



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

From left, Netanya Welch with Vitis Terra Vineyard Services, left, and owner Namaste Dave Masciorini inspect grape coming off the vines at the vineyard outside of Dallas on Wednesday.

Hot season, big wines

Warm growing season should translate to flavorful wines in 2015

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — The morning of the first day of fall, crisp and beautiful, set the perfect scene for wine grape harvesting at Namaste Vineyard outside of Dallas.

The calm morning was filled with the quick snip, snip of clippers while workers deftly removing dark purple pinot noir grape clusters from the vines. The grapes harvested Sept. 23 will become the vineyard's "Prosperity pinot."

Owner Dave Masciorini was all smiles at the beginning of the earliest harvest on record at the vineyard.

"I will have everything off before October, except Riesling," he said, sitting aboard the tractor he uses to move full containers of grapes from Prosperity's hillside rows. "That's never happened before."

By that point in the harvest, Masciorini was more than pleased with the growing season's bounty.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Namaste owner Dave Masciorini waits to haul grapes.

The hot and dry summer prevented common plagues of mildew and late-season pressure from birds seeking to make a meal out of sweet grapes.

The rain that's visited the valley off and on since late August was just enough to help slow down ripening and balance out the acids and flavors.

"When the rain started to come, if it would have gone steady, we would have had such an incredible year

with this limp little finish," he said. "We probably wouldn't have been able to get it right."

Masciorini said 2015 and 2014 have been as good as it gets, even with record heat.

"If this were the new norm — I don't think it is — but that would be fantastic," he said. "If this were the new norm, I would be able to sleep at night."

Bryan Croft, winemaker with Firesteed Cellars Winery in Rickreall, said he,

too, is pleased with what has come in so far since the vineyard's harvest that began Sept. 6.

Firesteed's harvest also is the earliest on record, thanks to an early bud break and bloom during the latter part of a mild winter. Combined with the heat of summer, Croft believes the 2015 wines will be very drinkable right away.

"I think 2015 will be one of those years that is going to make a really big splash in the (wine) magazines," Croft said. "It's more of the blockbuster than the indie film. You don't have to wait around."

In contrast, cooler years create wines with more subtle flavors and more acid, he said. Those wines typically age well as flavors develop over time. This year's vintage will be the opposite.

"You know they are going to be delicious (now)," Croft said.

The season wasn't perfect, though.

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No easy fix for SW Polk Fire's budget woes

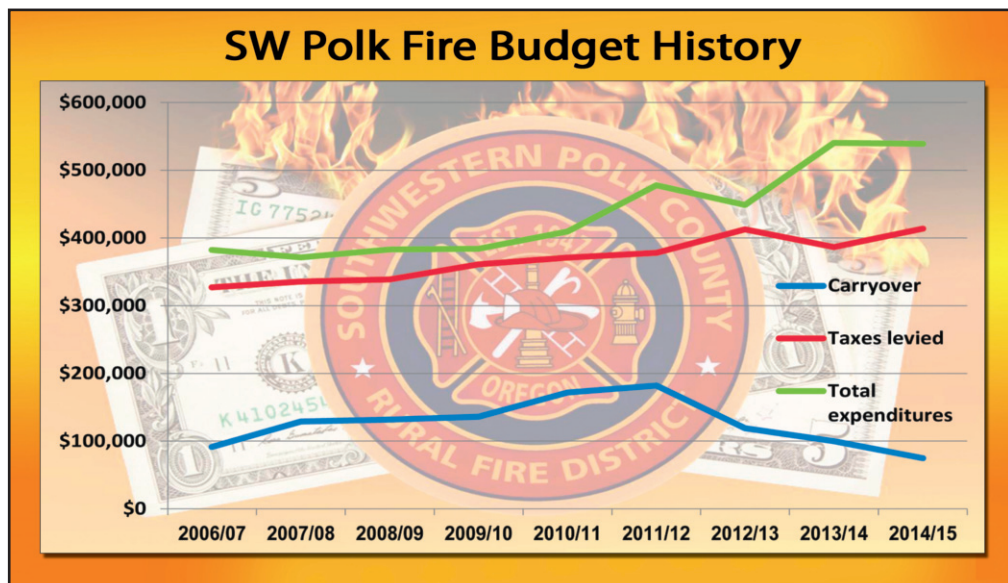
By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — For at least nine years, Southwest Polk Rural Fire Protection District has spent more money than it has levied in taxes.

Not because of frivolous spending, said SW Polk's Fire Chief Fred Hertel — also Dallas Fire & EMS' chief — but rather the cost of doing business has simply overwhelmed the district's tax rate.

Measures 47 and 50, passed by voters in the late 1990s, attempted to rein in government spending by rolling back tax rates to 1993 levels.

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Graphic by KATHY HUGGINS/Itemizer-Observer

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

The annual Dallas Booster Club Auction returns Saturday evening.

Tickets for the event, which begins at 6 p.m. at the Dallas Nesmith Readiness Center, located at 12830 Westview Drive, are \$25 and will be available at the door, organizer Michelle Nelson said.

This year's auction will include a variety of items to bid on, from house rentals at Sunriver to the chance to be a wrestling coach during the wrestling team's Orange and Black scrimmage, to local artwork, a pair of grills and gift cards.

Money raised supports Dallas High's sports.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

With eight freshmen and five sophomores, Falls City's volleyball team has seen a resurgence in numbers. The dramatic increase also means the Mountaineers are among the youngest teams in the Casco League.

Senior Allison Kidd has seen the volleyball squad grow from six players in 2014 to more than 20 in 2015.

For some, high school athletics is a serious matter — a place where student-athletes should focus only on the task at hand. Kidd doesn't subscribe to that line of thinking.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

The after-school program at Monmouth Independence YMCA, Go Club, is more than just a baby sitting service, said executive director Natascha Cronin.

"It's not just that we're making sure your child is safe and dry and feeding them," she said. "It really is a very different program than what it's been in the past. We're considering ourselves more of an extension of the school day."

There's plenty of play time, especially if it's nice outside.

Monday afternoon, about a dozen kids chased each other on the playground.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

A new app for smartphones makes it easier than ever to find out more about historic buildings in the city of Monmouth.

The app, Historic Monmouth Walking Tour, is available for both iPhones and Google formats. It cost about \$6,000, which was paid for through a grant, said Mark Fancey, Monmouth community development manager.

Once downloaded, the app provides users with information, pictures and history about 29 historic sites in Monmouth, including Western Oregon University.

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POLK COUNTY NEWS

Polk County mental health workers and administration are in a "cooling off" period after unsuccessful negotiations over wages.

"Basically, we've been bargaining with the county since June," said Dustin Breitwieser, mental health counselor and member of the bargaining unit for American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 173. "We have not been able to reach a settlement. They're taking a hard line. They cited political reasons for not wanting to give us a raise. They won't budget off 1.5 percent (cost-of-living adjustment) with us."

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THE NEXT
7
DAYS
PLANNING
FOR YOUR
WEEK



wed

Grab a yoga mat and head to Rogue Farms Hopyard in Independence for some relaxation in the vines.
6 p.m. Free.



Sunny
Hi: 72
Lo: 47

thu

It's October, and that means it's Breast Cancer Awareness month. Find out what you can do to prevent cancer at cancer.org.



Partly Sunny
Hi: 72
Lo: 47

fri

Imani Milele, a Ugandan children's choir, will perform at First Christian in Dallas to raise money for African orphans.
6:30 p.m. Free.



Mostly Sunny
Hi: 73
Lo: 45

sat

Uninsured? Receive free medical and mental health care at the Polk Community Free Clinic at Trinity Lutheran.
7-11 a.m. Free.



Partly Cloudy
Hi: 75
Lo: 49

sun

Practice your singing with free lessons for all ages at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Dallas.
1:30-3 p.m. Free.



Sunny
Hi: 78
Lo: 49

mon

Eating at Dairy Queen will help students in Monrovia, Liberia, build bookcases and buy books for a new library.
5-8 p.m. Cost varies.



Sunny
Hi: 75
Lo: 50

tue

Author Steve Arndt will talk about Oregon Ghost Towns at the Monmouth Public Library during a presentation.
6 p.m. Free.



Partly Cloudy
Hi: 75
Lo: 51