

Body of missing boy located on Monday

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

WEST SALEM — Searchers found the body of a 5-year-old boy missing since Friday from Wallace Marine Park in West Salem.

His body was found near Wheatland Ferry Monday at about 1:40 p.m., according to the Polk County Sheriff's Office. He was about 13 miles down river from where he was last seen.

The boy, Allen "Chaz" Pearson, was last seen playing near the old boat ramp and pedestrian bridge at the park.

Authorities believe he drowned in the Willamette River, according to a news release from the sheriff's office.

"The Polk County District Attorney and the Polk County medical examiner both responded to the scene, and the investigation is being treated as a drowning," stated a news release from the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

Emergency workers responded to a report of a missing 5-year-old boy at 5:45 p.m. on Friday. The Polk County Sheriff's Office and Salem Police Department responded to the call and were soon joined by several agencies in the search for Allen.

Sheriff Mark Garton said several people saw him playing near a pool created by a gravel bar in the river adjacent to the pedestrian bridge crossing from Wallace Marine Park to the river front park area.

"Nobody saw him in the water. Several people saw him right next to the water," Garton said. "He taken off his shoes and shirt that was right in the same place people saw. He also had goggles so he was wanting to swim."

Garton said even though

the river is lower, that doesn't mean it is safer or much warmer than it was a few months ago.

"In the 60s and it might seem refreshing. It is a shock for your body," Garton said. "You can't use your arms and legs like you need to."

Garton noted that while the water close to the shore near the gravel bar is shallow, the water on the other side is deep, and at the pillar of the walking bridge, the currents form a whirlpool.

"The current is going to drive you down," he said.

He said because of the cold temperatures and currents you can see from the surface, anyone playing in the water needs a life jacket. There has been an effort to place a life jacket station in the park.

"I hope someone does," Garton said.

Police, fire and search and rescue crews looked for the boy until dark on Friday and continued the search on Saturday and Sunday. Garton thanked the agencies and volunteers who joined the search.

Agencies who helped with the search are: Polk County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Polk County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol, The American Red Cross, Mountain Wave Search and Rescue, Benton County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Yamhill County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Yamhill County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol, Corvallis Mountain Search and Rescue, Marion County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Clackamas County Sheriff's Office Dive Team, Oregon Army National Guard, Salem Police Department, Salem Fire Department, and the Benton County Sky SAR (civil air patrol).

Economic director sees Dallas' 'potential'

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — AJ Foscoli, Dallas' Economic Development Director, believes the next year or so has a lot in store for Dallas.

"I think that Dallas is really poised for a lot of growth, a lot of potential," he said.

The city is already seeing evidence of that as industrial businesses are eyeing Dallas as a possible location.

He referred to one such project, without elaborating on what it is or who is behind it, in a workshop meeting with the city council in July. He said the business' site selection process has been educational for the city, and that will work in its favor, even Dallas doesn't make the final cut.

"The fact that it is still on-going is really good. The fact that's been about eight months now and the project is still alive is really encouraging to me," Foscoli said. "We will keep working on it until we get a thumbs up or a thumbs down. If we do end up getting a thumbs down, the process itself is helping us. We've strengthened our relationship with our partners, from Northwest Natural, from Pacific Power, Business Oregon."

Foscoli said Oregon has a limited amount of industrial land left that is centrally located for businesses, which is making Dallas



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer file

The removal of "Noah's Ark" from the former Weyerhaeuser mill site in Dallas makes the property more attractive to businesses wanting to locate in the Willamette Valley.

more attractive to outfits wanting locate or relocate in the Willamette Valley.

He said the most noticeable piece of vacant industrial property in Dallas, the former Weyerhaeuser mill site, has been improved by the removal of the building known as "Noah's Ark."

The giant drying shed, leftover from the mill operation, has been salvaged for its valuable 100-year-old timber.

"I'm a little bit saddened, to be honest, to see the Ark go away, but the timber in that is some of the most valuable out there," Foscoli said. "However, because it is going away, it is making that site much more ready for something else. The way that building was, it would

have been challenging — not impossible, but challenging — to shoehorn something that fit."

On the commercial side, particularly in the downtown, Foscoli sees his role as a facilitator between businesses and the owners of buildings with space to lease or buy.

"There is a bit of a dance that goes on between what a person feels their asset is worth and what a person coming in feels that it's worth," he said. "It's my job to get them to talk to each other and not just walk away."

Foscoli said he's pleased to see the development of the career and technical education program at Dallas High School.

The Dallas School District hired a former Dallas agricultural teacher, Tim Ray, to find the best courses of study for the Dallas area and develop programs around them.

That could go a long way toward filling another piece of the economic development equation: Keeping business supplied with well-trained workers.

"We are lucky to have Tim Ray at the high school tasked with that very thing, to create a talent pipeline that can help our businesses in Dallas and in the region," Foscoli said. "I have high hopes that the CTE program at the high school will grow and incorporate lots of skills that we can use."

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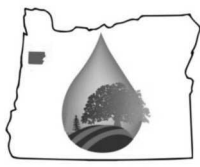
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