 5-18, who live in Cottage Grove or surrounding areas, are invited to participate by creating and submitting original artwork.

There are three age categories, 5-8, 9-12 and 13-18.

Prizes include, art supplies, gift certificates, art classes and more.

Artists can use any medium but pieces must be able to be hung or displayed on a table. Artists can enter up to three

pieces but one is fine as well.

Label your entry with name, age and contact information, fill out the release form and drop off pieces at The Crafty Mercantile, 517 East Main St. in Cottage Grove.

The contest is open to entries through Feb. 26.

No entries will be accepted after the Feb. 26 deadline.

Winners will be notified after March 8.

Pieces will be displayed in the windows of The Crafty Mercantile and The Opal Center.

Judging criteria: All properly labeled

entries will be judged by a panel of area artists. Judges are looking for:

- Innovative presentation
- Unusual perspective or viewpoint
- A message or idea that is being conveyed
- Skill with the medium appropriate to the age

group (although sometimes the significance of the message is more important than the medium)

- Colors coordinated or contrasted for emotional impact
- Design elements that work together

Tax season for 2021 is underway; here are some IRS tax tips

The Oregon Department of Revenue began processing state income tax returns on Feb. 12. That same day, the IRS will begin processing federal returns.

Although some taxpayers have already submitted their returns, processing doesn't start until the tax season officially begins.

Returns will be processed

in the order they are received. However, as in years past, the department won't be issuing personal income tax refunds until after Feb. 16. The fastest way for a taxpayer to get a refund is by e-filing. Taxpayers who e-file returns and request refunds via direct deposit receive their refund sooner, on average, than those who

file paper returns and request refund checks.

A refund hold is part of the department's tax fraud prevention efforts and allows for confirmation that the amounts claimed on tax returns match what employers report on Forms W-2 and 1099.

Once we begin processing returns, filers can check

Where's My Refund? to see the status of their refund.

As a result of COVID-19 stimulus payments, unemployment benefits and federal tax law changes, there may be impacts to what taxpayers file on their Oregon income tax returns.

Here are some important topics and information for Oregon personal income

tax filers.

Stimulus Payments

Economic Impact Payments received during 2020 and early 2021 may impact the amount of federal tax subtraction that can be claimed on the 2020 Oregon personal income tax return.

The federal tax subtraction is based on the amount of federal tax you had to pay in the 2020 tax year.

Individuals should reduce the amount of federal tax paid in 2020 by the payments received to determine the amount of federal tax subtraction they are allowed.

The federal tax subtraction is limited to \$6,950 (or \$3,475 if married filing separately).

Unemployment Benefits

Unemployment benefits are taxable to Oregon. Funds received through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program are also taxable to Oregon. Unlike W-2 wages, unemployment benefits do not automatically have amounts withheld to pay taxes at the end of the year.

Individuals who did not elect to have withholding on their unemployment may see an increased tax bill.

For individuals still receiving unemployment benefits in 2021, the department urges recipients to submit Form 1040WH to the Oregon Employment

Department to authorize withholding.

Oregon Withholding

The Department of Revenue has its own Form OR-W-4. Individuals should review their withholding to determine if changes are necessary for tax year 2021.

A calculator is available to help ensure withholding amounts are correct.

Business Use of Home

Oregon is automatically tied to changes made to taxable income under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA).

Employees who receive a paycheck or a W-2 exclusively from an employer are not eligible for the business use of home deduction, even if they are currently working from home.

Along with other changes, the TCJA suspended the use of employee business expenses for employees through 2025.

Visit the IRS for more information on business use of home.

Disaster Relief (COVID-19, Wildfires, Straight-line Winds)

The Department of Revenue recognizes not all individuals will be prepared to pay their taxes in full this year. The department is offering penalty waiver relief for individuals impacted by COVID-19, wildfires, or straight-line winds. To learn more, visit Revenue's tax relief options webpage.

To our valued readers: Help small businesses affected by coronavirus right now, including ours.

Businesses of all sizes have been hit hard in this challenging new age of social distancing and self-isolation, but the blow has been catastrophic for small operations that rely on in-person transactions. There are many ways to help, like purchasing gift certificates or memberships, and yet there are many service-type businesses that don't have that option.

As we look to a new year, we're celebrating what connects us as a community, and what we can do to support our local businesses!

THAT'S WHY WE CREATED THE SUPPORT LOCAL TOGETHER CAMPAIGN.

The Support Local Together campaign will help local businesses who have to choose between promoting their business and paying the electric bill. It will also help support the *Cottage Grove Sentinel*, who has seen a strong decrease in advertising revenue, but an increase in readership.

IT DOES TWO THINGS.

1. Funds advertising dollars for local businesses

Your financial support will go directly to fund advertising that our local businesses need to stay top of mind.

2. Supports local journalism

By becoming a supporting member, you are helping to replace some of the advertising revenue the *Cottage Grove Sentinel* has lost due to the pandemic.

HERE IS HOW TO SUPPORT:

- Call 541-942-3325 x 1200
- Make a donation of your choosing.
- Choose a specific local business that you would like the advertising credit to go to, or leave that blank and we will designate it to a business we know needs help.

Our community is small but generous and we recognize there are many great organizations, like ours, that could use your help.

We believe the vast majority of our readers have always shared our view of the value and necessity of a strong local media and are willing to provide support equal to two or three cups of coffee a month to secure its future.

Thank you in advance for doing your share to secure a strong local economy in the community we are proud to serve.

Gary Manly
General Manager
gmanly@cgsentinel.com
541-942-3325 x 1207

COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL
UNITY WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Yes, I would like to become a 2020/21 Support Local Together Sponsor
Call 541-942-3325 x 1200
Mail sponsorship form to: **Cottage Grove Sentinel Supporter**
PO Box 35, Cottage Grove, OR 97424

\$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 Other Amount _____

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Check Credit Card

Name on Card: _____ Expiration date: _____
Number: _____
Billing Zip Code: _____ 3 Digit Security Code: _____

Do you have a specific business you would like to sponsor:
List here: _____

We will send a gift card to the business(es) of your choice with your name. If you would like to remain anonymous please check here.
***This sponsorship is not tax deductible.**



Full-Service Detailing

Protect your investment with interior and exterior detailing designed to safeguard against wear, tear and extreme weather.

Brad's Chevy
COTTAGE GROVE CHEVROLET-GMC

2775 Row River Rd
Cottage Grove
541-942-4415
www.bradschevy.com