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JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Melanie Doyle watches as her son Darren Doyle packs red potatoes in a bag during Friday's weekly produce giveaway at Mountain Gospel Fellowship Church in Falls City. The giveaway serves as many as 120 families each week.

Nourishing a community

Weekly produce giveaway in Falls City provides food, social connections

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — Donna Creekmore walked to a parking lot beside Mountain Gospel Fellowship Church in Falls City and said: "We started here."

She's talking about the weekly produce giveaway that happens every Friday at the church.

The program helps a third to nearly half the population of Falls City, but it started about a year ago as a small giveaway spearheaded by people who recognized a simple way to fill a need.

Back then, it was operated out of the bed of a pickup truck. Now a multitude of volunteers are needed to deliver, unload and help families who visit the giveaway each week.

It's moved from the truck to using the entire front parking lot and covered walkway



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Signs are placed out before the giveaway begins at 4 p.m.

at Mountain Gospel.

"It's been needed for a while," said Charlie Flynn, a volunteer with the program.

A little more than a year ago, Falls City resident Angie Varney found out the weekly James2 Community Kitchen meal and food giveaway on Thursdays at Dallas United Methodist Church often had leftover produce. Working with the late Wayne Kester,

who organized the Thursday meal, she volunteered to take the excess to Falls City and hand it out to residents there.

Each Friday, Varney would park her truck at Mountain Gospel, have her kids hold homemade signs, and gave out fresh produce to anyone who needed it. The giveaway grew so fast, Varney asked Creekmore to help.

It wasn't long before Var-

ney and Kester realized that if expanded, the program could help more families in Falls City by providing fresh, healthy food for free on a regular basis.

Kester connected the Falls City volunteers with Marion-Polk Food Share to bring more fruit, vegetables and bread to the community on Fridays.

Last Friday, like many before it, there was a line outside the church at 4 p.m. when the giveaway opened. Boxes brimming with watermelons, apples, corn on the cob, peppers, potatoes, salad mixes and much more awaited people who signed in.

Melanie Doyle, along with three of her eight children were among those who come to the giveaway on nearly a weekly basis. She said with that many children in her house, food goes fast and is increasingly expensive.

See **PRODUCE**, Page 15A

Ready? Tax bills are on the way

Itemizer-Observer staff report

POLK COUNTY — Tax statements are on their way, and for most property owners, they won't contain good news when it comes to the size of their property tax bill.

Polk County will collect 6.2 percent more taxes, fees and special assessments for the 2015 tax year (\$84.5 million) on behalf of all the county's taxing districts.

Last year, the county collected \$79.6 million.

Polk County Assessor Douglas Schmidt said the primary contributors for this increase are the 3 percent increase in assessed value allowed by law under Measure 50, the need to collect for bond repayment, and value that has been added to a property from new construction. Schmidt added that another contributor to

	Average Assessed Value	Tax Rate Percentage	Average Yearly Taxes	Changed From 2014-15
Dallas	\$148,302	15.0296	\$2,229	4.8%
Falls City	\$83,817	12.3377	\$1,034	7.7%
Independence	\$119,528	19.6646	\$2,350	4.2%
Monmouth	\$142,859	17.9541	\$2,565	3.3%
West Salem	\$193,933	18.3406	\$3,557	6.7%
Willamina	\$82,111	15.3440	\$1,260	4.7%

Source: Polk County Assessor
Graphic by KATHY HUGGINS/Itemizer-Observer

property tax increases is the fact that last year almost 25 percent of the residential property owners in Polk

County were paying taxes on their real market value (RMV).

The RMV of a property is

what the assessor believes a property would sell for if placed on the market on Jan. 1.

See **TAXES**, Page 5A

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

The long-vacant former Tyco building in Dallas has a new owner.

Dallas City Manager Ron Foggin announced the closing of the sale to American Gas & Technology at the Dallas City Council meeting Monday night.

He said the sale was final on Oct. 2, but the company isn't in production at the facility off Monmouth Cut-off Road yet. He said the business specializes in the use of compressed natural gas.

"They will start sooner rather than later and they will be employing people," Foggin said.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

Try holding a physical education class in a room with an 8-foot ceiling — or having to load kids onto a bus for PE classes off site.

That is the case at Falls City Elementary School. Now district officials have proposed a solution: building a gym at the school.

It would take a bond measure to pay for it, but Superintendent Jack Thompson said after introducing the idea to citizens last week, the response has been encouraging.

"It was really positive," Thompson said. "People believe there is a need."

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

Moments after Central's 20-25, 25-23, 25-15, 25-20 loss to Silverton on Thursday, senior Kylie Nash was all smiles, joking with her teammates. Despite the loss, Nash and her teammates believe Central is ready to unleash its best play of the year during the postseason.

"In a positive sense, a lot of it came back to our side and our mistakes," Nash said. "We know we can take care of that. I didn't feel like they outplayed us. We could have taken that (match)."

The Panthers entered the final week of the regular season with a 6-10 record overall and 5-7 mark in Mid-Willamette Conference play.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

Stepping into Hadley's Radio Bakery, it doesn't seem like much. It's still a work in progress, with signs being made, art yet to be hung on the walls.

The display case isn't packed full of goodies like you might see in a commercial bakery. Instead, Hadley's displays a smaller assortment of delicacies.

Be glad, Hadley, 47, takes a small-batch approach, hoping customers will appreciate the attentiveness to his use of local ingredients and baking throughout the day. It means the likelihood of grabbing a cookie fresh out of the oven is high.

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POLK COUNTY NEWS

Thirty years ago, Greg Hansen had what could be the shortest job interview of any current Polk County employee.

Now the county administrator, Hansen was seeking a graduate intern position in the general services department.

"I said 'yes' three times and then I was hired," Hansen recalled last week after being presented a 30 years of service award and the Polk County Board of Commissioners meeting Wednesday.

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue
	The Dallas Library is hopping today with events for youth and teens including read to Davos, the teen advisory meeting and book club.	Have a question about Dallas schools? Have coffee with the superintendent at Dallas Retirement Village. 9:30 a.m. Free.	Tap your feet to the music at the Guthrie Park Acoustic Music Jam at the Guthrie Park Community Center. 7-10 p.m. Free.	Tour Monmouth and Independence while tasting Polk County wines during Discover MI Town. Noon-5 p.m. \$25.	Hand clapping and loud singing is encouraged during the Jubilee Service at Calvary Chapel in Dallas. 6:30 p.m. Free.	Take a moment and write a thank you letter to a service member overseas to recognize National Day of the Deployed today.	James2 Community Kitchen offers free meals to everyone who needs or wants one each Tuesday and Thursday. 4:30-6 p.m. Free.
	Partly cloudy Hi: 67 Lo: 47	A.M. Fog Hi: 64 Lo: 45	Partly cloudy Hi: 63 Lo: 43	Partly cloudy Hi: 65 Lo: 45	Chance rain Hi: 65 Lo: 45	Partly cloudy Hi: 65 Lo: 46	Mostly sunny Hi: 65 Lo: 49