

Online & Print

Donations Accepted Edition No. 395

Thursday, March 25, 2021

Forrest Glycer
Reporter
willitsweekly@gmail.com

However, the board is now considering making changes in the county's cannabis cultivation ordinance, including a new Chapter 22.18, which could significantly expand the size of cannabis farms allowed on some parcels if adopted as written.

Third District Supervisor John Haschak called Monday's BOS vote "procedural" in nature, and said that changes to the cannabis ordinance, as recommended by the planning commission, will likely be coming back to the board at their April 20 meeting.

Read the rest of
Phase 3
Over on Page 4

Joanne Moore
Reporter
joanne@willitsweekly.com

The Little Lake Fire Protection District's Board of Directors heard all the details at their March meeting.

"It looks like we're going to maintain our three (rated) status," said Fire Chief Chris Wilkes. "That's always the goal of the fire district to be able to maintain that. It gets harder and harder every year."

And insurance companies

Read more of **LLFD** 
Over on *Page 10*



Above, left: Willits Chamber of Commerce's Donna Hart handles phone calls at the Chamber office, which will be open weekends starting this Saturday. Above, right: Chamber Board Member Jill Persico folds some of the new "Cattle Brand-danas" available for sale as a fundraiser for the Chamber. Below: Willits Chamber Board of Directors members pose together to showcase the new bandanas including, from left: Chuck Persico, Julie Orr, Tim Westby, Jill Persico, Donna Hart, Cathy Moorhead holding Ron's photo, Gloria Westby, John Kvasnicka, Chamber president Lisa Kvasnicka, and Guest Operations Manager for the Skunk Train Aaron Fultz. Not pictured: Chamber Board member Linda Givens of Adnick Health Howard Memorial.



Colorful handkerchiefs showcasing many Mendocino County cattle brands available now

Representing Willits and representing Mendocino County can be achieved in many ways, but including the history of the region's cattle industry

Maureen Jennison
 Graphics & Photographress
 maureen@willitsweekly.com

The bandanas, which can be worn as a pandemic “Pan-dana” facemask, or in a number of other ways, are

The 2020 project was spearheaded by then-executive director of the Chamber, Ron Moorhead, who passed away earlier this year. Moorhead did get to see the project through to completion, however, and his wife, Cathy, noted his excitement and pleasure about the outcome.

Now, operations at the Chamber are even more of a group effort with volunteer Donna Hart manning the phones at the East Commercial Street office. Lisa Kvasnicka, owner of

Read the rest of
Brand-danas
Over on Page 9

At left: The bandana design which features 85 different cattle brands from around Mendocino County.

Below, left: There are four colors of bandanas available to purchase: pink, navy, red and maroon.

Below: Donna Hart, left, and Cathy Moorhead, pose with a photo of Cathy's late husband, Ron, who was the previous executive director of the Willits Chamber of Commerce and driving force to create the bandanas.

Photos by Maureen Jennison



Jennifer Poole
Editor & Reporter
willitsweekly@gmail.com

But commissioners did not agree on another controversial change: the proposal that landowners in Ag, Rangeland, and Upper Residential zoned areas, under Phase 3 permits, could be permitted to grow as much as 10 percent of their parcel's acreage in cannabis, subject to a use permit process. By the end of the meeting, three commissioners of the five participating had come around to supporting a 1

Read the rest of
Planning
Over on Page 11

I Forrest Glycer
Reporter
willitsweekly@gmail.com

"So what a difference a year makes," said Hutchins. "It's so good to see school buses stopping for school children and not just distributing meals and operating as hotspots."

“Each school is identifying appropriate actions based

Read the rest of
Schools
Over on Page 11

Willits Weekly's
Puzzle Page

Sudoku, Word Search & Crossword

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

PUZZLE
ANSWERS
ON
PAGE 9

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!

CONSUMER WORD SEARCH

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

ACCOUNTING	CUSTOMER SERVICE	NECESSITY	STOCK
AGREEMENT	DEMAND	ORGANIZATION	STORE
CASH	EXCHANGE	PAYMENT	SUPPLIES
CASHIER	IMPULSE	PURCHASE	WARES
CONSUMER	LINE	RETAIL	WARRANTY
CONTRACT	LIST	SALESPERSON	WHOLESALE

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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45				46				47				48		
			49				50				51			
52	53	54				55				56		57	58	59
60					61				62		63			
64						65					66			
67						68					69			

CLUES ACROSS

- Volcanic crater
- Having the means to do something
- Rods or spindles
- La ___ Tar Pits, Hollywood
- Missing soldiers
- Measuring instrument
- All of the components considered individually
- Play '___ Irish Rose'
- Gene
- Barrels
- London-based soccer team
- Feline
- Breed of sheep
- Body part
- Doctors' group
- One who follows the rules
- Cigarette residue
- Ancient Greek sophist
- Polish yeast cakes
- Promotional materials
- Pancakes made from buckwheat flour
- Completed perfectly
- Photo
- A peninsula in SW Asia
- The common gibbon

- Disfigure
- Ribonucleic acid
- Japanese honorific
- Pieces of music
- Expressed pleasure
- Having ten
- Type of sword
- Humble request for help
- Eating houses
- Italian Seaport
- Cain and ___
- Measure the depth
- U. of Miami's mascot
- Political outsiders
- Greek sorceress
- Body part

CLUES DOWN

- Mother
- Jewish calendar month
- Jai ___, sport
- Establish again
- Swiss river
- Racetrack wager
- ___ but goodie
- Closeness
- Soviet Socialist Republic
- At right angles to a ship's length
- Women's undergarments
- Mountain stream
- Expresses pleasure

WILLITS POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICE LOG

March 15 to March 21

By Danya Davis, Willits Weekly

The officers of the Willits Police Department handled **114 incidents** in this seven-day reporting period.

Summary of Active Investigations and Arrests

March 15

12:53 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 1700 block of South Main Street.

4:46 pm: Officer responded to a disturbance in the 1200 block of South Main Street.

6:54 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 200 block of East Valley Street.

9:29 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 1700 block of South Main Street.

11:47 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 100 block of Wood Street.

March 16

5:55 pm: Officers initiated a burglary investigation in the 800 block of Railroad Avenue.

March 17

9:33 am: Officers initiated a vehicle theft investigation in the 800 block of South Main Street.

11:02 am: Officers initiated a fraud investigation in the 1700 block of South Main Street.

11:11 am: Officers responded to a report of a suspicious person near the intersection of Sherwood Road and North Main Street.

12:50 pm: Officers initiated a missing person investigation in the 1200 block of Blosser Lane.

1:01 pm: Officers responded to a report of a suspicious person in the 800 block of South Main Street.

4:08 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 100 block of South Humboldt Street.

4:53 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance near the intersection of West Mendocino Avenue and South Main Street.

5:34 pm: Officers initiated a vehicle theft investigation in the 300 block of Fort Bragg Road.

10:59 pm: MANIES, Bobbi Anne (35) of Willits and GAMEZ, Luis Enrique (32) of Willits were contacted in the 100 block of Marcela Drive. Manies was arrested on felony charges of cruelty to a child (inflict injury) and conspiracy to obstruct justice. Gamez was arrested on felony charges of cruelty to a child (inflict injury) and obstruction of justice.

March 18

10:30 am: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 100 block of Harms Lane.

8:01 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 1700 block of South Main Street.

10:06 pm: GARCIA, Javier Ryan (33) of Willits was contacted in the 1300 block of South Main Street. He was arrested on felony charges of violation of parole.

March 19

11:06 am: Officers initiated a fraud investigation in the 1400 block of Baechtel Road.

12:38 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 100 block of Mill Creek Court.

1:47 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 800 block of South Main Street.

4:56 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 1700 block of South Main Street.

6:18 pm: Officers responded to a report of trespassing in the 400 block of East Commercial Street.

9:22 pm: Officers responded to a domestic disturbance in the 1400 block of South Main Street.

9:35 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance near the intersection of North Street and West Mendocino Avenue.

10:26 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 800 block of South Main Street.

March 20

11:29 am: HERNANDEZ, Uriel Aldean (25) of Willits was contacted in the 200 block of Margie Drive following a domestic disturbance. He was arrested pursuant to 245 (A) (1) PC (Assault with a Deadly Weapon), 273.5 PC (Domestic Corporal Injury), 273 (A) PC (Child Endangerment), 1203.2 PC (Violation of Probation), and on felony charges of cruelty to a child (inflict injury).

4:42 pm: CRABTREE Sr., Ezra Bartholomew (44) of Willits was contacted in the 1700 block of South Main Street. He was arrested pursuant to 422 PC (Criminal Threats).

6:27 pm: Officers responded to a report of unwanted subjects in the 200 block of East Commercial Street and issued a warning.

March 21

12:43 am: KENNY, Anna Marie (30) of Willits was contacted in the 200 block of South Main Street. She was arrested pursuant to 647 (F) PC (Public Intoxication), 415 PC (Disturbing the Peace), and on misdemeanor charges of disorderly conduct (alcohol).

3:54 am: Officers responded to a disturbance near the intersection of State Street and North Main Street.

1:08 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 800 block of South Main Street.

3:51 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 100 block of Madrone Street.

7:05 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 25000 block of Poppy Drive.

The rest of
Phase 3

From Page 1

There is also a special BOS meeting scheduled for Monday, April 12 which will include several informational reports regarding the local cannabis industry to help the supervisors make their decision about expansion and other changes being considered.

The reports will include a presentation from California Department of Fish & Wildlife focused on water usage, a look at the cannabis policies of Humboldt County and how they compare to Mendocino, and a look at enforcement of illegal cannabis grows by the Sheriff's Office and county counsel and whether the county should change their approach.

At the Monday meeting, First District Supervisor Ted Williams, a member of the cannabis ad hoc committee, talked about why they were shifting away from the Phase 3 plan as written.

"The reason we want to freeze this today and not start is we recognize Phase 1 and 2 were a disaster," he said. "And the current Phase 3 that's on the books would follow. And it's a difficult place for this board to be in that we need to make changes to make this program work. But if we start out with a mountain of complaints about how bad it is – well we know that and that's why we need to make changes.... We need to replace [Phase 3] with something that's reasonable that has enforcement elements that meets the state requirements."

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Above: WHS Native American Club advisor Buffey Bourassa, left, Anthony Wright, Joscelyn Beebe, and WHS Interact Club advisor Lucy Kyne are ready for customers. At right, from top: WHS Principal Mike Colvig is happy to pick up seeds for his garden and support the Native American and Interact clubs in their Clean Water Project. Willits Rotarian Mathew Caine and Willits Rotary President Jason Korte are some of the first customers. Advisor and Willits Rotarian Buffey Bourassa and Anthony Wright of the Native American Club assist in helping them decide. A packet of seeds came with eight sixpack trays ready for planting. WHS Assistant Principal Marian Lohne, left, is ready to make her purchases from students Joscelyn Beebe and Anthony Wright, while WHS counselor and Interact advisor Lucy Kyne supervises.

Photos by Jenny Senter



Seed Sale

Willits High School Interact and Native American clubs
raise money for Clean Water Project

The sun cooperated and shined down on the Willits High School Interact and Native American clubs' Vernal Equinox Seed Sale held in front of WHS on March 17 and 18. This well-organized event offered drive-up service and eight sixpack trays filled with potting soil as a bonus when donations were given for the quality flower, herb and vegetable seeds. All that needed to be done when was add seeds! Also available for sale were 0.75-cubic-foot bags of potting soil.

WHS Interact Club members Joscelyn Beebe, Michael Kale, Anthony Wright, Paris Hanserger, and Allegra Silveira helped with the sale.

Soil and seeds were donated by Sparetime Supply and this fundraiser was the first of several for the clubs' mutual Clean Water Project for Willits. The clubs' goal is to purchase three outdoor water stations for the parks in Willits – City Park, Recreation Grove, and Babcock Park. Initial cost estimates for the stations are \$2,000 each. An indoor station has been donated to the clubs by Mendocino County Public Health, and the students are working with the City of Willits for a suitable location.

WHS Interact Club members decided on the Clean Water Project idea during the 2019 / 20 school year. Willits Rotarians, of which WHS Interact Club is affiliated, Dickey Winkle and Mathew Caine went with students to the city council meeting to present this idea.

Native American Club advisor Buffey Bourassa mentioned the project to Tina Tyler O'Shea, program administrator at Mendocino Public Health and she said they had an indoor water-hydration station to donate to the project. Both Kenan O'Shea and Tina Tyler O'Shea presented their plan for help with the project to WHS Interact Club this school year. WHS Interact Club advisor Lucy Kyne is also assisting the students in their fundraising endeavors.

Kyne said the club met their goal of earning \$500 on this sale. They sold out of the soil and starter packs but have leftover seeds, which they plan to plant for starts to sell in May. Watch for an announcement in early May for a sale.

If you would like to support this project, donations can be sent to Willits High School Interact Club, 299 North Main Street, Willits, CA 95490.

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Below: Inside the cover, the vegetables are thriving and ready for the warmer weather.



are so glad we're able to give her this second chance at a new life! Luna would love to meet you and show you all her tricks. She is ready to go home to her best friend today.

The Humane Society for Inland Mendocino County, 9700 Uva Drive in Redwood Valley, is open Wednesday through Friday from 1 to 5 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 3 pm, by appointment only, for intakes, adoptions and fostering. For information or any questions, call 707-485-0123 or, for cats, you may email catteam@hsmc.org and, for dogs, you may email dogteam@hsmc.org. Visit www.petfinder.com or the "Humane Society for Mendocino County" page on Facebook to see available dogs and cats, visit www.mendohumanesociety.com to learn more.

Friendly Cheeks

Cheeks McGee is one handsome boy. This 3-year-old neutered male is very loving and affectionate, and we think he would do well with both other cats and kids, making him a great addition to any family.

For more about Cheeks McGee or to see the

Mendocino County Animal Shelter's canine and feline guests, and for information about services, programs, events and updates about COVID-19 and the inland shelter, located at 298 Plant Road in Ukiah, visit: www.mendoanimalshelter.com. For information about adoptions, please call 707-467-6453.



Community Gardens

For those who like to grow their own food but don't have the space, Willits offers many communal plots

"I think this is going to be a good year," opined Cathie Nicolaus, manager of the Brooktrails Community Garden, after the spring equinox meeting of the participants. "We have a great group of gardeners." The growers at the gardens are a tight-knit community of experienced and novice vegetable enthusiasts.

Mathew Caine
Features Writer
mthaw@willitsweekly.com

The newer members always know that they can get the advice they require from those who have been at it for many years, which creates a garden area which is productive and vibrant. It also becomes a place of beauty and serenity when fully operational, thanks to the efforts of such as Anthony Ward, a horticulturist-artist who makes sure the area is full of color and bees.

The gardens become transformed from soil patches into a place of life and sustenance each year, although some of the more experienced gardeners utilize the spaces year-round to grow winter crops such as garlic, lettuce or kale. Some even cover their plots with materials to retain enough warmth to help their crops to survive through the coldest weather.

Now, they are looking for the climate to offer enough continuingly warming days to begin the process of conditioning the soil, rejuvenating with compost and all-organic amenities such as chicken manure, bat guano, bone meal, or palm ash, all which supply the ground with nitrogen, phosphorous, and other beneficial elements.

Nicolaus, who has been with the garden from its inception 10 years ago when the space was converted from tennis courts into the thriving growing space of today, is proud of the accomplishments of the gardeners and what she has been able to grow. Even through the winter, she had watermelons, radishes, beets, lettuce, arugula and shallots successfully growing, as well as a sizable plot of garlic.

"We have 27 numbered plots currently," shared Nicolaus. "Four or five of them are communal. Maybe 22 are active. We do have some available plots for new members right now. If no one takes them, we'll open them up to current members. We would like new members because we need the energy. The more people we have, the more people we have for our work parties."

"If no one takes them by mid-May," she continued, "we'll put them up to members who have been here for a while, who show activity in the garden, or we can just turn them into communal beds."

Work parties and work days are part of what make this communal garden function so well. Everyone is expected to take on tasks



At right: The Willits Community Garden's front gate. At far right: Garden Manager Cathie Nicolaus is looking for new gardeners who have time to help maintain the garden grounds and compost.

At right, below: Some crops, like several varieties of garlic, are able to thrive through the Brooktrails winter.

At right, bottom: Brooktrails Garden member Brian Weller addresses the group at the spring equinox meeting.

which benefit the entire garden, tasks such as weeding, preparing compost, laying down wood chips, beautifying the entrance, etc.

The spring equinox meeting began with each gardener stating their name, which area of Brooktrails they live in, and a short statement of what they hope to accomplish with their efforts this year. This is not just a group of plots, but rather a community of people who love the fact that they can grow a sizeable portion of their own food, who love to get their hands dirty, and to watch the fruits (vegetables) of their labors come to fruition.

There are a few open spots available which people can apply for and pay the \$50 yearly per plot fee for, which includes the plot, carefully tended organic compost, organic amendments to enrich their soil, and most importantly, the group experience. Email brooktrailscommunitygarden@gmail.com if you're interested.

The Willits area has three more gardens which come under the oversight of the North Coast Opportunities Garden Project. The project is overseen by Sarah Marshall, project manager, and Lucy Kramer, project coordinator.

The Willits Community Garden can be found behind the Sheriff Sub-Station, next to Recreation Grove Park. It is managed by Julie Bailey-Todd and has a few available plots: www.facebook.com/Willits-Community-garden-101393841708625/. The gardens are going through a sort of renaissance with a new rainwater-catchment system and hopefully a new greenhouse, as the last one, installed a couple years ago, was ravaged by the snowstorm. Plots are \$25 for the year.

The Senior Center Garden, managed by Shannon Furr and the Willits Garden Club, is run on a sharecropping basis. Beds are \$25 and the gardeners are expected to share half of their crop with the Willits Harrah Senior Center to help provide fresh vegetables for the kitchen, which in turn provides inexpensive lunches for seniors as well as free Meals-On-Wheels for shut-ins. This garden has received grants and donations from the Willits Rotary Club, Fox Farm, Sparetime Supply, and a large cash-infusion from 100 Women Strong through the Gardens Project. For inquiries, call Shannon Furr at 707-321-8760.

Another garden, the newest one, is behind the White Deer Lodge on the ridge. It is primarily a garden tended by members of the New Agrarian Collective, Caroline Radice, Joshua Sternberg, and Eben Stewart. "We consider it a Willits garden," said Kramer. "It's primarily a private garden and they're not accepting more gardeners. It serves fire survivors and people from the local food movement."

In trying times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other uncertainties, groups of gardeners are coming together to be able to provide food security outside the normal commercial food chain with its GMO and processed foods. It is a definite advantage to be able to supply oneself and one's family with fresh, unadulterated and healthful foods.

To learn more about the work, support and efforts of the NCO Gardens Project, visit www.gardensproject.org.



At far left: The Brooktrails Community Garden is beginning to come back to life. At left, above: The spacious greenhouse is available to all gardeners. At left: The Brooktrails Garden community comes together four times a year to exchange ideas and learn the latest ideas. Above: The grape arbors are ready for the new season.

Photos by Mathew Caine

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ALL ARE WELCOME

Willits Seventh-Day Adventist Church
399 W. Mendocino Avenue
707-459-5714
Saturdays:
Bible Study 2 p.m.
Worship Service 3 p.m.
https://willitscadventistchurch.org
All are welcome!

Willits United Methodist
All Christ centered, progressive church
ALL ARE WELCOME
286 School St. (at Pine)
Rev. Rosemary Landry, pastor
Worship Celebration
Sundays - 10:30 a.m.
Children's Sunday School - 10:45 a.m.
459-2855
Facebook: www.facebook.com

Willits Unified School District has immediate openings for

Bus Drivers

The School District will pay for all licensing costs plus 50 hours of training for qualified applicants selected for this opportunity.



Applications available at the Willits Unified School District Office, 1277 Blosser Lane (south end of Blosser Lane campus). Contact Mattie Pinon, DMOT Assistant, 459-5111 or Trina Cardillo, Human Resources, 459-5314, ext. 1102.



City of Willits asks your participation in urban forest survey

Submitted by City of Willits Community Development

The City of Willits wants your input on taking care of our urban forest. The city's urban forest is made up of trees growing on private property, along city streets, and in parks.

Willits is in the process of creating its Urban Forest Management Plan, which will guide the city and tree care professionals to proactively and effectively manage our trees. The success of the UFMP relies on the public's input. To ensure the UFMP considers and incorporates the priorities of the people who live and work in Willits, the survey at the link following is provided for your voice to be heard: www.surveymonkey.com/lr/willitstrees

We want to know where focus should be placed as the city's urban forest program is continually improved. Your feedback will be kept anonymous, and findings from the survey will only be reported in group form. All survey responses will be stored securely and confidentially. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may stop the survey at any time.

We appreciate you taking part in this important process. For additional information about the city's Urban Forest Management Plan, please contact Project Manager Ryan Allen at rallen@dudek.com. The survey will close on April 16, 2021. Please respond before that date.

A hard copy of the survey can be requested from Jim Robbins at jrobbins@cityofwillits.org or 459-7155.



More of **LLFD** *From Page 1*

pay attention to the ratings, so the lower the rating, the lower you might pay for insurance.

Wilkes explained that it would be next to impossible to get below three for Little Lake Fire because the number of firefighters who are paid figures into the calculations.

"We're literally at a point where if you look at the breakdowns ... without a paid fire department, I don't believe there'd be any way for us to get to a two," said Wilkes.

For Willits, it's mostly volunteers out there fighting fires; there's only three who are paid to do so.

"They only allow us to claim a quarter of our roster [as firefighters], because they're volunteers. If you have a roster of 40, which we do, you can claim a quarter, and that brings it down to 10," he said. "You can only provide so much fire protection with two five-man engine companies."

Limitations with respect to the availability of time for training also affects the department's rating.

"We train as much as we can, [but] with volunteers we only have a amount of time to train," said Wilkes. "So usually, historically, we have always taken a hit on training ... just for the simple fact that we don't have the hours.

"A paid staff, they're trained two hours a day," he said.

Another audit-imposed constraint is a location's distance from a fire station or substation. More than five miles away precludes inclusion in the rating.

So, despite best efforts by district staff, parts of Pine Mountain could not be included in the district's rating.

There's only one way to fix that.

"I feel like down the road, we'll probably see a substation in our outlying areas," said Wilkes.

"Brooktrails has a station all the way up on Blue Lakes. It's a strategic move on the part of fire departments ... to place stations in the areas that can serve and help their ISO rating," he said.

Ridgewood Ranch, on the other

hand, "was able to get a classification because they have a fire station down there," said Wilkes.

"We gave them our old engine 5842... They're working with us all the time," he said. "We're able to call that a substation.

"They have a true water supply down there with a hydrant system, and so they were able to get a rating down there, and that's a big deal for them.

"They had put in a residential care facility, and the insurance was through the roof because there was no rating down there, and we were able to help them," said Wilkes. "It's exciting for them. It's exciting for us to be able to help."

Some help in the form of a donation, along with a letter of appreciation, also recently came the fire district's way.

Wilkes read the letter in its entirety to the board "because I think things like this are extremely important," he said.

The letter was from "the Craig family," owners of a property they call "The Ranch ... just at the end of Ryan Creek Road on the east side of Highway 101," a property Wilkes described as "certainly in the line of fire" during last fall's Oak Fire.

The letter described the property as originally purchased by Leela and Rod Craig over 80 years ago, and "a place of refuge, a place we've shared with friends and family, and a place we feel lucky to have inherited ... like a second home to the Craig family," 19 of whom were named at the letter's end.

The donation was for \$1,000 for "gear that you go through such as gloves and hats to fight the wildland fires."

The Craigs thanked "all the volunteers who work so tirelessly each year during the fire season, and especially those who were part of the crew on the Oak Fire last fall.... Your efforts, along with Mother Nature, were our heroes," they wrote.

Read the rest of **LLFD** *Over on Page 11*

Willits Beautification clean-up this Saturday

The Leopold Collective, Live Mendo Green, and the Zocalo Collective are sponsoring a "Willits Beautification" clean-up event on Saturday, March 27, from 10 am to 12 noon. Meet at the Willits Safeway parking lot.

"Join us in helping to keep Willits beautiful! Please bring: sun protection / hat, gloves, water and face covering."

The rest of **Market** *From Page 3*

the inspiration for the event. Most booths were a mixture of art and herbs. Selena Rowan, of Nine Sister Botanicals of Laytonville and an Herb Guild member, was offering a book, which she helped to edit, "The Essential Guide to Western Botanical Medicine" by Christa Sinadinos. The tome is an 800-page definitive exploration of "chemistry, folklore, and clinical herbal uses," according to Rowan.

Sarah Adams' Everyday Alchemy offered herbal tonics, all alcohol-free herbal formulas that are made with organic herbs, local raw honey, and organic raw apple cider vinegar. "We have different varieties that address different areas of wellness," stated Adams.

Annie Waters was selling herbs. "We have everything from starts to finished product that people have lovingly crafted from herbs they grew themselves or they wild-crafted." Rangi and Yvonne Mayshark, whose Trillium Herb Company has a storefront in Ukiah, offered bulk herbs, spices and herbs products from local herbalists.

Jennifer Gonzales of Covelo was selling herbal body scrubs, tinctures, and herbal-infused oils and salves. Several other herbal booths were in residence at the event, including an Herb Guild booth that was having a raffle to raise funds for the guild, with prizes provided by the vendors.

In addition to herbalists, other vendors could be seen at the market. Divora Stern of One Mind Body had ceramics and other objects d'art. Kaitan Tripaldi of Trillium Alchemy showed a variety of soaps made from all-organic oils, named after her son, Trillium. Rebecca Martin and Cory Gunterman brought jewelry and polished stones and stone eggs from their Circle of Stone collection. Anna of the Meadow was back with her sensual spiritual prints inspired by visions she received from her ancestors.

There were many other vendors offering their herbs and art. The Mendocino County Herb Guild would like to produce these fairs at each equinox and solstice, if possible. However, spring is an ideal time to learn about and appreciate the benefits of herbs, as it is traditionally a time of health, hope and renewal.

"It's really exciting to see the little signs of plant life emerge," said Rowan. "I can tell from everyone here that we're all feeling the stirrings of spring. There's excitement and there's hope. That's how I like to approach herbs. That's the feeling we're all feeling right now from the seasons, from the elements, and then how can we bring herbs into our life to align us with the cycles of nature."

The rest of **Planning** *From Page 1*

acre cap on cannabis cultivation, even for larger parcels. Staff suggested that since commissioners were "not going to reach consensus," the recommendation to the board should instead include the range of options discussed.

The Planning Commission had been asked to look at these proposed new rules for cultivation, cannabis events, and cannabis facilities proposed by county staff, at the direction of the board of supervisors, and then give their recommendation to the board. The changes would apply to unincorporated areas of inland Mendocino County in Ag, Rangeland and Upland Residential zones.

The changes to the county ordinance that the Planning Commission recommended will come back to the Board of Supervisors on April 20, Supervisor John Haschak, who opposes the 10 percent expansion, confirmed.

Two commissioners, Greg Nelson (at his final Planning Commission meeting as county ag representative), and Diana Weidemann (representing the Fifth District) both supported what's being called a "10 percent expansion" in all three zoning areas.

Commissioner Clifford Paulin (First District) and Planning Commission Chair Alison Pernel (Third District) supported a 1 acre cap in all three zones, even for bigger parcel sizes. Commissioner Marie Jones (Fourth District) at first said she supported a 1 acre cap in Upland Residential and Rangeland, "to keep the prices from going crazy for Rangeland," she said, but she was "more flexible" on Ag parcels. But at the end of the meeting, Commissioner Jones said: "I'll join you guys with the 1 acre cap across the board, so we have three people with the 1 acre cap across the board."

At that point staff suggested that the recommendation to the supervisors should include the range of discussion on a potential cultivation cap. With Commissioner Jones agreeing, that's what was decided, and the final language in that section about "Placing an acreage limitation on the amount that can be cultivated" reads: "The commission was not able to reach consensus on a limitation, but discussed a maximum area from 1 acre up to 5 percent of the parcel."

The meeting had lengthy discussion by the Planning Commission members on multiple different cannabis items, cannabis farm tours among them, as well as nearly three hours of public comment via the Zoom meeting or phone, in several different segments. Some supporters of the new rules called in, including former Second District Supervisor John McCowen, a representative from Leef Holdings, and some permitted cannabis growers. However the strong majority of callers, including permitted cannabis growers, were against the 10 percent expansion.

The agenda page for Planning Commission lists 407 letters of comment sent in on the proposed changes (a number were duplicates or multiple letters from one source). Letters from individuals and small cannabis farmers were overwhelmingly against 10 percent expansion, or any "aggressive expansion" of cannabis cultivation, though some local landowners and a number of cannabis businesses and workers in the cannabis industry locally and out of county were in support.

Just a sampling of points argued in opposition were that the new changes violated the county's General Plan; that there was already insufficient water for cannabis in Mendocino County; county staff was insufficient to review a big cannabis expansion, including tracking cumulative effects of water use; there was insufficient enforcement of the current rules; negative effects of big grows on neighbors and the environment; the new rules would allow outside investors to benefit to the detriment of the county's legacy small cannabis farmers; and that a rush to expand cannabis in Mendocino County could jeopardize the county's reputation for quality cannabis and make it harder for artisanal growers to get a fair price.

Organizations sending letters opposing the new changes included: Round Valley Area Municipal Advisory Council, Covelo Community Services District, Walker Lake Property Association, Covelo Cannabis Advocacy Group, Mendocino Cannabis Alliance, Round Valley County Water District, Laytonville Area Municipal Advisory Council, Willits Environmental Center, Greenfire Law, Mendocino Environmental Center, Sierra Club - Mendocino Group, and the Mendocino County Farm Bureau.

Written comments in favor included letters from Cannabis Business Association, Leef Holdings, CannaCraft Inc., Flow Cannabis Company, Mendocino Grasslands, Countervail Inc., ITW Management, LLC, and Henry's Original.

Some of the main reasons brought up by those in support were the increase in jobs and economic activity that they believed larger farms could provide, and the fact that other nearby counties are already embracing the larger-scale operations, and Mendocino should too in order to stay competitive in the statewide industry.

Commissioners discussed – and made recommendations on – other cannabis items of interest at their 12-hour Friday, March 19 meeting.

In the morning portion of their meeting on Friday, the county Planning Commission also examined a new "cannabis facilities" ordinance and recommended the BOS move forward with several items adding some modifications.

One of the more interesting items up for debate involved expanding the retail use classification to incorporate more canna-tourism uses in the county, including "the permitting of cannabis farmers' markets, cannabis farm tours, cannabis lodging opportunities, and on-site consumpational cannabis cultivation locations," as described in the planning commission staff report.

The commission did recommend going ahead with allowing farm tours and other canna-tourism in the county, but advised restricting each farm to three tours per week with no more than 25 people per tour – any more than that would require a minor use permit.

Also tours would only be allowed on parcels with "frontage on a publicly maintained road" and would not be allowed in some residential zones.

Those wishing to learn more can visit the Planning Commission meetings page, to find links to staff reports, the original resolutions, the amended resolutions that were sent to the board of supervisors after changes at Friday's meeting, and links to the hundreds of public comments. <https://www.mendocinocounty.org/government/planning-building-services/meeting-agendas/planning-the-commission>

The link to the YouTube video of the March 19 meeting is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6B-bAamsavc&t=265455>.

The rest of **Schools** *From Page 1*

on the unique circumstances of that community," she went on. "Safety mitigation measures must be learned and new patterns established," she went on. "The redesign of classrooms to comply with COVID measures is not a one size fits all strategy."

She noted that recently the distance students are required to keep from each other at schools was lowered by the Centers for Disease Control from 6 feet to 3 feet, and she expected the county schools to be adopting that change "definitely by the fall, if not later this spring."

Hutchins was hopeful that more such changes could come "as the pandemic wanes."

She said that there are COVID safety plans posted to each school's website, and also a "Safe Schools For All" website created by the state "that allows citizens and parents to report any concerns and also provides schools with technical assistance."

In addition, there will soon be a state dashboard tracking the number of people in person at each school district around the state that should be going up soon, according to Hutchins.

She emphasized that some good did come from all the distance learning, with more students obtaining and learning how to better use computers as an example.

"We've learned that some students can focus better on academics without the distraction of a social environment," added Hutchins. "We've learned that students who cannot attend class can still have access to class material and instruction. We've learned that long-distance learning could allow Mendocino County schools to share specialized classes and teachers such as AP Physics.

"This has the ability to expand course offerings at our small schools, expand dual enrollment opportunities with Mendocino College by sharing instructors between schools by using distance learning to invite students in."

Hutchins went on to say that the state plans to have some end-of-the-school-year testing to discover how much "learning loss" occurred due to the COVID measures among students, and "design programs to help students recover from such identified loss."

Hutchins said that schools have spent "enormous sums" to keep students in school and learning, and while they have received some one-time funding, it's not enough to cover all the costs associated with redesigning school setups to accommodate social distancing as they transition back to in-person learning.

She said things like hand washing stations, bottled water, Plexiglass separators, and new ventilation systems have all added to costs, as has the need for COVID testing at schools and personal protective equipment.

Additionally, Hutchins said that they do not have nearly enough buses or bus drivers as the number of students allowed on the bus has dropped from 78 to 26 students, so more buses and routes are needed each day.

Hutchins also spoke about the mental health needs of teachers and students caused by the stress related to the impacts of COVID-19.

"Many are extremely burnt out after an incredibly challenging year," she said. "And I think it's going to be difficult to have teachers work this summer and then expect it to continue in the fall. They need a break."

"And truly what schools need from their county government is support for mental health services," she continued. "We know the toll on students and families. In the COVID funding for schools – although schools are allowed to use some for mental health services – those funds must compete with practical expenses."

She asked that the county's Mental Health Advisory Board consider allocating some funding for schools, and that a county education representative possibly be placed on the board.

She talked about some of the things which have impacted students in the last year.

"Isolation, grief, loss of loved ones to COVID," she said, "And also the loss of what could've been – senior year, prom, final sports season. In society, tragedies like the death of George Floyd have brought new awareness and sadness and anger to bear. Are students able and ready to learn today?"

"It's important to make sure students basic needs are met before we ask them to stretch their brains and learn," she concluded. "It would be helpful to have an appropriate number of mental health counselors in schools as we deal with mental health problems, including those related to COVID-19."

COVID update

In the latest summary from County Public Health Officer Andy Coren, MD, to the board of supervisors on Tuesday, he said that the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses given in Mendocino County had risen to more than 42,000, and approximately 40 percent of eligible adults in the county have received at least one dose.

"The county is now using small travel teams to vaccinate nursing homes, prisoners, homeless and other small groups," he added. "Our vaccine supply has been a little bit better, and hopefully we'll be stable for the next two-three weeks – however [it's] not enough to give first doses for this week and next. Adventist Health has been running into the same problem of allocation and actually had to borrow from a sister hospital in LA for its [vaccine] event needs.

"We've opened up our eligible tiers last week to include construction workers as we found that our clinics were having difficulty finding enough people to fill their events," Coren continued. "And so we felt that we were topping out a little bit, at least temporarily.... Data shows we need more vaccines for Dos Rios, Leggett, Calpella, Talmage and Hopland, and we're trying to run this data weekly."

With the number of average daily new cases in the county hovering around five per 100,000 population, and the percentage of those tested coming back positive sitting around 2.3 percent, Mendocino County has now been in the "red tier" status for more than three weeks, allowing more public places to open.

Coren said that dining establishments, museums and churches can all have 25 percent capacity inside now with the right precautions, retailers 50 percent, and gyms and fitness centers 10 percent.

In addition, on April 1, the county "will open to live outdoor events to 20 percent, which can apply to sports as well as graduations – which is a long time coming.

"Small indoor gatherings of three households or less are allowed with masking and distancing, but they're discouraged," he added. "Especially if there are any vulnerable household members included. Remember we want to open up, but we don't want to open up to another surge in infections or outbreaks that could set us back to purple [tier]."

He reported that COVID testing continues to be fairly low statewide, but Mendocino County is better than most other counties.

Dr. Coren said that two more county residents died who had COVID-19 in the last two weeks, bringing the total to 46 since the pandemic began. For the two who passed away recently, he said that one was an 89-year-old white man from the north county, and another was a 57-year-old woman who was suffering from significant comorbidities in addition to COVID-19 who died out of county.

"He said with the opening of more schools, there has been a "slight increase in teachers and students who have tested positive, but none of these have been epidemiologically linked. This means that there have not been any outbreaks associated with the opening of schools."

He also reported that there have been no recent outbreaks in the county.

As he has at previous meetings, Coren again spoke on the topic of variants of COVID-19, saying that while none have been detected yet in Mendocino County, they continue to be a concern in the state.

"I think that what's happening now is active evaluation of all these variants," said Coren. "For their transmissibility and their virulence, and also their ability to escape our therapeutics and our vaccines. And the drug companies are developing updates to their vaccines."

When asked how he saw the next few months and years play out, Coren said that the hope was for enough people to develop immunity to the virus – either through vaccines or contracting the disease and developing antibodies – so that a "herd immunity" could build up, but with complications such as variants and "vaccine hesitancy," it was difficult to predict.

"So it's going to be up and down and a little bit of a bumpy course," he stated. "In summary our efforts are paying off with lower case rates, entering the red tier allowing the opening of schools and many businesses. But we still have to be vigilant and disciplined since variants are coming, and because the vaccines may cause many people to become overly optimistic, forgetting the basics like masking, distancing, hand washing and [not] participating in unsafe gatherings."

On the Mendocino County Public Health dashboard posted Wednesday, the number of those in the county in isolation due to COVID-19 was 40, with one in the hospital, one in the intensive care unit, and 3,832 released from isolation since the beginning of the pandemic.

The rest of **LLFD** *From Page 10*

And those tireless heroes are now "back on track to having in the mid-800 range number of calls" this year, after having been down a little bit, reported Wilkes.

"Call volume. Boy, it's up. It's up right now. We're on roughly 164 calls for the year, so it's around 2.4 calls per day," he said.

And there may be some help coming from the younger generation if a Boy Scout-sponsored Explorer program for kids 14 to 18 years old gets up and running.

It's the running part of it that needs to be explored, though, before the district makes a commitment to go forward with it.

"I think it's a good program. But we have to be able to manage it," said Wilkes. "I can tell you that our four staff members that we have now, we can't manage it. That's why we have to sit down and make sure that it's something ... that it's a viable thing. I don't want to start a program and then have it go away in a month. I'm not interested in doing anything like that."

He described the program as "actually very useful.

"Laytonville has an Explorer program and they use it a lot. Redwood Valley's strong. They use it a lot," he said. "One of the only things that I know they can't do ... They can't go in an IDLH atmosphere ... stands for 'immediate danger to life or health.'

"They can't go into structure fires.... But traffic control, vehicle accidents. They can respond as fire guys."

Besides cost and management, "there's educational and training requirements that go along with the program," said Wilkes. "We, I am sort of excited about it."

He told the board that "we could be presenting an Explorer program to the district probably next board meeting."

Willits Library plans limited reopening for March 30

We're reopening!! Starting Tuesday, March 30, the Willits Library will be open for limited services on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 5 p.m. Curbside pickup will be available on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

However, if Mendocino County is moved back into the Purple (Widespread) COVID Risk Tier, these plans will be delayed.

In preparation for reopening, Curbside Service will be canceled on Friday, March 26.

For the latest updates, visit the "Willits - Mendocino County Library" page on Facebook.





Above, from left: Students Grady, left, and Jacoby help run the hot beans to the dinner bags. Matt from Covelo picks up his WEF tri-tip dinner Friday night. WEF volunteer Gracie at the salad station.

At right: Volunteer Madison stands behind pink bags of Kathleen Ells Lewis' delicious cookies, baked for the fundraising event.

Vehicles in line at the WHS Ag Farm to pick up their tri-tip dinners for four.

Two happy WEF supporters pick up their dinner from Carrie Oliver.



Photos by Jennifer Poole

Tri Tip Is Back

Willits Educational Foundation raises funds for back-to-school expenses with Friday ‘take it and go’ dinner

Younger kids went back to school last week in Willits, and the Willits Educational Foundation was busy fundraising Friday afternoon with their annual “Take It and Go” Tri-Tip Dinner.

Jennifer Poole
Editor & Reporter
willitsweekly@gmail.com

“We’re excited our kids are going back to school,” said WEF’s Jennifer Drew, as she took tickets at the check-in table at the Willits High School ag farm.

Last year’s dinner was scheduled right at the start of restrictions for the pandemic: “The next day, the world shut down,” Drew said.

Nonetheless, she said, WEF continued to raise funds for supplies for kids for distance learning over the last year: “Sparetime Supply donated \$10,000,” Drew said, which went to filling bags of supplies for all the kids who were sent home to learn remotely.

All proceeds from the March 19 dinner will be going directly to the Willits Unified School District general fund for back to school supplies.

The WEF dinner for four included a tasty whole grilled tri tip, Caesar salad, beans from a huge bean pot, a loaf of delicious Emandal bread, extra-special cookies baked by Kathleen Ells Lewis, and a beautiful rose from Flowers by Annette.

Volunteers, including students, were packing bags of

goodies, and running to bring bags to the line of vehicles picking up their dinner. The goats next door in the barn got excited, too, with all action.

It rained a little during pick-up time of between 4 and 6 pm on Friday – had been raining off and on all day, reported the meat crew. But by the end of the evening, all 200 tickets had been sold – “thanks to Willits Power,” wrote Drew in her thank you to all involved posted on the Willits Educational Foundation page on Facebook.

“On behalf of the Willits Educational foundation I would like to thank the community and business for all the support over the past year,” Drew wrote. “But this morning I would like to give a big shout-out to Cat’s Meow for selling tickets again for us; Flowers by Annette Pinon for the beautiful donation of flowers; Emandal Farm for the wonderful bread; Forks Market in Ukiah for prepping all the meat; the meat and bean crew: Stan Cooley, Aaron Branscomb, Jack Drew, Tanner Drew, Tim King, Andrew Hosford, Bryan Tyler, Kevin Kvasnicka, Cail Lustig, and Matt Johnstone for delivering the big granite BBQ.

“Also a big thank you to Bonnie Rowland Riley, Carrie Lambert, Windi Kvasnicka, Hannah Bouthillier, Gracie Bouthillier, Madison Bouthillier, and Cindi Mihelcic for the salad prepping, bag stuffing, and running the ticket table. We sold out all the tickets at the end of the night thanks to Willits Power! Thank you everyone for the support!”

ADVENTIST HEALTH



Welcome

Yoshihiro Katsuura, MD

Spine Specialist

Joining the experienced orthopedic physicians serving Mendocino County



William Bowen, MD
Orthopedics



Paul Charpentier, MD
Orthopedics



Jeremiah Dawson, MD
Orthopedics



Ephraim Dickinson, MD
Orthopedics



Scott Gherini, MD
Orthopedics



Brian Gould, DO
Sports Medicine

Dr. Yoshihiro Katsuura is an orthopedic surgeon specializing in complex adult and pediatric spine care. He believes in using surgery only when necessary and utilizes minimally invasive techniques for better outcomes.

A graduate of Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, Dr. Katsuura went on to complete a residency at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine and a fellowship in spine surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery and Weill Cornell Medical College. Having spent time in Willits practicing alongside Dr. Bowen, Dr. Katsuura is thrilled to be back home in California, caring for patients at Adventist Health Howard Memorial.

Now welcoming new patients
707-459-6115
3 Marcela Drive, Suite C, Willits, CA
AdventistHealthHowardMemorial.org

