

Is there a fire in your future?

To the Editor:

2014 is already setting state records, and more records are likely to be set or broken as we progress through this New Year. We are having our second fire watch and Red Flag Warning for the year, and it is only the 21st of January. Statewide CalFire has already responded to 289 wildland fires, compared to zero for this same time last year. The winter model forecast for northern California, along with the increased fire danger we are recognizing statewide, has initiated an early hiring of some seasonal CalFire firefighters to better respond to fires.

We are looking at another potential year of drought with little measurable precipitation being predicted. Additionally, the State Warning Center is forecasting that this may be the continuation of several more years of drought for California. Hopefully they are wrong in their prediction, but we should all take steps now to ensure the safety of our homes, businesses and families.

Please make sure your address for your home or business is clearly marked and visible for emergency responders, day or night.

If you live in a State Responsibility Area (SRA), you are responsible for ensuring that your property is in compliance with California's building and fire codes that call for homeowners to take proactive steps to protect their property from a wildfire.

California law requires that homeowners in SRA clear out flammable materials such as brush or vegetation around their buildings to 100 feet (or the property line) to create a defensible space buffer. This helps halt the progress of an approaching wildfire and keeps firefighters safe while they defend your home.

The law also requires new homes to be constructed with fire-resistant materials. By building your home with materials like fire-resistant roofing, enclosed eaves and dual-paned windows, you are hardening your home and giving it a fighting chance to survive a wildfire.

By following the law, you will help prevent buildings from being ignited by flying embers, which can travel as much as a mile away from a wildfire. You also provide that buffer space that gives firefighters a zone of safety as they work to protect properties.

Carl Magann, Fire Chief, Willits

Being part of the solution

To the Editor:

Our community and our schools have been through some very difficult circumstances lately. We are in a water crisis. There may not be a Willits Otters Program this year if they can't find a head coach. The high school has lost many wonderful and beloved employees this year, and the students are left wondering whether anyone still cares about them.

We are struggling with the lack of revenue the pot industry has brought to town. Many of these issues affect me personally as well as other families I care about.

As I struggle to decide whether I want to look around for a better place to raise my kids, as many younger families in Willits have done, I realize that I can either be a part of the exodus or a part of the solution.

Our small town has some things and people that truly make it worth living in. Three days a week, Mike Colvig volunteers his time at 5:30 am to keep his community fit and healthy. This is a great Crossfit class, and 10 to 20 people regularly show up: high school students, accountants, teachers and mechanics, to name a few. The support and camaraderie is without measure.

We still have some wonderful teachers and administrators in town. Olga O'Neil has maintained grace and operated with wisdom through major changes at her school site. There are also still many gifted teachers: Anne Hammond, Molly Snider, Mackenzie Erikson and Megan Wolf at the Elementary Charter, to name a few that my kids have loved and who have hung in there through the ups and downs.

We have some great new officers on our police force who are both friendly and conscientious.

I can go into Safeway, or J.D. Redhouse, or the Book Juggler, or Buster's on a given Friday evening and see people I know, share a hug, catch up on the week, or just chat about the weather and the water crisis. My kids can run around in the woods in Brooktrails and build forts and ride bikes, and I feel perfectly safe about it.

A while back, we visited family in the LA area, and my son was commenting about some of the homeless people. I pointed out that we have hobos in Willits, too. He said to me: "yes Mom,

What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from readers

citizens are asked to be cautious in their daily activities. Even the action of trying to create a buffer could create the spark or heat source necessary to start a fire. Use caution with smoking materials, and please use common sense with any fire or open flame. Even something as harmless as a small warming fire has a great potential to cause damage to our neighborhoods.

There is a county-wide burn ban in effect, and several local declarations of open burning bans due to the ever-increasing danger of fire in our urban wildland areas. Please honor the burn ban, and protect your property and that of your neighbors from fire. Most people are surprised by the rapid rate of fire spread and the witnessed fire behavior they experience when their fire escapes their control.

Help us to help you this fire season. Our wildland fire experience started on April 24, 2013 with a 5-acre controlled burn escape, and has never really ended. We are still responding to controlled burn escapes now in January 2014. Winter is a term that really doesn't describe our current weather or fire conditions.

In regards to sky lanterns, prayer balloons, or lamps, although there currently are no state laws in California directly challenging their use, sending out an unmanned, uncontrolled aerial device with an open flame is not recommended by this fire department, especially with the current fire danger. There are several municipalities and counties in California that have local statutes against their use, statutes created because of the fires started by these devices coming down on structures and vegetation, causing property damage. Globally there have been several fires causing major property damage and even fatalities related to the use of these sky lanterns. Seeing the array of these lanterns decorating the trees along Highway 20 leaving Main Street towards Blosser Lane is disconcerting no matter what the original intent was.

Be fire safe, and support your local fire department and your volunteers.

Kelley Labus, Brooktrails

Are You Ready? part 2

To the Editor:

Being ready for an emergency in today's world is different than being ready for an emergency in the past. There are short-term emergencies and long-term emergencies. The world is very crowded, and trouble is closer to home. Trouble that could affect us in a very severe way is a very real topic of concern.

I've been concerned about our preparation for years and have voiced my concern to the powers that run our community and have been politely listened to and ignored. Things are the same as always, and the political class who are supposed to be thinking about our survival are silent and will not bring to the forefront all of the issues that affect our very survival. Current planning by the government agencies calls for a seven-day period where Willits will have to be on its own if a disaster strikes.

What kind of disasters are our political class concerned with? Fire, flood, earthquake. OK by me, but that is not my concern. Our traditional response to disasters is real well-thought out, and if all hell breaks loose, our government will come to the rescue and help, right? Not so fast: What if they can't come to our rescue? During the Great Depression, things fell apart, and goods and services to communities stopped flowing. There are issues in today's world that could leave little old Willits by ourselves. Not for a week but for months or longer.

that is self-sustaining. Right under the sign that hangs in front of Safeway, we should hang another one that says: "Willits: gardening capital of California."

I would if I could incorporate the whole of the Willits valley into one political unit so as to have continuity of political purpose and go for it all out. It will take political willpower and foresight to realize the dangers we face and do something about it. Food and water are first. This plan would save Willits, if the world around us becomes hostile and doesn't support us anymore. (Just because we have not had to deal with these issues in the past does not means we have to despair or stick our heads in the sand and do nothing.)

I would have a position in the city government that would be a manager of changing our way of life to grow as much food as possible. Survey every street and put a backyard garden everywhere possible. Every household should have chickens and ducks for eggs and meat. Every rancher out in the valley should have livestock as a back-up food supply.

The lawn that grows at the beginning of Highway 20 could be plowed up, and a huge community garden be put into place. Right in public view: "See what we are doing? We are growing our own food." We could establish a farmers'/ gardeners college and become "Healthy, Wealthy and Wise," to quote Ben Franklin. New businesses would sprout up: restaurants and farm supply stores, tourism and hotels, we could become a destination to see how to make change in rural America. If we did this, it would bring prosperity and fame to our community. It is a healthy thing to do and to teach our children to do.

It should be our goal to be as self-sufficient as possible and not depend on a system that could disappear right in front of us. Growing food locally will make us strong and independent. If the world around us becomes unstable, we need time to be able to adapt and that means our food supply must be first. Right now we have one week of food in Willits, that's it. Think about that and ask yourself: Does this make sense? We need to do something about this.

During the Cold War with Russia, there were six months of food stocked at the Oakland Army base for the whole Bay Area. Our political leaders then were looking out for the future; not now, that's all gone.

I am old and a student of history, and have perspective on life and times, especially the coming and goings of people and cultures. It is our responsibility, and no one else's, to see that we prepare for future events and our most important issue: our food supply.

Keith Rosen, Willits

Little connection with Willits

To the Editor:

I moved to Willits 12 years ago. On occasion, "I am asked how do I like the area?" Generally, I am reluctant to answer, because I have mixed thoughts. I am surrounded by beauty and tranquility, but find little connection with the town itself and only a few of its people. I do plan to remain in Willits.

I contribute financially and have volunteered many times for assorted events in Willits. What I write is as an outsider looking in.

Naïveté is all I can say when I first moved here. I saw older men riding bicycles and young people sunning on the grass, and I thought what an environmentally thoughtful community. Time passed, and I saw more men on bicycles and more young people on the grass and realized this was called poverty.

Last night, a young teenager asked me for money as he was walking from one gas station to the next. I asked, "Where are you staying?" His response was "By the railroad tracks with my mom." My anger became directed to the mom. Who would allow her son to sleep on dirt and in the cold? Poverty is in all communities, but it is ever so present and visible in Willits.

The Redevelopment Agency (RDA) originated in 1945, but was abolished in 2011. Many cities and towns took advantage of its use. The agency's purpose was to provide money to breathe life into a blighted area to encourage new investment. Typically, our property taxes provided the largest supply of this income. Willits could have secured this money to revitalize the community economically by making it attractive for new businesses and investors.

It also provided funds for affordable housing, public facilities, and public infrastructure. To name a few, Lucerne, Rocklin, Lodi, Windsor, and Cloverdale took advantage of RDAs. All of these towns developed points of interest to encourage new business and residents. They made their towns alive with color and beauty. Lodi and Windsor

Read the rest of **Letters** | *Over on Page 4*



Above: Kaleb Whitehust, who's been selling tickets at the family business, J.D. Redhouse, has sold nearly \$500 worth of raffle tickets for his school.

Photo by Jennifer Poole

Willits Elementary Charter School's Winter Gala

Celebrating the Chinese New Year

The Willits Elementary Charter School is hosting its second annual Winter Gala this weekend, and the public is invited. The 15-day Chinese New Year celebration starts on Friday of this week, and the Saturday, February 1, gala in Willits has a Chinese New Year theme.

The evening, from 4 to 7 pm at the Little Lake Grange, will feature a no-host menu of "some very tasty Asian food made by parents and volunteers," said WEC Director Kara McClellan, "including fresh spring rolls, along with beer, wine and sake."

Jennifer Poole
Editor & Reporter
jennifer@willitsweekly.com

Students will do dance and musical performances, and during the evening there'll be opportunities for children – perhaps while their parents are perusing the silent auction table? – to do arts & crafts with a Chinese New Year theme, under the guidance of an art teacher.

"A big part of our mission," McClellan said, "is to promote a global understanding of society. One way we do that is through our Spanish program. We also focus on world geography and world cultures, and celebrating Chinese New Year seemed like a very natural fit for our school, as well as a way to come together and celebrate our community."

One highlight will be a book signing and reading by Ukiah children's book author, Natasha Yim, whose new book "Goldy Luck and the Three Pandas," sold out of its first printing. "Goldy Luck" is a Chinese-American retelling of the "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" story, set in a contemporary Chinatown. Kirkus Review calls it "A welcome Chinese addition to the fairy-tale shelf."

Director McClellan said the school is really excited about the Book Fair on gala night, done in partnership with Willits' independent book store, The Book Juggler. "Everyone loves The Book Juggler," McClellan said, "They're being

Above right from top: Chris Harper of The Book Juggler holds piles of "Rainbow Fairies" books, destined for the Book Fair at the WEC Winter Gala this Saturday.

Center, left: Ukiah author Natasha Yim, who'll be reading from her "Goldy Luck and the Three Pandas" at the WEC Gala Saturday night (photo courtesy of Natasha Yim). Center, right: "Hard Luck," book eight of the very popular children's book series, "The Diary of a Wimpy Kid."

Bottom: Manuel Diaz, left, buys \$20 worth of raffle tickets from Willits Elementary Charter School student Kaleb Whitehust.

Photos by Jennifer Poole



really generous, and they're going to bring some great books, including some books for adults, like cookbooks and parenting books."

This is the first time The Book Juggler has done a school book fair, co-owner Greta Kanne said, but when McClellan suggested the idea, Kanne "didn't have to think twice."

To see students "get excited about a series," Kanne said, "or a joke book, or a beautiful picture book, reminds you of how exciting it can be, deciphering those squiggles on the page. It's exciting to be around young readers."

Some of the books on offer, new and used, will be from favorites kids' series like "Rainbow Fairies," "The Magic Tree House" and the "Geronimo Stilton" books – "and 'The Diary of a Wimpy Kid' of course," Kanne said. "We'll also have a great selection of non-fiction for kids, from books on pirates to dinosaurs to the human body."

The Book Juggler will be donating a percentage of the proceeds from the book fair to the school.

The Willits Elementary Charter School fourth-graders will be doing a bake sale on gala night, to help raise funds to buy a set of 22 ukuleles for their whole class. Ukuleles are a natural transition to playing guitar, which is part of the fifth-grade curriculum at the school.

WEC students have been selling raffle tickets for a gala night raffle for a while now, for a set of prizes including an outdoor propane-fueled and portable pizza oven; \$100 worth of Farmers Market scrip; and a Big Mouth chopper and slicer. Raffle tickets will be available the night of the gala, up until the drawing. No need to be present to win. Tickets to the gala are \$5 at the door for adults; children are free. For more information, call the Willits Elementary Charter School at 459-1400.



COME & PLAY!

Mondays
January 6th to February 24th

Guys Night

4:00PM to 11:00PM

Hourly Drawing from 4:00PM to 10:00PM for \$50 Cash!

Last Drawing at 11:00PM for \$150 Cash!

Ladies who earn 50 points, will receive \$15 Free Play
Points can be earned all day

Tuesdays
January 7th to February 25th

Ladies Night

4:00PM to 11:00PM

Hourly Drawing from 4:00PM to 10:00PM for \$50 Cash!

Last Drawing at 11:00PM for \$150 Cash!

Ladies who earn 50 points, will receive \$15 Free Play
Points can be earned all day

100 Kawi Place in Willits 707-459-7330

Willits Weekly

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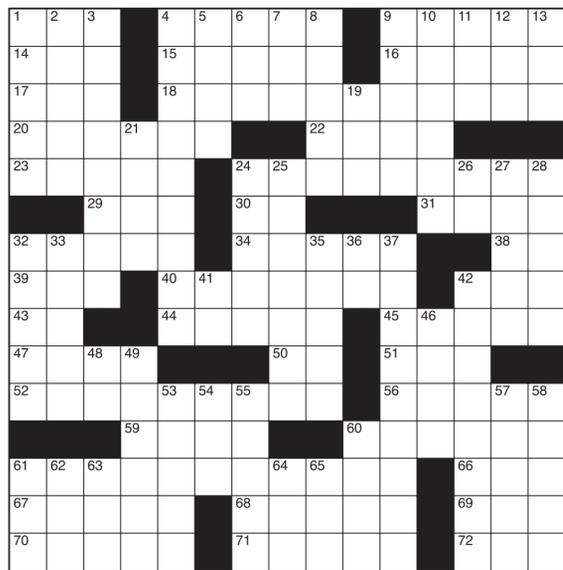
Puzzle Page

GAME & PUZZLE WORD SEARCH

Activities & fun for kids of all ages

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 N N R Y U Z H N G G O U D E Y U U T H A R J Z

Crossword Puzzle



CLUES ACROSS

- Chronicles (abbr.)
- Wallops
- He supported the world
- Own (Scottish)
- Ungentle
- Sinews
- Computer processing
- A Monkey's song
- Narrate or tell
- Lampreys
- Dialogue for the audience
- Many signatred requests
- Cost, insurance and freight
- Not under
- Exchange
- S. Am. river - Rio de la ___
- Isaac's mother (Bib.)
- Sodium
- Possesses
- Falls
- Animal pouch
- Overdose
- Samoyeds
- Genus bellis
- Mediation council
- Beachware manufacturer
- Not on

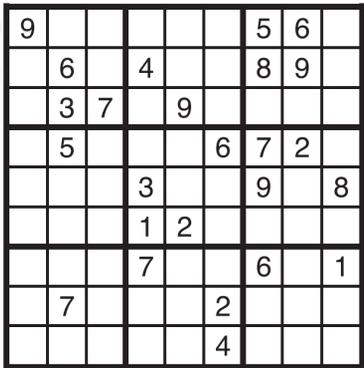
CLUES DOWN

- Inactive
- 1963 Nobel chemist
- Bambi
- More ethereal
- Adornments
- No (Scottish)
- 805 km Venezuelan river
- Occasion
- Time at 0 meridian (abbr.)
- Nathan and George Ellery
- S.I.T.C. character Jones
- South southeast
- Protocist genus
- Hell
- Copies
- 1932 & 1980 Olympic mtn.
- Part of harness
- Macaws
- Mutual savings bank
- Flat or fitted bedding
- Canted
- Dissertation
- Bulgarian monetary unit
- Wonderment
- Used to be United ___
- Hawaiian garland
- Nearly horizontal mine shaft
- Search party group
- One who makes it into law
- Exclamation of pain
- Grannys
- Out of it (slang)
- Loudness units
- Soup serving dipper
- Rough, grating
- A public promotion
- Pleasure seekers
- Article
- Winnows
- From a distance
- Rural delivery
- Previously
- Nostrils
- Icahn's airline
- Poker stakes
- Game sides
- Sharp, glacial ridge
- Tennis' Kournikova
- Spoken telegraphic dash
- Anti pollution agency
- ___ de sac: one end access
- Marsh elder genus
- Original part maker (abbr.)

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally & diagonally throughout the puzzle.

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| ADULTS | COMPETITION | LOWER | RULEBOOK |
| APPLICATIONS | CONCENTRATION | MEMORY | SCRAMBLE |
| BOARD | CROSSWORD | MENTAL | STRATEGY |
| BRAIN | CRYPTOGRAM | MULTIPLAYER | SUDOKU |
| CARDS | ENGAGE | NEWSPAPER | TEAM |
| CHAMPION | ENJOYMENT | PIECES | TIMED |
| CHECKERS | GAME | PLAYERS | VIDEO |
| CHESS | LEVEL | PUZZLE | WINNER |
| CHILDREN | LOSER | RECREATION | WORD SEARCH |

Sudoku



Level: Intermediate

How To Sudoku:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a Sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

COLUMN | Equine Health

Strangles

"Strangles" seems like a timely topic this month, since we've had a bit of a scare here lately. Currently there is one confirmed case of strangles in Mendocino County, which may have indirectly exposed horses competing in the High School Rodeo last week in Ferndale. That was a District 2 Rodeo, so horses from Mendocino County were there.

The current case has been isolated. The situation is being handled in accordance with the most current recommendations from UC Davis - which have changed quite a bit in recent years.

Any horses that could have been exposed should be monitored carefully - most cases will initially run fever but it could be weeks from exposure. Please contact a large animal veterinarian if you have a horse that may be exhibiting signs of this disease or if you have any questions about strangles, how to handle possible exposure or prevention.

Strangles is a disease caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus equi*. It usually causes fever, depression, swollen and abscessing lymph nodes around the head and neck, nasal discharge, and difficulty breathing. Some horses develop other, more serious types of disease. Cases of strangles tend to alarm horse people; the disease can be serious - even fatal - and it's quite contagious. It's also frustrating because of its variable incubation period, which is two days to three weeks. This means any exposed horse could take up to three weeks to show signs, and is variably contagious during that time.

Strep equi is a pretty tough organism. Unlike most viruses, which live encased in fairly fragile envelopes, this bacterial organism lives inside a tough outer shell or coat. This means it's impervious to many environmental conditions, and it can live for a long time in the ground or on fomites - things like buckets, halters, clothing, hands, boots, etc.

Infected horses often have draining abscesses or nasal discharge. This material is highly infective, and strict biosecurity measures should be implemented to avoid spreading the bacteria. Barns with positive cases should have no movement in or out until the risk of spreading the disease is over. This can be a long time - usually greatly influenced by management of early cases.

Our area is not endemic for strangles, which means we don't see it all of the time. It gets brought in by new horses or horses that travel back and forth. There is a vaccine available but, because there are some complications associated with it, it's not as effective as we'd like, and it is unpleasant for the horse, most horses in non-endemic areas are unvaccinated.

Horses that travel and are exposed to others from outside the area are good candidates for vaccination. They are at higher risk for exposure to disease, are often compromised by the stress of travel and competition, and are likely to expose horses at home. Vaccinating these horses can help stop the spread of this and other contagious diseases, like influenza and rhino. For these horses, the risk of exposure, illness, loss of function and being contagious usually outweighs the risk and cost of vaccination. Boarding stable managers should consider the lifestyles of horses living in their facilities when deciding on vaccination protocols to protect the entire stable.

The current situation isn't surprising, and no one is to blame. The population of horses here includes many who travel and compete with horses from all over the state and beyond, and strangles is not rare. Preventative measures include education, vaccination of appropriate horses, avoiding unnecessary exposure risk at events (like sharing buckets and equipment), avoiding close contact, recognizing and reducing stress, and dealing responsibly with horses that may be exposed.

Dr. Sheri Cronin has provided mobile equine veterinary care in Mendocino and Lake Counties for 12 years. She has extensive interest and experience in equine dentistry, endoscopy, digital radiology, reproductive care and preventative medicine. She is also the on-site veterinarian for Willits Frontier Days. Check www.mobileequineveterinary.com for more info, or call Dr. Cronin at 459-6781.

The rest of

Letters

From Page 2

particularly thrived. Cloverdale has struggled, but all of these towns are attractive, clean and inviting. I have no information as to what, if or how Willits seized the opportunity to utilize its RDA monies. Perhaps they secured all that was available and were productive with its use. However, what I see presently is a community that is with hardship. It is badly in need of repair and sadly represents itself. Painted storefronts, awnings over entries, floral baskets and planters are nice, but do not make a huge impact. If RDA money was used for Commercial Street and Main Street, I cannot support this intersection as improvement.

Local elders have told me the founders of this town did not want change or progress. For 17 years, Willits had the same mayor, Leo S. Hulett. He was either a very good mayor, or the town's people and directors wanted it managed as status quo. To have the same person running your town for this length of time prohibits new vision - a vision by another of equal quality. Businesses come and go. In 12 years we've lost Sears, Scott's, Trinity Craft, two bakeries, two video stores, a music store, World of Carpet, the fitness center and pool, two pizza parlors and two restaurants, Ray's, Mendo Lake Office Supply, multiple thrift and consignment shops. Our court system abandoned us, and funding for the library was almost lost. The Chamber of Commerce is a network of businesses whose main objectives include promoting and ensuring the livelihood of future businesses coming to the Willits area. Businesses should be well-advised of this town's economy. It is City Hall that approves business permits, but one should not be set up for failure.

Merchants ask us to buy local. This is only fair as they need our support, but most locals cannot afford the high pricing. This means driving down the hill to bigger stores with lower prices. For example, the shoe store on Main Street. Its inventory out-priced even the wealthy. Incidentally, this business closed because it was over-priced not because of the future bypass. It was simply a misfit for this community. Willits has rendered successful

improvements through hard work and efforts.

It has provided the community with Roots of Motive Power and the museum, the skate park, the dog park, the Kids Club, Mendocino Community College, and the Health and Human Services Agency building. Time will tell if the Wowsler program is successful. We are in the midst of the new Frank R. Howard Memorial Hospital being built. We are fortunate to have it at our reach, but do not be misguided of its presence. The objective of any hospital is to make money. Primary goal is profit, secondary is patient (it used to be in reverse, but no longer). This facility will see financial gain quickly each and every day. Finances will never see red and always be black. It will also serve outside communities. One cannot be turned away at the door upon emergency. You may have but one foot in the door and the other outside as you are being asked for money or insurance. This may even occur as you are being treated.

It is hopeful this hospital under its new management is as fair to Willits as we are to them. It will have assets to pay forward. This operative requires patients, and the patients are this community. Keep in mind other hospitals are available. Perhaps I am overly skeptical, but I have seen hospitals empty beds way too soon. Willits High School was built in 1929. Let us put this year into perspective: The beginning of 7-Up and Pop-Eye. The Wall Street crash and St. Valentine's Day Massacre. If you were of the first graduating class, you would now be 93. This school out-served its function decades ago. It can no longer be covered up with a bandage.

When a student graduates from his/her alma mater, it should be with pride and mark of honor. When students flock together and have little, then little is what they expect. It is difficult to dream proud unless proud is what you see. Our students have to attend this deplorable facility. Yes, they have the charter school and the alternative school but these, too, are below standard.

At very young ages, students of Willits have had to struggle that their community is driven by pot. It is not really fair to these young minds. With

all this challenge to overcome, we send them off to a place of blight and tell them it is as good as they're worth.

The most positive goal Willits could achieve is a new high school, in a new location, accessible for the mass. All in this community including the new hospital must support this project. One should consider portions of the old high school as salvageable and, refurbished into a new community center or shelter for our homeless souls.

The bypass, be it considered good or bad, will come to fruition. There is no analogy that depicts differently. Willits needs to accept this fact and adjust. I am reminded of 1989 with a young man at Tiananmen Square. It is a sad scenario that he stood in front of an army tank thinking he had the power to make it stop. He did not and it did not. Actually, his fate remains questionable. Compare that to the danger of Warbler living in our tree or tying oneself to heavy earthmovers, and yet we are expected to protect these protestors and at our expense.

Now that LoBuck\$ has closed, Willits may very well have but just one grocer, Safeway. With this privilege, you get darkness, tight aisles, a misplaced Starbucks, dirty floors, and high prices. Let's not forget the poorly marked parking lot that devours our cars such as the Post Office. There is Mariposa, but here again are the higher prices. Possibly and feasibly, Safeway may relocate to the north or south of the bypass exchange. Along with this will come a gas station and fast food sources. There will be no need for a traveler to drive through Willits unless they are heading to the coast.

Therefore, as life goes on, my neighbors will continue to drain Brooktrails water and grow their pot outside my bedroom window plus an alleged grow house right smack under the noses of the Brooktrails management, as water drips, drips, drips away. The homeless with their pit bulls will become more bountiful, because we invite them. Sheriff Allman will remain short-staffed and collect only 10 percent of pot growth. Finally, the Van Hotel and Remco will outlive us all. Why? Because it is Willits. Carpe diem.

Susan Ross, Brooktrails



Above: Kevin Copperfield uses a muffin tin to help with his soup tasting.

Right: The Willits Community Center is always filled with excited tasters for the annual event.

Below: Donna and Greg Schindel enjoy a slice of Emandal bread, which is always available to accompany the soup samples.

Photos by Maureen Moore



SIP SOME SOUP

Sip Some Soup needs soup makers



The 15th annual SipSomeSoup fundraiser for Willits Daily Bread is set for Saturday, February 15 at the Willits Community Center. "This is Willits Daily Bread's major fundraiser every year," said Director Cindy Savage, "and it's a terrific evening of delicious food and wonderful community."

Soup makers are invited to sign up to enjoy the friendly but serious competition to win a spot on the "Soup Trophy," engraved with each year's first-place winner's names, that is displayed in the Trophy Case at City Hall. "Please send in entry forms, soon!" Savage says.

The entry fee per each soup entered is \$25, which includes two taster's tickets and ballots. Groups, organizations and individuals are all invited to sign up. What soup makers have to do: make about 2 gallons of soup and bring their own crock pot, serving utensils and table decorations (for half of an 8-foot table). Soups may be reheated in the Community Center kitchen, as needed, to fill and refill crock pots. No hot plates allowed, due to electrical load. The evening also features fresh-baked Emandal breads and homemade desserts.

Doors open to the public at 5:30 pm, and soup is served until 7 pm. Soup makers should be at the center by 5 pm to set up and decorate. Tickets for tasters are \$15 per person, or \$25 for two. This year there will be a silent auction; anyone with items to donate should call Savage at 459-3947. "Please consider becoming a Sip Some Soup sponsor," Savage said. "It's a tax-deductible contribution, and will help us defray the costs of this event. Sponsorships begin at \$250. Call 459-3947 for details."

Sip Some Soup Contest Entry Form February 15, 2014

Name of Competitor, Group, Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____ Phone/Fax/Email: _____

Address of Contact Person: _____

Please enclose \$25 entry fee per soup entered (includes 2 "taster" tickets and ballots).

Send to: "Soup" c/o Cindy Savage P.O. Box 1826, Willits, CA 95490 For more information, call Cindy at 459-3947

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RECIPE | Maureen & Kathryn's Kitchen

Greek Cauliflower

Wash cauliflower and discard leaves. Chop or break apart into bite-sized pieces. Heat olive oil in sautee pan and add onion. Sautee over medium heat until soft, and add cauliflower pieces, tomatoes, basil and wine. Fill tomato sauce can full of water and add to pan. Stir and cover. Let simmer until cauliflower is just tender, about 10 to 15 minutes. Uncover and continue cooking until liquid has reduced slightly. Add lemon juice, and then salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot. Also delicious topped with a little parmesan cheese.

1 head cauliflower
1 onion, chopped
1 can diced tomatoes
1/2 lemon
2 tablespoons dried basil
1/2 cup white wine
Olive oil
Salt & pepper
Parmesan cheese (optional)

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Thursday, January 30

Sewing, Knitting & Crochet Circle: 3 to 5:30 pm at the Little Lake Grange, during the Willits Farmers Market, January through April. "Bring your current project or some yarn, hooks, needles if you have them and want to learn something new. Hand-sewing and mending is also great 'circle' work. We still want yarn donations of any kind and amount." Sponsored by the Little Lake Grange Women's Association. There are also sewing machines and materials available in Room 10. Info: 459-6362.

Friday, January 31

Shanachie Pub: "Mendocino Homegrown Music" by Redbud: original rock, blues, pop, reggae, ska & more. Featuring Yoli Rose on rhythm guitar & vocals, Bob Dress on bass & vocals, Hal Wagenet (former member of "It's a Beautiful Day") on lead guitar & vocals, and Tobin Hendricks on drums & vocals. 8 pm to midnight. No cover. 50 South Main Street. Info: 459-9194.

Saturday, February 1

Theater Tech Master Class: Professional theatre technicians, Joe Dowling and Kevin Moore, teach the second of four master classes on "Theater Tech" today from 10 am to 1 pm.



Joe Dowling and Kevin Moore

Learn by doing. Hands on experience will cover the nuts and bolts of light and sound instruments, including rigging for the stage. Willits Community Theatre, 37 West Van Lane. Two more Saturday tech classes are scheduled for March 8 ("Lighting and Sound Design") and March 29 ("Set Design and Construction"). Check willitstheatre.org or

Dry Branch Fire Squad

Willits Rotary continues its annual Bluegrass Concert Series, presenting Dry Branch Fire Squad at the Willits Center for the Arts on Saturday, February 8 at 7:30 pm. The show is one of several community events that Rotary sponsors to raise funds for scholarships for Willits High School

Dry Branch Fire Squad members are: Ron Thomason (MC, lead singer, mandolin, banjo, guitar), Brian Aldridge (guitar, mandolin), Tom Boyd (banjo, resophonic guitar) and Dan Russell (bass).

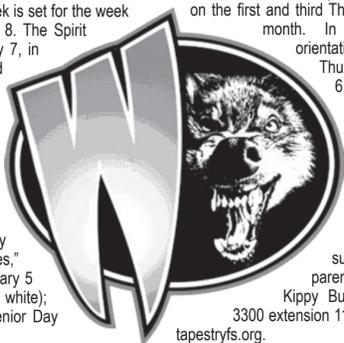
Ted Lehman of the Gettysberg Bluegrass Festival reviewed this memorable bluegrass group as follows: "Dry Branch Fire Squad is the onliest band to have appeared at all sixty-one iterations of The Gettysburg Bluegrass Festival. I've begun to realize that Ron Thomason, the band's leader throughout its history, is a sort of Forest Gump of bluegrass. He's been THERE from the start at Fincastle and seems to have been involved in many of the most important moments in bluegrass history, either as a spectator or participant. He also represents the closest thing bluegrass has to offer to a genuine Will Rogers, Mark Twain kind of humorist."

More from Ted Lehman: "Ron describes himself as a conservative in the deepest sense of the word, clinging to the most important values that have helped to forge the strengths of our nation.... Social commentary coupled with song choices from the oldest traditions of music to new and catching lyrics make Dry Branch Fire Squad one of the most important and entertaining bands in bluegrass, and much deserving of wider recognition."

Tickets, \$20, are available at Willits Furniture, La Bodega, Willits Pet Care, Willits Redwood Company, and the Mendocino Book Company in Ukiah. Bring the whole family to the Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street, and enjoy a special opportunity to hear a nationally recognized group perform in an intimate concert setting.

WHS 2014 Spirit Week

Willits High School's Spirit Week is set for the week of February 3 through February 8. The Spirit Rally will be on Friday, February 7, in the high school gymnasium, and the dance, with the theme of "White Winters Night," will be on Saturday night, February 8, from 9 am to midnight, also in the gym. Spirit Week itself will have the theme of "Monster Week." Monday, February 3 is Freshman Day ("Werewolves," wear gray); Tuesday, February 4 is Sophomore Day ("Zombies," wear brown); Wednesday, February 5 is Junior Day ("Mummies," wear white); and Thursday, February 6 is Senior Day ("Vampires," wear black).



Save the Date:

Valentine's Day, February 14, Don't forget!
Sip Some Soup, February 15, Willits Community Center
Patrick Ball, Celtic harp and storytelling, February 16, Willits Community Theatre
"LocalLights" Concert Series, February 23, Willits Community Theatre
Willits Educational Foundation's annual Drive Thru Tri Tip Dinner, Friday, March 7

What's Happening Around Town

Things to do, see and enjoy in and around Willits

call 459-0895 for more info.

Willits Redwood Little League 2014 season sign-ups in Laytonville: from 10 am to 1 pm at Wheels Café, 44930 Highway 101 North, in Laytonville. See item elsewhere on Calendar page for details.



Winter Gala: Willits Elementary Charter School presents its 2nd annual gala tonight from 4 to 7 pm at the Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street. The public is invited. With a Chinese New Year theme, the gala features no-host Asian food with beer, wine and sake, dance and music performances by students, a reading by Ukiah author N a t a s h a Yim of her book "Goldy Luck and the Three Pandas," a book fair presented by The Book Juggler, arts & crafts activities, a raffle, a silent auction and a bake sale. Tickets \$5. For more info, see article on page 3.

Shanachie Pub: the debut performance of Twin Cobras, a two-piece band featuring Johnny Young and Mike Masters, who perform "stripped down blues." 9 pm, \$5 cover. 50 B. South Main Street. Visit: www.reverbnation.com/twincobras or the Twin Cobras page on Facebook. Info: 459-9194.

Sunday, February 2

Senior Center Bingo: Doors open at 10:30 am, snack bar



Jeff Ritchley

opens at 11 am, and games begin at 11:30 am. Buy-in is \$10. Harrah Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road. Info: 459-6826.

Tuesday, February 4

Tightwad Tuesdays at the Noyo Theatre: All 2D movies that are in their second week are \$5 on Tuesdays at the Noyo Theatre for all ages, all showings. This week's Tightwad movies: This week's Tightwad movies: "Ride Along," "Lone Survivor," "American Hustle" and "The Nut Job." For showtimes: www.noyotheatre.com. 57 East Commercial Street. 459-6660.

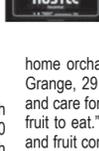
Wednesday, February 5

"A Second Cup of Coffee with the Principal": meet with Willits High School principal Jeff Ritchley from 8:30 to 10:30 am at WHS, 299 North Main Street. See article elsewhere on Calendar page for more details.

Long Valley Garden Club: Willits Mayor Holly Madrigal will discuss her visit to Cuba's organic agriculture program and show slides, at the Long Valley Garden Club meeting. Noon to 2 pm today. Begins with a potluck. The public is invited, free of charge. 375 Harwood Road, Laytonville. Info: 984-6587.

Thursday, February 6

"Tea and Crumpets with the Principal": meet with Willits High School principal Jeff Ritchley from 3:30 pm "until our conversations end" at WHS, 299 North Main Street. See article elsewhere on Calendar page for more details.



Jessica Cox
inspirational speaker

International keynote speaker, Jessica Cox, is coming to Willits next week for a free inspirational talk at the Willits Community Center. The event, set for Friday, February 7, at 7 pm, is sponsored by the Ministers Association of Willits, and is open to the public. Born without arms, Cox flies airplanes, drives cars and otherwise lives a normal life using her feet as others use their hands. Cox also holds the Guinness World Record for being the first armless person in aviation history to earn a pilot's certificate, as well as being the first armless black-belt in the American Taekwondo Association.

"I'm excited that Jessica is able to share her inspiring life with others in our community," said Frank R. Howard Memorial Hospital Chaplain Dennis Long. "Jessica is an inspiration on how to overcome challenges and to live life to its full potential."

Cox, who earned a degree in psychology from the University of Arizona, has traveled the globe to more than 20 countries sharing her inspirational story. Cox is convinced that the way we think has a greater impact on our lives than our physical constraints. Please arrive early to the Willits Community Center, 111 East Commercial Street, as seating is limited. For more information about Jessica Cox visit www.rightfooted.com.



Above: Jessica Cox

Right: A photo from Madrigal's trip to Cuba

'Cuba: Lessons in Agriculture'

Willits mayor and WELL president Holly Madrigal had the grand opportunity to visit Cuba for two weeks in late 2013. She will share a video, slides and her stories of traveling in Cuba at a WELL-sponsored event on Sunday February 9, 4 pm at the Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street.

Cuba is sometimes called the "Accidental Eden" because dramatic political conditions, including a 50-year trade embargo by the United States and subsequent collapse of trade with Russia, have shaped this small island into a beacon of organic agriculture.

Recently some restrictions on travel to Cuba have relaxed and, through the Center for Global Justice and the Organic Consumers Association, Madrigal and her husband, Gabe Madrigal, received professional visas to visit Cuba and learn about their agricultural renaissance. The two were part of an 18-person delegation representing a diverse mix of farmers, agricultural and political students, and just interested folks.

Their sponsor in Havana was the Martin Luther King Center, which serves as a church, educational center and community hub. The center teaches courses in popular education and community organizing. In addition to a Cuban guide and an interpreter, the group benefited from an American guide, Jennifer Ungemach, who previously lived in Willits for three years studying with John Jeavons at the Ecology Action Mini



Farm.

The event on February 9 will include a showing of the film "Tierralismo," a documentary about a successful organic farm cooperative near Havana, as well as slides and many stories from Madrigal's visits to cooperative small and larger-scale farms.

"Our tour was full of inspiration from these organic pioneers," Madrigal said. "The challenge now is to bring these lessons home. Could we start a farm co-op that paid good wages to all its members? Our challenges would be different but there are many parallels to this small island nation that imports much of its food (as do we), gets frustrated with its government (as do we), and rejoices in its successes (as do we). Let's continue to learn from each other to secure a positive future for our communities."

Here's the LocalLights schedule of events for 2014:

- Feb. 23:** Marjo Wilson, followed by Julian and the Upside Sound
- Apr. 6:** Malakai, followed by the New Blu Trio
- June 1:** Verne Morninglight, followed by Chanterelle
- Oct. 12:** David Partch, followed by Just Enough
- Dec. 6:** Char n' Chris, followed by Redbud

Sewing, Knitting & Crochet Circle: 3 to 5:30 pm at the Little Lake Grange, during the Willits Farmers Market. This afternoon's session features mentor Marcia Andrews, sharing her experience in a wide variety of craftwork, including knitting, crochet, sewing, quilting, and more. Sponsored by the Little Lake Grange Women's Association. There are also sewing machines and materials available in Room 10. Info: 459-6362.

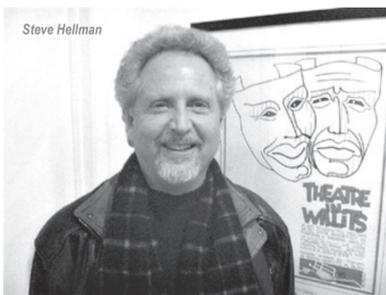
Friday, February 7

Jessica Cox, inspirational speaker: International keynote speaker Jessica Cox visits Willits this weekend, and gives a free talk tonight at 7 pm at the Willits Community Center, 111 East Commercial Street. Sponsored by the Ministers Association of Willits. The public is invited. "Cox will be sharing her personal story of overcoming challenges and reaching her full potential, and how you can do it too – she did it all without arms!" Visit www.rightfooted.com for more info about Cox. See article elsewhere on Calendar page for more details.

Saturday, February 8

Fruit Tree Workshop with Richard Jeske: offered by home orchardist Richard Jeske, from 10 am to noon at the Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street. "Learn what to grow here and how to plant and care for your fruit tree with the goal of actually getting some delicious fruit to eat." Richard has more than 30 years of experience as a pruner and fruit consultant. Sponsored by WELL (Willits Economic Localization). Suggested donation: \$5. Info: Richard at 459-5926.

Free Bridge Lessons: the Friends of the Willits Library is sponsoring



Willits Community Theatre names new managing director

Steven Hellman has been named as the new managing director of the Willits Community Theatre, to replace outgoing director Beth Rosen. Hellman brings more than 40 years of experience in event promotion and performance to the position. His qualifications include expertise in writing, graphics and firsthand involvement with live theatre production. He will be primarily directing publicity for WCT events and managing the day-to-day theatre operations.

Hellman said: "This is a great opportunity for me. I've been in love with live theater ever since my mother was a playhouse actress in Los Angeles during the 1960s."

He looks forward to helping manage a busy 2014 season for WCT, with five main stage productions, several live music concerts, and a complete range of theater arts classes.

As an instructor in English at Mendocino College, Hellman has produced five shows of his own at the WCT, mostly literary readings by his Creative Writing students.

"The Willits Community Theater truly is one of our unique cultural gems, and I'm honored to play an important role in its operation," he said

After serving as managing director for three years, Rosen decided to retire. Rosen said of her tenure: "I've been active with WCT for about 17 years, and it's time to retire to my garden. I was delighted when Steve expressed an interest in the position of managing director, as he has all the qualifications needed to run the theatre successfully. I'm confident that I'm leaving the theatre operations in good hands."

– Willits Community Theatre

LocalLights Concert Series

There is a new series of concerts in Willits, LocalLights, held at the Willits Community Theatre Playhouse as a benefit for the theatre. LocalLights will also provide an opportunity for local musicians to perform at the theatre in an environment where acoustic music can be heard well and appreciated. You are invited to honor the efforts and talents of our local musicians. These concerts are also seen as an extension of the very popular Soul Cafe events of the past.

The tickets are priced to give people a range of choices to suit their budget. For those who can afford it, front row seats are \$15 per event. The regular seats will go for \$10. And the last row seats will go for \$5. So everyone should be able to afford to come.

You can also purchase all five concerts at reduced rates of \$70 for front row seats and \$45 for regular seats – if bought together in advance. Your purchase will not only give you five nights of wonderful local entertainment, but it will also help to support our theatre!

Tickets will be on sale at the Farmers Market today (January 30 at the Grange from 3 to 5:30 pm). Or you can call David Partch at 459-7054 and make other arrangements. Tickets for each concert will be on sale at the Goods' Shoppe, three weeks in advance of each event. All concerts will start at 7 pm.

free weekly bridge lessons for beginners, starting today. Saturdays from 10:30 am to 12:30 in the conference room of the Willits Library, 390 East Commercial Street. Call the library at 459-5908 for info and to sign up.

Dry Branch Fire Squad: The veteran bluegrass band, featuring lead vocalist Ron Thomason's storytelling as well as music, returns to Willits, for a concert presented by the Willits Rotary Club. A benefit for scholarships for Willits High School. Thomason has been described as "the closest thing bluegrass has to offer to a genuine Will Rogers, Mark Twain kind of humorist." 7:30 pm at the Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street. Tickets are \$20. See article elsewhere on Calendar page for more details.



Dry Branch Fire Squad

Sunday, February 9

Senior Center Pancake Breakfast: 8 to 11 am. Second Sundays at the Harrah Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road. Pancakes, eggs (any style), bacon, sausage, or ham, orange juice, coffee. \$6 members; \$7 non-members; under 12, \$5. Info: 459-6826.

"Travels in Cuba: Lessons in Agriculture": A showing of the film "Tierralismo," a documentary about a successful organic farm cooperative near Havana, followed by slides and discussion led by Willits Mayor Holly Madrigal, who recently spent two weeks traveling in Cuba. 4 pm at the Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street. "Madrigal will share many inspiring stories about the people, farms, and way of life in the isolated island nation. Discussion will focus on how we can bring the lessons of Cuba home to Willits." Sponsored by Willits Economic Localization (WELL). Info: 459-0447. See article elsewhere on Calendar page for more details.

Ongoing Events:

Willits Farmers Market: Winter market at Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street, from 3 to 5:30 pm. Winter produce, hot house tomatoes, local meats, dinner, crafts, live music (this week: David Partch and Verne Morninglight) and more.

Willits Community Drum Circle: 7 to 10 pm at the Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street. Every 2nd and 4th Fridays. Free. Everyone is welcome. Info: 459-4932

Smoking Cessation Program: Free "Freedom from Smoking" class sponsored by the Frank R. Howard Memorial Hospital. Every Wednesday at the HMM Conference Room, 1 Madrone Street, 6 to 7 pm. RSVP to Jennifer Barrett at 707-540-4208. Walk-ins are always welcome.

Big Screen video games: Fridays from 4 to 5:30 pm at the Noyo Theatre. Arcade-style games, multi-player, with both casual and cartoony fighting games. Everyone gets a chance at the controller. Moderated by assistant manager Steve Thornton: "Gamemaster Steve." Fridays afternoons to start, with hoped-for expansion to an evening tournament-like event. \$5 (no gift certificates or passes accepted). 57 East Commercial Street. Info: 459-6660.

Willits Frontier Twirlers: Beginner's classes in basic and mainstream square dance at the Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street, from 6:45 to 8 pm, then dancing until 9 pm, with professional caller Lawrence Johnstone, who will teach and call. Every Monday night, classes are free for beginners. Info: 459-9526.

Free Sheriff's Activity League programs: at Body Works Gym, 1511 South Main Street. Teen gym: Monday to Friday from 2:30 to 5:30 pm; Boxing: Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7 pm; Karate: Kids aged 5 to 11 from 6 to 7 pm, Tweens, Teens and Adults: 7 to 8 pm. All SAL programs free to the public. Info: www.facebook.com/MendocinoCountySheriffsYouthActivitiesLeague or Mike Tobin: 354-0565

Work Days for Grange School of Agricultural Arts: scheduled on many Saturdays at the school site at Ridgewood Ranch, 16200 Highway 101. Skilled and unskilled help needed. Bring gloves and tools, if you have them. Follow the "Farm School" signs. Please drive slow on the ranch. Lunch available for those who RSVP by Friday each week (drop-in volunteers welcome, too). Work days (rain or shine) set for: February 8, 15 and 22. These volunteer days will focus on renovating the schoolhouse, building student housing, planting cover crop, and pruning in our well-established orchard. Custom work days or events can be scheduled by contacting director Antonia Partridge at (707) 272-1395 or farmdirector@californiagrangecommunity.org. More info at http://californiagrangecommunity.org/agschool/mission.html.

Shanachie Pub: Open mic every Wednesday at 8:40 pm. Sign-ups start at 3 pm. 50 B South Main Street, behind Adam's Restaurant. Info: 459-9194.

Just For Fun Choir: directed and accompanied by Nancy New. Meets Mondays at the Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road, from 1 to 2:30 pm. Accepting new members of all ages and abilities. Info: call Nancy New at 459-1276.

Brooktrails Lodge Winter Schedule: every Thursday night at 8 pm: "Dream Capsule Entertainment," featuring local musicians and talent; Happy Hour, and Ladies' Night specials. Every Friday night: Open Mic, with drink specials and prizes. Every Saturday night: "Electro-Dance" at 7 pm. Info: Shawntee Wirth at dreamcapsuleindustries@gmail.com or 459-6792.

Laytonville Winter Farmers Market: Mondays from 2:30 to 4:30 at the Laytonville Grange, 1620 Branscomb Road. Buy local: vegetables, apples, juice, bakery, beef, lamb, pork, jewelry, aprons, children's clothing, knife sharpening and more.

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Furry Friends Tucker, the Plott Hound



Photo by Rod Coats

Meet Tucker, a very handsome and affectionate Plott Hound mix! He came to us as a stray, and sadly nobody claimed him. He has a lazy eye, but that doesn't bother him at all - it just gives him a very unique look about him! We estimate his age to be around 2 years old, and he weighs 50 pounds. Tucker can be a tad cautious, so we think he would fare better in a quiet home with older children. With lots of love, patience and discipline, we believe he will blossom into a confident dog! During his evaluation, he was happy to meet another dog, and so he could go into a home with another dog-friendly dog. We hope you will see the potential in this sweet guy!

The Ukiah Animal Shelter, 298 Plant Road, is open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 4:30 pm and Wednesday from 10 am to 6:30 pm. We have many other wonderful dogs and cats, awaiting their forever homes here as well. To view photos and bios of more of our wonderful adoptable animals, please visit our website: www.pawstodopt.com or visit our shelter during shelter hours. We also have many barn cats available, for free, to qualified adopters. More info: contact Adoption Coordinator Katherine Houghtby at 707-467-6453 or houghtbyk@co.mendocino.ca.us.

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COLUMN | Trending



'The New Best Place to Live'

All across the country, and certainly right here in our own little burg, those under and over 50 are contemplating whether or not they should stay put for the rest of their lives or strike out in search of one of those "Best Places To Live in America" choices. In the most recent issue of Sunset Magazine, once again the editors scoured the United States, and it was an array of small towns that garnered most of the awards, including Walla Walla, Washington, where one of my clients has lived for the past few years - and loves it.

Like Willits, the town is somewhat isolated from shopping malls, big box stores and a highly diverse offering of culture and the arts. What Walla Walla does offer is a quaint and completely restored, historical downtown which is surrounded by equally historic, quaint neighborhoods all within easy walking distance to the town's hub. A bit further out are acres and acres of wine country with all those intriguing tasting rooms and seasonal events. Back in town, the hallmark for Walla Walla is its wide selection of culinary offerings - from restaurants to specialty stores.

There is also Whitman College, which offers both standard programs and community-driven classes. Willits could evolve into such a destination town for all ages, and that includes boomers torn between moving somewhere else or staying put.

What to do?

In my opinion and in the tradition of those entrepreneurs on that ever-engaging television series, "Shark Tank," the future of a struggling small town is ultimately in the hands of innovative entrepreneurs who choose action over rhetoric. At the risk of offending any of those in our political arena, a proliferation of discussions and reports is not creating substantive change in our community. It's time for the bypass to become a bygone and to look instead at what we can do within the immediate boundaries of the town that is loved by so many.

It all comes down to one word: image. In short, what can Willits become? Its current "image" isn't really an image at all, and is too diffused and colored by the wrong kind of green.

How about a committee of established business people, along with those sideline entrepreneurs, who would use commerce to create a town that can become one of those "best small towns"? Just recently, a businessman who owns multiple properties on Main Street took it upon himself (and at his own expense) to create beautiful rock facades on three of his contiguous buildings. What a difference! What other cosmetic and substantive changes can a determined group of entrepreneurs produce?

Downtown Willits can become a walking community where people stay healthier (and happier) by being able to walk to any number of downtown destinations. Jed Diamond has done significant work in trying to encourage people to "walk their town." What we need now are places that people want to walk to.

When I first visited Willits I was 5 years old and, over the years while I lived down in the Bay Area, I would drive through what came to be known as a "Gateway" town, now with its own sign proclaiming Willits as a place on your way to somewhere else.

I never imagined I would live here, and over the past few years I have frequently chomped at the bit to find a more enlivened community. Twenty years is a long time in one place - somewhat like a marriage - and it's not easy to think about leaving. I don't think I'm alone in my thinking.

How many people living here feel that the town "relationship" carries with it numerous concessions? So in that spirit, this column is a shout-out to business people who want more. I would gladly join that group. Of course such a group would honor political considerations, but the life force is in the creative and determined hands of the entrepreneur.

To quote the standard line from hopeful entrepreneurs on the aforementioned "Shark Tank": "So, sharks, who wants to bite?"

Nancy Ellis-Bell is a former professor and current literary agent/author who has lived in Willits for the past 20 years. Aside from her passion for the sharing of ideas, she is also addicted to parrots, kois and a garden that just won't stop growing. Ellis-Bell can be contacted at 459-4152 or nellis@mcn.org.

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12:45, 3:15, 5:45 & 8:15pm
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4:45 & 7:15

AMERICAN HUSTLE (R)
2hr 18mins
Fri-Sun:
8:00pm
Mon-Thurs:
7:00pm

THE NUT JOB (PG)
1hr 25mins
Friday:
4:00 & 6:00pm
Sat/Sun:
12:00, 2:00, 4:00 & 6:00pm
Mon-Thurs:
5:00pm

Times for 1/31/14 - 2/6/14 This Week's Tightwad Tuesday Titles are in RED - All tickets: \$5

Condolences Column



Obituary
Wilma Swezey

The rest of Wilma | From Page 1

Hawaii after World War II, Swezey didn't move around very much most of the time. She spent the last several decades of her life living at 52 West Oak Street, which was the house she was born in.

She was a member of the St. Francis in the Redwoods Episcopal Church and the Willits Garden Club. She also was a dedicated volunteer at the William F. Harrah Senior Center. In addition, she belonged to the "Willits Birthday Club and Terrorist Society," along with a group of ladies who liked to get together now and then and have fun. According to her friend Roni McFadden, after the events of September 11, 2001, the ladies tried to change the name of the club to the "Desserters," because they all liked desserts. But the name didn't stick and, in spite of Homeland Security and the National Security Agency, the women went back to the original name.

Tragedy struck in Swezey's family in May of 1994, when her son, William Arthur Swezey, shot and killed his wife and children, and then killed himself.

After she had recovered from the tragedy, Swezey opened her house up to those in need. "She had a couple of extra rooms in her house, and she would take in people who were down on their luck. She had a heart as big as the whole world," said McFadden.

Another friend, Betty Bays, said much the same thing about Wilma. "She had the biggest heart of anybody I've ever known. She was always friendly and helpful. She was always there," Bays said.

Reverend Mary Fisher of the St. Francis in the Redwoods Episcopal Church said of Swezey: "Tragedy struck her. But she rose above tragedy to become a true giant in the community."

Services for Wilma Swezey will be held at the William F. Harrah Senior Center on Thursday, February 6, at 3:30 pm.



Obituary
Rosario Modelo Maglante

Rosario Maglante, age 83, passed away from respiratory failure, on December 24, 2013. She was born in Ceres, California, to Servilano Modelo and Agripina Pontod, on October 2, 1930. She spent most of her life in Isleton, in the Sacramento Delta area, and graduated from Rio Vista High School. She was very active in the Filipino community and worked as a bookkeeper.

She married Augustus Maglante on July 18, 1950, and raised two sons Jonathan and Jason. When her mother died, she invited her five brothers and sisters to move in, and also cared for her father, known as Abing. She was an excellent cook, and was known for her adobo and saporinis. She enjoyed cooking for her family of 10 each night at the long ranch house, using a huge stove and large wok.

Easter and Christmas were spent with her friends and family, and everyone was welcome at the huge birthday parties she gave. She loved the water and waterskiing. Augustus died on Christmas Day, in 1978. In 1996 she married William Metante, a long-time friend. They moved to Willits in 2003 to be closer to her son, Jonathan, and his family. She loved to laugh, and had many friends at the Willits Senior Center.

Rio is survived by her brothers and sisters: Rita Kilat, Vincent Modelo, Rudy Modelo, Natalie Villamor, Joey Villamor, and Susan Villamor; her son Jonathan and his wife, Ann, their daughters, Emmelia and Miranda; and her son Jason, and his wife, Lisa, and their daughter, Kaitlin, living in Atascadero, California. She has two great-granddaughters, Haley Monroe and Brooklyn Grace. Her sister, Lordes Elliot, preceded her in death on September 29, 2005.

On January 3, a memorial service and mass was held at St. Therese Catholic Church in Isleton. Following was a graveside service at St. Joseph's Cemetery in Rio Vista, and a luncheon in the St. Therese Church Hall.



Obituary
Louis "Dail" Hughes

Louis "Dail" Hughes left to be with the Lord on January 2, 2014, at home with his family, and his dog, "Dog," at his side. He was 83 years of age. A native of Washington, he had lived in the Willits community for 45 years and, with his wife, Juanita, owned Hughes Radiator Service for 42 years.

Hughes was a Life Member of the American Legion Post 174, 40/8, and served in many chairs in Post 174 and in District One. He was also a member of the Disabled American Veterans. He loved camping in their motorhome.

He is survived by his loving wife of 31 years, Juanita, 10 children, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and two sisters and a brother. A Post Everlasting Memorial Service will be held at the church he attended, Agape Bible Church, at 2 pm on Saturday, February 1, followed by a potluck gathering at the Agape Multi-Purpose Building. There will be a Graveside Service at Little Lake Cemetery after the potluck.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of Anker-Lucier Mortuary.

Classifieds

Algebra, Geometry
College Preparatory Mathematics, Individual Instruction. Mac Smith 459-MATH

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1 bedroom, 1 bath downtown apartment for rent in Willits. \$600/month plus \$1,000 security deposit. Water and garbage paid. Available February 15; call 459-4599 for info.

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2 bedroom, 1.5 bath townhouse. Close to shopping. Garbage paid. Laundry facility on hand. Small backyard. \$795/month. Call Armo: 459-9601.

Help Wanted
Position available for person who loves to work with people and pets. Experience preferred but not required. Please bring resume to Willits Pet Care Center.

Help Wanted
U.S. Post Office, City Carrier Assistant 1, Willits. City Carrier Assistants hold temporary appointments for periods not to exceed 360 days. Applicants must have a valid state driver's license, a safe driving record, and at least two years of driving experience. Applicants must live within 50 miles of the facility address, 315 South Main Street, Willits, California, to be eligible. \$15.30/hour, paid bi-weekly. Veterans who are entitled to veterans' preference and/or covered by the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act may apply. This job has an exam requirement: applicants who do not have an exam score are being invited to take the exam. Contact: grace.b.zipagan@usps.gov.

House For Rent
\$750 a month. Brooktrails, 2 bedroom, 2 bath, separate outside building. Large lot, enclosed yard. Pet(s) OK. Must be: handy, have local references, job, car. 459-1798.

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Pinball Machines
PINBALL MACHINES for sale. 459-6372.

Room for Rent
Furnished large room w/walk-in closet, private entrance & bath, in shared home. No smoking. No pets. \$600 month + \$900 deposit. Loraine 459-5363

Rummage Sale
Every Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm at 1st Baptist Church, 145 Wood Street. Rain or shine. We accept rummage donations, and have an ever-changing selection of goods!

Swim Coaches Wanted
Willits Otters Swim Team, which has been around for 40 years, needs a coach to continue the program this year. Swim season is Feb. through Aug. Coaching experience desired. Monday through Thursday, 5:30 to 7 pm. One weekend per month required for swim meets. Call 707-513-0739.

Young Artist Classes
Beginning Tuesday, January 21. Ages 5 & up. Drawing skills, pastels, Waldorf watercolor, fabric. Tuesdays, 2:30 - 3:30 & 4-5 pm. \$10 includes materials. Ann Maglante, Rm. 7, Willits Grange, 291 School Street. greengables@wildblue.net

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Help support your locally owned community newspaper with a mail subscription: Willits Weekly is delivered in Friday's first-class mail to Willits addresses: \$75/year or \$40/6 months. Send check and mailing address to: P.O. Box 1698, Willits 95490 or pay using our PayPal account at www.willitsweekly.com.

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Puzzle Answers From Page 4

C	H	R	W	H	A	M	S	A	T	L	A	S	
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Above: Willits City Manager Adrienne Moore swears in the newest Willits Police Department recruit, Officer Ian McQuade

Photo by Holly Madrigal

Ian McQuade
Willits' newest police officer

A new officer with the Willits Police Department, Ian McQuade, was sworn in at City Hall Wednesday morning by City Manager Adrienne Moore.

Police Chief Gerry Gonzalez presented McQuade with his badge. McQuade, originally from Modesto, has been a reserve officer with the city of Livingston in Merced County. McQuade will be starting his training with the WPD today. "We're glad to have him," Chief Gonzalez said.

The rest of Phone book

From Page 1

This year's phone book also features a look back at some of the projects the Soroptimists have been involved with this past year, including book donations to Baechtel Grove Middle School and the 2013 Willits Frontier Days Sweetheart contest, as well as information about the group, their scholarships and awards, and insights into issues important to the organization.

Anyone wishing to get their ad in and ready for the 2015 phone book is encouraged to look inside this year's copy for a quick and easy tear-out form. Just complete and mail in your ad request and copy, and you'll make sure to have a

spot in next year's edition. An email address has also been set up for anyone wishing to alert the group to changes in numbers, misspellings, adjustments or other required changes to the directory listings. Please be aware that the listings are generated by a service. Efforts are made to do as many corrections as possible, but we do rely on information from the community to find out if additional changes are needed. Please email them directly to wpbadcopy@gmail.com.

Advertisers who joined in the 2014 book also have the opportunity to bundle their advertising with Willits Weekly and repeat their ads in future editions of this newspaper. Ads will be run alongside Soroptimist-themed content, allowing advertisers to continue their support of the non-profits

Less than \$7,000 to go

Willits Community Services still seeks donations

With the new total reaching \$25,750, the Willits Community Services and Food Bank's Winter Fund drive is almost to its \$32,000 goal.

Monies go to help keep vital services available to those in need in the community, and the food bank depends on all of us to help them continue these services.

Every dollar helps, and anyone who wishes to make a donation can contact 459-3333.

Contributors from this past week include: Bruce Burton, Donald and Margaret Eutenier, Joanne Franklin, Betty and John Lemmer, March Foundation, Riley and Jody Moore, Cindy and Verne Morninglight, P. Parker, Linda Posner, Hollis Rose, Sheryl Smith, Donna Vaiano, and John and Debi Vau.

women-and-girl-power message and mission.

If you purchased an ad in the 2014 phone book and would like to hook into the bundle deal, there's still time to be included. See prices below, and contact Willits Weekly directly to commit: 972-7047.

If you ran a business-card size ad in the phone book, add \$40 for the bundle; if you ran a quarter-page size ad in the phone book, add \$60 for the bundle; if you ran a half-page size ad in phone book, add \$100 for the bundle; and if you ran a full-page size ad in the phone book, add \$200 for the bundle.

Additional bundle costs can be paid directly to Willits Weekly, at P.O. Box 1698, Willits, CA 95490. Call 972-7047 with any questions.

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Congratulations Column

Birthday Buddies
Hailee & Kaleb



Happy 7th Birthday to best friends Kaleb Jeffrey Whitehurst & Hailee Rae Lopez. Kaleb's birthday was on January 25 and Hailee's was on January 29.

Birthday Girl
Brodey



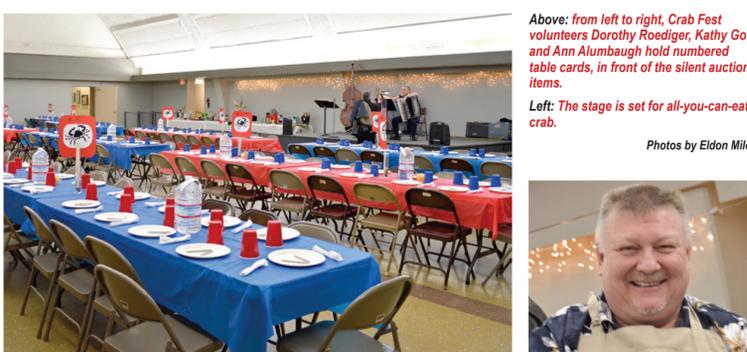
Happy 5th Birthday Brodey. We love you so much. Love, Dad, Mom, Charley & Rowdy

Birthday Boy
Rowdy



Happy 1st bday Rowdy! We love you. Love, Dad, Mom, Charley & Brodey.

Send us yours!
Congratulations Column entries are printed free of charge and are fun to read! It's easy! Just email us at willitsweekly@gmail.com



Above: from left to right, Crab Fest volunteers Dorothy Roediger, Kathy Gatt and Ann Alumbaugh hold numbered table cards, in front of the silent auction items.

Left: The stage is set for all-you-can-eat crab.

Photos by Eldon Miller

Festive Crab Feed

The Willits Rotary Club Crab Fest on January 18 raised an estimated \$5,000, said organizer Ann Alumbaugh. High crab prices cut into the profits a bit this year, but the nearly sold-out crowd enjoyed the never-ending fresh crab and all the side dishes, starting with butter-and-garlic-soaked French bread. Alumbaugh made the delicious pasta and Caesar salad herself.

Marilyn Harden did a little dancing, too. Jolene Carrillo and Tom Herman poured the drinks at the Lions Club no-host bar.

The big auction item was a date-night gift basket, Alumbaugh said, with four gift certificates to restaurants in town and four different sets of tickets: to the movies, the museum, the Skunk Train and to the bluegrass concert by the Dry Branch Fire Squad, coming up on Saturday, February 8 at Willits Center for the Arts, another Rotary Club benefit for WHS scholarships. High bidders for the date-night basket were Bruce Burton and Linda Buletti.

Alumbaugh is ready to do it all again next year: "if there's crab," she said. The monies raised "were more than we had to start with, so whatever we made was good," she said. "We don't count our time; Rotary is so good at pitching in that way."

Half of the funds raised by the annual event will go to the Willits Senior Center, and half will go to the scholarship fund for the senior class at Willits High School.

The Basics played music to eat to, and Jim and



Above, right: Mike Tobin, enjoying his crab on crab feed night.

Above: Willits Mayor Holly Madrigal, left, and Willits City Manager Adrienne Moore await the feast.

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The rest of Fire Tax | From Page 1

General Manager Denise Rose, if voters approve the rate increase, an additional \$290,000 would be generated for the Brooktrails Fire Department each year. Rose noted the department is currently critically short of funds.

Only about \$243,000 is generated each year to run a department with expenses of about \$323,000. With the approval of the tax hike, an additional \$290,000 would be generated, meaning the fire district would be taking in about \$530,000.

"This would give us enough revenue to buy the equipment we need, as well as to build up a reserve so we can purchase and replace the equipment we already have as it becomes worn out," said Rose.

During discussions about the merit of the plan, Brooktrails resident Paul Lambert reported on the process by which the fire department revenue enhancement committee, of which Lambert was a member, decided a fire tax hike was the most viable option for the community.

"We reviewed lots of options. We looked at asking CalFire to do the work. We looked at joining up with Little Lake (the Little Lake Fire Prevention District). When those were seen as unworkable, we went back to the committee and asked the question: 'Do we need fire protection? Can we provide this protection better than the other options?' And so this is what we came up with.

"And we were smart, because we brought in those who were critical of the last fire tax measure. And this time, they saw what we were proposing is the most viable, and the least hurtful, of all the options.

"I think this time around they will be supporting us, rather than opposing us," Lambert said.

The board will hold a public hearing on the proposed ordinance at the February 11 board meeting.

Skezas is out; board to appoint new director

Longtime Brooktrails board member George Skezas has officially resigned and moved to Hampton Cove, Alabama. In a January 17 email to Denise Rose, Skezas said he wished the move to be seen "not as deserting my post, but only what it is, and that is a major life change to be closer to many of our family members [who live] throughout this area."

Skezas, who had served a total of 16 years on the Brooktrails board, 11 as president, suggested Brooktrails might wish to honor his years of service in a small way. "If the district wishes to recognize my service, my choice would be a small plaque with a small gavel attached which would particularly recognize my service as president of the board. If that is not possible, I would understand," Skezas said.

The four remaining board members quickly decided to appoint a person to fill Skezas's seat. Interested and qualified persons are invited to apply for the position by February 17. If there are more than five applicants, an ad hoc committee of the board will screen and rank applicants. The board will interview either the entire field of applicants or the top ranked five applicants of the as-yet-undetermined field on Saturday, March 8, during a special planning meeting of the Brooktrails board of directors.

Director Tony Orth noted the appointment will be for a bit less than two years, and the seat will be filled by regular election in November 2015.

The rest of Taps | From Page 1

"We have gotten tremendous cooperation," City Code Enforcer and Building Inspector John Sherman said. "They are doing a great job."

Under Willits Municipal Code provisions, the city can send water-wasters to county jail or fine them up to \$1,000. The code allows for cases to be handled as an infraction, too.

The Willits Police Department handles emergency calls for the water department during the night and on weekends. An after-hours water loss emergency might be a big water leak or a break in a water main that could result in major loss of water.

Police dispatch will take information about other, less major breaches of the water ordinance, and forward them via email to the city code enforcement department.

There is an increased urgency to respond to leaks when they are reported, Willits Police Chief Gerry Gonzalez said at a recent city council meeting. "I think it is becoming liquid gold and we need to jump on it right away," Gonzalez said.

City Hall has stated it is looking for compliance and hopes to avoid prosecuting Willits residents who may be doing their best to save water.

"We are looking for the community to come together and not waste water," said Gonzalez this week.

It is a misdemeanor or a fine if city residents fail to comply with water rationing, according to the Municipal Code. But when the city council met last week, City Attorney Jim Lance said he is not certain Mendocino County District Attorney David Eyster

The rest of Tidbits | From Page 1

users. St. Helena, for example, charges extra per gallon and installs flow-reducers on customers' properties.

Police Chief Gerry Gonzalez noted his department has lost one member to retirement and another to better pay down south. "They go out quicker than they come in," Gonzalez said. "That is the nature of the business."

Police are patrolling Bill Barksdale's street, who had spoken to the council before about a suspected drug dealer in his neighborhood.

The rest of Measure D | From Page 1

would prosecute those cases.

Community members concerned about the water wasted by another resident may call City Hall directly at 459-4601, and hit "0" to talk to the operator.

City Manager Adrienne Moore said she can also be reached by e-mail at amoore@willitscity.com. City Hall will get the message to the appropriate crew member, code enforcer or billing department.

The city's Phase V water emergency allows residences to use up to 150 gallons of water per day, and insists businesses use 35 percent less water than last year.

With water on their minds, some community members have wondered how they can make sense of their water bills or keep an eye on how many gallons they use each day. City Hall plans to help on the next round of water bills by printing additional information on how to read a water bill and to calculate water usage.

The city's Clarence Tarver reads all of the town's meters over a two-week span each month.

Willits water meters give their readings in cubic feet. The city "bills at 100 cubic feet," Tarver explained. "Twenty-five gallons per minute is the maximum it is designed to measure accurately."

For residents who care to read their own water meters, 150 gallons is about 20 cubic feet. Most importantly, .20 units equals 150 gallons.

Tarver also said residents can try to use less than 1.5 units per week.

The senior care project of Jay and Elizabeth Santos is set to come back to the planning commission in late February.

Recently hired Associate City Planner Karen Gauss said she has received two inquiries about turning the deserted Carlson Apartments into apartments again.

Gauss also reported a brother and sister team may have plans for the Vassar's Pizza building, including a food truck.

- Zack Cinek

The rest of Parrish | From Page 1

Parrish has agreed to a two-year "entry of judgment" period, and any trespassing on the bypass construction site or interference with Caltrans or bypass contractors' work in any location would be considered a violation of the plea agreement. If there are no violations, after 24 months the two misdemeanors will be dropped to infractions.

One element of the case against Parrish - the potential of collecting "restitution" for costs resulting from his protest's delay of bypass construction - has not yet been formally resolved. A restitution hearing has been scheduled for April 25. Although Caltrans submitted nearly a half-million dollars in restitution costs, it's generally agreed by all parties at this point that any actual restitution awarded would be a fraction of that figure.

DA's Office spokesman Mike Geniella called the Caltrans' figures "inflated," and said District Attorney David Eyster "never had any intention of gathering \$500,000."

"The bottom line here," Geniella told Willits Weekly, "is that Mr. Parrish was told from the beginning, you have to stop trespassing on the construction site, that it's against the law, and the agencies have the right to demand we prevent you from doing that."

Caltrans spokesman Phil Frisbie told Willits Weekly his agency had been asked to provide "potential costs," to the DA's Office, and that's what the \$500,000 figure was. Since then, Frisbie said, "our contractor has filed an internal claim for additional charges [for extra costs due to Parrish's wick drain protest], and 'we've been working on settling this claim with the contractor.'"

That settlement will be "substantially less" than \$500,000, Frisbie said. "As soon as that claim is finalized, we will be updating the DA's office with the actual costs that we negotiated."

The 24-month "entry of judgment" period was described as a "probation period" in a press release sent out by the Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters, which announced the plea deal. But, Parrish told

Willits Weekly: "My understanding from the DA and from my lawyer is that it's not probation, per se. I don't report to a probation officer. I pled 'no contest,' and that's not an admission of guilt. It would have to be an admission of guilt to trigger the whole probation thing."

Parrish has also agreed to do 100 hours of community service.

Parrish said he felt it important that the stay-away order was lifted, so he could - as DA spokesman Geniella put it: "Put on his reporter's hat" - and be allowed to be present anywhere reporters can legally be while covering the bypass. Parrish has covered the bypass and other environmental stories for the Anderson Valley Advertiser independent weekly in Boonville for about four years now.

But the main reason Parrish and supporters take the plea agreement as a victory, Parrish said, is that "the restitution part has been clarified a lot, and actually has some definition to it. When it started, the first offer from the DA's Office [before Parrish asked for a jury trial] was three infractions and an open offer of restitution."

"Back when I was first arrested off of the stitcher, there were all sorts of things going around in the press," Parrish said, "about millions of dollars that protesters had caused in delays, so all of this restitution stuff was totally uncharted territory at that point. It's really important for me, in my case, since I was the first to have some sort of reasonable precedent established here."

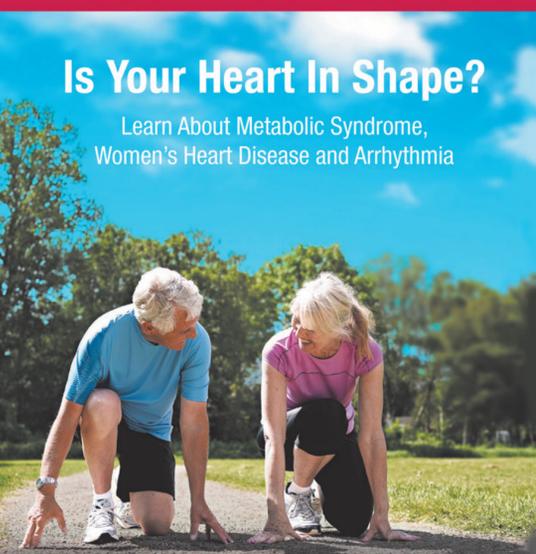
Spokesman Geniella said the DA's Office felt the plea deal meant "we were back where we started," when Parrish was first charged with infractions.

"Mr. Parrish and his supporters wanted to bring the bypass protest into the courtroom. They wanted the notoriety, and that kind of blew up on them. We attempted to resolve this as an infraction, but when they took it to the next level, it became multiple misdemeanor charges. That's the law. I think we could've avoided some of the hullabaloo, but I think Parrish decided to take this as far as he could."

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Women's hearts are different from men's. Learn how risk assessment, diagnosis and interventional options differ for women.
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Meeting the Mayor

Holly Madrigal gathered with Brooksidiers to discuss city improvements

It was an exciting day last Wednesday for a group of third-grade students, who were able to share their ideas about the future of the city of Willits with Mayor Holly Madrigal during her visit to their classroom.

The English language development class at Brookside Elementary School had the idea to contact the mayor after reading a story about a boy named James Ale.

The true story, set in the later 1980s, starts with Ale's friend, who was hit by a car and suffered a broken leg. Ale was convinced that if he and his friends had a park to play in instead of being out in the street, the tragedy wouldn't have happened. Just 9 years old at the time, Ale started writing letters and making phone calls to the city, trying to get a park built. Eventually, and after many unreturned contacts, he showed up at Mayor Joan Kovac's office with "briefcase and typed letter in hand" and made enough of an impression to finally get a park built in the town of Davie, Florida, a year later.

The story inspired the kids of Room 13 to contact our mayor, not necessarily for tragedy prevention measures, but to share their ideas on improving the city of Willits as we move into the future.

The students penned the letter (below right) and sent it to Madrigal in November last year.

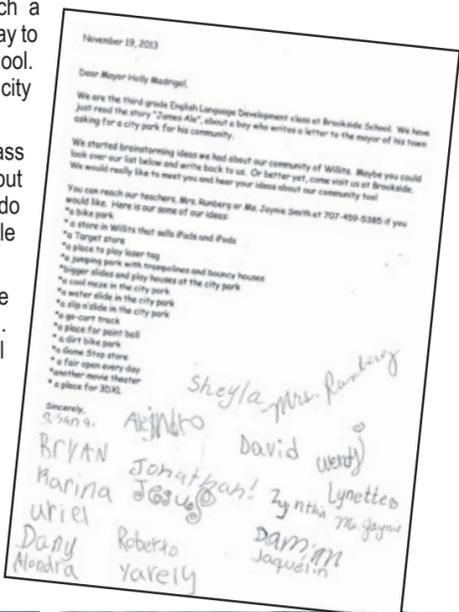
"It was so great to get this letter from the third-grade class, and it was an honor to go speak to them about their suggestions," said Madrigal. "That they took time to write down their ideas for the community was incredibly sweet. How great that their teachers are encouraging civic involvement at such a young age? I think they were blown away to hear that I, too, went to Brookside School. Who knows, perhaps we have a young city council person in the making!"

Madrigal decided to meet with the class and have a discussion with them about what the city and the community can do to make Willits a place where people continue to want to live.

Students excitedly gathered in the classroom, awaiting the mayor's arrival. Upon coming into the room, Madrigal was met with a group song by the class, and she was invited to sit at the front of the room for introductions and questions.

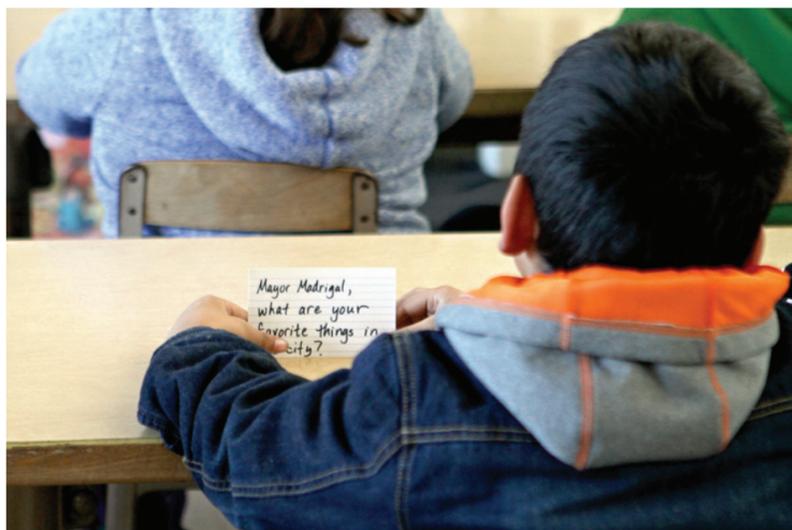
Top: Jayne Smith, Holly Madrigal and Nancy Runberg pose with the students after the presentation.

Right: The letter sent in by the students.



Above: Madrigal smiles for the camera and answers questions from the students.

Below: Students all waited their turn to ask their prepared questions. Photos by Maureen Moore



Students introduced themselves, and several had prepared questions including: Are you going to build something from our list? What did you think about our list? How did you become a mayor? Are you the boss of the city? Are you glad you are a mayor? What do you like to do when you're not working? What is your favorite part of your job? Where are your favorite places in the city?

Items from their list of suggestions included "a place to play laser tag," "a dirt bike park," and "a fair open every day," among many others.

Many questions were directed to the city, asking the city government to institute or create the changes. This was met with Madrigal's encouragement for the kids to contact an older friend or family member to start a business that offered the games and services the kids wanted.

"We can't open stores as the city, but we can provide ideas on locations and guidance of the associated rules to the people that do want to open the businesses," was a common response from Madrigal to many of the requests for a Game Stop, a Target or a Jumperz.

Kids seemed to be even more intrigued about the idea of their family or friends owning a business that could help the family with jobs and income, as well as give them the fun and services they desired.

Connecting kids and the city gives insight to the youth on how they can help shape Willits as they grow older. The students seemed impressed that, with enough effort and dedication, they, too, could help make a change in their hometown.

- Maureen Moore



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