The New Era

December 31, 2025
Vol. 95, No. 52
$2.00

Photos courtesy of SHFAD

Flames rage in a house off Old Hufford, left, on firefighters' arrival. Above, firefighters assess damage after it was extinguished. See more at sweethomenews.com.

Fire destroys residence off Old Hufford

Fire destroyed a home on Old Hufford Drive early Saturday morning, Dec. 27.

Fire crews and the Linn County Sheriff's Office responded just before 4:30 a.m. to a two-alarm call at 47225 Old Hufford Drive after a family member who lives across the ridge reported that the residence was on fire, reporting it to 911 at 4:22 a.m.

The residence on fire was located south of the Old Hufford mainline.

A total of four water tenders, three engine companies and three chief officers, including 24 firefighters and three support personnel responded to the scene.

According to a Sweet Home Fire and Ambulance District statement, "water supply was a challenge due to the large footprint of the home and the remote location," adding that approximately 45,000 gallons of water was shuttled to the scene. The fire was extinguished at 12:26 p.m.

Along with the structures, the owner lost three vehicles and a tractor, according to the SHFAD report. No civilians or firefighters were injured during the event.

County records list the owners as the Dale Crocker family.

According to SHFAD, the cause of the fire was undetermined at press time. The Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office assisted in the investigation.

Due to the intensity of the fire and the rural location, a substantial response was requested from neighboring agencies, SHFAD reported. Those agencies included the Lebanon Fire District and the Brownsville Rural Fire District.

Next week will mark new era for newspaper

Next week's edition of The New Era will include some changes.

As of Jan. 1, we will begin extending our weekly coverage of Sweet Home to the entire east Linn County – most notably, Lebanon.

The reasons for that move have been detailed in an editorial in the Nov. 26 edition and in the editorial on page 4 of this edition.

The practical outcome for readers is you will see, along with the fairly normal Sweet Home coverage that we offer each week, Lebanon-area news and sports and advertisements.

"We've decided that, in today's economy for newspapers, the best way to provide more stability for the entire operation is to publish a single weekly newspaper that serves both communities," said Scott Swanson, who with his wife Miriam are co-publishers of the newspapers.

They founded the Lebanon Local monthly publication in 2016, at the behest of leading

See The New Era, Page 2

Photo by Scott Swanson

Josh Darwood, maintenance supervisor for Sweet Home School District, center, points out entrances to the school that pose security risks during a tour of the campus.

SHHS tour highlights needs, risks

By Scott Swanson
Of The New Era

Aaron Huff stood in a breezeway at Sweet Home High School on the last day of school before Christmas break and watched students scurry hither and yon, most heading to classes.

The vice principal was one of several school and district officials taking a walk through the campus, noting some of the issues that have prompted the district to propose rebuilding parts of the campus.

The district had gotten news earlier that morning, Dec. 19, that it is in line to receive a $12.2 million Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching grant aimed at improving student safety and security and upgrading classrooms and career and technical education facilities. The grant is contingent on voters approving a bond measure in May 2026, which would be structured to maintain the current tax rate, according to district Business Manager Kevin Strong.

The grant represents a "use it or lose it" opportunity for the district. If voters

See SHHS Fixes, Page 7

Hometown Newspaper of
DOUG PEARGIN

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

From:
The New Era

THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE WILL CLOSE AT NOON WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31, AND WILL REOPEN AT 10 A.M. FRIDAY, JAN. 2. HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY!

LOCAL RETIRED NURSE MINISTERS TO HEARING IMPAIRED
PAGE 5

Serving Sweet Home since 1929
Find us online at SWEETHOMENEWS.COM

OBITUARIES

Annette Hilburn
July 22, 1944 - Dec. 19, 2025

Annette Hilburn, 81, of Sweet Home, passed away Dec. 19, 2025.

She was born July 22, 1944, to Mary E. (Kuckenbaker) and Robert A. Blackwell in Salinas, Calif.

She grew up in California and moved to Oregon in 1970. She worked at various canneries, White Electronics and was a day care provider for over 20 years.

Annette liked horses, enjoyed gardening and loved to go camping with her family.

She is survived by her son, John C. Hilburn; her daughter, Nancy A. Hendrix; sister Kathy McDermott; two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, John E. Hilburn; sisters Irene Johnson and Joan Huff; and her parents, Robert and Mary Blackwell.

A memorial reception took place Dec. 22 in the reception room of Sweet Home Funeral Chapel. Burial will take place at Oak Grove Cemetery in Laton, Calif., later in the spring. Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling the arrangements.

Death Notices

Kenneth Bates, Sr.
March 27, 1944 - Dec. 21, 2025

Kenneth Ray Bates, Sr., 81, of Sweet Home, passed away Dec. 21, 2025.

Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling the arrangements. For updated information, visit www.sweethomefuneral.com.

Norman Villines
Feb. 24, 1940 - Dec. 24, 2025

Norman Darle Villines, 85, of Sweet Home, passed away Dec. 24, 2025.

Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling the arrangements. For updated information, visit www.sweethomefuneral.com.

CORRECTIONS

The caption for our photos of "The Innkeepers" in the Dec. 24 edition should have stated that Brian and Peta Corbett were the narrators for the innkeeper and his wife, and Nick and Karla Boren were the actors who played the innkeeper and his wife. Greg Owen played Joseph and Carolyn Owen played Mary.

Also, Caiden Matthews' name was misspelled in the story about the fish project at Sweet Home High School in the Dec. 24 edition. What you see here is correct.

EVENTS

After 5 Connections dinner, program

After 5 Connections – a gathering for women – presents, "What's Up, Doc", a dinner and program from 6-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 13, at Ma's Restaurant, 2416 S. Santiam Hwy., Lebanon.

Guest speaker will be Linda Reinhardt, of Vancouver, Wash., to talk about "Choices and Where They Lead." She discusses the power of choices and how they can prevent us from becoming the women we were meant to be.

Malika Knebel and Kami Knebel, a gifted duet from Lebanon, will share their beautiful songs.

The featured presentation will be from Jeannie Davis, assistant professor at Western University of Health Sciences, who will share about what the medical students are doing in the community. The university in Lebanon was established in 2011 and is home to the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific-Northwest (COMP-Northwest), a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree program, and other health sciences programs like a Doctor of Physical Therapy. The campus focuses on preparing medical professionals for careers in rural and patient-centered healthcare.

Cost for dinner is $23; credit cards cannot be accepted. To RSVP, contact Sherri at 541-258-6414, or Nancy at 541-259-1396 or by email at NancyPinzino@comcast.net. Please call to cancel reservations, if needed.

See Events, Page 4

THE NEW ERA

From page 1

citizens of Lebanon when it became increasingly evident that the Lebanon Express, which had served the community for over a century, was nearing the end of its existence, at least in print.

"We figured at that time that we could provide a quality monthly newspaper with the staff we had, which turned out to be the case," Swanson said. "But although our intention from the beginning has always been to turn it into a weekly publication, for various reasons we were unable to do that."

Combining the newspapers into a single weekly publication, he added, will greatly increase the potential for advertising revenue, which is essential to provide the kind of staffing needed to adequately cover the entire region.

The newspaper will retain the name "The New Era," though the flag on the front page will include some small modifications to represent a wide scope of east Linn County.

"This community's newspaper is nearing the century mark – it was founded in 1929," Swanson said. "The New Era is an innocuous name that will, frankly, summarize what's happening for Lebanon."

The New Era will continue to cover Sweet Home government and community activities as it always has, but will include similar coverage of Lebanon and its surrounding communities – Sodaville and Waterloo – will also be included, as news develops.

Plus, The New Era will include weekly coverage of Lebanon-area sports while continuing to cover Sweet Home sports – high school during the school year and junior baseball and softball and others during the summer.

Lebanon and Sweet Home governmental and sports news will be packaged separately as much as possible.

"Our page size, which we don't have a lot of control over, doesn't allow us as much flexibility as we'd like, but that's the goal," Swanson said. "Our goal is to fill in a lot of blanks for Lebanon that we've been wanting to do for a long time, while continuing to provide the best news coverage we can for Sweet Home."

Human interest stories, obituaries, police reports, real estate and other "common-interest" stories pertaining to east Linn County as a whole will fill out the rest of the paper.

Public Safety logs will include both Lebanon and Sweet Home (and south county) news, as will obituaries, opinion page content, events listings and other news of common interest. Special sections, such as programs for community events, will also be common.

Initially, both websites will continue until further notice, Swanson said

For more on the merger, see our editorial on page 4

SUPPORT LOCAL JOURNALISM IN EAST LINN COUNTY!

As we come to the end of this remarkable year, we want to pause and say a heartfelt THANK YOU for being a valued reader of The New Era.

Gracious and generous support from the community has helped us recover from a bleak situation over the past year and we're eager to continue serving you with hyper-local news to help you stay on top of what's happening in our community. Without you,

The New Era / Lebanon Local would likely no longer be in existence today.
If you'd like to contribute to our mission of serving east Linn County as one of the only truly independent, locally owned newspapers remaining in Oregon, please consider a tax-deductible gift that will directly fund our writers' coverage of local issues and events.

☐ **DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE**
When using our link or QR code. Donations are specifically used for funding reporters, and freelance writers.

☐ **YOU MAY ALSO DONATE BY CREDIT CARD**
By calling 541-367-2135 or by mailing a check:
The New Era 1313 Main Street, Sweet Home, OR 97386 (NOT tax-deductible)

Every donation—large or small—makes a meaningful difference.

AND THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO HELP TOO:
- Give a gift subscription to a friend or family member
- Choose to advertise your business or event
- Sponsor a page in the newspaper each week
- Thank an advertiser for advertising in The New Era!

SCAN ME
BIT.LY/TNE1929

Thank you for standing with us, believing in community journalism, and helping keep local news alive. We are truly grateful for you.
Scott & Miriam Swanson, and The New Era Team

MEMORY MAKING
ADVENTURES
CRAFTING MEMORIES, ONE ADVENTURE AT A TIME
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TEMPERATURES

DATE	HIGH	LOW	PRECIP
December 23	45	40	0.02
December 24	50	39	0.09
December 25	54	39	0.24
December 26	49	37	0.26
December 27	47	35	0.01
December 28	47	30	0.00
December 29	44	28	0.00

PRECIPITATION

Year end: **30.27**
January 1, 2025: **37.39**

FORECAST

DAY	WEATHER	HIGH	LOW
Thur	Scattered Showers	49	46
Fri	Scattered Showers	53	45
Sat	Scattered Showers	50	46
Sun	Cloudy	53	48
Mon	Cloudy	51	38
Tues	Foggy	44	34
Wed	Foggy	49	32

LAKE LEVELS

Foster Reservoir: 617.3
Green Peter Res.: 932.8

PUBLIC SAFETY

Information for the Public Safety report and Courts in The New Era is sourced from local law enforcement and fire agencies. Addresses provided generally denote the location of the incident or arrest, occasionally indicating the origin of the call. Incident details, which may not always be available from agencies in time for publication in our weekly paper edition, are often updated online at sweethomenews.com as information becomes available. Also, due to space limitations in our paper editions, content may be restricted to the most recent information, and a more extensive version of the Public Safety Report will be available at sweethomenews.com.
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. We commit significant effort to following through as cases move through the judicial process.
Following is a list of abbreviations that may appear in our log reports: L. (Lebanon), SH. (Sweet Home), B. (Brownsville) and H. (Halsey) following addresses; CSO (community services officer); LCSO (Linn County Sheriff's Office); SHPD (Sweet Home Police Department); OSP (Oregon State Police); CTC (Cascade Timber Consulting); LCCC (Linn County Circuit Court); LCJC (Linn County Justice Court); SHMC (Sweet Home Municipal Court); LMC (Lebanon Municipal Court); AMC (Albany Municipal Court); FTA (failure to appear); FTC (failure to comply). A roman numeral listed after a charge means that the charge is that numbered-degree: theft I (first-degree theft).

Dec. 26

1:16 a.m. - Andrew Edwin Amundson, 36, arrested on SHMC warrant for FTC in resisting arrest case, 1800 block Main St., SH. Cited and released.

Dec. 25

2:50 a.m. - Heather Lillis, 41, of Sweet Home, cited for failure to renew vehicle registration, 2000 block S. 2nd St., L.

4:34 a.m. - Hunter Ariel Ringheimer, 32, arrested for possession of controlled substance-fentanyl, LCJC warrant in criminal driving case, LMC warrant for FTA in criminal citation case, 18th Ave./Willow St., SH. Shauna Ray Harden, 32, arrested for possession of controlled substance-fentanyl, LCCC warrants in meth possession and FTA in burglary case, LCJC warrant for failure to appear, LMC warrants for probation violation, SHMC warrant for FTA in theft case and FTC in fleeing case. Ringheimer cited and released, Harden lodged at Linn County Jail.

1:19 p.m. - Deputy responded to ongoing civil issue between property owner and tenant in 32900 block Brewster Rd., L. According to LCSO, owner locked pumphouse to remove access to water for tenant as way of forcing them off the property. Both parties had previously been instructed on proper way to handle dispute.

3:46 p.m. - Deputies responded to report of heated argument in 42100 block North River Dr., SH, in which one participant allegedly drove in the direction of the other person involved in the argument, but did not hit that person. Deputies unable to locate victim. No further action.

7:49 p.m. - Caller reported what they thought was a deceased dog that had been skinned and left hanging in a tree. Deputy responded, determined that the animal was a bobcat that had been skinned and the carcass left behind, likely by a trapper. Determined to be non-criminal.

11:19 p.m. - Bradley Allen Bowman, 29, arrested on SHMC warrants for FTA in theft case, FTA in criminal mischief cases and LMC warrant for FTA in theft case. 13th Ave./Nandina St., SH. Cited and released.

Dec. 24

12:35 a.m. - Caller complained about neighbor "constantly being loud," revving engines at all hours of night in 29200 block Berlin Rd., SH. Deputy contacted male, who apologized and said he would keep the noise down.

1:44 a.m. - Deputy located male sleeping in vehicle in Waterloo Park, 31100 1st St., Waterloo, after hours. He was advised to move along.

2:26 a.m. - Merlanda Sarah Wayna Faoa, 25, of Lebanon, arrested on warrant in Cheadle Lake Park, 2700 block River Rd., L, where she was found after hours. Cited and released. Report taken.

3:41 a.m. - Brandi Mae West-Parsons, 51, of Lebanon, arrested for warrant, Foster Dam Rd./North River Dr., SH. Cited and released.

7:54 a.m. - William Lee Phillips, 43, arrested by Lebanon police on SHMC warrant for FTA in theft case. Cited to appear Jan. 14.

8:29 a.m. - Caller reported pistol stolen from 40800 block Hwy. 228, SH. Report taken.

9:39 a.m. - Chelsie Lyn Jasper, 35, of Brownsville, cited for failure to obey traffic control device, Bishop/Loucks way intersection, B.

10:26 a.m. - Caller from Giustina Land and Timber reported Big Tex car trailer stolen from 51300 block Quartzville Rd. Loss valued at $9,800. Report taken.

11:04 a.m. - RIchard David McCollister arrested for giving false information to police officer, cited for driving while suspended, driving uninsured, 1600 block Main St., SH. Cited and released.

11:56 a.m. - Christopher Ciullo, 40, cited on three warrants out of Linn County, Lebanon and Sweet Home, Hwy. 228/Crawfordsville Dr., SH. Also cited for operating vehicle without insurance. Cited to appear Jan. 14 on SHMC warrant. Kelsey Ciullo, 38, arrested on outstanding LCCC felony warrant and SHMC warrant for FTA in hit and run case. Kelsey Ciullo transported to Linn County Jail, cited to appear in SHMC on Jan. 14. Report taken.

12:01 p.m. - Scam victim reported that they had been contacted by person claiming to be from Boost Mobile. Deputies

See Public Safety, Page 11

CIRCUIT COURT

Belle Eden Anway, 18, placed in diversion program and fined $220 after pleading no contest to DUII (liquor) and reckless driving.

Linnea Marie Baker, 57, charged Oct. 29 with criminal mistreatment I, theft I and four counts of aggravated theft I.

Kiah Brook Bearden-Coxen, 28, sentenced Dec. 15 to 20 days jail, 18 mos. supervised probation after pleading no contest to identity theft, fraudulent use of a credit card and FTA. Dismissed: fraudulent use of a credit card, unlawful entry into motor vehicle, FTA I.

Hailee Clark, 20, sentenced Dec. 12 to 10 days compensatory service in lieu of jail, 36 mos. bench probation and a $100 fine after pleading guilty to assault IV.

James Raymond Robert Collins, 27, charged Dec. 26 with burglary I, aggravated harassment, attempted assault public safety officer, resisting arrest, DV attempted assault IV, three counts of harassment, attempted assault IV, menacing, criminal mischief II and disorderly conduct II.

Buzz Starr Dodson Jr., 28, sentenced Dec. 15 to 13 mos. with the Oregon Dept. of Corrections and two years post-prison supervision after pleading guilty to DV strangulation.

John Andrew Mance, 37, charged Dec. 22 with DUII (liquor), fail to perform duties of driver to injured persons, assault IV and criminal driving while suspended or revoked. He has been convicted twice (2016, 2018) with DUII. Bail set at $50,000.

Charges against **Eric Wayne McKnight, 56,** of tampering with physical evidence, attempted unlawful delivery of meth within 1,000 feet of a school, unlawful possession of meth, attempted unlawful delivery of meth, unlawful possession of a controlled substance, attempted unlawful manufacture or delivery of a controlled substance within 1,000 feet of a school, unlawful possession of heroin, attempted unlawful delivery of heroin within 1,000 feet of a school and attempted delivery of heroin were dismissed with prejudice. He is deceased.

Sarah Beth Moore, 39, charged Dec. 22 with DUII (liquor), reckless driving and assault IV.

Juan Dedios Ocon, 32, charged Dec. 11 with fail to report as a sex offender.

Patrick Savolt, 76, sentenced Dec. 19 to 10 days compensatory service in lieu of jail, 24 mos. bench probation and a $500 fine after pleading guilty to two counts of assault IV.

Joseph Brock Umphress, 37, charged July 8 with DUII (liquor).

Crossword KEY

Puzzle on page 12

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

SUDOKU KEY

Puzzle on page 12

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

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FROM OUR FILES

All eight passengers of this 1942 sedan survived after the car crashed into a parked diesel truck in 1951.

Jan. 4, 1951

Too heavy, too high and too wide, reads the citation at the justice court regarding the huge Douglas fir which was parked along the highway last week. Dale C. Morgan was hauling the log through Foster for the Ripple Creek Logging Co. when he found himself at a standstill. Permissible weight runs about 72,000 pounds, while Morgan's load weighed 108,400.

A 1942 sedan driven by Wendell A. Moore, 25, of Holley, and carrying seven passengers was crushed after it met with a parked GMC diesel truck on M Street. All eight were injured, but are reported to be coming along well. Police reported Moore was clocked at driving 70 mph before the car skidded and crashed into the truck.

Jan. 1, 1976

After about seven years of frustration, the school district finally managed to purchase part of the old Oregon Plywood (Hofheins) property directly behind the high school. Seven of 20 acres was purchased at $64,162. Previous attempts at buying Hofheins' property had been unsuccessful, so the district bought other small lots surrounding the school. To afford this purchase, the district will sell a small parcel between the high school and Evangelical Church.

Former actress Holly Hill flew from New York to visit her parents here for Christmas. After acting in theater for a number of years, she is now a theatrical writer and drama critic for the Westchester-Rockland newspapers. She'd gotten bored in acting after always being typecast as a teenager, but she also disliked the growing number of acts with obscenity and nudity.

After three burglaries in nine months at the Travel Center and Trailways Bus Depot, owner Don Menear has opted to install bars on the store, and maybe even the windows. It was learned the most recent burglary was from a visiting 15-year-old who took between $60 and $100. His punishment: he was sent home.

Jan. 3, 2001

The Mountain House, an eastern Linn County landmark, closed down this week when owners Bill and Char LaFollette found they could no longer carry the financial burden of the home-restaurant. Located on Hwy. 20 just 25 miles east of Sweet Home, The Mountain House has a history more than 100 years old. The LaFollettes bought the place in 1991 and raised their children there.

The New Era
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Editorial: New focus is aim to make your newspaper better

By Scott Swanson
Publisher

As reported on page 1 of today's issue, we're about to embark on a new era for The New Era as we expand our coverage of east Linn County as a whole.

Don't worry. The newspaper will still be devoted to Sweet Home, but as I mentioned in an editorial last month, we've decided to combine our Lebanon Local monthly with The New Era weekly and will now focus our coverage on the broader east Linn County region, rather than producing two separate local newspapers.

I'll go into more detail on all of that next week, which will be the first issue that will go out to Lebanon readers as well as you, the readers of The New Era. But after nearly 20 years of publishing your newspaper, my wife Miriam and I have concluded that this is the best course for The New Era, particularly in light of the difficulties that have arisen in newspaper publishing in recent years.

I told someone recently: Publishers don't get thrown in jail for saying bad things about politicians any more, thankfully, but some of the difficulties that newspapers had back in the early days, the days of Ben Franklin and John Peter Zenger, are not unlike those we're experiencing today. It isn't legal stress now; it's economic.

I briefly referenced this in that earlier editorial, but the situation is grim; over half of the counties in the United States right now are "news deserts," meaning they have little to no access to credible, comprehensive local news and information, usually because their local newspaper has folded.

In Oregon, Sherman and Wheeler counties are officially "news deserts," but quite a few other counties only have one newspaper, and many of those are mere shadows of what they once were. Granted, the populations may not be large, but even a small community needs to have credible information to function well.

The biggest challenge for newspapers now (in addition to many others that I won't detail here) is the fierce competition for advertising dollars – more fierce than anything I've ever seen in 40-plus years in this business, and actually, arguably more than has ever occurred in the history of our nation.

Newspapers have been weakened by corporate management that has decimated news staffs in favor of immediate profits, eventually killing once-healthy local newspapers because, to put it bluntly, too many investors don't care about journalism.

Plus, because newspapers have weakened, a lot of people who should be reading their local newspaper are not. They get their information from social media and who knows where else.

Newspapers, like any other human institutions, are not perfect because they're produced by people who aren't perfect (as you are probably aware if you ever read our corrections on page 2). Human weakness has been exacerbated, in my opinion, by overt bias and faulty, slanted reporting that has reduced the trust of readers.

Yes, it pains me too. We all, by nature, are biased, but we believe journalists should at least attempt to be fair, to report as objectively as they can, and that's what we strive for here. We don't live by the notion that truth is whatever we want it to be.

But back to our main point: Our goal in combining the newspapers is to better serve Lebanon, which has a much larger economy than Sweet Home, while maintaining what we do here. That latter part is important: We want Sweet Home readers to continue to get the same (or better) news coverage you are used to.

The only area that you might see change is that we will not, at least initially, provide quite the "saturation" photo and story coverage of home contests every week for high school sports that we have in the past, because we will also cover Lebanon and East Linn Christian Academy.

However, our commitment to making coverage as balanced as possible (we try to cover golf as faithfully as we do baseball) will continue, and we will provide weekly summaries of how all the local teams did, as thoroughly as possible.

We hope to have more pages, especially if residents respond by subscribing and businesses respond to the increased circulation by advertising and sponsorships. As revenue increases, so will our staff, which will mean more local news coverage.

Again, this makes the most sense to us of any of the alternatives we've considered for how to put your newspaper on a more stable financial footing and how to get staffing to where it needs to be.

In the new year we plan to provide you with a survey that will give readers a chance to tell us what you like and don't like, and what you'd like to see in the newspaper. It's been in the works, and the goal is to have it to you soon.

We're off to a new year, and I hope this is a banner one for The New Era and its readers.

EVENTS

From page 2

Saturday Market returns Dec. 20

Third Saturday Markets are returning this year, starting Saturday, Dec. 20, at the Church of the Nazarene, 415 Holley Road.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The monthly event will run through April, featuring local vendors and all sorts of goodies.

DAR accepting scholarship applications

The Santiam Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution's Scholarship Committee is now accepting scholarship applications for graduating high school seniors, and college and graduate students in specific areas of study who plan on or are already attending an accredited college or university in the United States.

The 2026 DAR Scholarship application portal is now open, and applications are being accepted through Jan. 31 at DAR AcademicWorks. To learn more about the different scholarship opportunities and to apply, visit the online application portal found on the DAR website at dar.academicworks.com.

The DAR administers more than two dozen scholarships in fields including medicine, nursing, science, education,

See Events, Page 8

Janella Spears: Lifetime of service bridges two worlds

By Satina Tolman
For The New Era

For more than five decades, Janella Spears has quietly served as a bridge between the deaf and hearing worlds – using her hands, her medical training, and her faith to ensure that deaf individuals are not left unheard or unseen.

Spears' journey into the deaf community began long before professional titles or degrees. In 1966, at just 18 years old and newly enrolled in college, she met her future husband, Thomas Spears, on the tennis court. Thomas was hard of hearing, and it was he who first taught her sign language – an introduction that would shape the course of her life.

They married in 1971 and moved from Riverside, Calif., to Oregon, where they began raising their family. During those early years, Spears taught sign language in the Lincoln City and Newport school districts while Thomas worked in Oregon's state park system. In 1980, his career brought them to Sweet Home when he was hired as a park ranger at Cascadia State Park.

Thomas Spears holds a distinction that remains rare even today: He is believed to be the first – and only – deaf employee to work within Oregon's state park system. His success, supported by Janella's interpreting and advocacy, reinforced her lifelong commitment to accessibility.

As Spears pursued nursing, earning her registered nurse credential in 1982, her interpreting work expanded into medical settings. In the 1970s and 1980s, she helped hospitals and emergency rooms – including the Albany Emergency Room – learn how to communicate with deaf patients using TTY devices (Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf), a then-new technology that allowed typed conversations over phone lines.

"Back then, people were just learning how to work with TTY," Spears said. "I helped staff understand how deaf patients communicated—and helped deaf individuals learn how to use the equipment."

While video phones have largely replaced TTY technology today, Spears continues to assist those who still rely on it, ensuring no one is left behind as technology evolves.

Over the years, Spears has interpreted across Oregon – from Portland, Salem, and Roseburg to Bend, Redmond, Medford and Madras. Her work goes far beyond formal appointments. She regularly accompanies deaf individuals to grocery stores, dental offices, hearing aid providers, and other everyday errands, helping them navigate systems that often overlook accessibility.

She also volunteers exten-

See Spears, Page 6

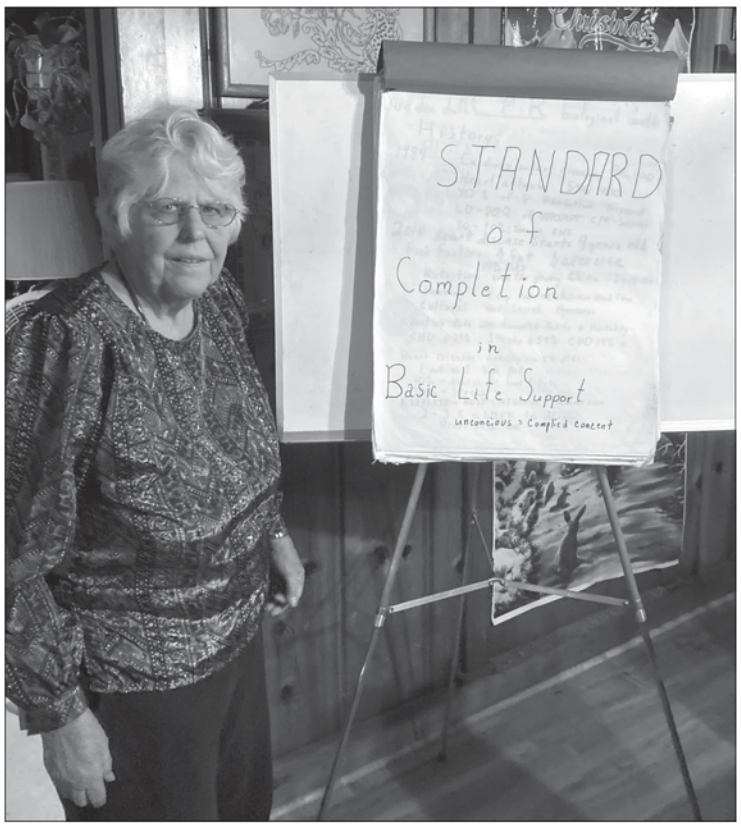

Photo courtesy of Janella Spears
Janella Spears has used her sign language skills in multiple medical settings as a nurse.

JANUARY 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday		
Exercise 8:30 Crafters 10:00 Dominoes 11:00 Meals on Wheels Senior Meals 12:00 Bridge 1:00	Qi Gong 9:00 Jolly Stitchers- Quilters 10:00 Meals on Wheels Senior Meals 12:00	Exercise 8:30 Painters/Paper- crafters 10:00 Lunch 11:30 Ponytail 1:00	Qi Gong 9:00 Jolly Stitchers- Quilters 10:00 Bible Study 10:00 Pinochle 1:00	Exercise 8:30 Meals On Wheels Senior Meals 12:00	*Happy New Year!!!!!*	
Exercise 8:30 Crafters 10:00 Dominoes 11:00 Meals on Wheels Senior Meals 12:00 Bridge 1:00	Qi Gong 9:00 Jolly Stitchers- Quilters 10:00 Meals on Wheels Senior Meals 12:00	Exercise 8:30 Painters/Paper- crafters 10:00 Lunch 11:30 Ponytail 1:00	Qi Gong 9:00 Jolly Stitchers- Quilters 10:00 Bible Study 10:00 Pinochle 1:00	Exercise 8:30 Meals On Wheels Senior Meals 12:00		
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10:30 a.m. Children's Church

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SPEARS

From page 5

sively. Every Sunday, Spears serves as an interpreter at Community Chapel. She volunteers at Meadowlark Retirement Center in Lebanon, supporting deaf siblings who reside there, and assists local police when communication is needed with deaf individuals experiencing homelessness or navigating HUD housing.

Fluent in both American Sign Language and Pidgin Signed English, Spears is adept at adapting her communication style to individual needs. She also understands the regional "accents" within ASL – variations that reflect geography, culture, and community.

Although Spears occasionally receives paid assignments through interpreting agencies – typically one to three per month when certified interpreters are unavailable – she never pursued full certification herself.

"I didn't become certified because it was part-time work, and I worked full-time as an RN," she explained.

Instead, she deepened her qualifications academically, completing sign language coursework at Western Ore-

See Spears, Page 12

Photo by Scott Swanson

Janella Spears interprets for the hearing-impaired during this year's Singing Christmas Tree performances.

Happy New Year
from
Sweet Home Senior Center
JANUARY
2026

7: Chicken Pot Pie
Like a warm hug, comfort food chicken pot pie served with salad and dessert

14: Sicilian Pork Chops
pork chops juicy, tender and full of Mediterranean goodness, served with potatoes, Mediterranean salad, dessert

21:Beef Stroganoff
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Dessert provided by Wiley Creek Senior Community

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SHHS FIXES

From page 1

approve the bond, Sweet Home would receive the full $12.2 million in state funds to offset local costs. If

the measure fails, the money would be reallocated to other school districts across Oregon.

The walk around campus allowed participation to take in some of the problem areas that would be addressed by the grant funding, Strong said, which have prompted concerns in recent months about intrusion by strangers, students who come and go freely, and basic construction issues – particularly flat roofs on which water pools.

Highlighting Needs

One of the biggest needs on campus, Strong and others said, is security.

Security for the high school would be a priority if voters approve the funding, he said.

The high school currently has more than 40 separate entrances with direct public access to student areas and lacks a secure entry vestibule. Bond proceeds would fund a secure campus perimeter.

Huff and the others stood in the breezeway which runs along the east end of the "C" building and counted doorways that give students and the public easy access to classrooms from off campus.

Strong noted that the most of the current campus, built in the 1970s, is "very porous," noting that there are more than 40 entrances in which students can exit and intruders can access the school buildings.

Principal Ralph Brown said his biggest concern, along with developing the school's Career and Technical Education programs, is "safety."

He said he spends a lot of time at the school early in the mornings and late at night.

"If I see somebody, I say, 'What are you doing on campus? You need to be off campus.'

Photos by Scott Swanson

Chief Custodian Darren Schultz, left, surveys a small room in which a homeless man was found one morning. Right, Josh Darwood, maintanance supervisor, surveys water pooling on a flat roof.

"There are lots of places to duck in. There are lots of places for kids to get lost. Supervision is really difficult, with all the places to hide. It's been crazy. I've been here 11 years. We went somewhere with Darren (Schultz, the school's head custodian,) and I had never been in that one spot."

Standing in the breezeway, Huff counted 13 entryways to classrooms into which an intruder could easily walk from the outside, "and that's just going down through right here," he noted.

Strong added, looking over Huff's shoulder: "And that's not counting the two modular classrooms."

Brown said one concern is that, with all the nooks and crannies on the old campus, a student could have a "medical issue" and staffers could be unable to locate the missing teen.

"We have cameras, a lot of cameras, but having a place that's more contained, it's easier. You'd have better coverage. "

The ease of access from the outside is such that, one day, a motorcycle roared up onto the sidewalk through the breezeway between the auditorium and the main "C" high school building. The rider was dropping off his girlfriend, a student, Assistant Principal Luke Augsburger said.

"I can't remember who was there, but they said, 'Did I just see a motorcycle drive through campus?' Of course, by the time we were able to catch up, that guy was gone and it's like, 'Don't have your boyfriend drop you off.' That was very sweet of him, but through the campus?"

He said multiple bicycles have been stolen from a rack next to the doorway at which the motorcycle commuter student was dropped off.

"I wish there wasn't through traffic here, 24/7," Huff said

Brown said one morning students walked in along with a barefoot stranger, who turned out to be "a homeless guy walking right through.".

"The openness from the outside, we have people just coming in the door."

Earlier this fall, school officials discovered another homeless man who had popped open a loose door to bed down in a closet built to house an exhaust fan for the woodshop.

The main high school building is also hard to negotiate for someone not familiar with it, Strong said.

"It's like a maze," he said. "How would you like to be a freshman on the first day, coming in the front door. You turn left, though you could turn right, then you turn right... It's confusing."

Strong and high school administrators emphasized the importance of having controlled egress and ingress for the campus, so students cannot simply leave the premises and then sneak back into class without having to check in at the main office.

High School History

The high school has undergone several expansions since the first portion of the modern campus was completed in the early 1940s. It has expanded westward over time, so the initial buildings what are now the music building and buildings used for CTE purposes.

Sweet Home Union High School was formed in 1912, from Sweet Home, Foster, Pleasant Valley, Moss Butte, Sunnyside, Liberty, Cascadia, Greenville and Cowling school districts, The New Era recounted in 2003.

The first building was finished in 1914, housing 26 students and two teachers. It was expanded as the school expanded to more than 145 students in 1933. A new building was approved in 1934, and expansion continued through the 1940s – a boiler room, a library-study hall, more classrooms and a cafeteria. A gymnasium stood about where the current cafeteria is. The auditorium was completed in 1950.

The current "B" and "C" buildings were built in the 1970s, while the front section of the campus facing Long Street and the main gymnasium were constructed in 2003-04 after voters approved a $19 million bond.

Structural Issues

Some of the older high school buildings have reached the end of their functional lives or need significant improvement, Strong said, listing the woodshop, in which the concrete floor is buckling, and structures housing the auto shop and agricultural classrooms.

"Our thought would be this

See SHHS Fixes, Page 10

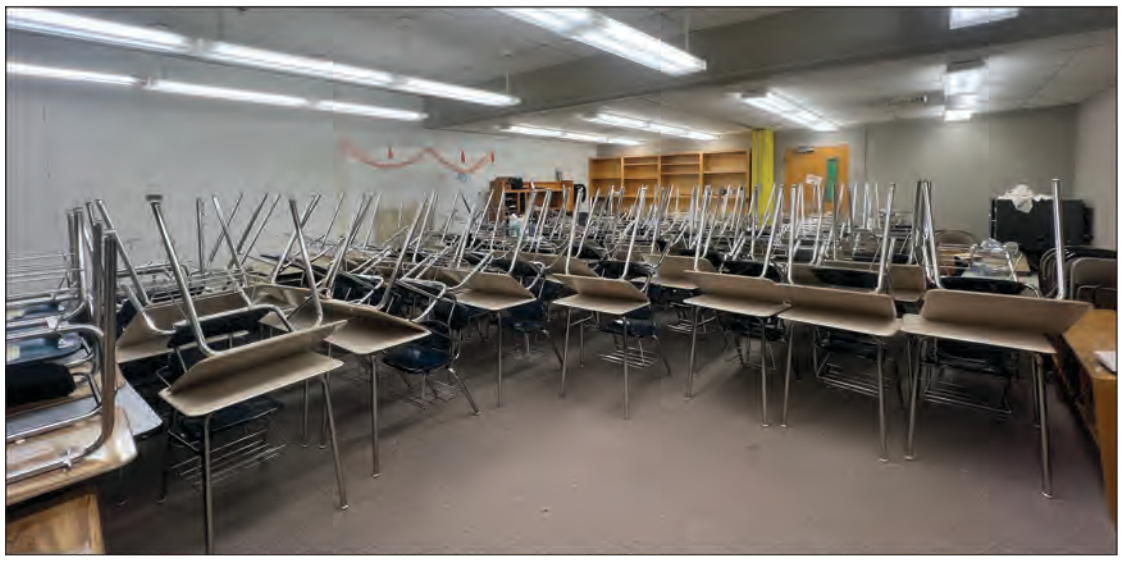

Photo by Scott Swanson

Desks donated by Western Oregon University are stacked in an empty classroom at Sweet Home High School prior to winter break.

Janitor and former teacher snag 215 desks for high school

By Scott Swanson
Of The New Era

Sweet Home High School students will soon be sitting more comfortably, thanks to a seat-of-the-pants transaction that involved former and current school staffers.

That would be SHHS Head Custodian Darren Schultz and former science teacher Dr. Harrison Neal.

Neal moved earlier this year to Western Oregon University, where he is now an assistant professor of education and leadership.

According to Schultz, Neal became aware that the university was planning to get rid of more than 200 desks.

"Apparently, these desks weren't meeting the standard for the state," Schultz said. "They were basically just going to scrap them."

Neal contacted the facilities manager at the university and mentioned that Sweet Home might be interested in the desks.

"He planted the seed," Schultz said. "I got an email stating that they had them if we wanted to get them. It just goes to show you how good it is to have good connections, you know, don't burn bridges. If he hadn't been in a position to say, 'Hey, Sweet Home might need those...'"

Schultz got busy "pushing the right buttons and poking the right people" and was able to procure a U-Haul for a couple of days, which is how long it took to haul 215 desks from the university in Monmouth. That's enough desks to provide new seats for nearly one-third of the students in the school.

He said that the closure of the school on Dec. 17 gave him and his staff extra manpower to go after the new desks.

"That allowed us to really take some extra people from maintenance, jump in another truck, and basically, we had a convoy going back and forth for Tuesday and Wednesday."

Shultz said that the high school is due to replace desks which, he guessed, date back to the 1970s and 1980s.

"They've gotten their money's worth out of them," he said.

"Those desks (from WOU) are $300 a piece, so if you do a little quick math, you can see that's a little over $60,000 worth of desks and they're nicer than the ones we're working with in the classrooms.

"In fact, I talked to the teacher (in a nearby classroom) and I said, 'You're getting new desks.'"

He said the acquisition was particularly timely.

"We're getting to that time where we're gonna need to spend some money on desks, and not just student desks, but teachers desks," he said. "So it couldn't happen at a better time. It feels good. It's gonna save us a lot of money."

EVENTS

From page 2

law, music, English and horticulture, and several of the scholarships are renewable for up to four years of study.

In honor of America's 250th anniversary, the America 250! Scholarship has been expanded for the 2026 award year. Ten one-time awards of $25,000 each will be granted to students majoring in American History. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, hold a minimum 3.5 GPA (on a 4.0 scale), and submit a one-page essay on either the founding of our nation or their personal volunteer service to community and country.

Seedling sale open through Jan. 31

Linn County Small Woodlands Association has opened pre-orders for its annual seedling sale until Jan. 31.

LCSWA offers seedlings for seven types of conifers and one deciduous tree. Nordmann fir, a popular Christmas tree, is available. The shrub and perennial offerings are focused on native and pollinator-beneficial species, as well as adding interest to woodland gardens and landscaping.

Narrowleaf buck brush, blue elderberry, oceanspray, birch leaf spirea, red flowering currant, lemonade sumac, meadow checkermallow and narrowleaf mules ear are a few of the 14 shrubs and perennials available.

There are typically additional tree and shrub seedlings for purchase on the day of the sale.

This year, most of the conifer seedling selections will be offered as greenhouse grown plugs rather than bare root stock. Seedlings grown as a plug have a soil mass surrounding the roots, are easier to plant and have a higher survival rate.

Prices are reasonable and are a fundraiser for LCSWA to offer college scholarships to Linn County students with forestry and conservation majors. It also provides annual funding for 4-H scholarships. These local 4-H students, their parents and LCSWA members provide a volunteer workforce to make the sale a success.

Buy online at https://lincountyswa.com/shop.

Purple Ball Donation

Photo courtesy of Robin Sherer

Cindy Rice, center, and Julie Dedman of SHEM accept a $3,000 donation from the Sweet Home Elks Lodge. The money, from the Elks' Purple Ball fundraiser, will contribute to SHEM's community projects.

The Icebox Performer Of The Week

This week's **ICEBOX Performer of the Week** goes to Scott Patton in Quality Control.

Scotty goes above and beyond every single day at Radiator Supply House. He has an incredible ability to anticipate where he's needed and always steps in without being asked. His consistency, attitude, and dedication help keep our standards high and our team moving forward.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

From page 3

investigating. 30700 block Pineway Dr., L. Report taken.

2:40 p.m. - Caller reported his vehicle stolen in Salem had possibly been sold to an individual in Sweet Home. Officer responded, information noted.

3:20 p.m. - Deputy contacted male whose vehicle was blocking timber gate. Vehicle was moved. 42900 block Marks Ridge Dr., SH. Deputy then contacted male who was getting ready to shoot in area where target shooting is not allowed on CTC property in same location. Male apologetic, moved along.

8:13 p.m. - Lisa Marie Magers, 45, arrested in 1900 block Main St., SH, on LCJC warrant for contempt of court, LMC warrant for FTA in theft case. Also cited for driving while suspended, driving uninsured. Cited and released.

9:20 p.m. - Ryan Ray Helms, 37, cited for driving while suspended, 1200 block 49th Ave., SH. ‘

9:41 p.m. - Multiple callers reported loud bang in area of 1200 block 47th Ave., SH. Officer responded, witnessed fireworks being set off, but was unable to locate where they were coming from.

10:43 p.m. - Ryan Greer, 47, cited for no operator’s license and driving uninsured, 3000 block Main St., SH.

11:28 p.m. - Caller reported assault in 4300 block Main St., SH. Officer responded, report taken for assault IV, strangulation and kidnapping.

Dec. 23

2:11 a.m. - Deputy provided extra patrol at Waterloo Chapel, 39400 block Gross St., Waterloo, following report of theft of fuel from vehicle.

3:45 a.m. - Caller reported that female in 5600 block Larch St., SH, stated she was assaulted. Officer responded, report taken, forwarded to D.A.’s Office for review.

9:03 a.m. - Caller reported parts of Old Hufford Road washing out, with sinkholes. Deputy and Linn County Road Dept. responded, began repairs. Road temporarily closed at Milepost 3.5.

9:07 a.m. - Dustin Clarneau, 51, of Lebanon, arrested on multiple outstanding warrants, 2200 block S. Santiam Hwy., L. Cited and released.

10:16 a.m. - CTC road crew found pry bar stuck in lock at High Deck 300 gate, High Deck Rd., Foster. Suspects were unable to gain entry, but pry bar will have to be cut out. Lock and pin damage estimated at $65, plus 1½ hours of labor. Report taken for criminal mischief.

10:51 a.m. - CTC reported lock cut off of High Deck 400 gate, High Deck Rd., Foster. Loss valued at $40. Report taken for theft.

1:09 p.m. - Robert Byers, 57, of Corvallis, cited for failure to carry proof of insurance, Main St./Vroman Ave., B.

1:16 p.m. - Two callers reported injured deer on side of road in 3200 block Main St., SH. When officer arrived, however, deer gained mobility and took off into the woods.

1:22 p.m. - Caller reported dog tied to back of vehicle in 1600 block Fir St., SH. Officer responded, located dog, which was removed from location. Animal Control to pick up dog.

3:00 p.m. - Cody Frye, 33, of Junction City, cited for expired tags, Washburn St./Cooley Ave., B.

3:11 p.m. - Theft reported in 1200 block 23rd Ave., SH. Report taken for theft III. Approximate value $20.

3:58 p.m. - Storage unit belonging to Special Olympics of Oregon burglarized in 36600 block Hwy. 34, L. Five computer tablets and five first aid kits missing. Damage and value of missing items estimated at more than $1,600. Investigation ongoing. Report taken.

5:50 p.m. - Deputy checked abandoned vehicle in 800 block Ash St., B. Owner, in Portland, advised they would remove vehicle next day.

9:11 p.m. - Stacy Manuel Teixeira, 60, arrested on LMC warrant for failure to appear, 1400 block 24th Ave., SH. Also cited for driving while suspended. Cited and released.

11:30 p.m. - Thomas Daniel Elmer, 54, arrested on SHMC warrant for FTC in theft case, LCCC warrant for two counts of forgery and Linn County supervisory warrant in theft case. Lodged at Linn County Jail. 2800 block Juniper St., SH.

Dec. 22

2:06 a.m. - Ivan James Robison, 28, arrested on LMC warrant for probation violation in driving while suspended case, 600 block Main St., SH. Cited and released.

9:07 a.m. - Caller from A&W, 1010 Main St., SH, reported male yelling at Burger Family figures outside restaurant and waving at passing cars. Officer responded, contacted male, who refused to identify himself, but said he was fine.

9:48 a.m. - Danielle Ruggles, 42, of Albany, cited for driving while suspended, driving uninsured, 35300 block Ede Rd., L.

11:53 a.m. - Caller reported accidental self-inflicted gunshot wound, 37000 block Gore Dr. Report taken.

1:42 p.m. - Theft reported in 39400 block Gross St., L.

3:52 p.m. - Theft reported in 40800 block Hwy. 228, SH.

4:01 p.m. - Caller reported vehicle dumped in 700 block 8th Ave., SH. Officer responded, vehicle posted for removal.

4:54 p.m. - Caller reported receiving messages threatening to post rumors about him if he didn’t send gift cards, Sweet Home area. Officer responded, recommended family disable social media and advised parents to not send any money.

5:20 p.m. - Crash reported in 200 block Center St., L. Report taken.

6:06 p.m. - Caller reported

See Public Safety, Page 16

Rollover on Hwy. 20

Emergency responders work at the scene of a single-vehicle crash that occurred shortly after 4 p.m. on Christmas, Dec. 25, near Milepost 26 on Hwy. 20 in the Narrows. According to OSP, multiple witnesses reported that the driver of the 2007 Toyota Camry, Zoe F. Giddings, 18, of Albany, lost control of the vehicle while navigating a curve “at high speeds.” The vehicle left the roadway and rolled multiple times. The driver and a passenger were transported to Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center with varying injuries, according to OSP. An investigation was “ongoing” at press time.

Photo by Scott Swanson

Christmas Eve carol singalong at American Legion

Local residents, top, sing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve at the new American Legion post (formerly Fir Lawn Lutheran Church) at the corner of Holley Road and 1st Avenue. The event drew nearly 100 people, who enjoyed treats and sang Christmas carols. Mack Greyling, right, spoke to the crowd about the birth of Jesus Christ. The Georgia Peaches and the Pit above, led the singalong. See more photos at sweethomenews.com.

Photos courtesy of Tim Cox

SHHS FIXES

From page 7

building here would come out so we would have a new art classroom, a new agriculture classroom and a separate greenhouse," he said, gesturing at the woodshop structure.

Another concern is the flat roofs over much of the older campus. Following the rainstorms earlier this month, a puddle several inches deep in places stretched the length of the breezeway along the west side of the "B" Building.

Strong noted that the flat roofs and breezeways were constructed "before campus security was a concern."

"The thought was, we need classrooms for kids," he said. "At that time, rather than thinking long-term durability. Our goal this time would be to provide a safe, secure campus for kids and we want to provide for durability so that what we build lasts for generations."

In a written report to School Board members in November, Strong listed desired improvements that include: weather-resistant roofs and classroom construction; eliminating "outdated" modular classrooms, removal of asbestos; improvements to CTE, music and physical education facilities; traffic safety improvements including a dedicated bus loop, and establishing a financial literacy lab for students.

OCSIM grants, along with other state funding, have allowed the district to make significant improvements to the Junior High and the elementary schools, while other nearby districts are struggling with buildings that needs significant improvements and voters that have not approved bond requests to make fixes.

Strong said a high priority is to make sure that the cost of any new construction would not exceed the current rate local property owners pay on the the district's current $4 million bond levy, approved by voters in May of 2016 and set to be paid off in early 2029. If voters approve a new bond, he said, the goal is to make sure the rate would simply be would be extended at exactly the same amount residents pay now.

He said that a big emphasis in any new construction will be creating facilities that the community as a whole can benefit from, and hearing from the community how needs should be met. .

"We definitely want to involve the community in our music and P.E. spaces," he said. "We are talking about creating a P.E. field within a secure campus, so the question is how can that P.E. field benefit the community?

"All of that will be what we want community input on."

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Willamette Industries remembered: 'Making the most of the best'

By Roberta McKern
For The New Era

As usual, the East Linn Museum is closed for the early part of the winter. A cold breeze swirls around it, but memories of the past remain safe within and we have the opportunity to borrow a book from the research room.

"Making the Most of the Best," by Catherine A. Baldwin, published by Willamette Industries, Inc. celebrates the company's 75th anniversary in 1981. The book is now an irony.

When the company was running full tilt, its employees included around 8,500 men and women in 14 states and it manufactured lumber, plywood, veneer, particleboard, pulp, paper, corrugated containers, bags and business forms and folding cartons.

It was a big, integrated corporation, much bigger than most of us know because for our area, it meant logging, operating sawmills, making plywood, and making wood chips for paper production.

Having someone related to us who worked there was about as close as we expected to get to the company.

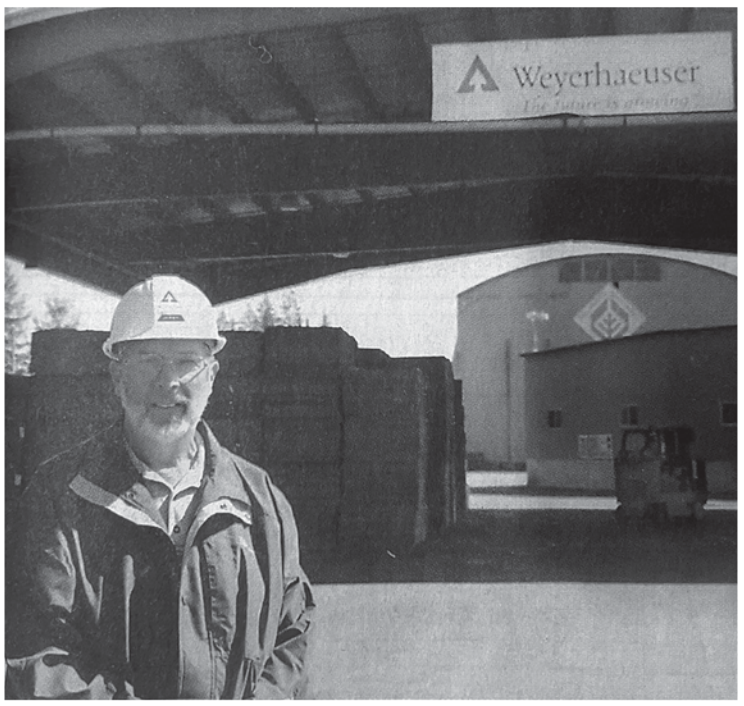
As it turns out, when we heard talk in our area of logging on Snow Peak or up on Swamp Mountain or for Santiam Lumber Company, we did not see the connection to Willamette Industries.

Willamette began logging on Snow Peak in 1939 and in 1941, Snow Peak along with Black Rock in Polk County, first focus of the company, were declared tree farms. Over 60 years later, we went on a trip sponsored by the company which led us to a stretch of forest carefully tended to allow growth of endless trees, mostly conifers and bright healthy green.

As for Santiam Lumber Company, in 1951, Willamette Valley bought an interest in that enterprise. Willamette Valley tended to sidle up to a company with which it could work and, by and by, if all went well, Willamette Valley gained complete ownership.

With the purchase of Santiam, Willamette Valley's name was lengthened to Willamette National in honor of the national forest behind the Sweet Home area.

They also entered into an agreement with the Hill family who had interests in the Cascades involving holdings associated with the granting of sections of land to railroads to encourage the building of a rail line.



File Photo
Foster Plywood Plant Manager Jerry Underwood stands on the grounds of the former Willamette Industries mill in 2002 after Weyerhauser acquired the corporation.

A railroad company could trade its sections for forest owned by the government under a legislative act similar to homesteading, quarter section (160 acres) by quarter section.

Louis Gerlinger, the founder of Willamette, firmly believed in the company's ownership of timber land for future development. He often directed his interest in acquisition to companies and individuals that brought in such lands.

Gerlinger had come to the United States from Alsace-Lorraine (an area of contention sometimes French and sometimes German). Born in 1853, at 17 he immigrated and settled successfully in Chicago.

When he was in his 40s, he travelled west to build a short-line railroad for the Harrimans between Portland, Vancouver and Yakima.

He then purchased 7,000 acres of timber in Polk County in the coast range near Dallas. He planned to harvest the trees and then sell the land to farmers for stump farms.

He built his own short-line railroad and incorporated the Salem, Falls City and Western Railway and raised money from the citizens of Dallas to run a four-mile line into timber country where he established a logging camp called Black Rock.

Two of his sons operated the railroad, which carried passengers as well as freight, and a third, George, began running the Fall City Lumber Company. Another enterprising man built a mill of his own on the edge of Dallas; the Gerlingers bought him out, and the Willamette Valley Lumber Company was inaugurated, sowing seeds for Willamette Industries. Gerlinger never sold the Polk County lands.

All did not go smoothly for Willamette. Fires occurred. Unions wanted to organize the employees. World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II intervened. Still, the company continued to grow.

But Willamette did more than just persevere; it often prospered, even though it was slapped by a heavy fine for pollution after the Environmental Protection Act went into effect in 1970.

Louis Gerlinger, Sr., died in 1948, but he left a legacy of canny management and intelligent forethought. He encouraged the diversification of products leading to the company's emphasis on making full-use or forest by-products with the manufacture of such lines as veneers, paper, business forms, and particleboard among other uses. (A plastic bag manufacturing unit is even listed.)

When Willamette celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1981, all personnel were feeling pretty good. There was continued hope to gain more acreage in tree farms for sustainability, at the time Willamette owned 555,000 acres under extensive management which meant replanting, fertilizing, and thinning although mother nature had to see to watering.

And the company maintained was a cadre of highly capable leaders and managers, family members included.

In Willamette's book, Donald R. Knudsen states the successful rules followed by

See Willamette, Page 12

Q: Do I have dry eyes or allergies?

Dr. Michael W. Stoner

A: Although allergy season is in full swing some people who have allergy type symptoms may in fact have dry eyes. There are sfic pecieye drops for allergies and dry eyes. It's important to use the correct drop or you may make your symptoms worse. Education or evaluation can facilitate the right treatment. Dry eye is an inflammation type condition in which there are insufficient tears to lubricate and nourish the eye. Tears are necessary for maintaining the health of the front surface of the eye and for providing clear vision. People with dry eyes either do not produce enough tears or have a poor quality of tears. Dry eye is a common and often chronic problem, particularly in older adults. The primary approaches used to manage and treat dry eyes include adding tears, conserving tears, increasing tear production, and/or treat the inflammation of the eyelids or eye surface that contributes to the dry eyes. Ocular Allergies is the abnormal response of sensitive eyes to contact with allergens and other irritating substances. Pollen in the air is the most common cause of allergy symptoms but other things in the air such as smoke, animal dander or fumes may also trigger an allergic response. The primary approach to manage ocular allergy is avoidance of allergic triggers, cool compresses, eyewash, oral anti-histamines or eye drops specific for allergies. Most eye drops used for dry eyes are mainly used to increase volume of tears. Drops used for ocular allergies have an anti-histamine component, which reduces the effects of histamine but also dry the eye. Using an ocular allergy drop will make a dry eye problem feel worse. If you are unable to find relief you should have your eyes evaluated to determine what condition you have and the best treatment options available to you specifically.

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TRANSPORTATION

Dial-A-Bus – The Sweet Home Dial-a-Bus is a curb-to-curb transportation system within the Sweet Home area within the School District #55, from Crawfordsville to Cascadia and as far west as Santiam Terrace. Rides are $1 within a five-mile radius of our office at the Sweet Home Senior Center. Over five miles, the charge is $2. Ten ride tickets are available for $10. Caretakers riding with a passenger ride at no charge. Call 24 hours in advance to schedule a ride at (541) 367-4775.

Linn Shuttle – The Linn Shuttle operates on a scheduled route, traveling from Sweet Home with stops in Lebanon and Albany. It leaves 10 times a day, Monday through Friday, and six times a day on Saturdays, from the Sweet Home Senior Center 880 18th Ave. Any requests for route deviations must be cleared through the Transportation Director. Rides are $1 each way. Through an agreement between Linn-Benton Community College and Linn Shuttle, LBCC students ride free of charge upon showing their current ID card. Multi-Ride tickets are available from the bus driver and at the office. The mission of the Linn Shuttle is to provide a safe transportation service that supports the economic, social, transportation and environmental needs of the community it serves.

Wolthuis Family Dentistry

Q: What are the worst drinks for my teeth?

A: Ironically, many of the foods and drinks we enjoy the most aren't good for us at all.

1. Soda: Two of the most harmful things for our teeth are sugar and acid, and carbonated beverages are full of both! The teeth literally start dissolbing under the attack of acid, leading to cavities.

2. Sports Drinks: Like soda, they are often full of sugar and are highly acidic. One study showed that lemon-lime Gatorade disolved more tooth enamel than any other drink, including Coke.

3. Fruit Juice: After reading to this point, you probably know what this is on the list.Juice has lots of sugar and acid too. While it could be considered a healthy option, most fitness experts will advise you not to drink you calories. Eat the entire fruit instead and enjoy the health benefits of the fiber.

Drink lots of water, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle and see your dentist regularly, to be sure your teeth stay in good shape.

COMPLIMENTARY ORTHODONTIC CONSULTATIONS (reg. $85)

Wolthuis Family Dentistry | Ivan H. Wolthuis, DMD, MAGD

1524 Long St. Sweet Home, OR |541-367-2931 | www.sweethomedental.com

MEMBER OF: American Dental Association, Oregon Dental Association, Southern Willamette Dental Society, Academy of General Dentistry (Master), International Association of Orthodontics

WILLAMETTE

From page 11

company policy.

There are eight:

(1) Fully utilize the forest resources (timber).

(2) Operate plants both continuously and efficiently (keep the machinery repaired).

(3) Provide stable employment to encourage a valued work force.

(4) Make certain customers receive quality products (no substitutions).

(5) Expand only to benefit shareholders.

(6) Stay in lines we know.

(7) Stay in domestic operations as long as opportunities exist (the company already had accounts abroad in Europe and Asia.

And, maybe most important of all,

(8) Adhere to conservative financial practices while relying on internally generated funds for expansion (neither a borrower nor a lender be).

Following these rules, we can now incorporate. This may sound like Economics 101, but we have must remember that Willamette was feeling very successful.

So, why have we said the company's success would become an "irony"?

In 2002 Willamette Industries, Inc., was purchased by Weyerhaeuser in a hostile buyout.

Hearsay is Weyerhaeuser's intent was to gain Willamette's carefully acquired timberlands. More extensive than Willamette, Weyerhaeuser had the same desire: to acquire additional timberlands as a sustained resource, and it had started tree farming even earlier than Willamette Industries. While it takes decades to grow a crop of trees, time becomes an investment.

In the East Linn area, there are limited traces of a company once an important employer here.

The veneer plant at Foster is under new ownership. Other facilities have bee razed. A few long and decaying drying sheds may still be around, but some have been burned, leaving charred remains.

Willamette took over the Santiam Company's mill in 1951and at some point after 1976, when the museum was opened, we received the whistle used in that mill.

It is a prized steamboat whistle with three tones – alto, tenor and bass – operating together. It was salvaged from the Terrascone, a packet boat in the Ohio-Kentucky region.

Mill employees of Santiam joined to purchase it and bring it here.

Whether it subsequently operated for the Willamette mills, we do not know. As a souvenir of the East Linn Museum's logging industry exhibit, the Willamette Industries anniversary book, "Making the Best of the Most" is about all we can definitively recognize. Copies given to Willamette Industries employees could still be somewhere in the vicinity.

Meanwhile, we can listen to the Terrascone's steam whistle in remembrance of Santiam and Willamette's logging days as written about many years ago.

The East Linn Museum opens again in February.

Happy New Year to us all!

SPEARS

From page 6

gon University and earning a master's degree in Disability Counseling in 2002, with an emphasis on vocational rehabilitation for both deaf and hearing individuals.

That expertise remains in demand. Spears frequently helps deaf individuals apply for jobs, navigate computer systems, and pursue new employment when physical limitations or injuries prevent them from continuing previous work. With vocational rehabilitation services often backlogged, her assistance fills a critical gap.

As a nurse, Spears has also devoted decades to education. Beginning in 1991, she taught CPR in nursing homes, later expanding to include CPR and First Aid training for foster care homes, including those serving deaf foster families in South Salem. That same year, she volunteered at Camp Taloali in Stayton, a residential camp for deaf children and adults, where she set up first aid stations and certified deaf staff in CPR and First Aid using sign language.

She continues this work today, traveling to foster homes with portable equipment to provide on-site training.

More recently, Spears has brought accessibility to the arts, interpreting productions such as the Singing Christmas Tree and "The Innkeepers," ensuring deaf audience members can fully experience performances often centered on music and dialogue.

Faith is another cornerstone of Spears' service. In 2005, she became an ordained minister so she could officiate weddings in American Sign Language. Since then, she has performed weddings, baptisms, and funerals entirely in sign language for deaf families.

"One Easter, I was interpreting in church when two deaf adult siblings jumped out of their seats and asked to be baptized right then," Spears recalled. "We went straight to it. You never know how or when God will move people."

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Sally Pelham, Treasurer
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Tonni Hutchinson, Director
Ruben Rivas, Director
Bob Weidner, Director
Jean Holcomb, Director
Dawn Mitchell, Executive Director

Public Notices

TRUSTEE'S NOTICE OF SALE
The Trust Deed to be foreclosed pursuant to Oregon law is referred to as follows (the "Trust Deed"):
Grantors: Scott Heinz
Trustee: First American Title of Oregon
Beneficiary: Oregon Community Credit Union
Date: March 28, 2023
Recording Date: March 28, 2023
Recording Reference: 2023-03213 County of Recording: Linn County The Successor Trustee is Patrick L. Stevens and the mailing address of the Successor Trustee is: Patrick L. Stevens, Successor Trustee, Hutchinson Cox, PO Box 10886, Eugene, OR 97440.
The Trust Deed covers the following described real property in the County of Linn and State of Oregon, ("the Property"):
THE LAND REFERRED TO HEREIN BELOW IS SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF Linn, STATE OF OR, AND IS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:
Beginning at a 1 inch rod, being the intersection of the North line of the Southwest quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section 1, Township 14 South, Range 1 West, of the Willamette Meridian, in Linn County, Oregon, and the Southeasterly right-of-way line of State Hwy. 228, said point being South 8921 'West 1304 feet from the Northeast corner of the Southwest quarter of the Northwest quarter of said Section 1; thence Southwesterly, along the Southeasterly right-of-way line of said State Hwy. 228, 100 feet to the Northwest corner of Parcel 1, PARTITION PLAT NO. 1995-90, Linn County, Oregon; thence North 89° 20'53 "East (North 89° 21 'East by prior record) 436 feet to a 5/8 inch rod; thence North 34°19'00 "East 107.37 feet (100 feet by prior record) to a 5/8 inch rod; being on the North line of the Southwest quarter of the Northwest quarter of said Section 1; thence South 89 20'20 "West (South 89° 21 'West by prior record) 449.88 feet to the Point of Beginning.
Commonly known as: 40972 Highway 228, Sweet Home, OR 97386.
Both the beneficiary and the trustee have elected to sell the said real property to satisfy the obligations secured by said trust deed and a notice of default has been recorded pursuant to Oregon Revised Statutes 86.735(3); the default for which the foreclosure is made is grantor's failure to pay when due the following sums:
The monthly installment payments beginning December 25, 2024 and continuing through the installment due June 12, 2025; plus interest and late charges; real property taxes, plus interest and penalties; and other liens and penalties. Total default as of June 12, 2025 is $2,763.34.
By reason of said default, the beneficiary has declared all sums owing on the obligation secured by the trust deed immediately due and payable, those sums being the following to wit:
$49,999.64 principal balance, plus unpaid interest through and including June 12, 2025 in the amount of $3,235.85, together with the sum of $131.59 which represents late charges, together with interest on the principal sum of $49,999.64 with interest at the rate of 10.50% per annum from June 13, 2025 until paid, together with insurance paid by the Beneficiary on the property, late charges and penalties, trustee fees, attorney fees, foreclosure costs and any sums advanced by the Beneficiary pursuant to the trust deed. The date, time and place of the sale is:
Date: Wednesday, February 18, 2026
Time: 11:00 o'clock a.m.
Place: Front Entrance, Linn County Courthouse, 300 SW 4th Ave., Albany, OR 97321

RIGHT TO CURE
The right exists under ORS 86.753 to have this foreclosure proceeding dismissed and the Trust Deed reinstated by doing all of the following at any time that is not later than five days before the date last set for the sale:
(1) Paying to the Beneficiary the entire amount then due (other than such portion as would not then be due, had no default occurred);
(2) Curing any other default complained of herein that is capable of being cured by tendering theperformance required under the Trust Deed; and
(3) Paying all costs and expenses actually incurred in enforcing the Obligation and Trust Deed, together with Trustee's and attorney's fees not exceeding the amounts provided by ORS 86.753.
We are a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information we obtain will be used to collect the debt.
Cashier's checks for the foreclosure sale must be payable to Oregon Community Credit Union.
Dated: November 21, 2025
/s/ Patrick L. Stevens
Patrick L. Stevens, Successor Trustee
Hutchinson Cox
Attorneys at Law
PO Box 10886
Eugene, OR 97440
Phone: (541) 686-9160
Fax: (541) 343-8693
(12/3, 12/10, 12/17, 12/24)____

CITY OF HALSEY
PUBLIC NOTICE – Vacation of West A & B Street
The following matter shall be reviewed by the Halsey City Council at a public hearing on January 13th, 2026, 7:00 p.m. at Halsey City Hall, 100 Halsey St., 97348. The purpose of this hearing is to obtain public comments pertaining to the vacation of West "N" Street. Oregon law requires that testimony and evidence must be directed toward the decision criteria. Interested parties may appear in person to comment or give written testimony to City Hall prior to 4:00 pm on Monday, September 8th.
APPLICANT'S NAME: Central Valley Church
TOPIC OF HEARING: Street Vacation of West A & B Streets, between West 6th & 7th Streets
LOCATION OF PROPERTY: Approximate location, lot south of 657 American Dr., Halsey, OR
PRESENT PLAN DESIGNATION: Residential
PRESENT ZONING: Residential
SUMMARY OF REQUEST: To vacate right of way from location with existing structure and to access all potential existing lots.
Briana Parra, City Administrator
Published in The Times on December 24th & December 31st
(12/24 - 12/31)_____

Notice of Public Hearing before the Halsey Planning Commission
Wednesday, January 7th, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. City Hall, 100 W. Halsey Street, Halsey, Oregon
The City of Halsey has received a land use application from Leland and Jayson East, requesting approval of a site plan to construct a coffee and food cart business at 1015 W 2nd Street in Halsey. Capitol Coffee will include on-site bathrooms, electrical and plumbing for each cart, and a customer seating area.
The City of Halsey will hold a public hearing before the Planning Commission on Tuesday, January 7th, to consider the land use application. The hearing will be held at 6:00 pm in the upstairs Council Chambers of the Halsey City Hall on the date listed above.
APPLICANT: Jayson East
PROJECT LOCATION: 1015 W 2nd Street, Halsey, OR
HALSEY ZONING: Commercial
Assessor's Map: 14S-O4W-0iDA; tax lots 2000and 2100
The application, decision criteria and staff report will be available at City Hall for a minimum of seven days prior to the hearing, no later than 4:00 p.m. on January 2nd, 2025. A copy of the staff report may be obtained at City Hall or may be viewed on the City of Halsey website.
At the public hearing, the Planning Commission will consider the proposal and receive public testimony. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Planning Commission may deny or approve the application as is or with conditions or modifications. The Planning Commission will make its decision based on criteria found in the Halsey Development Code, Chapter 4.3, Section 4.3.150 "Site Design Review Approval Criteria". The Halsey Development Code can be viewed under "Government" and then "Municipal Code" at the City of Halsey website: http://www.cityofhalsey.com/
Any person wishing to provide testimony must address the decision criteria. Failure to raise an issue precludes appeal and failure to specify to which criterion the comment is directed precludes appeal based on that criterion. City Hall is accessible to people with disabilities. Please call City Hall (541-369-2522) by noon the day before the meeting if you need an interpreter for the hearing impaired or any other special accommodation or if you have any questions related to the application.
Written comments may be submitted by mail to the City of Halsey, Attention: City Administrator, P.O. Box 10, Halsey, OR 97348 or faxed to (541) 369-2521, by 4:00 p.m. December 19, 2023. Copies of all materials relied upon by the applicant are available for review and may be obtained for the actual cost of photocopies and postage (if needed). Please contact City Hall with any questions at (541) 369-2522.
(12/24 - 12/31)_____

LEGAL NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned has been appointed Personal Representative of the Estate of Nikki Lee Fox-Hart, deceased, by the Linn County Circuit Court, State of Oregon, #25PB10334. Persons having claims against the Estate are required to present them, with proper vouchers, within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice to the undersigned or the claims may be barred. All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings may obtain additional information from the Court, the undersigned or the attorney for the undersigned.
Dated and first published December 31, 2025
Steven Hart
c/o Kevin O'Connell
O'Connell Hval, LLP
8555 SW Apple Way, Suite 310
Portland, Oregon 97225
Phone: (503) 227-2900
koconnell@ohmtaxlaw.com
(12/31)_____

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF LINN
In the Matter of the Estate of DELBERT GEORGE BAKER, Decedent.
Case No. 25PB10165
NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS Notice is hereby given that Ralph C. Baker has been appointed personal representative. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them, with proper vouchers attached, to the personal representative or his attorney, DONALD M. KELLEY, at law offices of KELLEY KELLEY, 110 North Second Street, Silverton, OR 97381, within four months after the date of publication of this notice, or the claims may be barred.
All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings may obtain additional information from the records of the court, the personal representative or the attorney for the personal representative.
Dated and published on December 31, 2025.
Ralph C. Baker
Personal Representative
(12/31)_____

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF LINN
Probate Department Case No: 25PB11048
NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS
In the Matter of the Estate of BARBRA JEAN FIELDS, Deceased
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Julia Dawn Bright has been appointed Personal Representative of the above-named estate. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them with vouchers attached to the attorney for the Personal Representative at the following address: JBHW, ATTN: Andrew Bridge, PO Box 5, Dallas, Oregon 97338, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice, or the claims may be barred.
All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings may obtain additional information from the records of the Court, the Personal Representative, or the attorneys for the Personal Representative.
Dated and first published on December 31, 2025.
Attorney for the Personal Representative:
Andrew Bridge, OSB No. 194937
Jarvis, Bridge, Halttunen & Weyer, LLC
484 NE Bovard Avenue
Dallas, OR 97338
Telephone: (503) 623-6676
Fax: (503) 714-8727
bridge@jbhwlaw.com
(12/31)_____

Sweet Home Police Department
1950 Main St., Sweet Home, OR 97386
(541) 367-5181
Notice of intent to dispose of property under ORS 98.245
The Sweet Home Police Department has in its physical possession the unclaimed personal property described below. If you have any ownership interest in any of the unclaimed property, you must file a claim with the Sweet Home Police Department within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice or you will lose interest in that property. You may file a claim that presents proof satisfactory that you are the lawful owner or security interest holder of the property. The unclaimed property may be donated to a non-profit organization or another government agency; retained for use by the City of Sweet Home; destroyed; or sold at public auction through govdeals.com, ebay.com or Facebook at any time after the 30-day period expires, Dec. 31, 2025-Jan. 30, 2026 (PP 25-10):
Eight books, lighters, vaping devices, clothing, bedding with miscellaneous small items, wallet for Jaime Villafana Chavez, bike frame and tire, backpack, bicycles, insurance card for Dick Reynolds, tents, suitcase, wagon, tarps, tools, bike trailer, EBT card for Donald Rodgers.
(12/31 - 1/21)_____

Statewide Notices

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SERVICES: Get a break on your taxes! Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 1-844-533-9173 today!

SERVICES: We Buy Houses for Cash AS IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy three-step process: Call, get cash offer and get paid. Get your fair cash offer today by calling Liz Buys Houses: 1-866-249-8679.

SERVICES: We buy 8,000 cars a week. Sell your old, busted or junk car with no hoops, haggles or headaches. Sell your car to Peddle. Easy three-step process. Instant offer. Free pickup. Fast payment. Call 1-855-980-4382.

SERVICES: The bathroom of your dreams in as little as 1 day. Limited Time Offer – $1000 off or No Payments and No Interest for 18 months for customers who qualify. BCI Bath & Shower. Many options available. Quality materials & professional installation. Senior & Military Discounts Available. Call Today! 1-844-847-9778.

SERVICES: Jacuzzi Bath Remodel can install a new, custom bath or shower in as little as one day. For a limited time, waiving ALL installation costs! Additional terms apply. Subject to change and vary by dealer. (Offer ends 12/31/25.) Call 1-855-341-5268.

SERVICES: Prepare for power outages today with a Generac Home Standby Generator. Act now to receive a FREE 5-Year warranty with qualifying purchase. Call 1-877-557-1912 today to schedule a free quote. It's not just a generator. It's a power move.

SERVICES: Portable Oxygen Concentrator May Be Covered by Medicare! Reclaim independence and mobility with the compact design and long-lasting battery of Inogen One. Free information kit! Call 855-839-0752.

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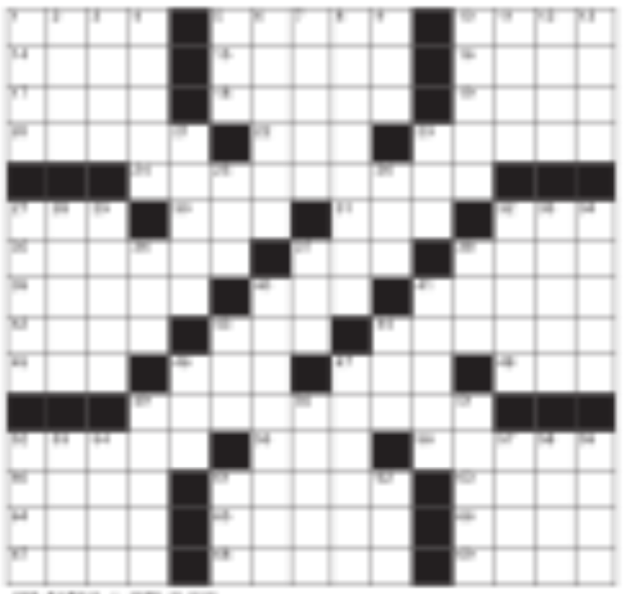
CROSSWORD



CLUES ACROSS

1. Unpleasant substance
5. Oil group
10. One-time Yankees rookie sensation
14. Ireland
15. Less easily found
16. Southeast Nigerian people
17. Bridgeline Digital stock designation
18. Play loudly
19. Elegantly fashionable
20. Open area
22. Frozen water
25. Sacred Islamic site
28. "Robotic" walkers
27. Follower signal
30. Cease to exist
34. Coal
35. Dwelers' group
38. Love amazingly
37. Avian cries
38. Greek sophist
39. Grandmothers
40. Affair
41. Reminiscences of bachelorhood days and years
42. Actress __ Rachel Wood
45. Not bright
46. Western hero personals
49. Baseball speedster Gordon
48. Golf score
47. Transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm
48. Diego, Francisco Atacélito
49. Songs to one's lover
52. Cattle's mammary gland
55. Fleeing sin
56. Fencing sword
60. Scarlet's home
61. Hold valuables
65. Italian Seaport
66. Cats and __
68. Bad places to live
68. Large wading bird
67. "Witches"
68. Cover with drops
69. Props up the head

CLUES DOWN

1. Philippine province
2. Shallow channel
3. Type of acid
4. Cygnus' brightest star
5. One who buys and sells securities (abbr.)
6. Ill will
7. Plant of the goosefoot family
8. Intellectual
9. Silkworm
10. Shiny silicate minerals
11. Albanian civilian title
12. What you wear when eating BBQ (2 words)
13. Soul and calypso song
21. Advises
23. "The Spanish Tragedy" author
25. Sea outside the earth
26. Public
27. Adjusted
28. Succulent plant
29. Forearm bones
32. Belonging to Egyptian oracle Apollo's colleague
33. Type of marital illness
34. One from Syria
36. 007's creator
37. Direct toward
38. Fix ___ mode
40. Large carrier
41. Hillsides
43. Patriotic woman (abbr.)
44. Conway's words
46. For each
47. Flower cluster
49. Closes a deal
50. Arabian desert
51. Vaccine against poliomyelitis
53. American state
53. Religion practiced in China
54. Type of sediment
57. Hall of Fame Ruth
59. "Layla" singer Clapton
59. Gamble
61. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
62. Midway between south and southwest

SUDOKU

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Level: Advanced

SHFAD, former staffer, settle suit

By Scott Swanson
Of The New Era

A legal dispute between the Sweet Home Fire and Ambulance District and a former staffer, Zach Lincoln, has ended in a settlement agreement.

Fire Chief Nick Tyler announced to the district Board of Directors at their Nov. 18 meeting that a resolution had been reached, but added that there was a waiting period at that time to make sure all the parties were comfortable with the agreement.

He said later that terms of the settlement are "confidential."

"There was no financial impact to the fire district," Tyler said.

Lincoln appeared at the SHFAD Board's April 2023 meeting, where he outlined alleged incidents of misconduct by department administrators and staffers. The 15-year district veteran,was terminated March 29 of that year after not signing a settlement agreement after being on administrative leave for more than 11 months.

In letters to board members he had sent previously, Lincoln had alleged "violations of Oregon and federal law, including allegations of criminal conduct" regarding current Chief Nick Tyler and his predecessor, Dave Barringer.

He claimed the district had violated 21 Oregon laws dealing with issues including discrimination, workplace harassment, sick leave, family leave, workers compensation, return to work by injured employees, reasonable accommodation, disability issues, prohibited conduct by public employers, whistleblower retaliation and other alleged violations.

Lincoln, representing himself, filed a complaint against the district in Linn County Circuit Court on April 15, 2024. Circuit Court Judge Thomas McHill dismissed the case in May of 2024.

The state Employment Relations Board, following a June 2024 hearing, held at SHFAD, dismissed Lincoln's complaints about the civil service process that resulted in his termination, ruling that he had failed to meet filing deadline requirements and did not testify at the hearing.

A separate hearing before Administrative Law Judge B. Carlton Grew on Nov. 20-21, 2024, and Jan. 16-17, 2025, involved an unfair labor practice/duty of fair representation complaint by Lincoln against the Sweet Home Professional Firefighters IAFF Local union. Grew dismissed the case on May 2 after "repeated nonresponses" from Lincoln, according to the order in the case.

According to court documents, Lincoln, again representing himself, sued the district in federal court in Eugene on April 10, 2024, alleging that Tyler, Barringer and the district violated his first, fourth and 14th amendment rights, state law and administrative rules and its own policies by retaliating against Lincoln and "wrongfully terminating him" from his position as a lieutenant in the department.

He sought $1.1 million in economic damages, lost wages and employee benefits.

In May of this year, District Judge Mustafa T. Kasubhai ruled that two of Lincoln's nine claims could proceed, while dismissing the others.

Lincoln alleged that Barringer had violated his Fourth Amendment rights preventing unreasonable search and seizure by using a first responder application installed on Lincoln's phone to track Lincoln's location for a non-emergency response purpose. Lincoln said in the lawsuit that he had called in sick to work because he was nervous about Barringer's presence.

The district argued that the statute of limitations for that claim had expired, but the judge ruled that was not the case, that the incident in question had actually occurred within the window allowed by law, and therefore ruled that the complaint could stand.

The judge also ruled in favor of Lincoln's complaint that he had been improperly prevented by SHFAD from receiving a civil service hearing after demanding such following his receipt of notice of his potential termination, as required under Oregon law. But he ruled that whether those claims were valid "is yet to be determined."

Lincoln alleged that SHFAD officials violated his First Amendment rights of free speech by retaliating against him for raising concerns about alleged wasteful spending and unlawful conduct.

The judge ruled that Lincoln failed to show that the speech in question was directed at a matter of public concern, which is required by case law, but rather was related to his job duties, work environment and interpersonal relationships, which, courts have ruled, is not protected under the First Amendment.

Lincoln alleged that the department violated his Fourteenth Amendment due process rights by "maliciously" creating a "civil service system" to prevent him from receiving a public hearing regarding his pending termination.

The judge ruled that Lincoln had been given "an opportunity for a hearing to dispute the allegations made against him" and failed to meet the legal requirement that he prove that the district had "engaged in any conduct that shocks the conscience or was constitutionally arbitrary."

Lincoln also complained that the department lacked policies and procedures to address claims of workplace harassment, but the judge ruled that Lincoln's claim was not one that the state law requiring such policies was enacted to prevent, and therefore dismissed that claim.

Lincoln alleged that when he applied for a part-time job in Salem after his termination, Tyler got him blacklisted, which, according to state law, is the intent to injure someone by preventing them from securing future employment.

But the judge ruled that Lincoln failed to allege that there was actual malicious intent or a wrongful act. Rather, the judge ruled, Lincoln had simply described how Tyler had been contacted and the Salem job offer, which was conditional, was rescinded after that conversation.

Lincoln also alleged that the department (Tyler and investigator Timothy Doney, who had been hired to conduct an investigation into whether Lincoln had violated any policies) violated state law by failing to provide records and refusing to acknowledge that they even existed.

While the judge cited Lincoln's assertions that he had requested records he was seeking "at least six times," he ruled that Lincoln had not proven he had made a formal public records request as required by state law. He also noted that Lincoln failed to allege that he had filed a petition to the District Attorney's Office, which had denied the request.

Lincoln alleged that the department failed to follow state law in giving him a chance to return to work after an injury, which, the judge noted, "appears to be anxiety caused by the 2012 modified HIV results."

However, the judge ruled, Lincoln's complaint stemmed from incidents that occurred in 2022, and state law limits the right of reinstatement to three years from the actual injury, which occurred in 2012.

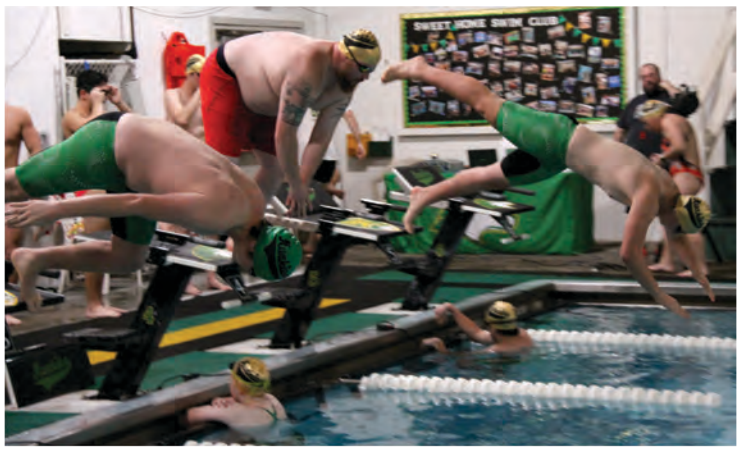
Lincoln complained that department officials changed his work schedule in violation of his union contract and state law in an effort to force him to resign. The judge ruled that the law cited by Lincoln did not cover his type of work and therefore he was not covered under that statute.

Kasubhai on Nov. 26 granted a motion by SHFAD to end the case.

Husky swimmers reunite

Sweet Home High School swimming alumni gathered Friday, Dec. 26, for the second annual Green and Gold meet , which brings past swimmers back to the school pool for a fun competition with current swimmers. Above are all of this year's participants. Above right, Kirsten Sautel, now at the University of Idaho, dives in for a race. At right, 2002 grad James Davis, center, takes on some of the current Huskies in the 50 Freestyle. Below right, Megan Hager, (2020) who went on to swim collegiately for four years at Colorado State, swims the 200 Freestyle. Below, alums and current swimmers compete in the backstroke. Results were not available at press time, but participants looked to be having a good time, if a bit winded in some cases. Sarah Rosa (2008) was named athlete of the meet. See more at sweethomenews.com.

Action Photos by Scott Swanson



Facebook Photo
KC Smith stands with one of the young women who helped him decorate the tree this year.

Photo by Scott Swanson
K.C. Smith surveys the chopped-up Douglas fir tree which, he said, was destroyed on Dec. 23.

Effort to decorate tree for kids comes to bad end by vandal(s)

By Scott Swanson
Of The New Era

K.C. Smith got an idea a few years ago as he drove past a little Douglas fir growing behind the guardrail in the parking lot on the southwest corner of North River Drive and Foster Dam Road.

"I thought I'd decorate it," he said. "I was trying to do something for the kids."

Smith, who asserted that he is not a "Christmas person" and says he can count all his relatives "one one hand," put tinsel and some decorations on the tree.

He said he went to Dollar Tree and bought some decorations and put them on the tree. He's done it every year since.

This year, though, as he decorated the tree, he got some attention.

As he was decorating the tree on the afternoon of Dec. 19, he said, a car with a couple of young women in it drove up and stopped.

According to Katt Brunkal, who posted a photo on Facebook, they asked if they could help and Smith agreed. They also took photos when they were finished.

"He talked about how he is so disheartened by all the trash people leave around the lake and around Sweet Home, and he told us about how every time he goes on walks, he takes a trash bag with him to clean up as much as he can," Brunkal wrote in her post.

Smith told The New Era the same thing, saying he was particularly disgusted by the trash left by loiterers in that particular parking lot. Once, he said, someone left a washing machine there. He said he wrote on the side of the dumped appliance, "Is this a city dump?"

On the night of Dec. 23, Smith said, someone had chopped the tree up with an axe or machete, he said. A Linn County Sheriff's deputy investigated the situation on Dec. 26, as the tree was on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property.

Smith was clearly disgusted, as he and a staffer from The New Era surveyed the damage the day after Christmas.

"I'm really p - - - - d," he said. "I like kids. I thought the kids might enjoy it."

PUBLIC SAFETY

From page 9

SH, driver apologized and left. Officer responded, report taken for hit and run, damage under $2,500.

7:30 p.m. - Caller reported red car jumping railroad tracks in area of 9th Ave./Nandina St., SH. Officer responded, contacted driver, who was counseled.

9:17 p.m. - Colton Kendall McKay, 30, arrested for driving while suspended, 1300 block 22nd Ave., SH. Cited and released.

Dec. 21

2:42 a.m. - Billy Wayne Hatch, 48, arrested by Lebanon police on SHMC warrant in criminal driving case. Cited to appear Jan. 28.

7:37 a.m. - Deputy responded to harassment call in 39300 block Mt. Hope Dr., L. Caller reported threatening posts on social media, but screenshots of posts received by deputy did not include aspects of criminality. No threats of harm to caller.

8:43 a.m. - Shay Cameron Kepler arrested by Lebanon police on SHMC warrant for FTA in endangering the welfare of a minor case. Cited to appear Jan. 14.

10:36 a.m. - Calle reported customer pulled away from gas pump with nozzle still in their vehicle, damaging pump at Towne Pump, 890 Main St., SH. Second caller reported he accidentally pulled away from the pump, but was providing his name and phone number to employee, who was demanding insurance information and being rude to him. Officer responded, noted some "miscommunication" between parties. Info exchanged.

10:59 a.m. - Colton Kendall McKay, 30, arrested for driving while suspended, 4100 block Main St., SH. Cited and released.

11:26 a.m. - Eric Strokson, 36, of Lebanon, cited on warrant, cited for driving while suspended, driving un insured, 30800 block Waterloo Rd., L. Report taken.

1:16 p.m. - Brittney Duncan, 28, of Lebanon, arrested on outstanding warrants following traffic stop in 700 block Crowfoot Rd., L. Driver, who was not named in Sheriff's log, cited for driving while suspended and driving without insurance. Report taken.

1:18 p.m. - Sherry Charlene Chase, 52, of Sheridan, cited for speeding, 61/45, driving without insurance, Bishop Way/Pearl St., B.

1:38 p.m. - Caller reported occupant of vehicle attempting to sell meat products in Halsey. Deputy searched area, but was unable to locate the vehicle.

2:22 p.m.- Charas Lelainia Blanco, 52, arrested at Linn County Jail on SHMC warrant for FTA in theft case. Cited to appear Jan. 14.

2:47 p.m. - Omar Edgar Arroyo, 22, arrested on LCCC warrant in DUII, four counts of reckless endangering and reckless driving cases, 4900 block Main St., SH.

3:04 p.m. - Brandon Matthew Moran, 32, cited for driving uninsured, Main St./47th Ave., SH.

3:16 p.m. - James Tagen, 51, of Lebanon, cited on LMC warrant, 28300 block Hwy. 20, SH. Report taken.

7:29 p.m. - Charles Hayden, 52, of Woodburn, cited for failure to display p[lates, driving uninsured, driving without operating privileges and failure to carry registration, 1900 block S. Main St., L. Report taken.

10:14 p.m. - Domestic disturbance reported in 39400 block Woodbine Dr., L. Individuals involved offered differing accounts of what happened and there were no visible injuries. Report taken and forwarded to DA's Office for review.

See more and updated Public Safety reports at sweethomenews.com.