

Brooktrails board get update on bike trails

Barbara O'Reardon
Reporter
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The Brooktrails Township Community Services District board meeting began promptly at 7 pm, and all directors were in attendance except for Director Ed Horrick who was unable to attend.

Board President Tina Tyler-O'Shea asked if any directors had anything to report, and Director Susan Mahoney announced that the location of the Willits meeting of the county Board of Supervisors coming up April 8 at 9 am has been changed. Initially set to take place at the Justice Center, it will now take place at the Willits Museum in the meeting room.

Brooktrails General Manager Tamara Alaniz reported: "We've received the most recent county contract for the Quarter 1, 2024-25 July/August/September of last year. They've successfully merged the contracts into one for the Proposition 172, Proposition D&E, and the Measure P revenues, and Quarter 1 is going to pay the Fire Department \$58,391."

Read the rest of **Update**
Over on Page 6

DA's steakhouse spending continues unchecked

By Mike Geniella, www.mendofever.com

March 23 – Through the tumult of the last two years surrounding District Attorney David Eyster's failed effort to prosecute county Auditor Chamise Cubbison there remains a constant.

Eyster continues to host steak house banquets for employees and their guests, violating county policies under the guise of labeling them "Continuing Education Staff Workshop Annual Debriefing" and tapping into a controversial asset forfeiture program to cover this year's \$3,600 one-night stand.

Internal documents obtained under California's Public Records Act show County CEO Darcie Antle, a prime prosecution witness in the felony criminal case the DA filed against Cubbison, "pre-approved" Eyster's most recent claim. Records show it was paid February 13, a week before the banquet was held.

The payment to the Broiler Steak House in Redwood Valley was from a county budget account

Read the rest of **Steakhouse**
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Above, left: A Caring Cupboard stands facing South Lenore Avenue along the fence line of the Rec Grove Park and offers a few snacks and drinks, including almonds and iced tea, on its shelves. Above, right: Danielle Steel's "Thurston House" might still be available to borrow from this Lending Library on the corner of East Valley Street and Madden Lane, if you're quick! Below: Lynn Dee Johnson enjoys glancing quickly at "Your Pregnancy Week by Week" by Judith Schuler and Glade B. Curtis, before happily putting it back on the shelf in this pretty leaded-glass-front Lending Library near the corner of School Street and West Mendocino Avenue.



Above, from top: Three of the easily-accessible Lending Libraries and Caring Cupboards that can be found in Willits include near the corner of Madden Lane and East Valley Street; Coast Street; and near the corner of School Street and West Mendocino Avenue. Below: The Coast Street cupboard included several staples, all for free, including oil, salt and pepper, dried peas, beans and oatmeal packets.



Lending & Caring

'Take some, leave some' books, food and snacks available in four free-for-everyone Caring Cupboards and Little Lending Libraries around town

In a sweet gesture to help fellow community members around town, Willits has several little Lending Libraries and also Caring Cupboards scattered about, offering free books, food, drinks, treats, pantry staples and more.

A "take what you need, leave what you can" concept runs the little stations which have a rotating selection of offerings. There's a library cabinet near the intersection of School Street and West Mendocino Avenue and on East Valley near the intersection of Madden Lane. There's a food cabinet on Coast Street, just past where Mill Street intersects; and another on the South Lenore side of the Rec Grove Park.

Read the rest of **Cabinets**
Over on page 15



Above: An assortment of paperbacks are available to borrow from the Madden Lane/East Valley library – readers are encouraged to enjoy borrowing one, or bringing one to share and leave for others. Below: These cute Easter Bunny-themed egg-dyeing kits are offered at the Caring Cupboard on Coast Street.



City of Willits and City Manager Bender part ways

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Former Willits City Manager Brian Bender and the City of Willits have agreed to part ways.

After multiple closed session meetings since the new council was seated in January, the City of Willits announced Sunday morning that the city and Bender "have mutually agreed to separate effective March 28, 2025."

In the March 28 closed session meeting, the council voted unanimously to approve the terms of the separation agreement with Bender.

The agreement approved on March 28 has a seven-day grace period, according to Willits City Attorney Jim Lance, with both sides able to change their minds until 4 pm on Friday, April 4.

At that time, the agreement becomes a public document, and Willits Weekly will be able to get a copy and report on its terms.

The press release goes on to say: "The City Council

Read the rest of **Bender**
Over on Page 4

Central Sierra snowpack up to 99% of average

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The UC Berkeley Central Sierra Snow Lab at Donner Pass announced Wednesday on its Facebook page that "today we've hit 99% of our April 1 average snowpack statewide and 100% of average for April 2. That last storm really helped out!"

"Three years at or above average is exceedingly rare in California with the last occurrence being in the late 1990s. Time to celebrate!"

California's Department of Water Resources did its "April" manual survey of the Sierra snowpack at the Donner Pass on Friday, March 28, a few days earlier than usual due to the heavy storms predicted for the coming days. That day, the manual survey recorded 39.5 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 17 inches, which is 70 percent of average for this location.

"While DWR's Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit strives to conduct measurements as close to the first of the

Read the rest of **Snowpack**
Over on Page 4

What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from our readers

Longvalley Quilters show now in May

To the Editor:

Longvalley Quilters have moved the date of our free outdoor quilt and fiber arts show this year. It will now be held on Saturday, May 17 (10 am to 4 pm) and Sunday, May 18 (11 am to 3:30 pm) behind The Fat Quail in Laytonville, 44550 Highway 101.

It is **free** to enter an item in the show. Registration forms are due by **Saturday, April 26, 2025**. If you have any questions about registration you may call: The Fat Quail 707-984-6966

Raffle tickets for this year's opportunity quilt will be on sale at the Laytonville Post Office April 16 and 21, and at the Laytonville Farmers Market on May 6, and also at the show. At the show there will also be quilts for sale and Raffle Baskets.

We look forward to having your beautiful work in the show this year and to seeing everyone there!

Jody McGeen, The Fat Quail, Laytonville

Why federal education policy still matters, especially in rural Mendocino County

By Michelle Hutchins, M.A., Area 3 Trustee, Mendocino County Board of Education

In recent weeks, national headlines have revived an old debate with new urgency: Should the U.S. Department of Education be dismantled? The Trump administration says yes. On March 20, a formal proposal was introduced to shut down the department entirely, essentially returning all educational authority to the states.

At first glance, it might sound like a harmless, even logical idea. After all, California already sets its own standards, tests, and curriculum frameworks. So why not let each state run its own schools?

But here's the problem: this line of thinking is based on the dangerous myth that federal education doesn't really matter. As someone who serves on the Mendocino County Board of Education and works closely with rural school districts every day, I can tell you plainly that it absolutely does.

A lifeline for rural schools

Federal education funding is a cornerstone of many school district budgets, particularly in rural counties like ours. Last year alone, California received approximately \$8 billion in federal education aid.

Read the rest of **Hutchins** Over on page 6

Your 'Best Fit' choice is a win in the college game

Submitted by Bob Colvig, Ed.D.

From the time high school students receive their first semester report card in the ninth grade, students begin to compare themselves to each other. Later they take the PSAT, SAT, and ACT tests, and share the results. With comparisons like GPAs and test scores, many students view these measurements in terms of winning and losing. The following discussion is an alternative view of winning and losing.

As a former coach and believer in the philosophy that competition brings out the best in us, I continually advise parents and students that applying to college should be approached like a game, so that the process can be fun. I also encourage students and parents to relax and enjoy the game.

So, to make it fun, we may play the college application process like a game. In order to be successful students need to learn the rules, prepare, and practice. In the college game, this may mean study hard, take challenging courses, and earn the best grades possible.

As colleges mail their "fat envelopes" of acceptance and their "thin envelopes" of thank you for applying in March, a high school senior

Read the rest of **College** Over on page 4

County Drought Resilience Plan open for public review and comments

Submitted by Mendocino County Water Agency

On March 26, 2025, the Mendocino County Water Agency released a comprehensive draft Drought Resilience Plan for public comment. Mendocino County's Drought Resilience Plan is a stand-alone document that will be implemented along other state, county, and local planning documents.

The draft Drought Resilience Plan is available on the Mendocino County Drought Resilience Plan webpage at: <https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/home/showpublished-document/70451/63878515753370000>

The Drought Resilience Plan finds that 84% of domestic wells and 93% of state small water systems are at high risk of being impacted by water shortages and droughts, underscoring the importance of preparing for drought in Mendocino County.

For normal and wetter than normal water years, the plan identifies long-term mitigation actions to prepare for future droughts. The Drought Resilience Plan also outlines a range of emergency response actions that would be triggered either countywide or regionally (coastal and inland) at moderate and severe stages of drought.

The Drought Resilience Plan is being developed in fulfillment of the county's obligations under Senate Bill 552.

SB 552 overview

SB 552 requires state and local governments

to share responsibility in planning and responding to water shortage events, particularly for state small water systems and communities supplied by domestic wells. This legislation required all counties in California to develop a Drought Resilience Plan and to establish a standing county Drought and Water Shortage Task Force Group, aka Drought Task Force.

Since 2021, when Governor Newsom signed SB 552 into law amid the historic 2020-2022 drought, Mendocino County has actively held regular Drought Task Force meetings to address water scarcity. In June 2024, MCWA hired EKI Environment & Water, Inc., as a technical lead and commenced development of the Drought Resilience Plan.

Plan development

At the state's direction, the Drought Resilience Plan was developed in four main sections: data collection; vulnerability/risk assessment; identification of short-term response actions and long-term mitigation strategies; and plan implementation. All four sections have now been completed, culminating in a draft Drought Resilience Plan that is open for public comment from March 26 until April 25, 2025.

To incorporate public discussion and

Read the rest of **Drought** Over on page 13

Senior Center menu for the week

Willits Senior Center is serving lunch in its indoor dining room, Monday through Friday, from 11:45 am to 1 pm. Drive-through lunches are available from 12 to 12:45 pm, outside the Senior Center, 1501

Thursday, April 3: Chicken Salad Sandwich, Mac Salad, Pickle

Friday, April 4: Fish Tacos, Rice and Beans

Monday, April 7: Tuna Salad Sandwich, Mac Salad, Pickle

Tuesday, April 8: Pulled Pork Sandwich, Baked Beans, Veggies

Wednesday, April 9: Turkey ala King, Noodles, Roll

Thursday, April 10: Pork Chops, Rice Pilaf, Veggies, Roll

Friday, April 11: Meat Loaf, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Veggies, Roll

April Pancake Breakfast: Every second Sunday, on October 13 this month, 8 to 11 am. Menu choices are: 1. All-you-can-eat pancakes with 2 eggs, choice of sausage or bacon, or 2. Biscuits & gravy with side of eggs only. Both include coffee, tea or orange juice. \$12; \$11 Senior Center members; \$8 children under 8. Extra sausage, bacon, eggs and juice for additional cost.

Activities: Bingo every Friday night, 5 to 7 pm. Exercise class every weekday morning from 9 to 10 am.

Meals on Wheels: The Senior Center Meals on Wheels program delivers lunch Monday through Friday. To sign up call Joliana at 459-6826, who can help fill out the application form. Call 459-6826 the day before needed to schedule home meal delivery. Delivered throughout Willits.

Transportation for seniors: Call 459-5556 to schedule. Pick up and drop off for grocery shopping, banking, doctors' appointments. Senior Center Thrift Shop: 459-2176

The Senior Center is in need of volunteers to help with the many activities here at the center, including volunteer Meals on Wheels drivers. "Volunteers are one-third of our workforce, which allows us to offer many services to our members and community." To learn more about volunteering: 459-6826.



Women Entrepreneurs

Local female business owners discuss inspirations and challenges at Willits Library event

The Willits branch of the Mendocino County Library is celebrating Women's History Month with various activities. Among those was a discussion and introduction to women in the community, who, through their entrepreneurship, are making an impact. Branch Manager Denise Jessie chaired the afternoon and introduced three local female business owners who have exhibited the drive and determination to create a successful business which fills specific needs in the town of Willits.

"Every year, during this month, we celebrate women's history and women that have made contributions to history," began Jessie as an introduction. "We have a slide show available to people in the library about women's contributions. In the past, that is what we have always focused on. What have women done to make a contribution to history? Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who fought their entire adult lives to give women the right to vote. Margaret Sanger, who helped to legalize birth control, so women would have more time to pursue their passions in life. Shirley Chisholm, Hillary Clinton, Kamala Harris. What is the commonality of these women? They ran for president. We have always focused on what has happened in the past, but this year we have decided to focus on what women are doing now in our own community that are contributing to the community and society as a whole."

Jessie introduced three women entrepreneurs as well as honoring members of her staff who have contributed to the well-being of the library with their expertise and creativity. "Jamie Chevalier," Jessie began. "She's been living in the Willits area for 22 years. She is the business owner of Quail Seeds. I love the Quail Seed business model. She started her business in 2018. She

Read the rest of **Business** Over on page 15



Above, from left: Branch Librarian Denise Jessie put together some tasty treats for the attendees. As part of Women's History Month, this display asks people to guess who said these statements. Branch Librarian Denise Jessie runs the discussion, asking questions to stimulate the stories of the entrepreneurs. At left: About 15 people attend the directed discussion about women entrepreneurs in the area.



Above, left: Branch Librarian Denise Jessie presents the attendees and entrepreneurs with gift bags. Above, right: Jackie Cobbs of Craft House Bakery talks with Saprina Rodriguez at the Women Entrepreneurs event at the Willits Branch Library on Saturday. At left: Library employee Julie Castillo contributes to the discussion. Below: Former councilmember and mayor Madge Strong adds her perspective to the discussion.

Photos by Mathew Caine



The Rules: **LETTERS**

Letters & Commentaries: Email letters to willitsweekly@gmail.com. Willits Weekly prints letters and commentaries about Willits and Third District issues, activities, events, and people. We print letters to the editor from residents of Willits and the Third District only. To encourage a variety of voices, Willits Weekly limits letter publication from any one writer to once every four weeks.

Letters and commentaries must be submitted with a name, address and phone number, although only the author's name and city of residence will be published. Deadline is end of day Monday for each Thursday edition. No letters from an anonymous source will be published, although a request to withhold the writer's name will be considered.

Willits Weekly

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Willits Weekly

EST. 2013

A Nostalgic & Modern Record of Community and Life in Willits

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LOST DOG



Reese

14-year-old terrier mix

Last seen Wednesday, March 26th at the Horseman's Arena on Commercial St in Willits.

She is skittish and nearly deaf

Please call if seen **Olivia 951-852-0513**

She is posted on Facebook's Lost and Found Pets in Brooktrails and Willits

Willits Weekly's
Puzzle Page
Sudoku, Word Search & Crossword

9x9 grid for Sudoku puzzle. Level: Beginner

LIBRARY WORD SEARCH grid with letters for word search.

Word search categories: ARCHIVE, COUNTER, MEMBERSHIP, RESEARCH, ASSIGNMENT, DIGITAL, MOVIES, ROWS, BIOGRAPHY, EVENTS, PAGES, RULES, CARD, FICTION, PAPER, SERENITY, CATALOG, GATHERING, PROJECT, SORTING, CHECKOUT, HISTORY, PUBLIC, STACKS, CHILDREN, HOMEWORK, QUIET, STUDENTS, COLLEGE, LIBRARIAN, READING, TRAVEL, COMPUTER, LIBRARY, REPORT, YOUTH

15x15 grid for crossword puzzle.

- CLUES ACROSS: 1. Narrow piece of wood, 5. African desert, 11. Waxy covering on birds' beaks, 12. Sour, 16. Infrequent, 17. Former AL MVP Vaughn, 18. Policemen wear one, 19. Out of the question, 24. Used to chop, 25. Symptoms, 26. Not moving, 27. Folk singer DiFranco, 28. Comedian Armissen, 29. Quantitative fact, 30. Incline from vertical, 31. Scottish musician, 33. Rooney and Kate are two, 34. Positioned, 38. A very short time, 39. Tropical American shrubs, 40. Yemen capital, 43. Spanish municipality, 44. Medical professionals, 45. Fibrous material, 49. Confined condition (abbr.), 50. Without covering, 51. 'Mad Men' honcho Don
- CLUES DOWN: 53. Hockey position, 54. Taste property, 56. Fertile spots in a desert, 58. They precede C, 59. 'Requiem for a Dream' actor Jared, 60. Try a criminal case, 63. Liberal rights organization, 64. Spoke, 65. Insect repellent, 1. Unshaven facial hair, 2. More thin, 3. Show up, 4. Seethed, 5. Ancient Greek city, 6. Poisonous plant, 7. Hello, 8. College sports official, 9. Monetary unit of Russia, 10. Wings, 13. Take too much of a substance, 14. A citizen of Uganda, 15. Most appealing, 20. Atomic #18, 21. Global investment bank (abbr.), 22. Jewish calendar month
- 23. Popular sandwich, 27. Swiss river, 29. Incorrect letters, 30. Popular entree, 31. Foot (Latin), 32. A driver's license is one form, 33. Extinct flightless bird, 34. Appetizer, 35. After battles, 36. It neutralizes alkalis, 37. Beverage container, 38. Partner to 'Pa', 40. Gray American rail, 41. Salt of acetic acid, 42. Canadian province, 44. Dish made with lentils, 45. Narrative poem of popular origin, 46. For each one, 47. Come to terms, 48. Test, 50. More dishonorable, 51. Unit of loudness, 52. The Ocean State, 54. Monetary unit in Mexico, 55. Lying down, 57. Thus, 61. Where LA is located, 62. Western State

WILLITS POLICE DEPARTMENT
POLICE LOG
March 24 to March 30
By Danya Davis, Willits Weekly

The officers of the Willits Police Department reported 56 incidents in this 7-day period.
Summary of Active Investigations and Arrests
March 24
4:03 pm: Officers responded to a report of illegal camping in the 100 block of Creekside Court.
5:17 pm: Officers responded to a report of illegal camping near the intersection of East Hill Road and Haehl Creek Drive and issued a warning.
11:54 pm: Officers conducted a stop in the 1700 block of South Main Street and issued a warning.
March 25
9:36 pm: NEAGLE, Richard Jay (45) of Willits was contacted in the 1400 block of South Main Street. He was arrested on misdemeanor charges of disorderly conduct (alcohol).
8:22 am: Officers initiated a vehicle theft investigation in the 1200 block of Locust Street.
9:04 pm: Officers responded to a report of illegal camping in the 300 block of Creekside Drive and issued a warning.
9:15 am: Officers conducted a stop near the intersection of Monroe Street and Central Street and issued a warning.
2:25 pm: Officers conducted a stop in the 300 block of Mill Street and issued a warning.
March 27
3:16 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 800 block of South Main Street.
3:40 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 100 block of Manor Way.
6:08 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 800 block of South Main Street and issued a warning.
6:35 pm: FRAZIER, Ryan Samuel (42) of Willits was contacted in the 100 block of

The rest of Bender
From page 1
would like to express its sincere appreciation to Mr. Bender for his hard work and dedication to both the community and the organization over the past four years. Under his direction, the city successfully completed several key capital projects. Mr. Bender also played a pivotal role in strengthening the City Council's ability to prioritize projects amidst competing needs. Mr. Bender skillfully navigated numerous complex challenges, balancing contrasting priorities and positioning the city for continued growth and success."
Bender assumed the job of Willits city manager in January 2021. City employees who've been around 20 years will be working under their seventh city manager when Bender's replacement is hired.
"I am proud of the accomplishments achieved during my tenure," Bender stated in the press release, "and truly enjoyed the opportunity to serve as the city manager of Willits."
Willits Mayor Larry Stranske stated in the press release: "The separation agreement between the City of Willits and Mr. Bender included a well-thought-out process which includes the needs and future of both the City of Willits and Mr. Bender."
The press release concluded: "City Council will have additional details on the process to appoint an Interim City Manager at a later date."

The rest of Snowpack
From page 1
month as possible," a DWR press release explained, "DWR must schedule surveys around forecasted storm activity to ensure the safety of DWR staff and invited media. The anticipated storms this weekend and early next week may boost the official April 1 average for statewide snowpack.
"The April measurement is a critical marker for water managers across the state," the press release continued, "as it is typically the time when the snowpack reaches its maximum volume and begins to melt. DWR's water supply forecasts use data from the April 1 snowpack to calculate how much snowmelt runoff will eventually make its way into California's rivers and reservoirs.
"Measurement California's snowpack is a key component that guides how California's water supplies are managed. On average, California's snowpack supplies about 30 percent of California's water needs. Its natural ability to store water is why California's snowpack is often referred to as California's frozen reservoir."
DWR conducts four or five snow surveys at Phillips Station each winter near the first of each month, January through April and, if necessary, May.
For California's current hydrological conditions, visit https://cww.water.ca.gov

Thursday, April 3
Willits Farmers Market: Join your neighbors every Thursday from 3-5:30 pm at the Little Lake Grange, 391 School Street. Silent Auction of Reggae DVDs, CDs, Posters, Flags, Books, Ethiopian medals and coins.
Laytonville Spring Fling: Laytonville Long Valley Lioness Club presents the 3rd annual Spring Fling, featuring live epic blues from Blue Luke and Indiana Slim Blues Band. Saturday, April 5 at Harwood Hall, 44400 Willis Avenue, Laytonville. A benefit for Laytonville High School students. \$20 adults; \$10 kids; doors open 7 pm; show starts at 8 pm. Cajun Dinner with Gumbo or Shrimp Etoufee by Sno 'Nuff and Dylan & Amanda Eichler, \$15 extra. Frey Wines, Silent auction, Wildfire Dancers, Tarot by Tara Bluecloud. Tickets available at Weathertop Nursery.

Friday, April 4
Art Under 20 at WCA: Willits Center for the Arts presents the annual Art Under 20 exhibit, with an opening reception for the artists Friday, April 4 from 3 to 7 pm. This year's show is dedicated to Kathleen Kirkpatrick, WHS Emerita. Artists from Willits High School, Willits Charter School and Potter Valley High School will show their works including drawings, paintings, mixed media artworks, woodworking and metal. Also, alumni artists: Velvet Bandit, Danza Davis, Issac Frankel, Maya Joy Griffin, Diza Hope, Crystal Kamoroff, Anne McGratten, Ellie Miller, Holly Madrigal, Malakai Shindel, Martin Wattenburger, Meghan White and Noel Woodhouse. Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street. Exhibit runs through April 27. Gallery Hours: Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays from 11 am to 5 pm.
Donnie & Friends at Shanachie: featuring local harmonica (aka Mississippi Saxophone) player Donnie, joined by local friends and fellow musicians, possibly including Gary Bouley, Jeff Martin, Rasta Sean and Tom G. among others, playing an improvisational variety of Chicago style Blues, Rock, Funk, Latin & West African music. Friday, April 4 at 8 pm at Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

Monday, April 7
Dharma Talk at The Muse: Khenpo Tenkyong returns to Willits on Monday, April 7, with ancient and up-to-the-minute wisdom of the tantric Buddhist tradition. At The Muse, 30 East San Francisco St., 6 to 7:30 pm. Admission free; donations welcome. Info: 707-354-1866.

Tuesday, April 8
BOS meets in Willits: The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors has their regular meeting in Willits, Tuesday, April 8, at the county Museum, 400 East Commercial Street in Willits, starting at 9 am in the Wooncott Room. BOS Chair and Third District Supervisor John Haschak reports there will be a presentation on the museum by Administrator Karen Mattson, a budget workshop "so if people have ideas on county services they can speak up"; and the cannabis density/cultivation square footage limit issue will be back. Full BOS agendas are posted the Thursday before the Tuesday meetings at https://mendocino.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx
Shanachie Pub Ongoing Events
Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street
Saturday Sessions at Shanachie: Every 2nd and 4th Saturday from 3 to 6 pm, Tommy G and Gustavo Amaral will host an open jam at Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main street. "You're invited to bring any instrument, meet new musicians, discover new genres, and explore your creativity!"
Bluegrass String Jam: Every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month starting at 3 pm - welcomes all Bluegrass musicians! An official jam for the California Bluegrass Association, "so you never know which members from out of the area may drop in!"
Wednesday Open Mic Night: Shanachie Pub presents its popular Open Mic Night every Wednesday, featuring an eclectic array of local musicians and performers from around the world. Pub opens at 3 pm, and from opening until 7 pm, you can be entered for the lottery. Lottery determines order from which you pick your 20 minute time slot starting at 7:20 pm.
Send your events to willitsweekly@gmail.com

WCT Auditions. April 5. 12. 19
Willits Community Theatre to hold auditions for Richard Greenberg's Tony Award-Winning drama "Take Me Out," a main stage play about identity, homophobia, racism, and the personal struggles of professional baseball athletes. Director Jeff Shipp says roles are available for new or experienced male actors ranging in ages 20 to 60. Auditions are April 5, 12 and 19 at 10 am at the WCT playhouse, 37 West Van Lane.. Performance dates are July 11 through 27. For more information contact Jeff Shipp at 214-912-7884.



Skunk Train Easter Express
Easter trains run from April 11 to April 20 out of the Willits Depot. "Step onto our vintage train for a 2-hour journey through Tunnel #2, taking in the blooming beauty of spring as you travel deep into the heart of the redwoods." With the Easter Bunny, festive cookies, pink lemonade, and an egg hunt at the Crowley stop, with the Golden Egg earning a year's worth of train rides. To book your Easter Express tickets, visit www.skunktrain.com/easter-express/



Thursday, April 10
Willits Farmers Market: Join your neighbors every Thursday from 3-5:30 pm at the Little Lake Grange, 391 School Street, for the freshest local produce, local meat, farm fresh eggs, hot dinner, tasty treats, live music, the new edition of Willits Weekly, and more.
Flying Dog Bluegrass Band at Shanachie: Flying Dog is made up of regulars of the Willits Bluegrass Jam, which has been happening on 1st and 3rd Saturday afternoons for about three years. This Thursday, April 10 show, starting at 7 pm, kicks off the Shanachie Pub 25th Anniversary Celebration, with many of your favorite local bands that have been a big part of Shanachie over the years. Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

Friday, April 11
Sober Grad Tri-Tip Dinner: Sober Grad's biggest fundraiser for the annual Graduation Night party is set for Friday, April 11, from 4 to 6 pm, at the Willits High School Ag Farm (behind the high school, 299 North Main Street). Dinner for 4 includes Marinated & Grilled Tri Tip, Baked Potatoes, Green Salad, Dinner Rolls, Cookies, and a Beautiful Rose donated by Flowers by Annette. Tickets, \$65 for dinner for 4; are pre-sale only. Available at 101 Trailer & RV Supply and Monkey Wrench Men & Women's Wear. Or call Karen Thiel, WHS, 707-459-7700, ext. 1504 or Carrie Lambert, Willits Sober Grad, 707-671-6173.
Leza at Shanachie: Leza is a Brazilian psych-pop/surf rock band formed in São Paulo, Brazil by Gustavo Athayde. Leza has been sharing their music at the Pub

Saturday, April 12
Cosmic Family Band at Shanachie: The Cosmic Family Band is a local Mendocino County jam band sharing original music that is a reflection of being a part of this amazing community. "We're the Cosmic Family Band and so are you." This Saturday, April 12 show at 8 pm is next in the Shanachie Pub 25th Anniversary Celebration shows, featuring many of your favorite local bands that have been a big part of Shanachie over the years. Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.



Continuing, Alaniz state: "Additionally PG&E, you may recall, back from the 2017 fires, there were settlement dollars that were paid to the County of Mendocino. Many of those dollars were allocated to our fire agencies county-wide. There is still money remaining in that settlement money, and the Board of Supervisors agreed that that should go out to the fire districts and the fire districts will be receiving \$13,986 of the remaining PG&E settlement money."

Those funds will be committed to emergency medical supplies and will be useful in replenishing the medical aid kits that get used quite frequently.

Attorney Chris Neary commented, "For context, 10 years ago, the fire districts received zero dollars and the Special Districts Fire Chiefs Association started in 2015 and this is the result: going from zero to \$200,000 per year."

Alaniz added: "Keep in mind that Measure P has a sunset date. We've only got that approved for 10 years and that's a lot of money. That was the replacement for the ¼ cent sales tax that expired from Measure B money."

The board then moved on to the Consent Calendar and unanimously approved the Accounts Payable in the amount of \$111,993.17.

The final item on the evening's agenda was "Review and Discussion of Memorandum of Understanding with Willits Area Cyclists."

As Adam Sherf, president of WAC, approached the podium, Alaniz remarked that in 2021 the memorandum with WAC was adopted and it was agreed that the non-profit, all volunteer group would serve as Brooktrails' Greenbelt trail stewards. WAC is comprised of hiking and mountain biking volunteers, who all live here and ride here. Sherf wanted to provide an update on what the group has accomplished since 2021.

He began: "The whole thing that spurred this was a giant snowstorm that knocked hundreds of trees down, and we realized that we needed to do things officially and utilize chain saws. So, we got approved and worked on four different days or more to clear over 400 trees. After that herculean effort, we began to have regular trail work days."

Sherf continued: "We began doing regular maintenance, raking and clearing and did some reroutes, addressing problems with some of the existing trails. We rerouted Mike's, working through an erosion-prone area and built a little bridge to cross the creek. We did a reroute on Fawn Lily and Oregon Grape. These were all approved and were successful and are working very well."

"We took back Dutch Henry which is a really cool connector between Lake Emily and Thimbleberry, and in two or three trail days made it very usable. We built a bridge there with a little retaining wall, bench cutting a good amount of trail, and people can fish from there. It is a very good connector and gets a lot of use."

"We built and erected a kiosk and put a trail map on it on the ParCourse. You might want to check it out. We also made signs for all of the trails."

Lastly, Sherf reported on the latest project which began in 2024: The Beginner Trail Zone. Besides the Nutmeg (ParCourse) Loop, there are not many trails that are approachable for beginner cyclists and hikers. Like the roads in Brooktrails, most of the trails are pretty steep, and the fitness required can be a huge barrier to people getting out to enjoy themselves in the Greenbelt.

"We got a grant from the Community Foundation for \$7,500," Sherf said, "and that allowed us to hire a professional trail builder to provide expertise to help us to build a professional trail."

"In 2024 we started construction and built the foundation loop, the outermost loop around the hill," he said. "We also built the climb to the top, called Climb Time and the first descent that's geared for bikes, which is the easiest trail."

The trails will be color-themed, green, blue and black, indicating the ease or difficulty for traversing them.

The entire project entails building 3 miles of beginner-friendly trails. The group has completed almost 2 miles. Their goal in 2025 is to finish it. They hope to be fully open after the next scheduled trail day. They will also do possibly three or four more trails.

Additionally, Sherf said: "We did some other trail work outside of the Beginner Trail work. We worked on Misnomer and built a little bridge over a swampy spot on Mike's. Our trailer was stolen but we, luckily, were able to get it back due to help from Brooktrails staff and law enforcement, the highway patrol."

He also noted: "We held a 'Trick or Trail' Halloween event on the Foundation Loop. Kids had a great time, hiking around to candy stations. We've also joined forces with the on the coast group, the Mendocino Coast Cyclists, to help expand their high school mountain bike team through NICA, the National Inter-scholastic Cycling Association. There are races for middle school and high school aged kids, and there's an inland chapter of the greater Mendocino composite team. 2024 was our first season, and it's going very well during this 2025 season. Practices are held on Sundays in Brooktrails, and it's working out very nicely for all of the kids participating."

In the future the WAC group, in conjunction with the Greenbelt Committee, would like to schedule an annual promotional event: A Bike Festival, possibly in Ohl Grove which would involve bike riding and potentially camping.

Finally, Sherf quoted some statistics regarding WAC's work throughout the past few years. He said, "Since we started having regular, volunteer trail days we've had 64 volunteers come out to work and they've logged 1,340 hours. We hope to continue and be successful in the future."

That's about 6 percent of the state's total K-12 budget, but for smaller districts with limited tax bases, that slice can make up a much larger percentage of their funding.

Programs like Title I support schools serving low-income communities. IDEA ensures special education services for students with disabilities. Funding for migrant education, English learners, school nutrition, and even after-school programs all flow through the U.S. Department of Education. If that department disappears, so too does the infrastructure for distributing and overseeing those critical dollars.

In fact, recent actions by the federal government already demonstrate the risks of abrupt policy changes. Linda McMahon, the new head of the Department of Education, recently informed state education leaders that the window to obligate remaining federal COVID relief funds has officially closed, without warning or flexibility. Billions of unspent dollars (funds many districts had planned to use for long-term recovery efforts) may now be inaccessible. For rural areas like Mendocino, this loss is not theoretical; it could mean fewer staff, canceled programs, or delayed upgrades. Once again, the consequences of federal decisions land hardest in communities with the least buffer.

Here in Mendocino County, where many students face barriers to access and opportunity, federal programs are not extras – they are lifelines.

"We cannot politicize equity"

During a recent virtual event hosted by the Association of California School Administrators, former U.S. Secretary of Education John King, who served under President Obama, spoke about the risks of politicizing public education.

He warned that dismantling the Department of Education would harm the very students public schools are supposed to uplift: low-income students, English learners, rural youth, and students with disabilities. These populations have historically been underserved by state and local systems alone, which is precisely why federal oversight was introduced in the first place.

"Education," King emphasized, "is not a partisan issue."

designated for the DA's slice of annual asset forfeiture funds. Under asset forfeiture, local, state, and federal agencies can seize property, including cash, vehicles, or real estate, which is believed to be involved in or obtained through illegal activity, even without criminal conviction. In 2023, \$376,776 from the program flowed into county law enforcement agencies, according to a state Department of Justice annual report.

The documents reveal Eyster submitted his latest claim three weeks before this year's banquet using a secondary label: "Staff Workshop and Continuing Education."

Asset forfeiture regulations allow use of seized funds for law enforcement training. Eyster claims the dinners are continuing education for his employees. However, he has been challenged by the Auditor's Office in the past because non-employees were guests, and did not receive any "training."

DA Eyster and CEO Antle did not respond to written questions about whether non-employees attended this year's banquet, as in the past, or how the dinners meet asset forfeiture spending standards.

The California District Attorneys Association did not respond to written requests for how asset forfeiture funds are managed, and whether Eyster's use conforms to statewide standards. However, a representative of a District Attorney Office that is considered a model statewide said the Eyster-style banquets would "never be allowed."

The dinners are symbolic of DA Eyster's past wrangling with the Auditor's Office about office spending practices, including disputed travel expenses. Eyster has sought and was granted exemptions by the CEO's office for travel-related requirements, but the county policy banning staff parties is still in effect. Since taking office in 2011, the DA has quarreled with three county auditors, including Cubbison.

The most recent banquet was held as the criminal case Eyster filed against Cubbison, a fellow elected official, was grinding to a halt in Mendocino County Superior Court after 17 months of a costly legal tug of war. The case was tossed by presiding Superior Court Judge Ann Moorman, setting the stage for substantial damages if Cubbison succeeds in a pending civil lawsuit accusing the Board of Supervisors of denying due process. Four days after Eyster in October 2023 filed a felony criminal charge against Cubbison, board members suspended her without pay or benefits or the opportunity to defend herself.

A few months later after initially resisting calls for his recusal from the case, Eyster hired an outside prosecutor at the rate of \$400 per hour to take it through court hearings. Cubbison was forced to hire a private attorney, while a county public defender was appointed to represent Paula June Kennedy, the county's former payroll manager who was accused by Eyster of paying herself an extra \$68,000 over a three-year period during the COVID pandemic. Both women, veteran county employees, were charged by the DA with felony misappropriation of public funds.

Key prosecution testimony during the preliminary hearing was given by top county officials, past and present, including Antle, retired Auditor Lloyd Weer, and Human Resources Director Cherie Johnson.

Judge Moorman, in explaining her reasoning for dismissing the high-profile case, ripped the witnesses for displaying "willful ignorance" in the courtroom. Moorman found no criminal intent had been shown by Cubbison or

It's a civil rights issue." And he's right. Without federal guardrails, we risk returning to a fragmented system where a student's zip code determines their entire future.

Local consequences of a national policy

For Mendocino County families, educators, and school leaders, the stakes couldn't be higher. Many of our districts depend on federal grants for everything from reading intervention and special education aides to school psychologists and student nutrition. The idea that local control can fully replace these systems is unrealistic and possibly dangerous.

And while it's true that any actual closure of the Department would require Congressional approval, the proposal itself signals a troubling direction. It distracts from real conversations we need to be having about post-pandemic recovery, teacher shortages, and equity for rural education.

Standing up for our schools

Now is the time for communities like ours to pay attention. We can't afford to sit out these policy debates, assuming they'll only affect big cities or distant states. What happens in

Washington, D.C. very much impacts what happens in Willits, Covelo, and Laytonville.

If we want thriving schools and fair opportunities for all students, regardless of where they live or what they look like, we must protect the systems that support them. And, that includes the U.S. Department of Education. Because federal education isn't a luxury. For Mendocino County, it's a necessity.

Want to get involved or learn more about how federal education policy impacts local schools? Listen to Inside Education on KZYX&Z the fourth Thursday of each month at 7 pm or attend your local school board meeting.

Michelle Hutchins has over 30 years of experience in public education, having served as county superintendent from 2018 to 2022. She currently serves on the County Board of Education and works as a consultant to several county offices across the state, with a focus on supporting small and rural school districts. Hutchins also hosts a monthly radio program called "Inside Education: Where Policy Meets the Classroom," airing the fourth Thursday of each month at 7 pm on KZYX.

Kennedy. In fact, Moorman found Cubbison functioned as a "whistleblower" by informing the County Counsel's Office of a Kennedy threat to sue the county for excess hours in meeting twice-monthly payroll demands of 1,400 county employees.

The day after Moorman's dismissal of the case, Cubbison returned to her elected office at the county Administration Center.

DA Eyster regularly posts on social media about court results, but he has never commented publicly about the Cubbison case and its eventual dismissal.

Records show that five days before Moorman's ruling to dismiss, Eyster greeted 72 guests at the latest banquet, most employees of the District Attorney's Office, spouses, and other guests as usual were included. The DA's Office was charged \$50 per person.

Cubbison ran afoul of Eyster when she began to challenge DA Office expenses including the annual dinner. "Are you going to get some training?" became an office quip in the days leading up to the banquet. Cubbison also questioned travel related claims, which so angered Eyster that he went around the auditor and secured exemptions from the CEO's Office that continue.

When former Auditor Weer retired in late 2021, he moved to name Cubbison as interim auditor but Eyster appeared before the Board of Supervisors and successfully blocked her appointment. The DA followed that up with a secret plan emailed privately to a county supervisor on how to block any Cubbison promotion, and outlining a way for the board to use a state law to force the merger of the county's two top finance offices into one. Eventually, the Eyster plan called for a new Department of Finance to be created, with voter approval, and placed under control of the board and CEO's office.

The board forced the proposed merger, but only one candidate – Cubbison – surfaced to be elected to lead the merged Auditor/Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector offices.

However, within four months of Cubbison being sworn in, CEO Antle sought a sheriff's office investigation into the Kennedy extra pay after consulting with Eyster. A year later, in October 2023, Eyster after having his own team of investigators work the case, finally filed felony criminal charges against Cubbison and Kennedy. The auditor had refused his offer for her to resign for a misdemeanor charge.

Typically, Cubbison might have challenged the latest banquet payment and forced Eyster to take it to the Board of Supervisors for approval. However, she was still under suspension and facing criminal proceedings when the DA submitted his latest claim. Cubbison declined to address the most recent payment because she had not returned to the office before the Broiler invoice was submitted to then-acting Auditor Sara Pierce and paid under Antle's authorization.

Documents show the February dinner started at 5:30 pm on February. 20, with Eyster giving welcoming remarks an hour later.

Eyster's agenda included "longevity recognition" to employees including 25-year office veteran Shari Arrington, and Alex Johnston, a 10-year member of the staff.

Eyster, according to the printed agenda, also gave an overview of changes in the law and Proposition 36, and he discussed 2024 calendar year goals, and an assessment on jury trial outcomes and state prison orders.



Fort Bragg poets Joe Smith, left, and Larry Felson read at WCT on Saturday, April 12 at 8 pm.

Casting call for "Take Me Out," award-winning sports drama at WCT

Submitted by WCT

Willits Community Theatre announces auditions for roles in Richard Greenberg's Tony Award-winning drama "Take Me Out," a main stage play about identity, homophobia, racism, and the personal struggles of professional baseball athletes. Director Jeff Shipp says amazing roles offering humor, depth and a sharp social critique are available for new or experienced male actors ranging in age from 20 to 60.

Auditions are Saturdays April 5, 12 and 19 at 10 am. at the WCT Playhouse, 37 West Van Lane in Willits. Performance dates are July 11 through 27. For more information contact Jeff Shipp at 214-912-7884.

Art Center hosts Art Talk on Diego Velázquez

Submitted by WCA

The Willits Center for the Arts invites the public to an engaging discussion on the life and work of Diego Velázquez, one of the most influential painters of the Spanish Golden Age. This special Art Talk, given by art historian Gary Martin, will take place on Friday, April 11, at 6:30 pm at the Art Center, 71 East Commercial Street.

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) is renowned for his masterful portraits, historical and mythological subjects, and his remarkable ability to capture realism and depth. As the court painter to King Philip IV of Spain, Velázquez created some of the most iconic works of Baroque art, including "Las Meninas" and "The Surrender of Breda." His innovative approach to light, composition, and perspective continues to inspire artists and scholars today.

This presentation is part of the ongoing Art Talks series, which brings insightful discussions on art history to the Willits community.

This event is free and open to the public. Art lovers, students, and anyone with an interest in history and painting are encouraged to attend.

For more information, please contact the Willits Center for the Arts at (707) 459-1726, or Gary Martin at 707-972-3326 or visit www.willitscenterforthearts.org.

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CHARLENE@WILLITSSKSCHARTER.ORG

WCT presents coastal poets Joe Smit and Larry Felson, April 12

Submitted by Willits Community Theatre

Fort Bragg poets Joe Smith and Larry Felson will read their poetry at the Willits Community Theatre Playhouse on Saturday, April 12 at 7 pm. Smith and Felson are well-known in the county for hosting their reading series at the Cobalt Gallery in Fort Bragg.

Felson hails from La Mesa in San Diego County and participated in the long-standing Bay Area poetry workshop that included Jack Gilbert, Linda Gregg, George Stanley, and Steven Rood, while he also taught English at Oakland High School for several years, and creative writing and Greek Literature at the Hellenic International School of the Arts in Paros, Greece.\

He says of living in Mendocino County with its inspiring natural environment, "Living here, Pegasus arrives almost every day and night and insists on taking me for a ride to places I've never been."

Smith's poems, stories, essays and translations have appeared in dozens of journals. Pygmy Forest Press published his first collection of pieces, "Chopsticks," in 1992.

His most recent books, "Sappho's Island" (2022) and "Hot Pink" (2024), were published by Littoral Press. Much of his life has been spend abroad, in Germany, Greece, and Japan, and most recently he taught English at College of the Redwoods in Fort Bragg.

An open reading will follow Smith and Felson.

Admission is by donation, with a \$10 donation suggested. No one will be turned away due to lack of funds. This reading is supported by Poets and Writers, a nationally known organization that supports literary artists. The WCT playhouse is located at 37 West Van Lane in Willits.

Art Talks

Diego Velázquez

Velázquez: "Master of Light, Soul of Spain."

Friday April 11 6:30 PM

Speaker: Gary Martin, M.A.

Velázquez: "Where reality meets brilliance."

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For more information, visit our website www.willitscenterforthearts.org

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Make sure to grab your copy of the 2025 Willits Community Telephone Directory, put out annually by the Soroptimist International of Willits club. The phone book is being distributed in 3,000 copies of Willits Weekly on April 3, and will also be in stacks around town at various businesses. The phone book lists residential and commercial numbers, cell phone numbers and even some email addresses and can be customized on request for next year. Want to be included? Want to be removed? Need a change? Please, reach out directly to the Soroptimist phone book committee via email at willitsphonebook@gmail.com and they will get your notes included for the 2026 book. The book also serves as a fundraiser for the club, with money earned from advertising revenue going to create scholarships for women and girls in the local community.



Hello there! My name is Cleocatra, and I'm here to tell you all about me and why you should make me your newest furry family member! While I can't tell you my previous history, I can tell you that I have the playful spirit of a kitten! I'm a friendly girl who loves to get affection from my humans, but I'll also be sure to give you your space when you need it. Now, a bit about my personality: I'm an intelligent girl who



The Mendocino County Animal Shelter, located at 298 Plant Road in Ukiah, is open to the public from 9:30 am to 5 pm Tuesday through Friday, and 10 am to 3 pm on Saturdays (closed for lunch each day from 1 to 1:30 pm). Make sure to pre-fill out the adoption application available at www.mendocinoanimalshelter.com. Call 707-463-4427 for more information.

Olive is an eager, happy youngster who is ready to join a very dog-experienced home that can give her the consistency, activity and training she craves. Olive is an achiever; she is built for action and learning; she needs and takes to direction well, and needs to know to look to her person for approval and direction. She is head-strong and protective, needing strong leadership! She is a very affectionate young dog who is dog-friendly and house-broken. Olive needs a bit of work on her leash manners. She is very dog friendly, but no beta.

To learn more about Olive, or to view other adoptable animals, visit www.milofoundation.org or the Milo Foundation Sanctuary Facebook page. The sanctuary is currently doing pet adoptions by appointment only. Please complete a pet-adoption application before requesting an appointment. You can reach the Milo Foundation at 459-4900.



Sweet senior Lola Love is back and is ready to get back out of the shelter. Lola was adopted from us as a puppy nine years ago. Due to no fault of her own, she is back on site. She has been the sweetest girl, loving on the staff and walking well on leash.

A tan-colored dog, possibly a Weimaraner, is sitting on a large, ornate rug with a floral and geometric pattern. The dog is looking towards the camera with a calm expression. It has a dark collar around its neck. The background shows a wooden floor and a portion of a white bowl or basket.

The Humane Society for Inland Mendocino is located at 9700 Uva Drive in Redwood Valley. Feel free to visit us, no appointments needed! We are open Wednesday through Friday, 1 to 5 pm; Saturday and Sunday, 11 am to 3 pm; closed Monday and Tuesday. Check out all of our available dogs and cats on our website: www.mendohumanesociety.com, on our Facebook page, and on www.petfinder.com.



Vote for your favorite idea for the proposed mural at the Rec Grove at the Willits Art Center.

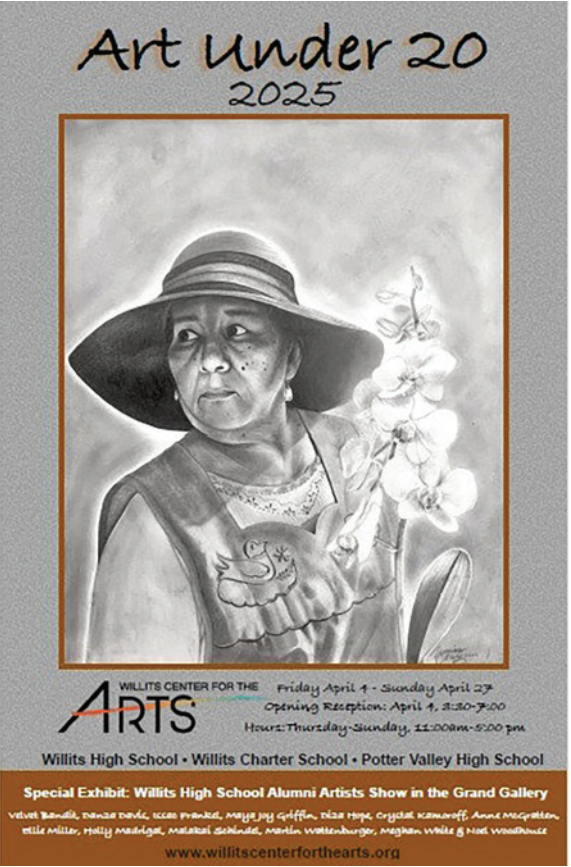


Posted by Willits Art Center

All visitors will have a chance to cast a vote for their favorite image.

The April exhibit at the Art Center, "Art Under 20," will open with a meet the artists reception, Friday, April 4, from 3 to 7 pm. You will have a chance to meet the artists, see their work, and have refreshments.

The annual "Art Under 20" show this year also features art work from alumni of Willits schools, WCA is located at 71 East Commercial Street.



Posted by Be the Antidote - Willits

My name is Alisha Narvaez. Many of you might now know me but let me introduce myself. I just graduated college with a Bachelors of BioPsychology.

I have been a student athlete for all my academic career. I started wrestling when I was in third grade and loved it ever since. For my wrestling career I have accomplished so much to being a 5x All-American, 3x NCS champion, 6th in the nation for NCAA, etc. I will say that hard work pays off no matter what you do; as long as you put your heart into it anything is possible.

In the long run I want to be a large animal doctor and work near home in Williits to make a difference. Animals have always been my passion and will always have a place in my heart. As long as the clients and patient go home with a smile and knowing I made a difference, that's what I'm in it for – nothing else matters. I am forever grateful for the things my parents sacrificed in life to get me where I am today.

P.S: Come on down to Willits



Posted by Willits Grapplin Pack

"It was incredible to see them use everything they've learned this season on the mat. It was an amazing way to wrap up the season. Congratulations, girls, on an outstanding day of wrestling!"

As explained in post comments, the Willits Grapplin Pack team was not eligible for team awards because they are a club and not school-affiliated. "However, our girls were the fourth highest scoring team, only 3 points behind the third-place team. This was out of 47 teams!!!! Great job girls!!"



Artist Alisha Narvaez (who also works at Willits Animal Hospital) poses with some of her animal portraits.

Animal Hospital and say hi! I would love to chat and to see all the friendly faces.

Art is the Antidote. We're seeking to build a community around arts in our local area. Whether you're an artist, budding artist or not. If you're looking for artist resources or want to know how to support artists, feel free to contact us! Visit www.facebook.com/groups/922282036472368



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If you want to be included in this column please call:

April Tweddell
(707) 972-2475
april@willitsweekly.com



Above, from left: Snacks, sweets, pizza and sandwiches are available to the players throughout the evening. The head table is just for winning teams – they determine the end of each round by getting a Bunco or reaching 21 points and ringing the bell. One of the raffle baskets includes a one-year membership to Body Works Gym and is worth \$240. Below, from left: Getting a Bunco is special and the recipients let others know about it, loudly. Charlene Bredder, director of Willits Elementary Charter School, hosts the fundraiser event. Mark, visiting from Washington State, attends with his family; he displays the Bunco doll that he gets to hang onto until the next Bunco.



Photos by Mathew Caine



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At top: Players make new friends while switching tables – Tiffany, Renee, Carla and Cathy play together during this round. Above: The Willits Community Center is almost full with determined Bunco players.

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LEGAL NOTICES

WW530

PETITION FOR CHANGE OF NAME

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner CAROL DENISE ALESHIRE has filed Case Number 25CV01855 with the Mendocino County Superior Court as a Petition for a Decree Changing Name from CAROL DENISE ALESHIRE to CAROLE DENISE ALESHIRE.

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before the court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted.

Any person(s) objecting to the petition for name change must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection(s) at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard, and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted.

To object to the petition by remote appearance, go to the court's website at www.mendocino.courts.ca.gov in advance of the hearing.

Date of hearing: May 2, 2025, Time: 9:30 a.m., in Dept. E. The address of the court is 100 N. State St., Ukiah, CA 95482.

If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

Publication Dates: March 27, April 3, 10, 17, 2025

Marc Komer
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At top: Kira Crelly keeps score for her team in this round.

Above: A set of prizes for the player with the most amount of wins throughout the evening is on display.

At left: Even the player with the most losses gets a prize, which includes passes to the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.

Photos by Mathew Caine

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- County Health Officer**
\$185,224 - \$225,139
- Deputy Sheriff-Coroner in Training**
\$25.33 hourly
- Deputy Probation Officer I & II**
\$55,577 - \$74,505
- Deputy Public Guardian/Administrator**
\$67,766 - \$82,388
- Deputy Sheriff-Coroner**
\$84,323 - \$102,460
- Legal Secretary I/II**
\$37,648 - \$55,744
- Mental Health Clinician I/II**
\$62,337 - \$87,630
- Public Health Nurse**
\$92,040 - \$111,883
- Public Safety Dispatcher**
\$53,643 - \$65,187
- Registered Nurse**
\$78,977 - \$95,971
- Screener**
\$41,142 - \$50,024
- Senior Environmental Health Specialist**
\$67,641 - \$82,222
- Senior Program Manager – Children's**
\$107,182 - \$130,291
- Senior Public Health Nurse**
\$101,296 - \$123,136

For a complete list of current openings and to apply:
www.mendocinocounty.gov/jobs
EOE

The rest of
Bunco | From page 10

quickly caught on and began to throw the dice with a fervor that became excited play as the competition heated up. The players, some of whom brought their own dice and tended to begin with their family units, shouted and laughed and made marks on their scorecards as they began to understand how they were to win. There was really no skill involved but to a casual observer it was as hot and heavy as a Las Vegas craps table.

There was a very long table with a vast variety of food for the players, from pizza and sandwiches to some extremely luscious sweets. Wine and beer were also available at an extra fee.

The purpose of the fundraiser was "to help us with our music and art programs and potentially doing some murals over the summer for the kids, inside and outside," explained Bredder. "We are excited that, next year, we are getting an arts building. This year, it's mostly for program support. We are getting the arts building donated from another school that doesn't need it anymore. We will need a foundation for the arts building. We need to go through the permitting process as well.

"We are currently maintaining the structures and doing a bit of repairs. We already have two shade structures. We have exciting murals, so we hope for more over the summer. We obtained gravel so our running path is not muddy anymore."

WECS is currently enrolling students for next year for grades kindergarten through fifth. Call 459-1400 for information.

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

CLASSIFIEDS

Brookside Registration Open
Brookside Elementary TK / Kindergarten registration is now open. To register go to www.willitsunified.com. Kindergarten: age 5 by Sept. 1, 2025; TK: age 4 by Sept. 1, 2025.

Inscripción abierta en Brookside
La inscripción para TK / Kindergarten de Brookside Elementary ya está abierta. Para registrarse, vaya a www.willitsunified.com.

Do you need food?
Willits Food Bank, 344 Railroad Avenue, Willits, CA 95490. Open Wednesdays & Fridays, 1-4:30 - Bring an I.D. (707) 459-3333

For Sale
Igloo 3.5 cubic feet chest freezer. \$50. Call: 707-951-9268

Free Food for All Pop-Ups
Mendocino Food Network presents food pop-ups with free food for all: In Willits, every 1st and 3rd Thursday, from 10 to 11:30 am at 1250 Blosser Lane. In Laytonville, every 4th Thursday, 12 to 1 pm at 300 Cahto Drive. In Covelo, every 2nd Thursday, from 12 to 1 pm, at 76300 Grange Street. In Leggett: Every first Tuesday from 12 to 1 pm at 65100 Drive-Thru Tree Road. Info: Rachelle@mendofood.org; 707-615-6654.

Room For Rent
Room for 1 person for rent. Must work and have references. No pets. No drugs. In town. \$650 / month. Info: 354-0287.

RV/Trailer Space for Rent
Space for RV's and Trailers – starts at \$500 per month, includes water & garbage. Close to Safeway in Willits. Call Tony (707) 972-4696. See at <http://www.oaknvine.net/lp>

LEGAL NOTICES

WW528

Fictitious Business Name Statement

2025-F0058

The following person or persons are doing business as The Chesscakery, 21451 Poplar Avenue, Willits CA 95490; 408-469-7481.

Registered owners: Angela and Nicholas Gessner, 21451 Poplar Avenue, Willits CA 95490.

This business is conducted by a married couple.

The registrants commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on 1/31/2025.

FBN statement filed with the Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder on January 31, 2025.

/s/ Angela Gessner, owner
Publication Dates: March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 2025

WW529

Fictitious Business Name Statement

2025-F0109

The following person or persons are doing business as Sequoia Farm, 36000 Covello Road, Willits CA 95490; 951-805-9007.

Registered owner: Annette Pastrana (Amy), 315 South Main Street, / P.O. Box 1715, Willits CA 95490.

This business is conducted by an individual.

The registrants commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on 2/18/2023.

FBN statement filed with the Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder on March 3, 2025.

/s/ Annette Pastrana
Publication Dates: March 20, 27, April 3, 10, 2025

Willits Weekly Online & In Print

S L A T S A H A R A
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Above: Ridgewood Ranch resident Cynthia Platner enjoys getting up close during "lunch with the lambs." At right: Sheep graze on the beautiful Ridgewood Ranch south of Willits, and in front of the Seabiscuit Stud Barn, below.



Flock Together Festival

A Celebration of Ranch Work at Ridgewood Ranch

Submitted by Headwaters Grazing

Ridgewood Ranch and Headwaters Grazing are proud to announce our first annual Flock Together Festival, a lively celebration of ranch work and community spirit.

Join us on April 26 from 10 am to 3 pm for a day filled with hands-on experiences, demonstrations, and festivities that highlight the joy of working together on the land. Admission is just \$5, free for kids age 10 and under, and lunch tickets are available for \$20.

Sheep shearing has long been a communal tradition, where many hands make light work. At Ridgewood Ranch, we embrace this spirit and invite you to roll up your sleeves as we transform raw wool into beautiful fibers through skirting, carding, felting, and spinning. Witness the magic of spring as dozens of newborn lambs graze alongside their mothers at the heart of our festival.

The festival will also showcase a ranch parade, an art show, grain threshing demonstrations, fire engines, sheepdogs, horses, donkeys, and much more! Come celebrate the dedication of hardworking individuals committed to service and stewardship in our community.

Attendees can enjoy a lunch featuring ranch-grown lamb stew from Headwaters Grazing, fresh salads and sides from Golden Rule Gardens, and a hearty wheat berry salad from the Mendocino Grain Project.

Tickets and more information can be found at headwatersgrazing.com/festival.

Festival Activities

All Day Activities:

- Farmers Market
- Visit with the lambs
- Fiber arts demonstrations: spinning, felting, weaving, knitting
- Photos with a mini donkey and horse activities
- Scavenger hunt

Scheduled Activities:

- 8 am to 12 pm Sheep Shearing
- 10 am Festival Opens to the Public
- 10 am to 12 pm Wool Skirting
- 11 am to 2 pm Felting Activities
- 11 am to 12 pm Sheepdog Demonstrations
- 12 to 1 pm Lunch
- 1:30 pm Hand Shearing Demonstrations
- 1 pm to 2 pm Parade
- 2 pm to 3 pm Threshing Demonstrations
- 1 pm to 3 pm Art Show Opening and Reception
- 2 pm Fire Department Demonstrations
- 2 pm Golden Rule Gardens Tour
- 3 pm Walk to the Redwood Grove
- 3 pm School of Adaptive Agriculture Mixer and Tour

About Ridgewood Ranch

Ridgewood Ranch is dedicated to sustainable agriculture, land stewardship, and fostering community engagement. Our mission is to celebrate and preserve the traditions of ranch work while creating meaningful connections between people, animals, and the land.

About Headwaters Grazing

Headwaters Grazing is a project of the Golden Rule Community, which calls Ridgewood Ranch home. We are a multi-faceted operation offering grazing services, grass finished lamb and beef, wool products such as yarn, roving, and sheepskins, and the occasional workshop or event. Our flock is made up of Icelandic, Navajo Churro, and Golland sheep, moving with intention throughout a variety of Mendocino County's diverse ecosystems.

For more information, please contact us at headwatersgrazing@gmail.com or visit www.headwatersgrazing.com/festival



Most members of the 2024/25 Civil Grand Jury attended the March 25 county Board of Supervisors meeting, where the board issued a proclamation recognizing March 2025 as Civil Grand Jury Awareness Month. Third District Supervisor and Board Chair John Haschak stands in the middle, with Judge Ann Moorman, who supervises the grand jury, on the left of the group.

Supervisors recognize the work of the Civil Grand Jury

Submitted by Superior Court of California, Mendocino County

On Tuesday, March 25, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors acknowledged the important work of the Civil Grand Jury by issuing a proclamation recognizing March 2025 as Civil Grand Jury Awareness Month.

Most of the members of the current Civil Grand Jury and Judge Ann Moorman were in attendance at the board meeting. Judge Moorman is responsible for impelling, supervising and providing guidance, to the Grand Jury.

Civil grand juries are included in the California Constitution and have been in existence since California became a state in 1849. They perform a vital function in a democracy. They review the operation of local government, including the county, cities, school districts, and special districts. They perform investigations of local government programs, and they make recommendations to those agencies on their findings with a goal of improving government operations and making government more responsive to the communities they serve.

Each year the court solicits volunteers for a new civil grand jury. Jurors are impaneled to serve a one-year term, beginning July 1 of each year.

Join the Civil Grand Jury

Participate in citizen oversight of local government agencies and districts

Submitted by Superior Court of California, Mendocino County

Each spring, the Mendocino County Superior Court recruits Mendocino citizens to volunteer for a one-year appointment as civil grand jurors. The Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury, composed of 19 members plus alternates, performs important citizen oversight of local government. It investigates, monitors and issues reports and recommendations on the performance of government entities, including Mendocino County departments; city departments; water, school, and fire districts; and other special districts.

Jurors are not summoned, but instead volunteer to examine the operations of various local government entities and departments. The work is rewarding and ensures that ordinary citizens have appropriate insight into how public funds are spent and how public entities operate to make sure the mission of responsible government is met. Topics for investigation may come from the grand jurors or referrals from the previous grand jury or may arise from complaints, including anonymous complaints from citizens.

To be selected, applicants must be US citizens, at least 18 years old, reside in Mendocino County, and be fluent in English to communicate both orally and in writing. Applications and related information are available at www.mendocino.courts.ca.gov/

The application may also be obtained in person at Superior

Court, 100 North State Street, Room 303 in Ukiah or by calling the Grand Jury at (707) 463- 4320. The deadline this year is June 20, 2025.

Typically, civil grand jurors will spend 10 to 20 hours per week performing the oversight fieldwork and drafting public reports of findings and recommendations that are delivered to the target organizations. Jurors often spend the first month of their term deciding what topics will be investigated.

Local agencies are required to provide relevant information to the grand jury to ensure a thorough review and must respond to findings and recommendations contained in the reports. Reports from the last two years have included reviews of County Human Resources, Family and Children's Services, Ukiah School District's Special Education Program, Mendocino County Jail, and many other topics.

Civil grand juries are convened in all 58 California counties. The long-cherished tradition of citizen oversight into the workings of government is widely recognized in democratic forms of government. When the California Constitution was ratified in 1849-50, the concept of a civil grand jury was included in Article 1, Section 23 and directed that a civil grand jury be impaneled "at least once a year in each county" to act as a "watchdog" on local government.

Consider joining your fellow citizens in an important and stimulating process to ensure that Mendocino County government is fulfilling its potential to serve its citizens responsibly and its mission to provide critical services to all Mendocino residents.



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PROCLAMATION OF THE MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

RECOGNIZING MARCH 2025 AS CIVIL GRAND JURY AWARENESS MONTH IN MENDOCINO COUNTY

WHEREAS, every year in each of California's fifty-eight counties, nineteen (or 11 based on county size) ordinary citizens take an oath to voluntarily serve a term of one year as civil grand jurors; and

WHEREAS, grand juries have been in existence since the adoption of California's original Constitution in 1849-1850; and

WHEREAS, civil grand juries conduct their investigations under the auspices of the Superior Court of California and have broad access to public officials, employees, records, and information. One of the most important functions of a civil grand jury is to review the operations of the officers, departments, and agencies of local government; and

WHEREAS, civil grand juries are charged with investigating and reporting on local governmental operations to assure that their responsibilities are being fulfilled legally, efficiently, honestly, and in the best interest of the public. Civil grand juries serve as a watchdog authority and are well suited to the effective investigation of local governments because they are independent bodies, operationally separate from the entities and officials they investigate; and

WHEREAS, the civil grand jury's fact-finding efforts result in reports that contain specific recommendations aimed at identifying problems and offering ways to improve government operations and enhance responsiveness; and

WHEREAS, the hard work done by civil grand juries has a great effect on our communities and makes California a better place to live; and

WHEREAS, the reward of being a civil grand juror is the satisfaction received from working with fellow residents and community members to improve local government for all; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to recognize the efforts of those jurors, both past and present, who have volunteered their time and service to the Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Mendocino, hereby proclaims March 2025, as:

"CIVIL GRAND JURY AWARENESS MONTH IN MENDOCINO COUNTY"

Dated: March 25, 2025
John Haschak, Chair

Little Lake Valley rainfall totals (inches)										rainfall since 01/Oct/24
location	Mon Mar 24	Tue Mar 25	Wed Mar 26	Thur Mar 27	Fri Mar 28	Sat Mar 29	Sun Mar 30	weekly total		
Northbrook Way	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.92	0.47	0.01	0.69	2.28		77.90
Brooktrails Dr @ Sherwood Rd	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.92	0.61	0.00	0.47	2.19		71.51
Valley Rd	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.55	0.29	0.00	0.32	1.33		54.31
Canyon Rd	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.55	0.27	0.00	0.36	1.36		49.76
Pine Mountain	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.76	0.48	0.01	0.54	1.99		51.51
South Main @ East Oak	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.72	0.47	0.00	0.58	1.98		70.71
average	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.74	0.43	0.00	0.49	1.85		62.62

data compiled from weatherunderground (<https://www.wunderground.com>)

California Nevada River Forecast Center					
Six day precipitation forecast for the Willits area	Mon Mar 31	Tue Apr 01	Wed Apr 02	Thur Apr 03	Fri Apr 04
	1.0 - 1.5	0.5 - 1.0	0.1 - 0.25	0.0	0.0

<https://www.cnrfc.noaa.gov/precipForecast.php?cwa=EKA&imgNum=1&mobile=0>

The rest of Drought | From page 2

input into the development process, Drought Resilience Plan agenda items were presented at the Drought Task Force meetings under the supervisors' General Government Standing Committee meetings. Additionally, the University of California Cooperative Extension has held two public workshops during development of the draft plan.

After the commenting period closes on April 25, and comments are reviewed and addressed, a resolution will be brought to the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors on May 20, 2025, to authorize county staff to upload the final Drought Resilience Plan to the Department of Water Resources portal.

Why comment?

Public participation is vital to the success of the Drought Resilience Plan. By contributing your insights, experiences, and feedback, you will help shape both immediate and long-term strategies for addressing drought and water shortages. We seek participation from key community stakeholders, including domestic well owners, residents relying on local small water systems, tribes, and public water suppliers.

The draft DRP is available on the Mendocino County Drought Resilience Plan webpage: at:www.mendocinocounty.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/70451/638785157533370000

To submit a comment, please complete the General Commenting Form on the county Drought Resilience Plan webpage: www.mendocinocounty.gov/departments/water-agency/drought-water-conservation/drought-resilience-plan

To allow county staff time to review and respond to comments, all comments must be submitted by April 25, 2025.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to building a resilient future for Mendocino County.

The draft DRP is available on the Mendocino County Drought Resilience Plan webpage: www.mendocinocounty.gov/departments/water-agency/drought-water-conservation/drought-resilience-plan

Submit a public comment via our online form: www.mendocinocounty.gov/departments/water-agency/drought-water-conservation/drought-resilience-plan/drp-general-commenting-form

Drought resources for community members are available on our Drought Portal, which was revamped in tandem with Drought Resilience Plan development: [www.mendocino-county-water-agency/drought-water-conservation](http://www.mendocinocounty.gov/government/mendocino-county-water-agency/drought-water-conservation)

Sign up for Drought Resilience Plan updates: www.mendocinocounty.gov/departments/water-agency/drought-water-conservation/drought-resilience-plan/get-drp-email-updates

Rain Box


Thanks to Tim Hanna for his Rain Box covering Monday, March 24 through Sunday, March 30. His commentary on the weather week:

"March ended on a wet note, with rainfall through Saturday spot on with last week's prediction. Despite this March being drier than March 2024, rainfall totals for this season are more than 4 inches ahead of the same period last year. Look for a drying trend as we move into the first week of April."

ATW presents 'Parkinson's Disease:
A Personal Story,' April 17

Submitted by ATW

Avenues to Wellness presents: "Parkinson's Disease: A Personal Story" by Mary Hatfield on Thursday April 17, from 6 to 7 pm, at the Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street. Free to the public; stairlift available.



Mary Hatfield

**Parkinson's Disease:
A Personal Story**
Thurs. April 17, 6-7pm

Parkinson's Disease (PD) is a progressive, life-changing condition without a cure. Receiving this diagnosis can feel overwhelming, bringing with it a whirlwind of anxiety along with many questions. Where can you find support? What does the future hold? Discovering answers to these questions can provide clarity and help ease the fear that often accompanies such a diagnosis.

Mary Hatfield understands this journey. Three years ago, her husband was diagnosed with PD. Together they have navigated the path from anxiety to hope and optimism. They founded "Movers and Shakers," a PD support group where Mary serves as the facilitator. She has professional experience as a group facilitator and as a marriage and family therapist. She shares their story to inspire others to find strength and support in their own journey.

Learn the causes and symptoms of Parkinson's Disease

What are the lifestyle habits that reduce symptoms?

What are the latest medical advances that can help reduce symptoms?

Find a network of local support and care providers

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April 2025

Mary Hatfield understands this journey. Three years ago, her husband was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Together they have navigated the path from anxiety to hope and optimism. They founded "Movers and Shakers," a Parkinson's disease support group where Mary serves as the facilitator. She has professional experience as a group facilitator and as a marriage and family therapist. She shares their story to inspire others to find strength and support in their own journey.

Avenues to Wellness is a wellness program of the Frank R. Howard Foundation.

Visit: avenuestowellness.org for an online archive of past events. For more information, call (707) 456-9676 or email spicetti@howardfoundation.org



PHOTOS WITH THE EASTER BUNNY!

SATURDAY, APRIL 5
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No appointments, just come by and get in line!

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"Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it."
- Andy Warhol

Group: Be the Antidote - Willits
Page: Be the Antidote

OBITUARY |

Rodney LaPant

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved husband, father, and grandfather, Rodney Allen LaPant, on March 26, 2025. Born on February 21, 1951, in Oakland, California, to Ruth and Roger LaPant, Rod lived a full and hardworking life defined by love, dedication, and an adventurous spirit.

Rod was a man of many talents – a skilled carpenter, a devoted family man, and a true outdoorsman who loved hunting and fishing. In 1981, he moved to Willits, California, to settle on his family's ranch. There, he built a vacation home for his father and soon after, a home of his own. During this time he met and married the love of his life, Chris, on August 20, 1983.

Rod was the kind of man who could do anything he set his mind to. For 25 years, he owned and operated his own heavy equipment business. Later, he expanded into farming, managing an almond orchard in Durham, and also ran a successful rental housing business, which his daughter now carries on.

Rod is preceded in death by his parents, Ruth and Roger LaPant; his brother, Scott LaPant; and his children, Dustin LaPant and Chelsea LaPant.

He is survived by his loving wife, Chris LaPant; his daughter, Jacy Raymond; son-in-law, Andrew Raymond; and his cherished grandchildren, Connor, Lillian, and Wyatt. He is also survived by his brother, Jack LaPant, along with many nieces, nephews, and extended family.

Rod can now rest in peace, reunited with his children, family, and friends who went before him. He will be deeply missed and forever loved.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, April 12, at 1 pm at Amazing Grace Assembly of God Church, 803 Coast Street, in Willits.

"We love you and miss you more than words can express."



OBITUARY |

Stephen Romberg

Stephen Romberg "Rombie" was born to Marion and Charlene (Rushton) Romberg May 31, 1946, in Downey, California. He passed away March 15, 2025, at the Redwood Cove Healthcare Center in Ukiah while recovering from respiratory illness.

Stephen graduated from Paramount High School Class of 1964. On January 16, 2004, he was married to Tami Sharp and kept their roots in Willits for the past 30-plus years.

In addition to retiring from the Mendocino County Roads Department in 2009, he worked various occupations including ranch caretaker, dairy farmer, and truck driver, and enjoyed volunteering in the Willits Lions Club

Chapter for multiple years. Stephen served the Army in the Vietnam war between the years of 1966 to 1968. He was preceded in death by his sister Rebecca Romberg in 1984.

Survivors include his wife, Tami Romberg of Willits; sons Richard Rumsey of Redwood Valley, Mathew and Jamie Mayfield of Willits; daughters: Annie Romberg of Willits, Sarah and Cory Unangst; and brother and sister-in-law Mike and Missy Romberg of Long Beach. As well as numerous grandchildren: James, Kaitlynn, Sierra, Lillie, Kassidee, Paislee; and great-grandchildren Emalynn and Koulter.

OBITUARY |

Annie Samson

Annie Samson, 87, passed away peacefully on March 20 in the home she and her husband, Don, built together 53 years ago, in the hills outside Willits – a home filled with love, poetry, and the beautiful of life well lived.

Annie was born in 1938 in Boston and grew up in Peabody, Massachusetts in the house her French-Canadian grandfather built. From an early age she had a deep love of words, a passion that led her to a teaching degree from Merrimack College in 1959.

In 1961 Annie married Don, the love of her life, and together they embarked on an adventure that took them from California to Germany while Don served in the army. Their son, Andreas, was born during this time, and a few years later, they welcomed their daughter, Natasha, in San Luis Obispo.

In 1972 Annie and Don followed their dream of living close to the land, settling in the hills outside Willits, where they built a life rooted in simplicity, creativity, family, and connection with generations of students. As a member of California Poets in the Schools, she traveled the county, inspiring young minds from Point Arena to Whale Gulch to Covelo.

Beyond teaching, Annie was a writer at heart. She filled journal after journal for over 30 years, crafting poetry, short stories, and novels. She found joy in yoga, dance (she loved to dance), music, and the quiet comfort of nighttime radio. Her home was never without the warmth of beloved cats and dogs who, like so many others, were drawn to her gentle spirit.

Annie is survived by Don, her devoted husband of 63 years; their children, Andreas and Natasha; two grandchildren, Owen and Brianna; and two great-grandchildren, Dalton and Lily Ann.

A gathering to celebrate Annie's life will be held on May 10 from 2 to 5 pm in the Great Room at the Willits Center for the Arts.

Annie's life was a full one. Full of love, creativity, and deep connection to the world around her. She will be dearly missed, but her words and spirit will live on in all who knew her.



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The rest of
Business

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also partnered with the library on several seed events. She likes to be able to work from home and teach a wide range of people about growing plants and rebuilding the habitat."

"Jackie Cobbs – I read about her in 'Meet the Merchants.' She has been in Willits for 12 years and her business is called Craft House Baking, which has been in operation since the fall of 2023. She loves that she gets to combine baking and art to make beautiful cakes. She also loves that she has flexibility by working from home," said Jessie.

Saprina Rodriguez, past councilmember, mayor, and current owner of three businesses – Imagination Station Pre-school, the Toy Depot, and The Whistle Stop Café – was also in attendance and spoke of her journey: "When I was young, I was interested in business in high school, but then I had my children young and was concentrating on being a mother. Then, I went back to school to study business.

"Within two months of my first semester," explained Rodriguez, "I decided to take the leap and build myself a business. We were studying in class all the qualities one would expect in a business owner. When I heard the assets it took to be an entrepreneur in class, I thought 'that's me.' That gave me the confidence to open up my first business. Then, I opened up another. I had a string of businesses in Mendocino County. But then in 2008, when the bubble popped, we closed all the businesses except for Ace Copy. My husband took it over and I went back to school for a degree in business management."

In addition to the business owners, Jessie introduced attendee Madge Strong, a woman who, although she does not have a business per se, has contributed greatly to the well-being of the community through her participation in the city council, as mayor, and one of the founders of WELL (Willits Economic Localization), a think-tank of concerned citizens who formulated ways to aid in the economic health of the area.

Jessie asked the participants several questions about their inspirations: who were their greatest influences, how their businesses were named, etc. Chevalier began her journey as a fishing outfit in Alaska, involving her family, as they all worked together on the boat. Later she was part of Bountiful Gardens, a business that sold heirloom seeds. When that business folded she started her own company, selling seeds under the name of Quail Seeds. She has been very generous in imparting her knowledge to willing gardeners and those interested in the art of saving seeds.

"When I was at Bountiful Gardens, it was part of a non-profit that was focused on international aid, and it was part of John Jeavons' Ecology Action non-profit," recounted Chevalier. "The focus was on food security in the third world by learning really productive garden methods. The seed company was part of that non-profit and so that focus was international and having varieties that were part of that wonderful vision. It was also the first heirloom seed company in the United States."

The emphasis of the discussion centered on the determination and grit that the women exhibited in overcoming stereotypes and sexual biases to rise above prejudices in order to create an entity that would sustain themselves and their families and be of benefit to the community as a whole.

California Library offers new Virtual Bookshelf for eBooks and audiobooks

Posted by California State Library

Sacramento – Every Californian with an email address and an internet connection can now visit California's Bookshelf and access more than 300,000 eBooks and eAudiobooks.

Previously, readers had to log in through a participating library to get to all the ebooks available on the eBookshelf. With California's Bookshelf, access to our vast collection is just a few clicks away, as you'll see below.

"With just a few clicks, any Californian can go and grab what they're looking for on California's Bookshelf. Trust me, we've tried to make something for every reader," said California State Librarian Greg Lucas.

"From your home, a coffee shop or while traveling, you will always be connected to convenience with this new virtual library bookshelf. Did I mention it's free?"

California's Bookshelf has thousands of eBooks and eAudiobooks in multiple genres

Mendocino College Foundation buys Ukiah property for future student housing

Submitted by Mendocino College

Ukiah – Mendocino College is pleased to announce the March purchase of a property at the corner of Perkins and Main Streets in downtown Ukiah, marking the first phase of a multi-year initiative to develop future student housing. This project aims to increase the availability of affordable housing for students and support the local community.

The acquisition of this property is made possible through generous support from the Mendocino College Foundation and its dedicated donors. The Foundation provided the funding to purchase the property from Redwood Credit Union, and will continue to support the project with additional multi-million-dollar contributions for the construction phase. The Foundation has a long-standing commitment to stewarding funds responsibly to support the long-term needs of students, and this project is a testament to their role as a trusted donor partner.

"The Mendocino College Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that donor dollars are used effectively to support the long-term needs of our students," said Julie McGovern, Executive Director of the Mendocino College Foundation. "This project is a perfect example of how we can make a lasting impact on our students' lives and the community."

Student housing at California community colleges offers several benefits, including improved academic performance, stability, and addressing broader housing shortages. Studies show that students who live near campus tend to have higher GPAs and are more likely to graduate. Affordable student housing provides stability, allowing students to focus on their education without the stress of

The rest of
Cabinets

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Earlier this week, one of the cupboards offered dried beans, oil, salt and pepper, oatmeal, bottled water, egg-coloring kits, and split peas. Another offered almonds, spices, canned veggies and canned ice tea.

Books available in the libraries earlier this week ranged from Danielle Steel and Nora Roberts paperbacks, to a book on pregnancy, to books by Anne Perry, Richard Russo, Nelson DeMille, Jenny LaCoat, Jodi Picoult, Joe Lerner, and even one titled "Deer Hunting With Jesus" ... options galore!

If you want to donate to the library cabinets, bring clean, dry books and gently stack them alongside the others, ensuring the cabinets close to keep the weather and critters out.

If you want to donate to the food cabinets, rules are simple: "Donations should be unopened, not-expired and non-perishable" the sign posted in the front of the Coast Street cabinet reads.0

The sign also offers some ideas for good donations: Canned meat, peanut butter and nut-butler alternatives; canned beans and garbanzos; rice; boxed pasta; cereals/instant oatmeal; crackers and granola bars; canned tomato sauce; canned fruits and veggies; condiments; jelly and syrup; baking and pancake mixes; microwave meals and shelf-stable meal kits; infant formula and dry cereal; protein drinks; and dried fruit.

In addition to food, other items that are always appreciated include: Can openers; shampoo/conditioner/combs/brushes; toilet paper; feminine care; toothbrush/toothpaste; deodorant; razors; hand/ dish/bath soap; hand sanitizer; laundry detergent; gloves/hats/scarves; and baby supplies like wipes and diapers.

Of course, good intentions are always assumed, but the cabinet is not able to accept open or partially-used items; rusty or unlabeled cans; homemade or home-canned items; things in glass; anything in torn boxes or bags; perishable items (no raw meat, eggs or dairy), alcoholic beverages, dented/bent/leaking/ bulging cans; anything past its best by/use by/sell by date; anything damaged; and anything repackaged.

Do you know of additional cabinets in town? Send us a photo and location, and we'll try and make a little collage of any more in an upcoming edition to let folks know. Email us: willitsweekly@gmail.com

and over 20 languages.

The eBookshelf is a partnership with the Palace Project. It uses the Palace app to provide access to digital content.

There are five steps to access California's Bookshelf and create a virtual library card:

Download the free Palace app on your iOS or Android device.

Inside the app, use the "find my library" search function to find "California's Bookshelf."

Browse the collection until you find a title you would like to read then either "get" or "reserve" that book.

Choose the option to create a virtual card and then complete the details in the form. You will need to enable the app's permission to use your specific location, just one time, for the creation of your library card.

Look in your email for your library card number. You can borrow items using that number and your new password.

When you browse California's Bookshelf, you'll have access to over 300,000 eBooks and eAudiobooks and over 70,000 unique titles. There are over 3,500 titles available with no wait times or hold queues.

If you log into the Palace app through your local library, you'll not only have access to all the materials in California's Bookshelf but all the eBooks and audiobooks in your local library's collection.

Established in 1850, the California State Library is the central reference and research library for state government and the Legislature. The library collection includes more than 4 million titles, 6,000 maps and 250,000 photographs, and includes an extensive collection of documents from and about the state's rich history. The State Library also serves California's local libraries, providing more than \$500 million in state and federal funds to support public libraries and deliver statewide programs and services. Visit the State Library website at www.library.ca.gov/

was submitted to the California Community College Chancellor's Office to fund a \$54M 110-bed student housing project in Ukiah. Although our project was not funded in the 2024/2025 California State Budget, we remain committed to making progress. A historic milestone was achieved in February 2025 with the Mendocino College Foundation purchasing a parcel of land for future student housing. With this critical step, we can move forward to investigate all funding options available to move the project forward.

"We are excited to take this important step towards addressing the housing needs of our students," said Rose Bell, Director of Communications at Mendocino College. "We are committed to being a good community partner and will keep the community informed throughout the project's development.

"We are proactively collaborating with the City of Ukiah to find effective parking solutions, and address any concerns about high-density housing downtown. We are committed to transparency and want to set realistic expectations: construction is anticipated to begin in a few years as we continue to secure the necessary funding for the project."

Mendocino College is dedicated to maintaining open communication with the community and ensuring that this project benefits both students and local residents. We look forward to a time when our student housing residents will bring vibrancy to the city core, support local businesses by shopping at nearby stores, and dining at cafes and restaurants, and utilizing services within walking distance from their housing. As students pursue their education, they will contribute to the overall strength and vitality of Mendocino County.

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String Creek neighborhood works towards becoming a Firewise community

By Sarah Reith for Mendocino County Fire Safe Council

Spring is short, and fire season is long, in the highly combustible landscape of rural Mendocino County. Neighborhood Fire Safe Councils are a great way to prevent disaster by sharing information and resources, organizing workdays, and providing many other ways to help homes withstand wildfire. Communities can take their efforts even further – and receive substantial benefits – by becoming designated as Firewise USA® Communities by the National Fire Protection Association.

Firewise Communities are safer because they write up Risk Assessments and Action Plans, and then act on them. They also have access to the latest scientific findings such as preventing ember ignition of homes, and they increase their chances of getting grants for wildfire-safety projects. Significantly, as home-insurance costs skyrocket, recent California “Safer from Wildfires” regulations require insurance companies to offer discounts on premiums to homeowners in Firewise Communities. Visit <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa/Firewise-Insurance-Discounts-for-California-Residents> to learn more.

After some initial work, the Firewise commitment is not much more than organizing workdays and “contact trees,” which your neighborhood may already be doing. A board or committee of volunteers (such as a Neighborhood Fire Safe Council) needs to work with a qualified organization (such as the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council) to conduct a neighborhood Risk Assessment and prepare a three-year Action Plan.

Then you collectively get to work on your Action Plan to address the risks you’ve identified, for instance clearing access roads, removing hazard trees, or doing home-hardening and defensible space around homes – all of which have an impact on the overall safety of the neighborhood. And you need to keep track of volunteer hours and money spent on wildfire-safety equipment or improvements.

The Mendocino County Fire Safe Council is happy to help communities advance to Firewise status, and can provide free hands-on guidance and tools to simplify the process.

One sunny Saturday afternoon in early March, Mendocino County Fire Safe Council

Executive Director Scott Cratty and Community Outreach Coordinator Eva King joined the String Creek/Tartar Canyon Fire Safe Council as they took their first steps toward becoming the county’s 14th Firewise Community. (Less than a year ago, there were only four Firewise Communities in Mendocino County!)

String Creek is a small settlement of about 70 people, northeast of Willits, including a few dozen homes, often at the end of long, steep, narrow driveways, and mostly occupied by one or two people who are no longer young.

For Joanne Moore, a founding member of the String Creek/Tartar Canyon Fire Safe Council, the moment of reckoning came late one night in June 2020, when her neighbor’s house caught on fire. “We were very, very lucky,” she recalled. “It could have been the beginning of a terrible fire,” if it had spread to other homes or engulfed the road, which is the only access in or out of the neighborhood. After it was over, Moore began to think about how to make sure the next fire didn’t devastate her community, either.

For one thing, it was difficult for emergency responders to find people’s houses due to a lack of signage. “We’ve gotta grow up,” she realized. “We have to get road signs.” That led to a decision to buy low-cost reflective address signs from the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council. Visit <https://www.firesafemendocino.org/reflective-address-signs> to learn more.

One thing led to another, and soon a Neighborhood Fire Safe Council grew out of their local road association.

“We’ve accomplished quite a few things,” added Windy Stephens, a String Creek/Tartar Canyon Fire Safe Council member who has lived all her life in the house that her father built on String Creek. The group has gotten grants (including MCFSC’s annual Micro-Grants) for water storage and fuel-reduction projects along the road, as well as in a large, centrally located meadow. The meadow is an ideal spot for picnics, bocce ball, and sheltering in place if it ever



Windy Stephens, one of the original members of the String Creek/Tartar Canyon Fire Safe Council, with her dog Daisy, at the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council’s March 5 visit to the rural neighborhood northeast of Willits.

FREE DEFENSIBLE SPACE ASSISTANCE

The Defensible-Space Assistance for Income-Eligible Seniors and Physically Disabled Residents (DSAFIE) program offers FREE defensible-space clearing services up to 100’ around the homes of qualifying households.

Is your home wildfire prepared?

Learn more and apply by calling (707) 462-3662 or visiting our website [FireSafeMendocino.org/defensible-space-assistance-program](https://www.firesafemendocino.org/defensible-space-assistance-program)

becomes impossible to flee homes in the area. But now they’re ready to do more.

“A lot of people around here don’t know where to begin,” Stephens acknowledged. “There’s so much to do,” from installing 1/8-inch mesh on all their vents, building skirting around their decks, and keeping roofs free of debris. “A lot of folks around here are low-income. They don’t have that much money to put into their homes. This is a good time for us to educate them about resources that are available to us.”

Those resources include Mendocino County Fire Safe Council’s Defensible Space Assistance program for income-eligible seniors and people with disabilities, which provides fuel-reduction work at no cost. The work is done around the home and main access routes, including some of their steep driveways, which, Moore noted, “contribute to how difficult it is to be fire-safe.”

The community Risk Assessment, which is the first step toward drafting a Firewise Action Plan, includes assessing a sample of homes for safety features such as non-combustible building materials, deck skirting, and fire-resistant landscaping within 100 feet of any structure. To be Firewise, communities need to make a plan that addresses the main shortfalls, and then make demonstrable progress each year toward increasing their neighborhood safety.

Moore feels she benefited from the String Creek Fire Safe Council’s community assessment. “There is a lot to learn, and it’s actually interesting,” she reflected,

especially about the silent devastation of tiny embers, which can slip in through vents or kindle a full-scale blaze in debris-littered roof corners. “It’s all about how those embers get in there,” she realized.

The community will probably start small, with educational campaigns, strategic placement and protection of outbuildings, and maybe incorporating grazing into their fuel management. Coming up with an effective means of communicating during a disaster, and creating a map of water resources and high-risk areas for firefighters, are a few other priorities that will be organized in order of importance and feasibility.

Overall, they were pleased with their initial foray into heightening the safety of their neighborhood. “I feel really happy that our community is mobilizing in this way,” Stephens concluded. “We have fun at our meetings, and we’re productive. I feel really proud of the work that we’ve done, and I love our little community up here on String Creek. We work really well together. We all really care about each other, and we care about making this place better because we all love living out here and we don’t want to live anywhere else.”

For more information on creating a Firewise Community, visit Mendocino County Fire Safe Council’s webpage at www.firesafemendocino.org/firewise-usa. If you are a low-income senior or person with disabilities, information about the free Defensible Space Assistance program is available at [/www.firesafemendocino.org/defensible-space-assistance-program](https://www.firesafemendocino.org/defensible-space-assistance-program).

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