

Logging Restrictions Approved Despite Protests

By Kristy Tallman
Of The New Era

Amidst a backdrop of protests and heated debate, the Oregon Department of Forestry Board (ODF) made a divisive decision on Thursday, March 7, voting 4-3 to advance a contentious proposal aimed at curbing logging across 640,000 acres of state forests while prioritizing the protection of endangered wildlife.

The Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) seeks to align western Oregon's forests with the federal Endangered Species Act, safeguarding habitats crucial for at least 17 imperiled species. However, the plan also involves reducing timber harvests on state forests, which could lead to diminished revenue for local county services and a decline in employment opportunities in rural areas already grappling with economic challenges.

It was a day of betrayals and high injustices to the loggers who lined the streets of Salem in protest of the decision that would, in their eyes,



Photo by Kristy Tallman

Trucks circled the block around the capital on March 7 in protest to the new Habitat Conservation Plan the Oregon Department of Forestry passed at their March 7 board meeting.

seal their fate. Despite fervent appeals from the public and unsuccessful attempts to postpone the decision through three separate motions, the board forged ahead with its vote.

A move former gubernatorial candidate Betsy Johnson predicted. Johnson vehemently criticized the ODF's impending decision, labeling it a "catastrophic mistake based on a flawed process."

"The forest accords were supposed to be an agreement... about how logging was going to be conducted. This is coming back and grab-

See Protests, Page 8

Remains of Missing Man Found Near Foster Lake

By Sarah Brown
Of The New Era

The body of a Lebanon man who was reported missing four years ago was found Monday, March 4, east of Foster Lake.

Holden Reed Kinsey, who was 25 at the time of his disappearance, was found near milepost 34 on Highway 20 when a tree trimming company was clearing limbs along the highway.

Kinsey was reported missing on Jan. 11, 2020, by his mother after an apparent dispute earlier that month. Reports indicate she reported he left their Lebanon residence on Jan. 2 and she hadn't seen him since. She also told police her son had mental health issues that he wasn't treating, he had no friends, he rarely left home, and he'd made statements that caused her to be concerned he would harm himself. He was last seen wearing a black hoodie, black long sleeve shirt, black pants and black shoes, and he might be in possession of a firearm and knife.



During investigations a month later, Sweet Home police learned Kinsey had used the bathroom at Steelhead Fitness a few times in January, and on Jan. 31 he was staying at the Sun Motel. He had paid for his own

room, as well as two nights for the room of 77-year-old Louis Ennis. Police were called to the motel on Feb. 4, 2020, when Ennis' body was found in his room. An autopsy revealed Ennis died from natural causes.

Witnesses described a male likely to be Kinsey leaving Ennis' room and taking off in Ennis' truck on the same day Ennis was last seen.

The truck was found not
See Remains Found, Page 7

Hometown
Newspaper of

**GEOFF
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**LIFELIGHT TRAINING
BOLSTERS
RESPONSE EFFORTS**
PAGE 3



**CHAMBER HOSTS
80TH ANNUAL
AWARDS BANQUET**
PAGE 9



**COACHES 'COULDN'T
ASK FOR BETTER'
PLAYERS**
PAGE 16

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OBITUARIES

Jaye Durall Travis

February 16, 1950 - February 28, 2024

Jaye Durall Travis, 74, of Sweet Home passed away Wednesday, February 28, 2024. She was born February 16, 1950, to William Dale and Doris Lucille (Breasaw) Durall in Tacoma, Washington.

She enjoyed feeding the birds outside and watching her favorite television shows.

Jaye is survived by her daughters: Lori Sharp, Renee Rehn, Beth Jensen; eight grandchildren, a brother and sister. She was preceded in death by husband Gary Travis (February 2, 2020).

In lieu of flowers or gifts donations can be made to Good Samaritan Hospital Foun-

ation: 3600 NW Samaritan Drive, Corvallis, OR 97330-9933 or call 541-768-4256. Please donate to where need is greatest, or Mario Pastenga House.

A possible Celebration of Life event to be announced at a later date. Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling arrangements. www.sweethomefuneral.com.

Michael Alan Healy

November 4, 1954 - February 29, 2024

Michael Alan Healy, 69, of Sweet Home passed away Thursday, February 29, 2024. Memorial service will be at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 23rd at River of Life Fellowship. Military honors and celebration of life potluck will follow

at 2:00 p.m. at Sweet Home VFW. Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling arrangements. www.sweethomefuneral.com.

Jeffrey Daniel Feldschau

January 6, 1981- March 3, 2024

Jeffrey Daniel Feldschau, 43, of Sweet Home passed away Saturday March 2, 2024. Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling arrangements. www.sweethomefuneral.com.

Marcel Eugene Backman

November 27, 1942 - March 3, 2024

Marcel Eugene Backman, 81, of Sweet Home passed

away Sunday, March 3, 2024. He was born on November 27, 1942 to Elmer L. and Loretta A. (Jura) Backman in Nebraska.

He lived in Albany from 1955 to 2004 then moved to Sweet Home. Marcel enjoyed fishing, hunting, and loved to play pool.

He is survived by his life partner Debra E. Warner of Sweet Home, son Tracy Wade Backman of Sweet Home, siblings: Gaylyn Shay and Gary Backman of Albany; bonus children: Brian Warner of Lebanon, Crystal Warner of Albany, Jay B. Keesee of Sweet Home and Erika Keesee of Albany. Preceded in death by his parents and sister Gail Backman. Sweet Home

Funeral Chapel is handling arrangements. www.sweethomefuneral.com.

Marjorie Lou Harer

October 12, 1929 - March 6, 2024

Marjorie Lou Harer, 94, of Sweet Home passed away Wednesday March 6, 2024. Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling arrangements. www.sweethomefuneral.com.

Dennis Grover Davidson

March 31, 1955 - March 7, 2024

Dennis Grover Davidson, 68, of Sweet Home passed away March 7, 2024. Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling arrangements. www.sweethomefuneral.com.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Information for the Public Safety report in The New Era is sourced from local law enforcement and fire agencies. Incident details, which may not always be available from agencies in time for publication in our weekly paper edition, could be updated online as information becomes available. Addresses provided generally denote the location of the incident or arrest, occasionally indicating the origin of the call. It is crucial to emphasize that our reporting of an individual's arrest or citation for a crime does not imply guilt. Determination of guilt can only be established through legal proceedings in court.

Mar. 4

9:16 a.m. - Cara James, 44, was cited for failure to register a vehicle.

2:09 p.m. - William Cockrell, 61, was cited for driving while suspended, driving uninsured, failure to renew registration, failure to display plate, failure to carry and present and an undisclosed warrant.

2:53 p.m. - Loa Branton, 34, was cited for driving while suspended and driving uninsured. Branton was

additionally arrested for third degree theft and failure to carry and present.

Mar. 5

6:35 p.m. - David Allen Vasquez, 42, was arrested for menacing and harassment, both constituting domestic violence. Lodged at Linn County Jail.

11:06 p.m. - Shelly Wagner, 41, was cited for driving while suspended and driving uninsured.

Mar. 6

8:48 a.m. - Benjamin Philip Hyatt, 45, was arrested on a Sweet Home Municipal Court warrant for failure to appear on an original charge for second degree criminal trespass.

8:57 a.m. - Rebecca Ann Long, was arrested on a Sweet Home Municipal Court warrant for failure to comply on an original charge for second degree disorderly conduct.

9:18 a.m. - Jamie Daniel Carpenter, was arrested on a Sweet Home Municipal Court warrant for failure to comply on an original charge for driving while suspended or revoked.

10:36 a.m. - Nicholas Scott Warren, 44, was arrested on a Sweet Home Municipi-

pal Court warrant for failure to appear on an original charge for third degree theft.

8:05 p.m. - Mackenzi Overholser, 23, was cited for speeding. 41/25.

Mar. 7

7:11 a.m. - Nickolas Ray Aday, was arrested for fourth degree assault constituting domestic violence.

8:42 a.m. - Sheri Yvonne Bower, was arrested for second degree criminal trespass.

4:08 p.m. - Donald Glenn Rodgers, was arrested on a Sweet Home Municipal Court warrant for failure to appear on an original charge for second degree criminal trespass.

4:44 p.m. - Donald Glenn Rodgers, was arrested for failure to register as a sex offender.

11:27 p.m. - Keegan Ryker Fox, 21, was arrested on a Sweet Home Municipal Court warrant for failure to comply on an original charge for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

Mar. 8

12:04 a.m. - Jacob Todd Newberg, 30, was arrested on a Sweet Home Municipal Court warrant for failure

See Public Safety, Page 11

LOCAL EVENTS

Flea market

The Linn County Fair & Expo Center hosts the county's largest indoor flea market on Saturday, March 16, at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Rd E Albany. Over 85+ spaces full with vendors selling antiques, collectibles, vintage and one-of-a-kind items. Early admission (cash only) from 8-9 a.m. is \$6, regular admission from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. is \$2, children 12 and under are free; parking is free. For more information visit linncountyfleamarket.com.

Annual Workshop

The Sweet Home Genealogy Society will be hosting a workshop, March 16, from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. There will be five speakers on tap, learn about doing family research. \$25 for non-members, \$20 for members. Register at 1223 Kalmia, Sweet Home, next to the library. For more information contact 541.818.0578.

After School Movies

The Sweet Home Public Library will be hosting movie nights this month at 3 p.m. on Wednesdays. The dates for the events follow with the movie; March 20 Peter Pan and Wendy, March 27 Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget.

Getting Ahead with Solar Power

Oregon Blue Solar will be hosting a discussion about real benefits many homeowners can enjoy from the addition of solar power at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 16. Located at the Sweet Home Senior Center. Topics that will be covered: Scams to avoid, Tax Incentives, DIY vs Pro-installed, Grid Tie vs Off Grid, Net Metering, Property Values and crowd questions. For more information contact Christopher Anderson 541.497.3332 or Ward Christman at 541. 570. 2308.

Saint Patrick's Day Party

The Dam Bar will be hosting a Saint Patrick's Day Party with a live band on Saturday, March 16 at 3 p.m. Other events include DJ Drunken Punkn March 23 at 7 p.m. and April 6 at 6 p.m. Open Mic Night hosted by The Dam Karaoke Girls.

Karaoke with Double D Karaoke

Downtown Restaurant and Lounge will be hosting a karaoke night March 16 from 8-11:59 p.m. For more information contact Katherine Julian at katiejulian2014@gmail.com.

See Local Events, Page 6

The New Era

A LOCALLY OWNED NEWSPAPER

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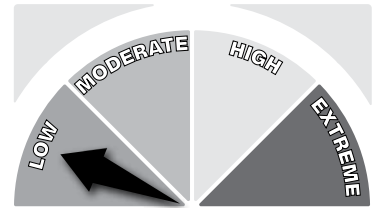
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TEMPERATURES

DATE	HIGH	LOW	PRECIP
March 4	42	34	0.57
March 5	47	32	0.22
March 6	49	29	0.00
March 7	52	29	0.00
March 8	62	31	0.00
March 9	52	40	0.00
March 10	51	50	0.00

FORECAST

DAY	WEATHER	HIGH	LOW
Thur	Partly Cloudy	60	35
Fri	Sunny	66	39
Sat	Nice	69	42
Sun	Nice	69	43
Mon	Partly Cloudy	70	46
Tues	Partly Cloudy	64	43
Wed	Few Showers	57	41



TODAYS FIRE DANGER IS
LOW

The fire danger information provided is current at the time of publication. For the latest and most accurate updates, please visit: oregon.gov/odf

PRECIPITATION

Year to date: 10.74
March 15, 2023: 9.91

LAKE LEVELS

Foster Reservoir: 614.1
Green Peter Res.: 971.4

Weather predictions are reported based on forecasts provided by the National Weather Service and others. Temperature and lake level information courtesy of the U.S. Corps of Engineers. For updated stream flow information, call (541) 367-5132.

LifeFlight Training Bolsters Emergency Response Efforts

By Kristy Tallman
Of The New Era

In a strategic collaboration aimed at fortifying emergency response capabilities, Sweet Home Fire and Ambulance District (SHFAD) recently engaged in specialized training conducted by LifeFlight, a premier air medical transport service. Chief Nick Tyler of SHFAD provided exclusive insights into the training initiative, highlighting its significance in bolstering the district's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to critical situations.

LifeFlight Network is a not-for-profit patient transport service providing helicopter, fixed-wing, and ground ambulance transport throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana.

Tyler stressed the crucial necessity of providing SHFAD personnel with the vital skills required for loading patients into helicopters and setting up landing zones for air ambulances. "While there is no formal certification required for loading patients into the helicopter, we prioritize training all our Paramedics and EMTs in this crucial skill set," Tyler said.

The collaborative training effort extended beyond frontline responders to include SHFAD officers, who were tasked with coordinat-



Photo by Sarah Brown

The SHFAD conducted their first training session on the new LifeFlight helipad at the Samaritan Sweet Home Health Center.

ing with air ambulance crews and facilitating the setup of landing zones. Tyler highlighted the importance of this training for the officers, stating, "It is also beneficial for our officers who interact with the LifeFlight crew and assist in setting up landing zones."

Tyler commended the participants for their exemplary performance during the training sessions, noting, "Everyone did well with the training. It was very exciting to utilize that landing zone

for the first time. It proved to be a very good landing zone. In talking with the pilot, it was very easy to see, the windsock was in a great spot and the landing zone was good."

The decision to conduct the training at night was strategic, providing SHFAD personnel with valuable experience in handling landing zones under challenging conditions. Tyler said, "Training at night simulates real-world scenarios where

assistance may be needed in

low-light conditions."

Additionally, conducting drills at 7:00 pm was convenient, and utilizing the landing zone during less congested times ensured optimal training conditions according to Tyler. The helicopter also landed during the day to inspect the area before the night training.

"From our perspective night versus day is no different," explained Tyler. "The pilot and the Lifeflight crew require a little more assistance at times when it's

dark. Obstructions get more difficult to see, so the communication between ground crews and the helicopter crew is important."

Tyler highlighted the potential impact of the dedicated landing zone on response times, particularly for emergencies along the Hwy 20 corridor where traditional landing spots may be limited. "We envision utilizing this landing zone for calls requiring LifeFlight from remote areas where landing options are scarce," said Tyler.

Moreover, he underscored the significance of the dedicated landing zone in streamlining emergency response efforts during large-scale events such as the Jamboree weekend. "A specific time I see that being extremely useful is during the Jamboree weekend. If a medical helicopter is needed during the Jamboree many of the open fields and open areas have campsites in them. The dedicated area provides a known, open area that could be used with less ground resources required," said Tyler.

CIRCUIT COURT

Warrants are out on the following individuals: Kaleb Kimber Banta, Jacob Reginald Bliss, Christian Jacob Boatwright, Hope Marie Connors, Curtis Ray Daniel, Ashlee Dee Flanagan, Aaron Thomas Halvorson, Noe Hernandez-Reyes, Michael Trevor Hilton, Ariel Shanea Kaping, Andrew Donald LeGore, Charles James Marvel, Bryce William McGowan, Eric Wayne McKnight, Carrie Lynne Miller, Kendra Lynne Montoya, Larry Robert Morgan, Nicholas Alan Nelson, Daniel Austin Phillips, Ju-

lianne Nicole Phillips, Tammy Lavonn Robinson, Paul Levi Shelton, Richard Gene Stephens, Harley Michelle Webb.

Gary Louis Coomer, 51, was sentenced March 4, to 600 months with the Department of Corrections, 99 years of post-prison supervision, and a \$800 fine following guilty verdicts for first degree rape, and two counts of first degree sexual abuse. Charges acquitted: First degree rape, first degree sexual abuse.

Gabriel Frank Grajiola, 40, was charged March 9, with fleeing or attempting

to elude a police officer and felon in possession of a firearm.



ECONOMY DRUGS

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DRIVE UP PHARMACY

Crossword KEY Puzzle on page 15

C	Y	P	R	U	S	D	A	I	S	E	S		
O	U	T	L	I	N	E	A	N	T	I	B	E	S
S	D	A	T	H	L	E	T	I	C	S	M	P	
A	G	A	T	E	L	E	I	H	A	B	E	R	
G	E	L	S	S	E	G	N	O	L	O	S	E	
E	L	I	F	A	R	G	A	S	U	T	A		
P	R	A	T	T	A	B	L	E	D				
T	C	H	A	D			L	E	E	R	S		
R	O	A	M	E	D		K	I	E	V			
A	P	T	D	A	H		T	I	C	A	A	R	
F	L	I	C	M	A	S	A	N	A	R	E	A	
F	A	C	E	S	R	I	P	I	N	D	R	I	
I	N	C	A	P	A	R	I	S	O	N	I	D	
C	A	R	I	T	A	S	R	E	N	A	M	E	S
R	E	L	I	C	S		S	W	A	M	I	S	

SUDOKU KEY Puzzle on page 15

6	7	9	2	5	8	4	3	1
1	2	8	7	4	3	5	9	6
4	5	3	6	1	9	7	8	2
2	9	6	5	3	7	1	4	8
7	1	4	8	2	6	3	5	9
8	3	5	4	9	1	6	2	7
9	6	2	3	7	5	8	1	4
5	8	1	9	6	4	2	7	3
3	4	7	1	8	2	9	6	5

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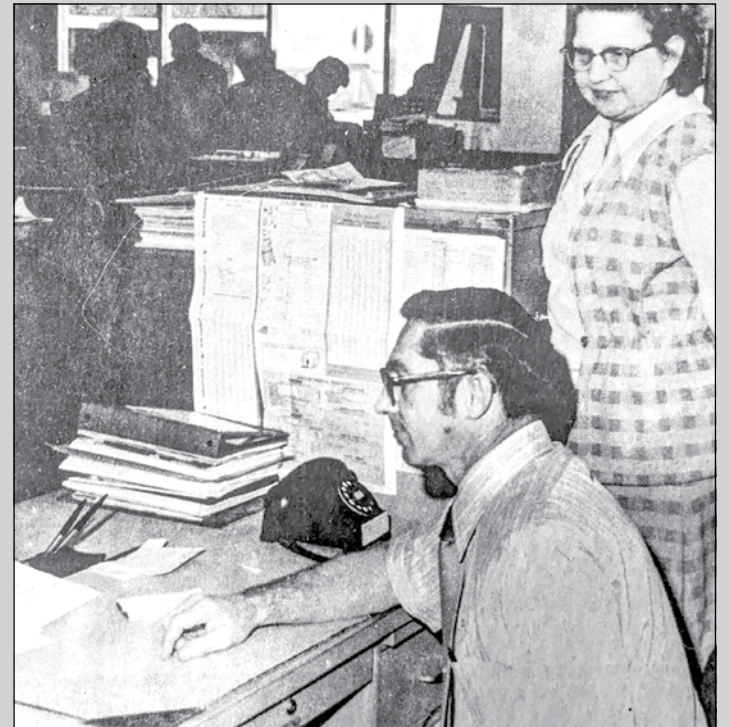
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FROM OUR FILES



Postmaster Lavonne Moe, who in 1974 had been with the post office 26 years starting as a clerk, looks on as Assistant Postmaster Don Hoffman explains accounting procedures.

March 13, 1974
Willamette Industries Inc. recently purchased Bauman Sawmill, Lebanon Sawmill, Bauman Lumber Company, Indianola Lumber, Lebanon Machine Shop and WJH Trucking. The company will now have the capacity to process approximately 135 million board feet per year. Bauman Lumber Company, heavy in the production of wood chips, has been the principal supplier of Willamette's Western Kraft Paper Mill.

Sweet Home's High-Q Team winning for the tenth consecutive time set a state record as Hood River faced defeat 300-200. Coach George Wenzel said it will take another school at least two years to dislodge their record. The team has not been defeated since 1971.

Postal employees celebrated the local office's centennial anniversary this week. A facade of the old post office was erected for the occasion. A special cancellation was purchased to honor the centennial with the East Linn Chamber of Commerce selling first day cancellation commemorative envelopes for stamp collectors at 25 cents. Having gone from 55 families 100 years ago to more than 4,000 today, the post office now employs three clerks, six city carriers, two rural carriers, four substitute carriers and clerks, a postmaster and an assistant postmaster.

March 17, 1999
A small fire closed the junior high for a day. The fire was reported at 5:59 a.m. Fire crews saw no visible flames, but smoke was seen in the north wing of the school. The cause of the fire appeared to be from a radiant heat source, possibly a duct heater. Over a period of time, the heat source created a pyrophoric carbon on an isolated portion of the wood roof, which lowers the ignition temperature of wood to the point that it can autoignite at low temperatures.

The Kiwanis Club kicked off the "Silver for a Skate Park" effort this week to raise funds for a skate park in Sweet Home. The club, in conjunction with the City of Sweet Home, hopes to build the park for the city's park system. They will need to raise \$52,000 in three years to be successful.

Residents of the Calapooia Watershed agreed to form a watershed council for the area. Approximately 80 people attended a meeting to discuss the pros and cons of forming a watershed council for the Calapooia River. Meeting moderator Don Hopkins said residents of the Upper Calapooia need to concentrate on protecting their property from erosion. Since the flood of February 1996, Calapooia residents have had to deal with serious erosion damage. Watershed councils can provide a local voice on statewide water issues and even receive government funding.

Legislature's Short Session Ends Early - Sine Die

By Kristy Tallman
Of The New Era

Oregon's State Legislative short session ended on Thursday sine die ahead of its scheduled close on March 10. During their time in session the legislature considered a total of 291 bills. Of those bills 180 were House bills with 111 being Senate bills. The total number of bills passed during this session were 135. Bills that have passed have moved to Governor Tina Kotek's desk for signature.

"Sine die (*adjourned with no appointed date for resumption.*) usually brings a mix of emotions, as the clock has run out to pass some great legislation, but also on some bad legislation. And this year was no different," Jami Cate, R-Lebanon said.

Oregon's Drug Crisis: Passage of HB 4002 and Funding Approved

In a 21-8 vote on Friday, March 2, the Oregon Senate passed House Bill 4002 (HB 4002), garnering bipartisan support. The bill, now awaiting Kotek's decision, proposes penalties of up to six months in jail for possession of small amounts of drugs such as meth or fentanyl.

Additionally, HB 4002 ex-



pands opioid withdrawal treatment access, establishes new addiction services facilities and facilitates harsher penalties for drug dealers. Senate Majority Leader Kate Lieber emphasized the bill's intent to enhance Oregonians' access to necessary treatment.

The bill's approval was widely anticipated following its amendment to address

concerns from republicans and law enforcement. The 51-7 House vote and the subsequent 27-3 Senate vote on a \$211 million funding package aligned with HB 4002 signaled strong legislative support.

"Finally, reforms to Measure 110 will start to take shape, as I intend to sign HB 4002 and the related prevention and treatment investments with-

in the next 30 days," Kotek said. "As governor, my focus is on implementation. My office will work closely with each implementing authority to set expectations, specifically in response to the Criminal Justice Center's Racial Equity Impact Statement, which projected disproportionate impacts to communities of color and the accompanying concerns raised by advocates. HB

4002 will require persistent action and commitment from state and local government to uphold the intent that the legislature put forward: to balance treatment for individuals struggling with addiction and accountability."

Oregon's Housing Crisis: Passage of Senate Bill 1537 and House Bill 4134

A legislative housing package aimed at addressing Oregon's housing crisis by increasing affordable housing units for essential workers such as teachers, nurses and firefighters was approved by the state house and awaits the governor's signature.

The package, consisting of Senate Bill 1537 (SB 1537), Senate Bill 1530 (SB 1530) and House Bill 4134 (HB 4134), marks a significant achievement for Kotek, who prioritized these measures for the 2024 legislative session. Garnering bipartisan backing, the bills will allocate \$376 million towards various initiatives, including bolstering housing production, funding infrastructure projects like roads and land acquisition, and providing support for renters.

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The New Era

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OPINION

Website is Up and Running, Kinda

By Chris Chapman
Of The New Era

The new website is officially in place. We have been working on the development since before July, and it feels good to finally have it come to fruition. But like anything brand new, it comes with its own set of bugs and issues. Most of them are known, but some are surprises.

Now, you are probably asking me, "Why bother if there are already issues?" Well, most of the issues will happen regardless of which website platform we use, and since the old one, while okay for what it was, didn't fit the bill for the expansion we have in store. So we knew we were making a change and would have to face some of these challenges regardless.

Existing Users:

One issue is that your credentials don't pass from one platform to the other. So, if you are an existing user, you need to reset your password. This happens because passwords are stored encrypted, and we do not even have the ability to

decrypt them, nor do we want to. That is your private password; you should control that information, not us. So you, as a user, have to reset it. You can do this when you visit the log-in page or via the "forgot password" section of the interface. There is a prompt to change your password, so if you still need to do so, please do.

Auto-Renewal Users:

Some of you choose the auto-renewal system to process your monthly or annual subscriptions. This is a great way to ensure your subscription doesn't expire. However, the previous website was connected to PayPal, which is limited in its functionality. So, with switching to new website platforms, we also switched to a different payment processor. This allows for a much easier workflow, but it comes with the challenge that anyone who used auto-renewal on the old site no longer has that in place. So, in order to hop back on auto-renewal, you have to log in to your account and then upgrade your subscription status from the "legacy" subscription

to either a monthly or annual subscription.

Print Only Users:

If you are one of our subscribers who has only had print, whether by design or not, you now have an online or digital subscription as well. This will require you to have an email on file, so if you are one of those who fit this bill, don't worry. You aren't required to use your online subscription, but just add an email the next time you renew your subscription via mail. Or you can call us ahead of time. If you don't have an email, that is fine too; we can use your cell number instead.

Odd Balls and Other Errors:

Now, some of you have had random errors, either usernames or emails not working or no emails at all; just some random situations that either came from the transition or were left over from the old system. This, in all honesty, is partially why we made the switch, which I will discuss later. There isn't a solution for those situations other than calling us so we can handle each one

individually. I know it's a pain, especially when breaking news happens, and now you want to log in to read the story and can't, and it's 8 p.m., and the office isn't open. This is why I implore you to get ahead of that situation and get your account squared away. Try changing your password, and make sure you can log in; if not, call us so we can get you situated and back in the game.

Okay, now that the negative stuff is out of the way, it's time for the positive. Part of the reason for the switch is to bring our subscriber database 100% online. The current subscriber system is essentially the same system that was in place back when Scott and Miriam took over. That isn't to say it was terrible, but it has its limitations. So, by bringing it all online, it makes it accessible to staff at any point. That means if you have an issue at 8 p.m. and you happen to send a message on Facebook or an email in, if one of us sees your issue, we can solve the problem quickly. We no longer have to be in the office to manage your subscription. The other benefit to this is user control. Let's say you spend half of the year in Arizona but want to change your address. No problem, log in and change it. Super simple, super easy. Now, you can still call us to change it as well, but now you have the option to control it yourself if you want.

The biggest positive about this system is the added value we have planned for the future. I have talked about archives already, which are partially in the production stage and partially in the planning stage. We have it broken up into multiple phases split by actual newspaper archives and then photo archives. Photo archives are in production; we have acquired most of the hardware required to scan in mass; now, it's just a few smaller pieces and the time. But without going off on a tangent, the new site can expand at any rate. This means we can add things like

archives without too much of an issue. We have more additions planned, but I don't want to spoil the surprises we have in store. So for now, just know it wasn't possible before, and now it is, and it's on its way.

One of the other things you might notice while checking out the new website is the subscription price change. I didn't want to do this, but I knew it would have to happen at some point. It's not a real mystery as to why, inflation eventually hits all markets. Printing is no exception. By upgrading some of the systems in the office, we have actually cut some monthly expenses, but not enough to truly make a dent. I was sent a letter over two months ago stating that our printing costs are going up, effective immediately. We had already squeezed the lemon dry at that point, so we weren't left with any option other than to raise rates. On the flip side, we have simplified them by combining print and digital, and there is no longer a higher rate for snowbirds and those outside Linn County. I don't know what happened with shipping rates, but the cost difference at this point is so negligible that it didn't make sense to develop a completely different system.

I told you when I first took over that I strive for ultimate transparency, and that is what I will continue to go after. The new website opens a lot of doors for us and you. We can finally do some of the things I think are a big part of the modern-day media. I've written it before: we have to reach people where they are, and this new site allows us to do that. I do apologize for the inconvenience of it all; I know it's new, and the transition isn't super clean, but it couldn't ever really be, so we just ripped the bandaid off, and now we can move forward and start expanding our value to you as a reader. Provide you with more information and resources in an efficient and timely manner.

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Sweet Home Man Facing Charges in Florence

By Kristy Tallman
Of The New Era

Phillip Thomas Swartz, 36, of Sweet Home, remains in Lane County Adult Corrections after an arrest on Feb. 20 in Florence. Swartz was arrested for allegedly breaking into a home and holding the female resident against her will in an attempt to rob her.

He was charged with two felonies and various misdemeanors. His felony charges were for first degree burglary and third degree robbery.

On the count of first degree burglary, a Class A felony, the court document states Swartz unlawfully and knowingly entered or remained in an occupied dwelling located at a residence at Tamarack Street in Florence, Ore., with the intent to commit the crime of theft therein.

The State further alleges,

during the commission of the offense the defendant caused or threatened physical injury to the female resident.

On the count of third degree robbery, a Class C felony, the document alleges the defendant, Swartz, unlawfully and knowingly, while in the course of committing or attempting to commit theft, and with intent of preventing and overcoming resistance to defendant's taking of property and or retention of the property immediately after the taking, used or threatened the immediate use of physical force upon a female resident.

Swartz also faces various Class A misdemeanor charges in the case. Those charges include menacing, first degree criminal trespass, fourth degree assault and second degree theft.

According to court reports, a charge of second degree kidnapping was also pursued at the onset by Lane County District Attorney Patty Perlow.

"When we first received the police reports, information was filed that included a kidnapping in the second degree charge," she said. "After the grand jury heard the case, the Indictment was returned without the kidnapping charge based upon the evidence presented."

Florence Police Department was unavailable for comment.

"I can't comment on the case, other than procedure, until it is disposed," Perlow said of the case moving forward.

Swartz is being held on \$175,000 bail. His next court appearance is April 18 at 9:30 a.m. at the Lane County Circuit Court.

Gary Coomer Sentenced to 50 Years for Child Sexual Abuse

By Kristy Tallman
Of The New Era

Gary Coomer, a resident of Sweet Home, has been sentenced to 50 years in prison for the sexual abuse of his 4 and 8 year-old daughters. According to court documents, Coomer's absence during his initial sentencing on Feb. 12 led to a warrant for his arrest. He was later apprehended on Feb. 22 on Horseshoe Loop in Lebanon, as confirmed by the Linn County Sheriff's Office.

Despite his claims of innocence, a jury found Coomer guilty. Deputy District Attorney Conor McCahill emphasized the severity of the crimes against Coomer's daughters, advocating for individual justice for each

victim. The State recommended a 50-year sentence under Jessica's Law, which the court accepted.

"Gary Coomer was the father of these two girls," McCahill stated during the court proceedings. "He had a duty to protect them, keep them safe, and show them love. Instead, he exploited his own children to satisfy his own sexual desires."

McCahill underscored the significance of recognizing each girl as a separate victim subjected to distinct crimes, urging the court to administer separate justice accordingly.

Following the jury's decision, Coomer was sentenced to imprisonment for the remainder of his life.



Gary Coomer of Sweet Home will spend the rest of his life behind bars after being convicted of raping his young daughters.

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PROTEST

From page 1

bing more timber," Johnson asserted.

Johnson particularly took issue with the board's perceived lack of concern and dismissiveness towards dissenting voices

"The state forester is recommending the most radical approach," she said. "He could have dialed it back 100,000 acres, this is going to have long term negative ramifications on the state of Oregon."

"The most insulting part is that [a few] people are deciding timber policy in the state of Oregon. What happened to the votes and things like that?"

Johnson highlighted the disregard for public feedback, stating, "They listened to 800 people and incorporated nearly none of the recommendations from the people that spoke against this."

Despite the possibility of changes, Johnson expressed skepticism, suggesting that the decision had been predetermined.

"Do you expect that there will be any changes? Do you think they're gonna ram this through today?" Johnson asked, responding to her own question. "The decision was made ages ago," she said.

Johnson criticized the lack of consideration for the human cost of forestry decisions, calling for accountability and empathy.

"They should [be ashamed]...They're very anti-human," Johnson said, stating further her frustrations.

In the final vote, Board Chair Jim Kelly, Ben Deumling, Chandra Ferrari, and Brenda McComb all voted in favor of approving the Habitat Conservation Plan. Joe Justice, Karla Chambers, and Liz Agpaoa voted against it.

Leading up to the final vote, Justice, Chambers, and Agpaoa each put forward motions that would have delayed the approval. The motions called for additional study or finding ways to increase the harvest level, but all three failed along the same lines.

Regarding the vote, Tasha Web, of Sweet Home and secretary for the board, for Oregon Natural Resource Industries (ONRI) said, "I'm a little broken today. And a lot exhausted. A lot rattled. I've put in everything humanly possible to help protect our natural resource industries for five years, every day. That's all I've done for five years. And today was a monumental loss."

Web said, "Our team has done everything thinkable

and beyond to get word out on the HCP. To educate. To fight it. To get every elected person we could, to stand against it. But to keep taking loss after loss after loss after loss. To see farmers' tears and loggers' tears and miners' tears. To watch people sell off and leave and give up and close down and give up and give up and give up....I'm just a little broken today"

ONRI, who organized the protest, advocates for the livelihoods of working individuals and families reliant on natural resource sectors such as forestry, logging, ranching, trucking, mining, fishing, and farming. This encompasses both rural and urban communities.

Web wasn't just making statements when she spoke of folks packing up and leaving town over the restrictions loggers are continually finding themselves faced with.

McKenzie Dukes, who drove from Idaho to join the protest, stated, "I came from Idaho to stand with ONRI today. I wish Oregon would change, so that one day my wife and I could return to the state we love, that we were forced out of due to the tyranny."

Continuing he said, "Oregon has to stop with this one way environmentalist, extreme left, liberal ruling of their constituents. The Legislature is not in the best interest of the people. They do not allow people to vote on important issues. They do not care what the people think, and they often think it is best that they decide the vote."

Dukes said by the ODF deciding the fate of loggers it took the vote and the voice from the people. He said, "This is not how a constitutional republic is meant to be governed. The legislature votes against what their constituents want and they pass laws that are unconstitutional."

"They pass regulations and laws that destroy the very things that make Oregon great. They take hard working rural Oregonians' livelihoods away, their hobbies and generational businesses, to cater to extreme environmental and special interest groups with all of their actions ending in catastrophic destruction of state natural resources and jobs."

Expressing his disappointment in the board's decision to move the HCP forward for federal review, Dukes said, "No more tyranny in Oregon. Restore the people's voice and their vote. Bring back the powerhouse of Oregon Natural Resources and restore Oregon to the most beautiful and prosperous state in the



Photo by Chelly Bouferrache
Former gubernatorial candidate Betsy Johnson was a key speaker at the ODF board meeting on Mar. 7. She advocated against the proposal of the Habitat Conservation Plan.



Photo by Chelly Bouferrache
Environmentalists spoke in favor of the Habitat Conservation Plan stating it wasn't going far enough to protect wildlife.

Pacific northwest! We The People have the power. The power is in numbers. Come together for Oregon and Fight back!"

The proposed plan would scale back logging operations to an estimated 185 million board feet of timber on western Oregon state forests, a decrease from the approximately 225 million board feet harvested over the past decade.

Numerous members of the public were on hand to express concerns about the potential economic repercussions, fearing further closures of sawmills and job losses while those whose lives hinged on the board's decision overflowed the meeting room into a standing room only side room where they stood watching as their

fate unfolded.

Board members, who have deliberated over the plan for years, grappled with the implications of their decision. Ben Deumling, who manages Zena Forest in the Willamette Valley and voted in favor of the HCP, acknowledged the gravity of the action, lamenting the absence of a preferable alternative.

Chair Jim Kelly, also supporting the HCP, underscored the board's obligation to abide by the Endangered Species Act, recognizing the legitimacy of arguments from both sides while emphasizing the necessity of considering the broader implications.

The meeting commenced with Oregon State Forester Cal Mukumoto, head of the Oregon Department of Forestry, advocating for the

board's endorsement of the HCP. Mukumoto highlighted the plan's significance in providing a more stable operational environment, devoid of legal entanglements and lawsuits.

Previous to the vote, Governor Tina Kotek addressed the Board in a letter dated Mar. 5, 2024, acknowledging the complexity of the decision-making process and commending the Board members for their dedication. She wrote, "This is certainly a difficult week for each of you serving on the Board as you decide whether the State Forester should finalize and submit the proposed HCP for Oregon's west-side forests."

Kotek's letter highlighted

See Protest, Page 16

Chamber Hosts 80th Annual Awards Banquet

By Kristy Tallman
Of The New Era

The Chamber of Commerce (COC) hosted their 80th Annual Awards Banquet on Saturday evening, handing out Chamber Awards in a star-studded diamond and decades themed dinner at the Boys and Girls club.

Lagea Mull, Executive Director of the COC hosted the event with the help of emcee Don Knight, pastor of Sweet Home LifePoint, who always brings an ounce or more of humor to the podium. Mull believes the event was a great success as tables were filled with attendees, the food was hot and not as costly as some of the other chamber events which were transpiring in other towns. She was pleased everyone seemed to be having a great time.

Angila Tack Food Service catered the event in grand style with a dazzling array of dishes meant to satisfy all tastes while Richard Hillman Construction provided the bar. There was a photo-booth sponsored by Krake Home Sales and awards were sponsored by Loan Depot and Jolene Mullenix.

The room was abuzz as the Chamber awards began to be announced by Knight and presented by Mull.

This year's Curb Appeal award was presented to Lilies and Lovelies for enhancing the physical and social appeal of Sweet Home with vibrant colors and welcoming signs among many other things.

Knight said, "Tonight we acknowledge a business that has transformed a piece of our town into a visual testament to beauty and community pride, with vibrant colors, welcoming signs and a renovation that speaks volumes for our collective identity."

The Junior First Citizen, which is given to recipients 40 and under who have served the community for five or more years, was given to Tomas and Amber Rosa who Knight said, "Their dedication to our youth and our community sets them apart. From the field to the classrooms, to our community gatherings and beyond, their combined efforts that enrich lives and shape the future of Sweet Home."

He continued, "They embody the spirit of the Junior Citizen award not just through their individual efforts but in their combined efforts to uplift Sweet Home."

The First Citizen's Award, which is given to a citizen who has shown consistent dedica-

tion to various areas of the community, went to Travis Miner this year. Miner, Knight said, quietly and profoundly impacted lives around him.

Knight cited Miner's coaching and teaching efforts, ensuring safety and extending help to those in need. He further said Miner's dedication went above and beyond the call of duty.

"This year's First Citizen award is bestowed upon someone who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to our community," Knight said, "both in their professional role and their countless personal endeavors."

The Organization of the Year was awarded to the Elks Lodge for their significant impact on the community through services and community involvement.

"Tonight we celebrate an organization that has served as a pillar of support services and unity in our community," said Knight while he recognized the 70 years the Elks Lodge has been present in the community. "This group has profoundly impacted Sweet Home, their benevolence and volunteerism has enriched our community."

Knight continued, "Through events that mark the milestones of our lives to the unwavering commitment, to supporting youth, patriotism and those less fortunate."

The COC named the Sweet Home Medical Center as their Business of the Year for their commitment to healthcare and wellness which was demonstrated through their state-of-the-art facility and generous contributions to nonprofits.

For Distinguished Service, an award that is given to those 55 and over, the chamber named Gina Riley for her dedication to community service.

"Tonight we honor an individual whose life has been a testament to unwavering commitment to their love for Sweet Home," said Knight. "This individual embodies the essence of community service contributing not just her time but her heart, improving the lives of those around them."

Mayor Susan Coleman also bestowed awards at the event and tangled words with Knight when he stepped up ahead of her but she conceded, "It was really fun last week to emcee the Gala with Donald, he's a character, and I appreciate his commitment to this community."



Photo by Kristy Tallman

Lagea Mull left, awards Gina Riley right, the Distinguished Service award at the 80th Annual COC Awards Banquet held Saturday evening.

Coleman said choosing the award recipients was difficult and wanted the audience to know how much she appreciated the efforts of all the nominees.

She said, "Even beyond the spotlight of recognition, there are many unsung heroes in this room tonight that will not receive an award. It doesn't mean you haven't done great things and that your impact hasn't been felt."

Angela Clay for her work with the city and her volunteerism. She was also named for her humanitarian efforts and the support she provides to others. She was instrumental in the restoration of Sankey Park. Also named by the Mayor for the Merit Award was Milt Moran for his impact on the community.

"We honor the remarkable contributions of Milt Moran," said Coleman, "whose selfless dedication during times of crisis, such as the Wiley Creek fire, epitomizes the very essence of community resilience. His swift action and unwavering leadership were instrumental in safeguarding our community and ensuring the safety of our residents. He is well deserving of the Merit award."

The Mona Waibel Hero Awards were presented by Bob and Dawn Dalton. These awards are considered the President's club award and are based on volunteerism.

Dalton said, "They're what I call the heartbeat of our community when I think about volunteerism. They



Photo by Kristy Tallman

Bob Dalton left, awards one of two awards to Travis Miner right, at the 80th Annual COC Awards Banquet. He was awarded the Presidential VIP Mona Waibel Hero Award and the First Citizen Award.

are the pulse that gives life to our community."

Recipients of the award were Ashley Stewart, Travis Miner, Matthew Betchel and Sophia Sullens. And Stewart was named for her humanitarian efforts among her fellow neighbors. The Daltons spoke of how she has volunteered at the Jamboree for 11 years, served on the beautification board for five years and can be seen planting flowers through downtown.

Of Betchel they spoke of his enlistment in the National Guard, his work as an Emergency Medical Technician and now how he works for the city. Betchel also volunteers three days a week at the food pantry and helps serve the com-

munity meals and 'sunshine'. Betchel worked with Clinton Gregg, who were instrumental in starting the Earth Day Clean-up which they hope will become a yearly event.

Sullens is one of the youngest recipients of the Mona Waibel Hero awards; she is just 10 years old. Sophia was recognized for her work with her church and she was named a Virtue Ambassador for her acts of service at Hawthorne Elementary School. Sophia has volunteered at the Jamboree for years and she is also a three sport athlete participating in soccer, swimming and track. During Christmas she also helped fill 50 gift boxes of food for needy families.

LEGISLATURE

From page 5

Kotek praised the passage of the two bills.

"Oregon will now have more tools to meet the urgent demand for all types of housing, in all parts of the state," she said. "Senate Bill 1537 will help stabilize housing costs by increasing housing production through cutting red tape in permitting processes, establishing some of the strongest affordability standards for new construction in the country, and other critical reforms. Combined with investments in Senate Bill 1530, I look forward to ensuring that every dollar advances housing production."

Kotek's administration set an ambitious statewide housing production goal of 36,000 new units annually, surpassing the previous rate of approximately 22,000 units. Building upon prior funding efforts, this latest package includes a \$75 million revolving loan fund to assist cities in expanding affordable housing options. It introduces a program enabling local governments to offer interest-free loans for moderate and affordable housing projects, empowering jurisdictions to select and fund local developments.

The bills allocate funds across various initiatives, including \$131 million for housing and homelessness projects like Project Turnkey, aimed at repurposing hotels into emergency housing. An additional \$123.5 million supports counties in acquiring land and developing properties for housing production.

Furthermore, \$24.5 million has been earmarked for emergency air conditioning and air filter provisions, warming and cooling shelters, and home energy efficiency improvements.

While initial discussions regarding the housing package included exemptions allowing cities to circumvent certain state land-use laws, ultimately the bills passed with bipartisan backing, marking a significant step towards addressing Oregon's housing challenges.

Campaign Contributions Passage of House Bill 4024

In an historic vote that could significantly alter campaign practices within the state, the Senate easily passed a bill aimed at capping political contributions.

Campaign finance reform is on the horizon for Oregon in 2027 pending Kotek's approval of the Senate's passage of House Bill 4024 (HB 4024) on Wednesday.

The House overwhelmingly supported the bill with a 52-5 vote, while the Senate endorsed it with a 22-6 vote.

With a decisive vote, senators forwarded HB 4024 to Kotek, who has signaled her intent to sign it into law.

"This session also marks the historical passage of campaign finance reform with strong bipartisan support," Kotek said. "I applaud all those who came to the table to find compromise and deliver a policy that will strengthen transparency and confidence in Oregon's elections. I want to thank legislative leadership for their commitment and urgency in getting it done this session."

Upon full enactment, the legislation will establish limitations on contributions from individuals, businesses, labor organizations and other entities to candidates. These limitations will vary, contingent upon the entity making the contributions.

Fundamentally, the bill imposes a cap of \$3,300 on individual contributions, mirroring federal restrictions. However, committees affiliated with labor unions and non-profit organizations associated with business and advocacy groups would be subject to significantly higher limits.

Furthermore, the bill introduces a novel mechanism for mandating the disclosure of "independent expenditures," referring to funds expended in support of a candidate without the candidate's awareness or consent. The U.S. Supreme Court has affirmed that such expenditures constitute protected free speech and cannot be restricted.

"Book Ban" Bill - Fails To Pass Senate

Senate Bill 1583 (SB 1583), aiming to prevent the removal of library books based on

the perspective or authorship related to protected classes faced opposition and ultimately failed to advance to the senate.

"One of the more notable casualties of the clock running out was SB 1583, which would have limited our elected school boards' ability to decide what course materials and even library books are appropriate and inappropriate for students," Cate said. "This is a conversation that a lot of people feel has been overblown by conservatives and is discriminatory in nature, but some of the materials being found in some classrooms is truly beyond the pale to show to young school kids, and I'm glad our school boards, who are held accountable by local parents, will still retain the local control to evaluate what is most appropriate for our students."

Wildfire Protections and Property Tax Proposals

Three measures aimed at increasing funding for wildfires this legislative session failed to pass, but a bill concerning protection for wildfire survivors' settlements will go to Kotek's desk. This session sought to address gaps in wildfire funding through bills addressing various aspects of wildfire prevention and response, including landowner fees, home protection and survivor compensation.

The legislature unanimously passed two bills this week aimed at providing financial assistance to survivors of wildfires. Of the proposed bills, only Senate Bill 1520 (SB 1520) was successful, ensuring that wildfire survivors are not taxed on compensation and settlements.

"One of the greatest victories of the session, passing with just a day to spare, was some long overdue tax relief for wildfire victims. The state and counties should not get more in taxes from victims because of the fire, and SB 1545 and SB 1520 (also HB 4007) achieve that," Cate said.

"There was an amazing team working on these concepts, and to have both pass unanimously speaks volumes at how much this tax relief was the right thing to do for victims. We still have a long way to go to make sure every victim who wants to rebuild has that opportunity, but little by little, we're making it more of a reality, and achieving the very unpopular thing for the legislature's majority of passing actual tax relief. And that makes me very happy."

The first bill, SB 1520, sponsored by Sen. Brian Boquist, I-Dallas, establishes a tax exemption for awards resulting from lawsuits related to

wildfires. This move addresses concerns that survivors were receiving only a fraction of their lawsuit payouts due to state and federal tax laws. The legislation ensures that survivors will not be subject to state taxes on any awards or judgments. Boquist hailed the bill as a bipartisan effort to offer financial relief to wildfire victims, particularly those affected by the 2020 Labor Day wildfires, which resulted in numerous lawsuits and settlements.

The second bill, SB 1545, sponsored by Cate and Sen. Fred Girod, R-Stayton, focuses on reducing property taxes for homeowners rebuilding their homes after the 2020 wildfires. This legislation allows counties to grant property tax breaks to homeowners who are reconstructing homes lost in the wildfires. Homeowners will be able to pay property taxes based on pre-fire assessed values, easing the financial burden of rebuilding.

Both bills reflect bipartisan efforts to support wildfire survivors in their recovery efforts. They now await Kotek's signature to become law.

The failed proposals, which were a response to the 40% cut in funding to state fire agencies in 2023, aimed to reduce landowner fees and secure additional funding from taxpayers or the timber industry. Democratic lawmakers were divided on whether funding should come from all taxpayers or predominantly from private property and business owners who benefit from state protection of natural resources.

Kotek supported a bill to increase the timber harvest tax and lower wildfire protection fees for ranch and timber landowners, contingent on a long-term funding solution by 2025. However, the bill was shelved due to last-minute fiscal concerns.

Additionally, two bills proposing ballot measures to raise property taxes or reinstate a severance tax on timber harvests for wildfire funding were unsuccessful. One remaining proposal suggests studying the potential reinstatement of a severance tax, but faced opposition from the timber industry.

Last Day Brings More Changes

In a pivotal moment during the 2024 legislative session, a significant shift in leadership took place.

Representative Rayfield, D-Corvallis, opted to step down from the position of speaker to concentrate on a candidacy for attorney general. This decision opened the pathway for representative Julie Fahey, D-Eugene,

to be elected as the incoming House Speaker.

Announced during this transition was the retirement of representative Paul Holvey, a long-standing Eugene democrat who has been a prominent figure in the state legislature for two decades. Holvey, despite facing a recall attempt last fall, emerged with overwhelming support.

The session also witnessed the departure of several senators, with some exits not being by choice.

The Oregon Supreme Court's ruling in early February had determined that 10 republican lawmakers were ineligible for reelection. This occurred due to their refusal to attend Senate floor sessions for six weeks the previous year. It was reiterated by the federal court on March 6.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit issued an updated federal case filing regarding a dispute involving three state senators, Sens. Brian Boquist, Cedric Hayden and Dennis Linthicum, who stated they were exercising their first amendment rights by partaking in the walkout.

In the filing, the court reiterated the characterization of freedom of speech under the First Amendment as a privilege or immunity, rather than a right. The case centered on a federal injunction sought by the senators against Oregon Senate President Rob Wagner and Oregon Secretary of State LaVonne Griffin-Valade to prevent their disqualification for reelection due to legislative absences.

The Ninth Circuit upheld a lower court ruling denying the senators' injunction, stating that legislative walkouts to deny a quorum are not protected under the First Amendment.

Among those affected, senators Knopp, Art Robinson of Cave Junction, Dennis Linthicum of Beatty, Bill Hansell of Athena, Lynn Findley of Vale, and Brian Boquist of Dallas are concluding their legislative tenure. Additionally, four other republicans will vacate their seats as their terms expire.

No Change to Daylight Saving Time

The push to end daylight saving time in Oregon failed to reach the governor's desk this session. Despite narrowly passing the Senate, the measure that would have put the state on permanent standard time ironically ran out of time to become law due to the end of the 2024 short session.

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Despite Losses, Boys Basketball Had Fun and Growth

By Sarah Brown
Of The New Era

The boys basketball team held a brief awards banquet at the high school on Wednesday, March 6.

Ethan Delibertis took home Defensive Player of the Year, while Colin Nicholson was named Most Valuable Player. Josh Aker was given the Hustle Award, Connor Pace was honored for Sportsmanship and Nathan Aker took home the Free Throw Award.

"The reality of this year is we did not win as many games as I would have liked or expected from our varsity team this year, but that does not change how much fun we had and how much growth we showed on and off the court," Coach Drew Emmert told The New Era.

He highlighted the few big wins they took home this season, including Lebanon at home and Stayton on the road. The boys team was also awarded Academic All-State for their grade point average (fifth in state).

"I am excited about the direction this program is going," he said. "We had the



Photo provided by Amber Nicholson

Boys basketball varsity letter winners Kellen Hartsook, Gavin Tyler, Kaeson Walker, Bradyn McClure, Conner Pace, Josh Aker, Ethan Delibertis, Jason Funk, William Jewell, Jon Holly, Vegas Mauer, Colin Nicholson, Nathan Aker, Kason Forum.

freshman class spread out between all three teams and they competed and helped all three teams win games. We also had multiple sophomores take huge steps this year, and we have a few juniors who are coming back and going to be great leaders."

Varsity third-year letter winners were Nathan Aker, Ethan Delibertis, Jon Holly,

Will Jewell, Vegas Mauer and Colin Nicholson. Second-year letters were Josh Aker, Kason Forum and Connor Pace. First year winners included Jason Funk, Kellen Hartsook, Gavin Tyler, Bradyn McClure and Kaeson Walker.

All-league honorable mentions went to Ethan Delibertis, Colin Nicholson and Vegas Mauer.

dangers of unprocessed grief, and how to support grieving people as Ed Skipper weaves his personal story of loss into the presentation.

Annual Sweet Home Rock and Mineral Show

The 74th Annual Sweet Home Rock and Mineral Show will be held 10 a.m to 5 p.m March 30th & 31st locat-

ed at the Sweet Home High School Activity Gym. Admission \$1 Kids 12 and under FREE when accompanied by an adult; Theme: "A Pirate's Treasure Chest." Rough rock, display specimens, minerals, fossils, demonstrations, door prizes. The event will include displays, demonstrations, vendors, raffles and food available for purchase.

REMAINS FOUND

From page 1

an hour later on Highway 20 near milepost 33, just east of the intersection of Santiam Highway and Quartzville Road. It had been crashed and left abandoned, with Kinsey's backpack left inside.

More than a year later, in April 2021, a new case officer took over Kinsey's missing person case and, on Aug. 9, 2021, Linn County Search and Rescue conducted a search around Kinsey's last known location, but no further leads were found. A report indicated Kinsey's last known location was about a mile east of where the truck was located more than a year earlier, but it's unclear how that location was determined.

Three Type 2 search assignments were requested. This would be a grid search wherein searchers space out at approximately double-arm intervals and slowly traverse the terrain in front of them.

• Conduct a five-person Type 2 search of the area to the north of Santiam

Highway around Kinsey's last known position. The terrain was described as a near-vertical drop from the highway down several hundred feet to Foster Lake and was covered with heavy trees and undergrowth. The search was to be conducted using high-angle rope equipment with specially-trained rope rescue SAR members. The SAR members were picked up at the water's edge and dropped back off at the starting point for another pass.

• Conduct a Type 2 search with 11 rescuers along the south side of Santiam Highway from the last known position to Cascade Timber Consulting Company road, South Santiam 200.

• Conduct a Type 2 search with 11 rescuers along the south of Santiam Highway from the South Santiam 200 road, east approximately 100 yards.

Furthermore, Linn County Sheriff's Office conducted multiple flights over the search areas using a drone.

This story will be updated as more information is obtained.

PUBLIC SAFETY

From page 2

to comply on an original charge for second degree disorderly conduct.

4:30 p.m - Karen Davenport, 59, was cited for driving while suspended. Scott Heinz, 61, was cited for a warrant.

Mar. 9

3:50 p.m - Jason Avery, 31, was cited for driving while suspended, driving uninsured and warrants. Annie Avery, 30, was cited for a warrant.

11:13 p.m - Randy Fowler, 55, of Eugene, was arrested for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving.

Mar. 10

10:04 a.m - James Reynolds, 39, was arrested for contempt of court, a probation violation and a warrant.

2:26 p.m - Travis Sells, 34, was cited for driving while suspended.

3:06 p.m - Jaycee McClurg, 36, was cited for driving while suspended and failure to carry insurance.

LOCAL EVENTS

From page 2

Karaoke Party

Hangry Solution will be hosting a karaoke party March 16 from 7:30-11 p.m. For more information contact 541.619.3568.

Breast Cancer Support Group

Samaritan Health will be hosting a virtual breast cancer support group 5:30-7 on Mar. 18. The breast cancer support group is a place to share hopes, fears and experiences for anyone diagnosed with breast cancer. Support groups can help cope with the emotional aspect of cancer by providing a safe place to share feelings and challenges. They foster a sense of community for those living with a cancer diagnosis and offer opportunities to learn from others. This support group will meet virtually using Zoom for health care. Please call Kathy Nepper, RN, 541-768-2376 or Deb Sikich, RN, 541-768-2190 to register.

Good Grief Workshop

There will be a good grief workshop March 18 from 2-3:30 p.m. at the Lebanon Senior Center. Learn how to grieve in a healthy way, the



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REAL ESTATE

860 Sugarberry Ln., Lebanon; one-story residence, 1104 sq. ft., three-bedroom, one-bath built in 1994; 0.16 acres; \$310,000.

1470 Westwood Ln., Sweet Home; one-story residence, 1518 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 1959; 0.17 acres; \$344,000.

937 31st Ct., Sweet Home; one-story residence, 1430 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 1992; 0.26 acres; \$370,000.

321 Boulder Ridge Dr., Sweet Home; one-story residence, 1867 sq. ft., four-bedroom, two-bath built in 2015; 0.24 acres; \$511,560.

1064 North River Dr., Sweet Home; triple-wide mobile home 2400 sq. ft., three-bedroom, three-bath built in 2006; 0.75 acres; \$464,720.

41630 Cut Off Dr., Lebanon; double-wide mobile home 1296 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 1998; 20.98 acres; \$654,900.

3461 Hawk Arrow Dr., Lebanon; one-story residence, with attic 1953 sq. ft., five-bedroom, two-bath built in 2014; 0.14 acres; \$420,000.

132 Weldwood Dr., Lebanon; one-story residence, 781 sq. ft., one-bedroom, one-bath built in 2005; \$179,900.

28140 Ridgeway Rd., Sweet Home; two-story residence, 3144 sq. ft., four-bedroom, two-bath built in 1977; 3.18 acres; \$585,000.

870 Oak Terr., Sweet Home; no additional details listed; 0.69 acres; \$600,000.

40355 Holley Heights Ln., Sweet Home; one-story residence, 936 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 1935; 0.35 acres; \$139,234.

138 Weldwood Dr., Lebanon; one-story residence, 781 sq. ft., one-bedroom, one-bath built in 2005; \$201,000.

36310 Hillside Ln., Lebanon; one-story residence, with basement 1952 sq. ft.,

five-bedroom, two and a half-bath built in 1981; 1.08 acres; \$555,000.

1262 Main St., Sweet Home; no additional details listed; 0.07 acres; \$250,000.

171 Jennings St., Lebanon; one-story residence, with attic 1473 sq. ft., four-bedroom, one and a half-bath built in 1947; 0.16 acres; \$318,300.

2409 Cascade Dr., Lebanon; two-story residence, 800 sq. ft., no additional details listed; 2021; 1 acres; \$465,000.

340 Blakely Ave., Brownsville; two story residence, 2040 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two and a half-bath built in 1997; 0.25 acres; \$453,000.

2385 Stoltz Hill Rd., Lebanon; one-story residence, 1208 sq. ft., two-bedroom, one-bath built in 1952; 0.53 acres; \$230,000.

2790 Acorn St., Lebanon; one-story residence, with attic 1886 sq. ft., four-bedroom, one and a half-bath built in 1948; 0.24 acres; \$352,000.

40080 Highway 228, Sweet Home; one-story residence, 893 sq. ft., two-bedroom, one-bath built in 1930; 1.24 acres; \$75,000.

33005 Berlin Rd., Lebanon; no additional details listed; 1.19 acres; \$229,000.

344 Russell St., Lebanon; one-story residence, 1260 sq. ft., two-bedroom, one-

bath built in 1963; 0.17 acres; \$125,000.

370 Elmore St., Lebanon; no additional details listed; 0.25 acres; \$360,000.

810 Sugarberry Ln., Lebanon; one-story residence, 1072 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 2003; 0.15 acres; \$350,000

1420 Sunset Ln., Sweet Home; one-story residence, 1014 sq. ft., three-bedroom, one-bath built in 1968; 0.17 acres; \$295,000.

913 6th Ave., Sweet Home; one-story residence, 919 sq. ft., two-bedroom, one-bath built in 1946; 0.11 acres; \$292,000.

1859 Ulex St., Sweet Home; MS Double wide 1296 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 1994; 0.32 acres; \$275,000.

165 Airport Rd., Lebanon; one-story residence, with attic 1201 sq. ft., two-bedroom, one-bath built in 1947; 0.19 acres; \$313,300.

865 Glen Oak Dr., Lebanon; one-story residence, 2100 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 1995; 0.32 acres; \$415,000.

788 Cheadle Lake Ct., Lebanon; one-story residence, 1402 sq. ft., three-bedroom, two-bath built in 2023; 0.18 acres; \$403,999.

1020 Airport Rd., Lebanon; one-story residence, with attic 2104 sq. ft., four-bedroom, two and a half-bath built in 1947; 0.16 acres; \$235,000.



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Swim Coaches: Every Swimmer Saw Improvement From Hard Work

By Sarah Brown
Of The New Era

Swim coaches praised all the hard work their swimmers invested over the course of the season while passing out honors during the awards banquet on Thursday, March 7.

“Every single person improved, which is not easy to do, but they all did,” Coach A. Jay Bronson said before handing out gifts that included trading cards of the teams.

Freshman Lexi Rundell was on two state relay teams, while freshman Austyn Hogan also participated on a relay team. Sophomore Andrew Tolman went essentially from 10th place in districts last year to 10th place in state this year.

“That was kinda cool to see,” Bronson said. “Our usual suspects of our juniors and seniors we expected to do well, but they did better at state than what we thought.”

At the banquet, Timber Nobles and Tolman earned the Most Improved award, while Hogan and Rundell were awarded Underclassman of the Year. The swim teams’ Most Valuable honor went to Blake Arthur and Kirsten Sautel, and a special award, Best Teammate, was given to Rylee Markell. Sautel was also named swimmer of the meet for state, which earned her a special hockey-style jersey.

Coach Mark Cirkosz said he was beyond proud of the swimmers who were rewarded for their hard work by seeing improved personal records (PRs).

Arthur “went out in style” as a senior when on the first day of districts he PR’d, then did it again the next day. Then at state, he PR’d on the first day,



Photo by Sarah Brown

The 2024 swim team poses for a group photo after receiving their awards at a banquet held on March 7.

and PR’d one last time on the second day. Cirkosz said the boys were “on a rampage” at districts, destroying the competition, and the girls “took a punch” on the first day, but rallied “like I’ve never seen,” destroying the competition.

The coaches’ passion for their teams could be seen as they cheered them on and exchanged fist bumps, he added.

“You made it exciting, you made it fun,” Cirkosz said.

Bronson shared each swimmer’s contribution that helped get the teams to the top in districts and state, and their personal efforts to improve their own times. Some highlights included Noble’s determined effort to go from a 10:15 in the 500 freestyle to a 6:58 near the end of the season, Sautel at state in the 100 breaststroke cutting her time from last year’s 1:08:02 to 1:06 this year and “smoking the rest of the competition,” and Emerson Martineau’s im-

provement in diving.

“The hardest thing is to change that body mechanic to make sure that you can adapt and make sure that you are streamlined in the water,” Bronson said.

It took Martineau two seasons to make the perfect dive and was able to improve her time by over five seconds in the 100 freestyle.

Then there was Tolman, who landed 11th place at districts last year with 1:09, and this year made it to 10th at



Photo by Sarah Brown

Coach A. Jay Bronson, at right, hands Andrew Tolman an award for the All Districts awards.

state with 1:04:01. Perhaps somewhat entertaining to Bronson was watching an unofficial competition Peyton Markell had for herself against Tolman. Bronson said she worked hard to beat Tolman’s numbers, and on the second day at state she “broke the barrier” with 1:03:09.

Bronson’s goals at the start of the season were to get an 11th straight district title from the girls along with a second or first place at state,

and “to take it all for the boys” in districts with a top four finish at state.

The girls did win first place for districts and the boys won for the first time in seven years. At state, the boys earned fifth place while girls took home third.

“We wanted to come home with hardware, and that’s top four, so we were happy with that. We always want more, but they did a good job,” Bronson said. “Overall a great year, great season.”

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Public Notices

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF LINN

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF CHARLENE GALE MILLER, Deceased. Case No. 24PB01744 NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

Notice is hereby given that Julie Spencer has been appointed and has qualified as the personal representative of the estate. All persons having claims against the estate are hereby required to present their claims, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice, as stated below, to the personal representative at: 1275 Main Street or P. O. Box 486, Sweet Home, Oregon 97386, or the claims may be barred. All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings in this estate may obtain additional information from the records of the Court, the personal representative, or the attorney for the personal representative. Dated and first published: March 13, 2024

Personal Representative Julie Spencer
Attorney for Personal Representative Robert Snyder
Attorney at Law
541-367-5191
(Mar 13 - Mar 27)

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Linn Probate Department Case no. 24PB02123

Notice to Interested Persons

In the Matter of the Estate of Monte Douglas James, Deceased. Notice is hereby given that Alyxandra B. James has been appointed as the Personal Representative of the above estate. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them to the undersigned Personal Representative in care of the undersigned attorney at: P.O. Box 16520, Portland, OR 97292, within 4 months after the date of first publication of this notice, as stated below, or such claims may be barred.

All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings in this estate may obtain additional information from the records of the Court, the Personal Representative, or the attorney for the Personal Representative. Dated and first published March 13, 2024.

Alyxandra B. James, Personal Representative
Ekua A. Hackman, OSB# 195793
The Commons Law Center
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Photo Courtesy of Steve Thorpe

Wrestling award winners from left to right: David Steagall, Colton Bennett, Bailey Chafin, Alyssa Peterson, Amelia Sullens, Lydia Wright, Alizeah Weikel, Kaylene Zajic, Riley Watkins, Kyle Sieminski, Jesse Landtroop, Ashton Swanson, Luke Rosa.

Wrestlers Close Out Season with Awards Banquet

By Sarah Brown
Of The New Era

Ending the season with a robust 54 wrestlers on the high school boys and girls teams, Coach Steve Thorpe handed out awards to top achievers, workhorses and extra-mile parents at a banquet on Sunday, March 10.

About 300 attended the banquet, which Thorpe likes to say is a special casual-formal annual event.

"We honor our seniors as our guest of honor," he said. "There's a lot of emotion involved. We preach about having a wrestling family, and one of the things families do is they eat together."

Indeed, he's been coaching some of the kids since Mat Club, but Thorpe's roots can go as far back to some of his athletes' parents, as well.

Looking back on the wrestling season, Thorpe can be proud of his team for continuing to capture state titles. Amidst capturing the 4A state championship title, Thorpe highlighted senior Kyle Sieminski, who became Sweet Home's first-ever four-time state champion, and the 50th in the history of wrestling in the state of Oregon.

"That's just quite an accomplishment," he said. "He worked very, very hard to get what he got."

Both Sieminski and Ashton Swanson, who won his first state title, pinned their way through the state tour-

namment.

"Nobody went the distance with them," Thorpe said. "That's a pretty dominating force. In the boys we placed 13, which is a ton of kids to place at a state tournament."

Thorpe also noted freshman Jesse Landtroop, who had the opportunity to "avenge a loss" he took at the Oregon Classic when he beat the same grappler in the finals on his way to winning a state title. Then there was sophomore Bailey Chafin who, despite a torn labrum, wrestled her way through the tournament to win her second state title.

"We put five kids in the finals of the boys tournament, and we came away with three champions and two runner-ups. In the women's tournament, we didn't get what we wanted, but we put two women in the finals; Bailey Chafin won her second state title and Riley Watkins got second."

At the banquet, Landtroop and Alizeah Weikel were named Rookie of the Year, while Colton Bennett and Amelia Sullens earned Most Improved. The Iron Award, so named for those who "kind of fight through injury or adversity and still achieve success," was awarded to Chafin and David Steagall.

For those who "show up every day and are the most

consistent and hardest working," Luke Rosa and Lydia Wright were awarded the Workhorse Award. Watkins, for succeeding despite adversity in life, was honored with the Spirit of a Champion award.

Sieminski and Alyssa Peterson earned the Norm Davis Scholar Athlete award this year for their net team points multiplied by their grade point average. Sieminski tied with Landtroop for Most Take-downs, while Kaylene Zajic took home the award on the girls team. As for Most Falls, Swanson (41) and Watkins (37) walked away as top recipients.

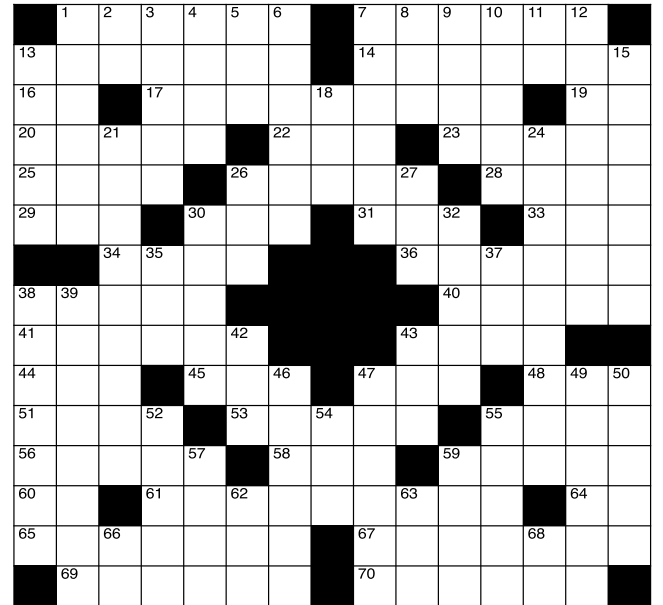
Chafin, Landtroop, Sieminski and Swanson earned the Pat and Ernie Baxter Outstanding Wrestler Award for being the highest placers at state. Thorpe also presented the honor of the Extra Mile Award to parents Andrew and Connie Swanson, who went the extra mile this season helping the kids and the coaches, and helping the program as a whole.

"They're program-first people," Thorpe said of those who win the award.

Thorpe also handed out "silly" awards, giving the coaches an opportunity to "razz" the kids.

"We roast each other a little bit at the banquet, and the seniors kind of roast us sometimes as coaches," he said with a laugh.

CROSSWORD



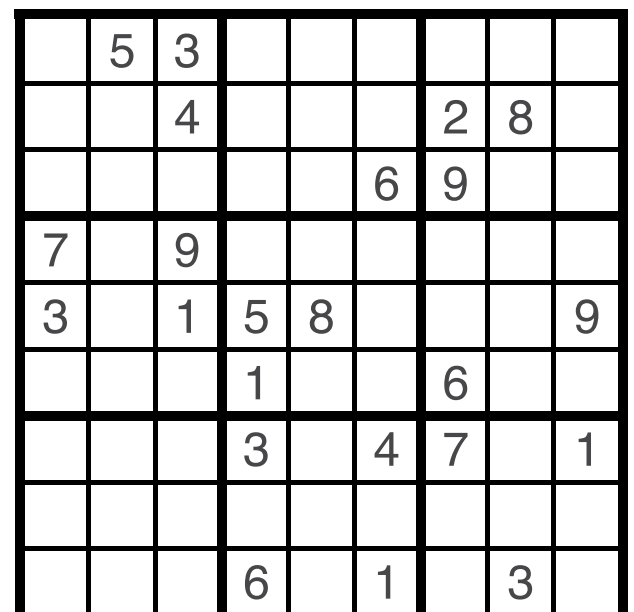
CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Spiritual leaders
- 7. Salt
- 13. Fortified wine
- 14. Edible mollusk
- 16. It begins with them
- 17. A way to compare
- 19. Government lawyer
- 20. Back parts
- 22. 8th month (abbr.)
- 23. Very willing
- 25. ___ ex machina
- 26. Satisfies
- 28. Quebec river
- 29. A doctrine
- 30. Popular pickup truck
- 31. Dekagram
- 33. Naturally occurring solid material
- 34. Company officer
- 36. Villains
- 38. Cricket frogs
- 40. German founder of psychology
- 41. Endured
- 43. A female domestic
- 44. A "place" to avoid
- 45. Cigarette (slang)
- 47. Canadian politician Josephine
- 48. French ballet/acting dynasty
- 51. Employee stock ownership plan
- 53. Belonging to the bottom
- 55. Sound
- 56. Yankees' slugger Judge
- 58. Dickens character
- 59. More wise
- 60. Flash memory card
- 61. Exposing human vice or folly to ridicule
- 64. Atomic #79
- 65. Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
- 67. Humor
- 69. Shawl
- 70. Preliminary assessment of patients

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Animal disease
- 2. Commercial
- 3. Craft supply
- 4. Storage units
- 5. Investment vehicle
- 6. Colorado Heisman winner
- 7. In a way, sank
- 8. Post-birth brain damage (abbr.)
- 9. Lay about
- 10. Intestinal
- 11. The opposite of yes
- 12. Caused to be loved
- 13. Messianic in Islamic eschatology
- 15. Showing since conviction
- 18. Not safe
- 21. The number above the line in a fraction
- 24. Yard invader
- 26. Pouch
- 27. Swedish krona
- 30. Start anew
- 32. While white or yellow flower
- 35. Fourteen
- 37. Graphical user interface
- 38. Up-to-date on the news
- 39. Campaigns
- 42. Touch softly
- 43. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
- 46. Violent seizure of property
- 47. One who supports the Pope
- 49. Anxiety
- 50. Body fluid
- 52. Phony person
- 54. Title of respect
- 55. Chilean city
- 57. City in central Japan
- 59. Silk garment
- 62. Draw from
- 63. Automobile
- 66. Man
- 68. Legal bigwig (abbr.)

SUDOKU



Level: Advanced

Girls Basketball Coaches 'Couldn't Ask for Better' Players

By Sarah Brown
Of The New Era

In her first year as head coach for the high school's girls basketball program, Coach Erika Evans reflected back on the season during the awards banquet with appreciation for a team that played hard for her.

"I could not ask for a more fantastic and hardworking group of kids," Evans told parents at the banquet. "Some kids just don't have the love for the sport and their program and their coach that they're willing to come in and fight battles for you every day; these kids are willing to do that for me, despite the monstrosity of the battle sometimes."

Brooke Elder was awarded Rookie of the Year, Selah Wright was named Defensive MVP, and Adrienne Funk earned the All American Award during the girls basketball awards banquet on Tuesday, March 5.

Evans thanked the parents for "buying into the mission" of building a team culture of family by driving their daughters to practice, attending games and being there during the tough calls as well as the wins.

"That, from me, does not go unnoticed to parents, and definitely from your girls," she said.

Recognizing the new girls basketball program at the high school was going to be "an uphill battle" for the first few seasons, Evans said the girls "bought in" to being a part of that program by setting goals to inch the needle forward and establish the foundation for future im-



Photo by Sarah Brown

The varsity girls basketball team poses with their coaches after receiving awards on March 5.

provements. Evans also recognized Kyla Dennon and Jocelyn Fairchild, who contributed as managers for the team.

Brooke Elder and Amara Gonzales were recognized by Evans as showing "astronomical growth" during the course of the season, while Aaliyah Brown was recognized for being able to overcome the mental hurdles of team sports and wear a smile at all times. Evans appreciated Selah Wright's commitment to spend extra hours practicing a left-handed layup until she got it down.

Coach Evans shared about Addy Vannice's natural leadership skills and being able

to determine which role she needed to play to help the team in a game, and Aubrey Newberry's fearlessness to do at least one charge a game.

"In girls sports in general, girls don't like to do a couple of things. One of the things is jump, and second they don't like to draw contact or take contact," she said. "(Newberry) is one of the best charge takers I've ever seen, and that takes a lot of cojones to want to step up and take a charge, or multiple, every game."

Loralai Mark was honored for actively looking at how she could contribute, while Hannah Donnell was honored for determining how to fulfill roles that were needed

in games. Evans recognized Adrienne Funk's ability to take everything she learned and deliver it onto the court, as well as the many functions she performed behind the scenes.

The coach awarded Keely Boyd for her ability to create chaos, always managing to be "in the wrong place at the right time," and awarded Madison Duncan for her ability to recognize situations really well and inquiring how she could be a motivating force for the team.

"I cannot thank you girls enough for your dedication," Evans said. "I really, genuinely could not ask for a group of girls more dedicated to

the mission that we laid out on day one. And I cannot be more grateful to the parents for all for being dedicated to it."

JV Coach Caytlin Gillespie said she "had a blast" during her first year of coaching basketball.

"This group of JV girls that I had were a phenomenal group of young ladies, very positive, came to practice, (and) worked hard every day," Gillespie said. "I couldn't ask for a better group to coach."

Mailey Brewer was awarded JV Defensive MVP for being a defensive force down low in the post and "finally stepped up and took a charge for our team" at a North Marion game. Kalissa Ellis was awarded JV Offensive MVP for being able to drain threes in the middle of a game.

"Some of the times that we saw her shoot threes, we were like, 'How did that go in? 'Cause I don't know how,'" Gillespie said.

Eturntyi Allison and Tori Jones were awarded the "hustle" award, while McKenzie Olheiser and Khloe Wood were named "most improved." Jayla Moore took home the "positive attitude" award, and Talitha Watkins walked away with the honor of "great communicator." Koharu Yasuda won the "rebound award" for wrestling for her rebounds both offensively and defensively. The "work horse" award was given to Xavia Pike, and the player who was referred to as the "team mom," Madison Sailors, walked away as "most inspirational."

PROTEST

From page 8

ongoing efforts to address the fiscal impact on Trust Land Counties resulting from reduced harvest levels anticipated under the HCP. She assured the Board of her commitment to finding solutions, stating, "I see a viable pathway forward to address the estimated reduction in timber receipts that would result from implementing the anticipated HCP."

Additionally, on the same day, the Oregon Senate and House Republican Caucuses jointly addressed Governor Tina Kotek, urging immediate reconsideration of the ODF's proposed HCP. The 70-year logging scale-back, as described by the caucus, has already shown adverse effects on businesses, with heightened concerns follow-

ing the recent closure of several sawmills.

The caucus expressed significant reservations about the current iteration of the HCP, emphasizing its lack of balance between economic interests, environmental conservation, and societal benefits for Oregonians. In their letter to Governor Kotek, they emphasized the necessity of ensuring that forests remain valuable resources for communities, advocating against measures that they foresee as imposing long-term negative impacts.

In their words, "This 70-year forest policy does not support a balance between economic, environmental, and social benefits to all Oregonians." They underscored their opposition to measures they perceive as "burdensome HCP measures that will knowingly have negative im-

pacts on our communities for the next several decades."

Pointing to recent projections released on Dec. 13, 2023, the caucus highlighted a substantial increase in conservation acres and a significant decrease in timber harvest levels compared to previous promises. ODF had initially advertised the HCP with an annual harvest certainty of about 250 mmbf (million board feet), but the latest projections indicate a decline between 168-185 mmbf annually, signaling a heavy emphasis on conservation at the expense of economic viability.

As per the press release, "ODF advertised this HCP as a conservation plan with harvest certainty of about 250 mmbf (board feet) annually... Obviously, this 70-year plan is heavy on conservation and light on economic viability

which is not in alignment with Greatest Permanent Value."

Additionally, the caucus drew attention to the discrepancy between the HCP and the principles of "Greatest Permanent Value," citing statistics that demonstrate the historical timber harvest levels and the revenue generated by ODF. They noted that while ODF had exceeded conservation requirements by adding approximately 100,000 acres, the HCP did not fully account for critical habitats such as those of the Marbled Murrelet, Red Tree Vole, or Coho Salmon.

In their argument against the HCP, the caucus referenced scientific perspectives, including findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which recognize managed forests as significant contribu-

tors to climate mitigation. They stressed the potential benefits of sustainable forest management, including the production of renewable wood products vital for addressing issues such as homelessness, affordable housing, and forest fires.

"The HCP will exacerbate these issues," they warned, advocating for "proper and sustainable management" of forests as an alternative solution.

They urged the Board to reject the State Forester's recommendation and instead directed ODF to substantially amend the HCP to improve harvest and economic outcomes to no avail. The decision of the ODF will undoubtedly have far-reaching implications for the future of these forests and the communities that rely on them.