

Willits Weekly

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A Nostalgic & Modern Record of Community and Life in Willits
 Donations Accepted Edition No. 155

Thursday, May 12, 2016

Nearly letter blasts MCOE fiscal policy

Mike A'Dair
 Reporter
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On May 4, Willits Unified School District Board of Trustees President Christopher Neary sent a searing letter to Mendocino County Superintendent of Schools Warren Galletti, criticizing the county Office of Education for misrepresenting facts, for allowing the fiscal philosophy of retiring head of MCOE's administrative and business services Vicki Todd to improperly color the office's financial advice to county school districts, and of issuing misleading assessments of Willits Unified's current financial status.

Nearly wrote his letter as
 Read the rest of **MCOE**
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Prop. 172 monies for LLFD likely

Forrest Glyer
 Reporter
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The Little Lake Fire District may finally be close to receiving some Proposition 172 funds, members of the district's board of directors were told during Tuesday night's meeting.

At their May 3 meeting, the Mendocino County supervisors unanimously agreed they should allot \$398,000 to be split up among all of the county's 22 fire districts, Fire Chief Carl Magann told the board. LLFD would receive between \$20,000 and \$22,000 for the 2016/17 budget year, based on the supervisors' formula of 2 percent for every county district. The rest of the

Read the rest of **Prop. 172**
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Main Street 'Sneak Preview'

Willits area residents are invited to experience a Main Street Sneak Preview on Thursday, May 19, from 3 to 6:30 pm. "The preview is a live demonstration project that will temporarily mock-up traffic calming and place-making treatments like bulb-outs, enhanced crosswalks, bike lanes, landscaping, and public art," said City Manager Adrienne Moore.

The event will showcase concepts generated by the community during the April 18-22 Main Street Corridor Planning Fair.

The sneak preview will be displayed on East

Read the rest of **Main Street**
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Above, left: Elaine Houpe and Debi Holcomb select options from the Senior Center Thrift Store. Above, right: Holcomb shows off one of the five gift baskets that will be raffled off during the event. Below: Martha Morgan, the "Queen" of this year's Tea & Togs event.



Photos by Maureen Moore

Time for Tea & Togs

Fashion Show and Tea Party at Harrah Senior Center

The fifth annual fundraising event "Tea & Togs" will be held on Saturday, May 21 at the Harrah Senior Center, and attendees can expect an afternoon of fashion, finger foods and fun. Tickets are \$15 each and will be available presale at the center or at the door on the day of the event.

Maureen Moore
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Item to be showcased have been carefully selected from "the little boutique on Baechtel," a term coined affectionately for the senior center's Thrift Store by volunteer Dorothy Roediger. Around 10 models will each wear three to five specifically selected looks that fall under several categories: tropical, polka dot, texture, Oriental, lace or "Tea with the Queen."

Looks are made up of pieces ranging from size 6 to 16 which cost around \$3 to \$12 each. Each outfit will be for sale at the end of the show - though the models have first dibs!

Models for the 2016 event include Angie Rodriguez, Mary James, Danielle Sherman, Marnie Sylvander, Frances Neumeyer, Fran Schatz, Elaine Houpe and Martha Morgan. Morgan will be 93 this year, according to Kathy Neff, senior center board of directors member and show coordinator, and will be the "Queen" during the finale theme, "Tea with the Queen," fancy hat and all.

Each outfit is accessorized with hats, bags, belts, jewelry and other embellishments also selected from the thrift store. Models try on many looks, have fittings, and attend a dress rehearsal to prepare for the event. Ladies will walk down the runway to the tunes of Evelyn Swift on piano and Neff's descriptions and commentary about each look.

Tea & Togs is not all about fashion, however, it's also about tea!

"Everyone has their favorite tea cup," said Neff. "We encourage everyone to bring their special cup and sample

Read the rest of **Tea & Togs**
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Above, from left: Options, options, options! Willits Senior Center volunteer, board of directors member, and Tea & Togs show coordinator Kathy Neff, left, assists model and center volunteer Elaine Houpe try on several outfits for the show. Below: The ladies shop at the Senior Center Thrift Store, including, from left: volunteer Elaine Houpe, volunteer Bev Vacarro, show coordinator Kathy Neff and new volunteer coordinator, Debi Holcomb.



Air district sues Grist Creek

Mike A'Dair
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The Mendocino County Air Quality Management District has sued Grist Creek Aggregates, the Mercer-Fraser Company, and Grist Creek Aggregates owner Brian Hurt in an effort to resolve differences surrounding Grist Creek's 2015 operation of a rubberized asphalt plant on Highway 162, near Longvale.

The lawsuit, filed April 7 but not announced until May 6, seeks a permanent injunction against Grist Creek Aggregates and/or Mercer-Fraser operating an asphalt plant again in the location. It also seeks penalties against Grist Creek and Mercer-Fraser;

Read the rest of **Grist Creek**
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Faulder, Pekin stake their positions at forum

Mike A'Dair
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Ukiah attorney Keith Faulder and Fort Bragg attorney Patrick Pekin vied for voter support during a Tuesday night candidate forum in Ukiah. The two men are running for Mendocino County Superior Court judge in the June 7 election.

Faulder, the older of the two, has been practicing law for 23 years, 18 of those years in Mendocino County. He served as a deputy district attorney with the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office beginning in 1999 before becoming

Read the rest of **Candidates**
 Over on Page 13

New superintendent aims to improve student performance

Mike A'Dair
 Reporter
 mike@willitsweekly.com

Incoming Willits Unified Superintendent Mark Westerburg founds lots of positives and a few negatives in a recent whirlwind tour of district schools. Westerburg spent the week of May 2 through May 6 in Willits, attending a May 4 board of trustees meeting, and much of the rest of his time in discussions with outgoing Superintendent Patricia Johnson and her staff.

Westerburg praised
 Read the rest of **Westerburg**
 Over on Page 11

Phone scammers robbing locals

To the Editor:

A couple of months ago an elderly friend told me they had won a lottery and were going to be receiving \$5,000 a day. They were absolutely convinced that this was going to happen. They gave a lot of personal information to the scammer. Of course, the money never arrived.

More recently that same friend told me they had gotten a call telling them they had won \$20 million. The catch was they had to send several thousand dollars to the person "for processing costs." My friend sent that money.

The calls continue. A check for thousands of dollars was received by my elderly friend, but no bank would cash it. My friend was reassured by the phone caller that "the check is good" and there is just a misunderstanding. The check was not "good." It was a scam. This is a typical scam.

The convincing scam calls continue, and credit card numbers, Social Security number and other personal information have been given. This person's bank accounts were cleaned out, and credit cards maxed out. This is currently happening to a number of other local people in our area, I was told by a social worker. It happens fast. Local people have been robbed of hundreds of thousands of dollars in life savings, I was told. The next target is usually the house, if you own one.

Many people have lost their homes to these scams. You may not think it can happen, but it does. Go to YouTube.com and type in "senior citizen scams," and watch the news reports.

I spoke with two local social workers who work with the elderly and people with dementia. I also spoke with Sheriff Tom Allman and another law enforcement officer who investigate these scams. I filed a report with the sheriff's office at 463-4086. I got a call back from the investigator, and he is contacting my friend and beginning an investigation.

I also got in touch with our local Adult Protective Services on behalf of my friend.

If you suspect a local elderly person is being scammed or abused, call Adult Protective Services in Willits at 456-3740 and report it. Let them know what is happening. Ask for the "officer of the day." Let them know if the person is confused or is in danger. Let them know if the person is living alone.

If you suspect a loved one or friend, or even yourself, may be in the early stages of dementia or advanced dementia, call Redwood Caregiver Resource Center in Santa Rosa at 707-542-0282. Ask for help. Ask for guidance. People experiencing early onset dementia are often embarrassed and angry. They withdraw. They are losing the capacity to reason, so trying to reason with them often doesn't work. Try to be reassuring. They are needing emotional safety. Get help. Help is available. You can't do it by yourself. Beware of starting to give a lot of money. That's a bottomless pit.

Of course, it's not just elderly people who are scammed. Anyone who is financially insecure is a potential victim to scams like this. Let's face it, no stranger is out there giving you large amounts of money. Learn to just hang up on callers promising free

The Rules: LETTERS

Letters & Commentaries: Email letters to willitsweekly@gmail.com. Letters focusing on Willits and 3rd District issues, activities, events and people have priority. Willits Weekly prints letters from residents of Willits and the 3rd District only. To encourage a variety of voices, Willits Weekly limits letter publication from any one writer to once a month.

Typed letters can be sent to Willits Weekly, P.O. Box 1698, Willits, CA 95490, but email is preferred. 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. 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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What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from readers

money, conducting a survey, or asking for any kind of personal information. *Never give out your social security number to a caller.* Never give them your bank account or credit card numbers. The IRS does not call you if you have a problem. They will mail you a notice I was told.

These scammers, for some reason, are mostly centered around Jamaica and Nigeria, although some are much more local. Often the scammer has an accent, but not always. Sometimes the scammer is telling you that they are a "Debt Collection Service," and you have an IRS bill or other bill, and you might be jailed if you don't call a certain phone number to get it cleared up. Recently, someone called saying they represented a local bank and that you have a problem with the bank and you had better call a certain phone number. Another popular scam tells you that a relative or friend is in jail in a foreign country, and you must send money now to set them free. *All of these are scams.*

Two days ago another elderly friend called me to say the scammer had called her, and she didn't know what to do. I said "Just hang up." Report the caller and phone number to the sheriff. We are taught to be respectful to people who call us, and we often have trouble just hanging up. Believe me, you need to learn to *just hang up* the phone when someone calls you telling you you have won a large amount of money, owe a debt collection service, or have a problem with the IRS. Never give out personal information to a caller, not even your name, age – nothing.

Never call the phone number the caller provides. If you think you have a problem with your bank, call your bank at the phone number on your bank statement. Better yet, stop into your bank. There is a customer service number on your credit card. Use that number. The IRS doesn't call you. They will mail a notice. Check any phone number on the internet or get help from the sheriff or Senior Center (459-6826) before calling it.

People all over our area and the country are losing their life savings and homes to these scams. Never give out your credit card number or personal information to an unsolicited phone caller. The information may seem innocent, but it adds up, and your identity and savings can be stolen before you know what's happening. *Just hang up!* Let me repeat that: Just hang up.

Bill Barksdale, Willits

KLLG Radio update

To the Editor:

The adventure of creating a local radio station in Willits – Willits Hometown Radio (KLLG – 97.9) – is happening. We are looking for people who want to help. It's up to all of us. A small group has started on the not-so-much-fun technical part. Soon we will need lots and lots of DJs (the people who go on the air with their ideas. Their music. Their passion. For their friends.)

Let's be clear: a local radio station, KLLG, is not in any way a duplication of or redundancy to KZYXZ. KLLG will be the "Voice of Willits," exclusively of, by, and for our community. The focus is us. We just need you to step up.

If you want to see our town thrive — a local radio station will help do that. Become part of the process. It's easy. It can be done out of your own home, using your own computer. The technology is here, now. You don't have to do it live out of our studio.

Giving birth to a very local radio station is a drawn-

out, complicated task. There is no one way to do it. Each town does it differently. I think there is a little magic involved, as well.

The future is uncertain for small, rural communities. If we are to survive with health, dignity and any kind of economic viability, we are going to need to be more cohesive, more resilient, more self-sufficient. We are not a handful of volunteers looking for a hobby or a distraction; we are striving to make KLLG a reality, because we think Willits' future depends upon it.

Gualala, Ukiah, Covelo, Fort Bragg, and Laytonville have low-power radio stations. It's time Willits did, too!

Here's where we're at, and here's what must happen if KLLG is going to become a working reality and profoundly serve our community.

Our first major fundraiser, "A Fool's Errand," was a success; we cleared \$1,100. Thanks to those who participated. Since then, we've raised another \$700 in donations, and our city and the Willits Police Department have contributed \$1,000 to help defray the cost of an FCC-mandated Emergency Alert System. Very important!

While our sister station in Laytonville, KPFF, has generously given us a tower for our antenna, we need only another \$900 to \$1,500 to purchase the antenna and properly erect the tower. (Once the tower is up, we'll start broadcasting a lower-strength test signal.)

We are going to get "on the air" as soon as possible. We hope to be broadcasting a test signal by June 1. But to get the full-strength signal (so it can reach all of you), we're going to need to raise another \$4,500. Our goal is to be broadcasting full power on July 4, 2016.

Tessa Ford, Willits

The 'new normal'

To the Editor:

This responds to Mayor Bruce Burton's letter in the April 28, 2016 Willits Weekly. I must disclose that Bruce is a good friend.

Bruce has lived in Willits almost his whole life, choosing to return here after graduating from Cal. He started his current business from the back of a pickup. So, in addition to being mayor, I believe he's well-qualified to speak up for what he believes is best for our town – his home town.

I think that Bruce wants greater Willits to be a great place to raise a family – a place with good jobs, good schools and a healthy living environment. I agree with him. And I believe he feels that being just another drug-oriented town in Mendocino County will not contribute to those goals. Again, I agree with him.

Some in this community say that marijuana is OK, that it's inevitable, so just shut up and get used to it. It's part of the "new normal," something older people just don't understand. Whether or not it's a gateway drug doesn't seem to be part of the discussion.

Please excuse me if I say that so far the new normal is not as good as the "old normal." I was a kid in the 1950s, and Bruce was a kid in the 1960s, when we were basically allowed to "run wild." We went to school by ourselves, as well as took responsibility for ourselves in terms of what we did after school and on the weekends. But we didn't have all that much free time because of things like homework, Boy Scouts, Little League and jobs.

Perhaps jobs were more plentiful back then, but I believe that part of it was that no one had a sense of entitlement. People felt that it was important to have principles and values that related to their jobs as well as their lives overall.

Teaching is a truly tough profession. Teaching the middle-school level is arguably the most challenging age group. Having worked in six different school districts, I feel qualified to add that teaching in Willits

I don't see that rolling over for the drug

Read the rest of **Letters** | Over on Page 11

is especially complex. That said, I would like to address an ongoing problem I have observed between schools and our community, with the goal, perhaps, of effecting change.

In the almost eight years I have been in Willits, I have seen our middle school come under attack over and over again, sometimes warranted, often not. The majority of the complaints are initially registered by parents, who, I acknowledge, have a completely valid right to address their concerns over issues regarding their children; however, my disagreement comes from the manner in which those concerns are often set forth. Gossip and slander are never constructive avenues for positive change, and every time a situation arises which is truly in need of a good solution, it often devolves into bickering, name-calling, and hard feelings. No one walks away satisfied, and many harbor hurt and ill will.

I would like to see our community recognize the genuine concern and care that each and every person who works at Baechtel Grove Middle School has for your children. I would like to be appreciated for the extremely difficult work we do for you, your children, and our community each and every day of the week. I would like to see every effort being made to *support* us in our efforts to educate and keep your children safe and cared for.

I envision a community that sees a problem and discusses it objectively through appropriate channels, without generating gossip and hysteria as fuel for a desired change, but rather, involvement in a positive, pro-active, and communicative process.

I believe we are capable of this: the question is, are we willing?



Above, from left: Transferring trash from the Skunk Train flatcar to a truck to take it to the dump. The Skunk Train to the rescue. More trash on the flatcar.



Below, left: A beautiful tree and a pile of trash at the hobo encampment.



Below, right, from top to bottom: The Skunk Train's Jim Baskin, center, with the loading crew. The crew carries trash to the flatcar. The crew rests after loading up the flatcar.



Skunk Train cleanup

Railroad and county trash agency work together on Willits project

The Skunk Train and the Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority worked together last month on an unusual trash cleanup project on Willits area property.

Jennifer Poole
Editor & Reporter
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The "unusual" elements were not just the large size of the trash dump at the hobo encampment west of Willits – three tons – but also the use of the Skunk Train to haul out the mess.

Landowner Mike Burgess explains that the section of his parcel with the well-established hobo encampment was "stranded" – cut off from any access by road. "The only access," he said, "is from the train tracks – handy for the hobos."

Below, from left: Sorting through the piles of trash. More trash on the flatcar. A close-up of the "household" garbage. Mike Sweeney, top, director of Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority, lends a hand. Mike Burgess, bottom, is happy to see this "stranded" corner of his property cleaned up.



Love Art? Want to support the Arts? Thinking about a career in the Arts?

WILLITS CENTER FOR THE ARTS IS SEEKING DOCENTS

COME JOIN OUR TEAM!
WILLITS CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Come learn the skills to run a gallery, and earn credits or build your resume.

The WCA will host 2 free docent training programs – sign up for either:
Wednesday, May 18 from 5-7 pm
Saturday, May 21 from 10-12 noon
All training will be held at the Art Center, 71 East Commercial Street

For more information on the program or to RSVP for the training:
Contact Holly Madrigal
at 707-459-1726 or wacarental@gmail.com
Willitscenterforthearts.org

Redwood Meadows is an active independent senior community featuring 101 apartment homes, primarily a mix of one and two bedroom apartments which are single story 4-plex cottage-type set amongst seven acres of park like landscaping.

We are a smoke-free and pet friendly community. We boast a community center where activities are held like card games, Bingo, birthdays and socials. We also have a barbecue area for residents to get together for social functions.

Redwood Meadows is conveniently located adjacent to the William F. Harrah Senior Center with a thrift store, cafeteria and taxi service, and Howard Memorial Hospital is just blocks away.

REDWOOD MEADOWS
Senior Apartment Community

1475 BAECHTEL ROAD
WILLITS, CA 95490
707-459-1616
MON-FRI 10:00-4:00

BROOKTRAILS GOLF COURSE and GRILL
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Willits, CA 95490
(707) 459-6761
brooktrailsgolfcourse@gmail.com

Golf Course Hours:
8am-7pm

Grill Hours:
9am-5pm

Weekly Schedule:
8am
Mondays & Fridays
Senior League
8am Wednesdays
18 Holes Golf –
Fun Day All Welcome

5pm Thursdays
Bordo Scramble
10am Sundays
Disc Golf Club

Crossword Puzzle & Sudoku

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

Level: Intermediate



How To Sudoku:

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

1	2	3				4	5	6	7
8			9				10		
11							12		
13			14				15		
16							17		
18				19	20				
				21			22		
				23			24		
			25				26		
			27						
		34							
36	37							38	
39								40	
41								42	
43									44

ROSE GARDEN WORD SEARCH

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

CLUES ACROSS

- Administrative Review Board
- Not worried
- Rowan Atkinson played him
- Stars
- Indian city
- North American nation
- He partnered with Garfunkel
- Understood
- Foe
- Jewish state
- 2015 postseason hero
- Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
- Goddess of the dawn
- ___ Squad
- Belonging to a thing
- Food-related allergic reaction (abbr.)
- Car mechanics group
- Exceed in weight
- Deserved
- Singer Thicke
- Clemencies
- Critique
- Resented
- Type of tissue
- Passages
- It comes in a can
- His heart is in San Francisco
- Retirement account
- Actress Watts
- Natives of the American Southwest
- Covered
- The Science Guy Bill
- Soviet Socialist Republic
- Contraceptive device
- Unfastened
- ___ student, learns healing
- Ties the knot
- Actor McKellen
- Optical phenomenon
- Turf
- Foot (Latin)
- Flub
- Birds settle here
- Calculator
- Herbal tea
- Catch
- Pitcher Santana
- Not for vegetarians
- Japanese novelist

CLUES DOWN

- Belittled
- Actress King
- They pour drinks
- Communicates
- Take advantage of
- Take on cargo
- A stiff drink

Volunteers needed

Haehl Creek cleanup project set for Saturday, May 21

Damian Sebouhian
Reporter
damian@willitsweekly.com



It's civic action time, and City of Willits Code Enforcement Officer John Sherman wants your help.

Sherman, in cooperation with several volunteers, will be conducting a thorough clean-up of the Haehl Creek area across from the Harrah Senior Center on Saturday, May 21.

More volunteers are needed. If interested, dress for the occasion and meet the crew at the City Hall parking lot, 111 East Commercial Street, at 8 am to receive the provided bags and gloves. Long-sleeved shirts, pants and boots are encouraged, as you will be working in the woods.

The cleanup should be finished by noon; however, "the more volunteers we get, the sooner we'll be done," said Sherman.

Mike Sweeney of the Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority is providing a dump trailer for the occasion, along with a three-person crew, according to Sherman.

"Alex Garcia, who did some cleanup recently out on Tomki Creek, has agreed to bring his trailer," Sherman said. "And I think June and Jerry Albright are probably going to bring their trailer as well."

This marks an improvement over last September's fall cleanup, when the crew had only the use of a single pickup, run by Supervisor Tom Woodhouse.

Read the rest of **Haehl Creek** | Over on Page 6



Photos showing the trash dump along Haehl Creek, courtesy of John Sherman.



- | | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| ANTIQUE | DOUBLE | PERPETUAL |
| ARBORETUM | ENGLISH | PISTIL |
| BALLING | EXHIBITION | POLLEN |
| BARE ROOT | FLORIBUNDA | POLYANTHA |
| BLACK SPOT | FUNGICIDE | PROPAGATION |
| BUD | HIPS | ROSE |
| CALYX | HYBRID | RUST |
| CANES | LANDSCAPE | SPECIES |
| CLIMBING | MILDEW | STAMEN |
| CONSERVATORY | MITES | STIGMA |
| CULTIVAR | MULCH | TEA |
| DEADHEAD | PATIO | |

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101 Drive In, JD Redhouse, Willits Post Office, Village Market, Ardella's Downtown Diner, Buttercup's Childrens' Boutique, Willits City Hall, Willits Library, Mariposa Market, the old Country Skillet, Old Mission Pizza, Gribaldo's Cafe, Brewed Awakening and Ace Copy and Shipping.

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I am not an attorney, and can only provide self-help services at your specific direction.

Swab testing for DUI
Linda on the law
Linda McNeil
Columnist
The results can be obtained right at the site of the test. At this time some law enforcement agencies and probation/parole departments throughout the country are using this test.

detects alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs, legal or illegal. (When a swab test for DUI is developed that detects a four-shot espresso, I'm moving to Italy.)
A driver is not required to submit to a preliminary drug screening test (PDS) or a preliminary alcohol screening test (PAS) unless submitting to these tests is required by the terms of their probation or parole.
The PDS (swab test) and PAS (portable breath test) are characterized as screening tests just like field sobriety tests, such as walking a straight yet imaginary line. Since the PDS and PAS are screening tests, they are administered for the sole purpose of assisting the officer with the decision to arrest or not. If you are detained by an officer, you are not required to submit to these tests, and that decision cannot be used against you. But, once you are arrested, you are required to submit to a breath or blood test, or you may refuse those tests. A refusal, if proven, does

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time some law enforcement agencies and probation/parole departments throughout the country are using this test.
For example, Los Angeles County has a grant to use swab testing on those people suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at DUI checkpoints. Kern County is a "pilot county" using swab testing for general DUI enforcement. The California Legislature is considering a new law authorizing swab testing. Swab testing

result in more serious penalties
A swab test is touted as a reliable test for drugs and/or alcohol within a specified period of time. The length of the detection period varies, and more peer-reviewed scientific research is needed that addresses the parameters of that detection period. Still, a person who may drink alcohol or ingest smoke cannabis within the detection period may not be unsafe to drive. You may ask why such a test can be used by an officer to decide whether to arrest if it does not accurately show whether a person is presently unsafe to drive. This is one of the problems with using such generalized tests to support probable cause to arrest. Watch our state government proceedings for further information.
Linda McNeil is an attorney with more than 35 years legal experience. Since 1992 she's been practicing in Mendocino and Lake counties, with an office in Willits. Her practice is limited to representing drivers before the DMV and representing people accused of DUI. The California DUI Lawyers Association has designated her a "DUI & DMV Specialist."

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WPD Activity Report

April 30 to May 6

Prepared by WPD Sgt. Jake Donahue

The officers of the Willits Police Department handled 212 incidents this week.

Summary of Active Investigations and Arrests

April 30

7:30 am: WILLETT, Donald, 32, of Willits was contacted during a traffic stop in the 10 block of Monica Lane. After an investigation, it was determined Willett was under the influence of a controlled substance (11550(a) HS). He was also in possession of a personal amount of methamphetamine (11377(a) HS) and drug paraphernalia (11364 HS). He was arrested and released with a citation.

8:10 am: During a probation compliance check at a residence in the 200 block of Alice Drive, officers contacted WATSON, Russell, 27, of Fort Bragg and placed him under arrest for an active Mendocino County warrant.

10 pm: Officers patrolling the area of Blosser Lane Middle School noticed what appeared to be smoke coming from one of the classrooms. As they further investigated, they discovered two 11-year-old male juvenile subjects inside one of the classrooms. During a subsequent investigation, it was determined the juveniles had entered the room by breaking a window. Once inside they caused extensive damage inside the classroom, including setting off a fire extinguisher. Charges against the juveniles were filed for prosecution.

May 2

2:10 am: Officers found an unconscious male, lying on the sidewalk, in the 200 block of South Humboldt Street. Upon contact, the subject was identified as SANDERS, Thomas, 53, of Willits. Officers determined Sanders was unable to provide for his own care due to his level of intoxication and, as such, was in violation of the terms of his probation. Sanders was arrested pursuant to 647(f) PC (Public Intoxication) and 1203.2(a) PC (Violation of Probation).

4 am: Officers contacted HENRY, Roger, 44, of Willits during a traffic stop in the 1400 block of South Main Street and issued him a citation for an active Mendocino County warrant.

8 pm: Officers initiated a mental health commitment in the 1600 block of South Main Street.

May 3

1:30 am: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 300 block of South Main Street and subsequently contacted MORRIS, James, 25, of Willits. Officers determined Morris was under the influence of a controlled substance and placed him under arrest pursuant to 11550(a) HS.

3:30 pm: HAND, Pat, 26, of Willits was contacted during a traffic stop in the 100 block of North Main Street and issued a citation for an active Mendocino County warrant.

3:45 pm: SIFFORD, Robert, 37, of Willits was contacted during a traffic stop after he was observed driving a motorcycle erratically in the 300 block of North Main Street. He was issued a citation for 23103 VC (Reckless Driving).

May 4

11:20 am: ARRINGTON, Jeffrey, 56, of Willits was contacted in the 100 block of East San Francisco Avenue and issued a citation for an active Mendocino County warrant.

3:15 pm: KNIGHT, Michael, 55, of Willits was contacted in the 10 block of Barbara Lane, and issued a citation for an active Mendocino County warrant.

5 pm: HALE, Orren, 55, of Willits was contacted in the 1200 block of Blosser Lane and issued a citation for an active Mendocino County warrant.

May 6

9:30 am: JOHNSON, Dakota, 19, of Willits was contacted during a traffic stop in the 10 block of Holly Street and issued a citation for an active Mendocino County warrant. FRANCE, Christopher, 19, of Laytonville was a passenger in Johnson's vehicle and was arrested pursuant to an active Mendocino County warrant.

11 am: SMITH, Jennifer, 32, of Willits was contacted in the 1700 block of South Main Street and issued a citation for an active Mendocino County warrant.

11:50 am: DAHLUND, Kevin, 47, of Willits was contacted during a traffic stop in the 100 block of Gregory Lane after officers noticed a registration violation on his vehicle. Following an investigation, it was determined Dahlund was displaying a false license plate on his vehicle. He was issued a citation for 4463(b) PC (False Registration) and 1203.2(a) PC (Violation of Probation).

The rest of Haehl Creek

From Page 5

"We can now take a trailer, load it, weigh it [at Willits Solid Waste], dump it, and drive off," Sherman said.

The Haehl Creek area of concern had become a homeless camp, and is currently strewn with garbage.

"The idea is, if we can get it cleaned up before the summer comes along, then there won't be any convenient places for transients to camp out," Sherman explained, noting that the transient population begins to increase during the summer and fall months.

One homeless camp used to be located off of East Valley road by the railroad tracks, but because the brush was cleared out and "no camping" signs placed along the trestle, the area has remained clean.

"If you take the cover away, these people are going to go somewhere else," Sherman said, adding that while the transient homeless add to the litter problem, it's the local Willits homeless who are more to blame.

"When they ask me how I found them, [I tell them] I just followed the trash," Sherman said. "They leave a trail wherever they go."

Sherman expressed his sympathies by saying that anyone born on the earth deserves to live on the earth, regardless of having money or property.

"They just have to play nice with the rest of us, that's all," Sherman added. "They make a pain out of themselves by creating these big mountains of trash. If they cleaned up after themselves, we probably wouldn't have this problem."

According to a report by the Health and Human Services Agency, in 2015 "there were 112 homeless persons residing in a county emergency shelter; 40 in transitional housing; and 880 people were found to be unsheltered, for a total of 1,032 homeless people in Mendocino County."

For more information, Sherman can be reached at City Hall at 459-4601.

The rest of Skunk

From Page 3

waste makes its way into, and often means campfires – even in those months with high fire danger.

MSWMA Director Mike Sweeney told Willits Weekly this dump was "one of the biggest homeless trash messes I've ever seen, countywide, and I've been doing these cleanups for over years. There was no road access, no way to drive to this site. I don't know what we would've done without the Skunk Train."

The Skunk agreed to send a flatcar hauled by a locomotive, and crews loaded up the trash, which was then taken to a location where the trash could be unloaded onto a truck, and thence to the dump.

Burgess and Sweeney listed some of what was found at the site in addition to the trash bags: moldy tents, piles of wet clothing (providing homes for rats), "considerable evidence of the kind of drugs that come in little aluminum foil packets," and household trash from living, including dog food bags.

"There's always a lot of discarded clothing," Sweeney said. "It's just an example of how 'wealthy' a society we have, with so much cast-off clothing that's basically free."

"Homey" touches at the site included a car mirror fixed to a tree with branches cut to provide hanging hooks, a hanging tin can "candle" with holes pierced to provide light, a neat fire ring, and what look like old railroad ties serving as "furniture," along with plastic lawn chairs.

Third District Supervisor Tom Woodhouse, who's been involved in cleaning up encampment trash dumps and graffiti in the Willits area for years, visited the site during the cleanup.

"One of the funnest things I do is cleanups," Woodhouse said. "You see a real clear result; the people involved in the cleanups are very inspired by 'making something pretty.' I really want people to call me about any littered areas; it's really important they help keep this town clean. We want to clean up messy areas: the trash builds up so quickly."

When asked why people used to live in these encampments wouldn't just come back, Woodhouse said: "Once you cover graffiti, or clean up areas, it shows the property owner is watching, that somebody's eyes are there. They don't want that; they want to be private. It breaks that pattern, and word goes out that somebody is watching that area, so 'Let's go somewhere else.'"

Burgess said he is keeping his eye on the area, and so far, so good. "That group of people is staying away," he said. "I got some cow panels up, and I go over there twice a week and make sure it stays empty." Burgess sent out "a big thanks to Mike Sweeney and to the Skunk Train, because without both of them, nothing could have been done."

Sweeney said MSWMA is available to help clean up other illegal trash dumps or to reimburse dump fees for a private cleanup. Some of the funding available for MSWMA's efforts is state grant money, including funding to clean up illegal roadside dumps, and the \$5 per ton surcharge on trash collecting at the curb or the transfer station helps fund cleanups, too. With cleanups on private property, Sweeney said, the landowner is required to take protective steps to prevent future dumping, including fencing or gates. "We don't have a blank check for private property situations, but we're supportive as far as time and money allow."

"Looking ahead," Sweeney continued, "there's no solution for the homeless problem on the horizon, and we – like other counties – are in a mode of self-defense. We have to plan on making the expenditures and effort necessary to protect the community and the environment."

Those interested in learning more about how MSWMA can help with trash cleanups or reimburse dump fees for a private cleanup, can call MSWMA's Ukiah office at 468-9710.



20th W.H.A.T. Walk

Willits Walk for Wellness and Health on May 22

By Jed Diamond, contributing writer

The 20th W.H.A.T. Walk for Wellness and Health kicks off at 10 am on Sunday, May 22 at J.D. Redhouse on Main Street. Registration begins at 9:30 am, and free commemorative T-shirts will be given to the first 200 who register. The walk is free for all, and men, women, children, and well-behaved pets on leashes are welcome. Bicycle riders are also encouraged to join the walk. The walk will end at Recreation Grove where walkers can join in the festivities of the Healthy Family Fair. The walk takes place rain or shine.

The Willits Healthy Action Team, W.H.A.T., was first formed by myself, Jed Diamond, and Dr. Kristin Bradford in 2007 after hearing a talk by health expert Dr. Richard Jackson. Dr. Jackson asked the audience how many of us had walked or ridden our bicycles to school when we were growing up. Nearly 100 percent of the audience raised their hands. He then asked how many of us had children or grandchildren who regularly walked or rode their bikes to school now. Almost none of us raised our hands.

Dr. Bradford and I both knew the

health benefits of walking and decided to create a 10,000 step (5 mile) walk through Willits that would go by most of the schools in Willits and encourage people of all ages to walk together through their community. The first walk took place on February 3, 2008.

There are now large community walks twice a year in May and in October. Since the walks began, my wife, Carlin, and I have headed the team that plans the walks, promotes them, registers the participants, and encourages all to have a great time. Local merchants have been generous in their support of the walks, including this walk where they have donated the money to buy the T-shirts. Young people from the local high school and middle school have also helped by being "cheerleaders" for the walkers. The Willits Harrah Senior Center, and their driver Stacy Shaul, have always been available to pick up walkers who get tired. Many other volunteers help make the walk one of the premier events in Willits.

This will be our last time organizing the W.H.A.T. walks. We are hoping to pass on the duties to someone else who would like to support this wonderful activity.

It's been a total joy planning these walks. We've gotten the organization down so there's not a lot of time spent organizing. We get the most fun for the least amount of work. We're sure the next people who would like to guide and support the walks will have as much fun as we've had.

I'm planning to start the Willits Healthy Action Club – W.H.A.C. – where individuals can get support in engaging eight aspects of healthy living so that together we can make Willits the "Healthiest Little Town in America."

Contact us at 707-354-0758 if you have questions about this walk or would like to join in planning future walks.

Clockwise from top: A family strolls along together at the 2015 W.H.A.T. Walk. A celebration after crossing the 3,000-step mark. Volunteers from Energize Willits worked the 3,000-step mark, including, from left: Rachel Cash, Megan Hall, and Erin Fitzpatrick. The Healthy Family Fair at the Rec Grove, which will again take place after the W.H.A.T. Walk this year. Patty Bruder and Alan Falleri cross the 4,000-step mark. At right, from top: Local Boy Scouts volunteered at the 6,000-step mark last year. Above: Holly Madrigal, Betty Meinecke and April Tweddell start out the 2015 walk in front of J.D. Redhouse.

Photos by Deleigh Hermes



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Willits On Stage 4

Annual Willits Community Services fundraiser showcases local talent

Mendocino County has a lot of talent and a lot of heart, especially when it comes to supporting Willits Community Services and Food Bank. That was made entertainingly clear this past Saturday evening at the Willits High School during "Willits On Stage 4," a variety show benefit that perfectly exemplified the diverse range of talent our area has to offer.

The 12 acts encompassed a range of song-and dance-routine genres, from choral groups to solo belly dance. Kevin Copperfield, producer of the event, acted as MC.

The event was sponsored by 28 local businesses, all of whom earned plugs between acts.

Linda Posner got the show started by reciting from Martha Graham, including the lines: "You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open."

The always energetic long-time Skunk Train singer, Greg Schindel followed, opening his set with a surprise singalong of "Happy Birthday," in honor of MC Copperfield, whose birthday has taken place during each of the four years of the show's existence.

The River of Life Dancers (Melinda Clarke, Angela Greystar, Aidyn McFadden, Jacqueline Morninglight, Ariel Herz-O'Brien, and Linda Posner) performed two

dance routines to the songs "The Waters of Life" and "Don't You Ever Let Nobody...."

Kati Mulhauser performed a touching rendition of "What Am I Living For," which she dedicated to her husband, Harry.

Ambria amazed the crowd with her dexterous and acrobatic hula hoop dancing. The 12-member "Just For Fun" Choir, with director Nancy New, performed stirring renditions of "Proud Mary" and "Reach Out."

The 10-year-old with the voice of an angel, Farrow Lockwood opened the second half of the evening's performances with a strikingly moving rendition of "The Rose."

Erin Mendoza showed off her incredible operatic range with a powerful version of "Poor Wandering One," followed by the whimsical and witty "The Girl in 14-G."

Julie Castillo captivated the audience with her intricate belly dancing that both popped and flowed to the song "Iris Emphatic Dance."

The Mendocino College Dance Repertory amazed and amused with their highly creative dance routine called "The Pecking Order 2: The Fox & The Chickens."

Ayla Marie Decaire, donning an LED-covered suit, dazzled and awed with her performance "Illuminate."

The Mendocino Gaggles of Raging

Read the rest of **On Stage** | Over on page 11

At top, left: Nancy New, right, and her Just For Fun Choir sing at Willits On Stage 4 Saturday night.

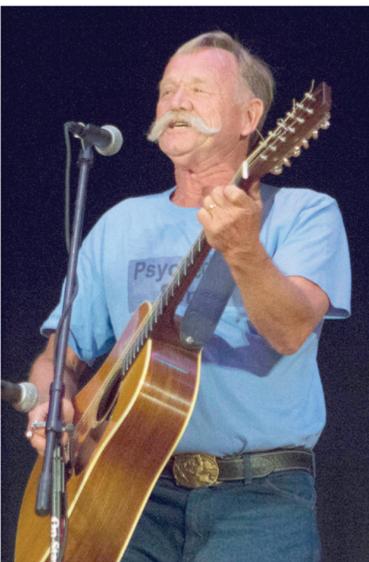
Above, left: The River of Life Dancers, from left: Ariel Herz-O'Brien, Aidyn McFadden, Linda Posner, Jacqueline Morninglight, Angela Greystar, and Melinda Clarke.

Above, right: Train singer Greg Schindel.

At right: Maxwell Hovland plays a handsome fox in Mendocino College Dance Repertory's dramatic dance number.

Below, right: Singer/guitarist Kati Mulhauser.

At bottom, from left: Linda Posner recites a quote from dancer Martha Graham. Belly dancer Julie Castillo captivates the crowd. Dancer Ambria and her hula hoop.



Photos by Mathew Caine



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The rest of **Westerburg** | From Page 1

the energy and enthusiasm of the staff at Brookside Elementary School, and was impressed by the school's BLAST intervention/enrichment program. He admired the design of Blosser Lane's campus and the school's energetic teachers. He perceived Baechtel Grove Middle School teachers have had lots of effective training in classroom management, and was impressed with Willits High School's Career Technical Education center.

"I do a lot of consulting," Westerburg said. "I've probably been to 500 high school campuses. It is rare to go to a high school and to see a real live wood shop, a metal shop, and a FFA program. That vocational, hands-on skill is something we're always going to need, and it is so often cut."

"I like the scope of what I saw at the high school."

However, the "one concern I did see," Westerburg said, "at virtually every school I saw except Blosser Lane: there's a lot of fix and repair that needs to happen. A lot."

Westerburg noted the main "needs-to-improve" he saw during his week in Willits schools is a multi-faceted, intertwined issue. "It's the climate, culture and perception of the schools," he said. "And, tied to that, it's student performance."

"Regardless of everything else that happens - facilities, contractual things, all those other things," he said, "nothing matters more than students. The achievement in the district is not where it needs to be."

"If there's anything I want to be able to say about the school I work in, it's achievement," he said. "You can tell me the facilities need a lot of help. You can tell me my bus driver's mean, or my custodian doesn't pick up the room as well as he should. But I want to know that my kids are doing real well. If I'm not taking care of the primary task - which is kids performing well in a culture of respect - then we're missing the mark."

Westerburg heads back to Michigan on Saturday and

The rest of **Letters** | From Page 2

culture reflects any positive principles or values on the part of Willits. The biggest reasons Bruce hears in support of drugs are that they represent lots of revenue for the local community, including lots of tax dollars.

I believe that greater Willits needs to continue its conversation about what kind of town it wants to be. And I applaud those who are thinking beyond completion of the bypass, how to bring more industry and other legitimate businesses to Willits, etc.

Bruce Burton is what I call a stalwart, someone upon whom you can always rely. And I believe that we can all count on him to work to do what's best for Willits in the long term. The community is lucky to have him in local government. If and when he ever succumbed to the new normal, we would all be impoverished by it.

God bless you, Bruce, and please keep working hard to do what's best for our community. We are all uplifted by your presence, your values and your actions.

Larry Stropes, Willits

Voter registration deadline is May 23

To the Editor:

An urgent reminder: If you are not yet registered to vote (or if you have changed your address or wish to change your party), you can do so if received by the registrar by May 23. The forms are available at our local library as well as at the county offices in Ukiah.

If you are currently registered as "no party preference" (i.e. "Independent"), but you wish to vote in the Democratic primary presidential race, you can still do so. If you vote at the polls, you can just ask for a Democratic Party ballot when you show up. But if you vote by mail, you must request that ballot in writing, received by the registrar of

The rest of **On Stage** | From Page 10

Grannies closed the show on a hilarious note, performing their satirical songs, "Ghost Grannies" and "Proud Hippies."

Copperfield, who is a member of the WCS board of directors, explained the importance of the Willits Food Bank to the Willits community and beyond.

"We don't only serve Willits," Copperfield told the crowd. "We serve from here all the way to the northern border of Mendocino County."

Other emergency services Willits Community Services can offer include providing hotel room vouchers for a night or two, and paying gas and electric bills to families who can show need. "We've helped people pay the propane, just so they can get through the month," Copperfield

will move to Willits permanently in June. He starts work July 1.

The school board for New Buffalo Area Schools in Michigan, where Westerburg was superintendent for the last seven years, accepted his resignation at their April meeting "with regret," reported the local New Buffalo newspaper, the Harbor Country News. At that same meeting, the board presented its 2016 superintendent evaluation: Westerburg was rated "highly effective" and given an "average rating of 93."

As a "friend, mentor and counselor" as well as a leader to the district's students," the story continues, Westerburg was credited with fostering an environment "that has allowed both students and staff to reach their highest potential" along with spearheading the board's vision to create "a world-class school with great facilities, top-notch curriculum and cutting-edge technology."

According to the story, the school board president said he understood why Westerburg was taking on this new challenge but commented: "We've been very fortunate to have you, and I'm sad that you're leaving."

Additional reporting on this story was done by Jennifer Poole



Incoming Willits Unified Superintendent Mark Westerburg Photo by Mike Adair

voters by May 23.

You can use the application form on the back page of your sample ballot to make this request, and specify which political party's ballot you wish (except Republican, for which you must be actually registered Republican). Be sure to include your full name, home address, date of birth, and mail to: Registrar of Voters, 501 Low Gap Road, Room 1020, Ukiah CA 95482.

The registrar will suspend the other vote-by-mail ballot you may have already received, and send you one with the presidential primary you selected. That vote-by-mail ballot must be postmarked by June 7 and received via mail delivery at the voter office by June 10. Vote-by-mail ballots can also be dropped off at the voter office in Ukiah or at any polling place on Election Day.

Questions? Call the registrar's office at 707-234-6819. Voting is important!

Madge Strong, Willits

Thanks from Brooktrails Fire

To the Editor:

Fire Chief Daryl Schoeppner and the firefighters of the Brooktrails Fire Department would like to thank all those who came out and supported our annual spaghetti feed this last Saturday, May 7. We thank those businesses who supported and contributed to the event. They are Brooktrails Women's Club, Willits Lions Club, Printing Plus, Grocery Outlet, Safeway, The Willits News and Willits Weekly. We would also like to recognize the firefighters and their families for making this event possible. It was great to see old friends and make new friends and also to continue the tradition. Thanks again,

Deputy Chief Jon Noyer, event coordinator, Willits

The rest of **Tea & Togs** | From Page 1

teas and treats and socialize with others in the community. We have groups of ladies who come together and reserve tables, as well as moms and daughters, friends and clubs. We've had people from Willits, Ukiah and Fort Bragg come and enjoy the event."

The center will have teas available to choose from, along with a selection of sweet and savory treats, catered by local chefs Irene Durigan, Jody Moore and baker Megan Howlett-Prescott.

Howlett-Prescott will be providing assorted scones, and the Durigan/Moore duo will be providing the following items: Toasted macaroons dipped in chocolate, butter-frosted banana bread, filled mini cupcakes,

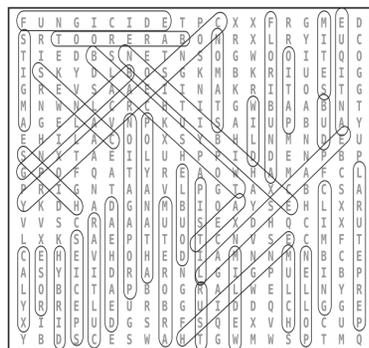
thumbprint cookies, smoked salmon and spinach rollups, curried egg with chutney sandwiches, Pacific Coast tuna sandwiches, olive tapenade on toasted baguettes, cheese biscuits and cucumber sandwiches with cream cheese.

Additional entertainment will be provided by the Just for Fun Choir led by Nancy New.

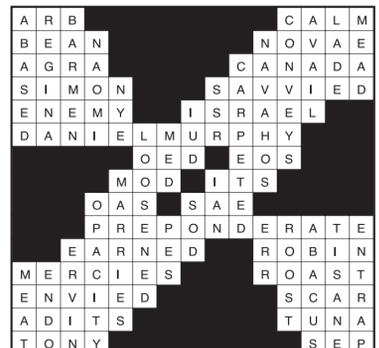
"The choir does a great job," said Neff. "They are so entertaining and fun to listen to!"

Rumor has it that there may even be a Tina Turner number and performance on the schedule.

For more information, contact Neff at 459-9547 and leave a message, or call the center directly at 459-6826.



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Spaghetti tradition

Brooktrails firefighters hold annual fundraiser Saturday

Brooktrails residents and guests lined up for a heaping plate of salad, garlic bread and spaghetti Saturday evening to benefit the volunteer firefighters of Brooktrails. Some even went back for seconds. Those in the know requested a scoop of the vegetarian sauce and a scoop of the meat sauce from the firefighters dishing out the tasty pasta.

Friends and family of the volunteer firefighters helped with collecting tickets and clearing tables, and Willits Lions Club volunteers sold beer, wine and soft drinks from their no-host bar.

Out back, firefighters tended the large pasta cookers, the biggest home-constructed especially for the event. Fire Chief Darryl

Schoepfner showed off the skills of Ashes the Arson K-9 for admiring fans.

The spaghetti feed has been Brooktrails Firefighters main fundraiser every year for about 35 years. The funds raised go for special equipment not covered in the regular budget.

— Jennifer Poole

Above, left: Volunteer firefighters serve up dinner.

Above, right: Volunteer firefighters, from left, Damian Angeli, James Wells, Steven Carter, Albert Hinkle and John Turner.

Below, from left: A young aspiring firefighter gets served by Steve Carter. Martin Rodriguez and son Eric wait in line for dinner. Jayla and Ricky Ramirez, at top, came to eat dinner with their dad. Keith and Lotus Baker, at bottom, show off their full plates. Fire Chief Darryl Schoepfner with Ashes the K9 and her fans Robert Houtz, center, and Wayne Park.

Photos by Jennifer Poole



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The rest of Candidates | From Page 1

assistant district attorney in 2005 and interim district attorney in 2006, following the death of then-DA Norm Vroman.

In 2006, Faulder sued the county, asking a special election be held for district attorney. He won the case and ran for the office in 2007, but was defeated by Meredith Lintott.

Lintott fired him after the election, and Faulder opened a private practice in Ukiah.

Since 2007, Faulder has worked as a defense attorney on more than 500 cases involving criminal marijuana growing and illegally growing medical marijuana. None of his clients in those cases has been convicted of a felony, Faulder told Willits Weekly.

Faulder's candidacy has been endorsed by Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman, District Attorney David Eyster, Ukiah Police Chief Chris Dewey, Willits Police Chief Gerry Gonzalez, the Willits Police Officers Association, and a host of citizens, including Bruce McEwen, Ed Nieves, Greg Van Patten, Adam Shouff, Lee Adams, Ted and Carole Hester, Richard Venturi, Megan Morales, Cambria Milani and Rick Wagner.

His opponent, Patrick Pekin, lives in the town of Mendocino and practices law in Fort Bragg. He is married with three young children.

Born and raised in Monterey, Pekin attended the University of Oregon in Eugene and studied law at Hastings College in San Francisco. Between college and law school, Pekin went "on the road" for several years, during which time he worked on a cruise ship, on a scientific research vessel, and on a luxury yacht. He also taught English while living in Turkey and Brazil.

After graduating from law school, Pekin practiced law in San Francisco, specializing in insurance litigation; in Eureka, where he worked in the office of the Humboldt County District Attorney; and in Salinas, where he practiced family, criminal and civil law.

He has been living in Mendocino County for five years.

While living here, he has coached Fort Bragg High School students for mock trial competitions for four years, and for the past three years has been a volunteer firefighter for the Mendocino Volunteer Fire Department.

Pekin has been endorsed by approximately 400 Mendocino County citizens, including Tamara Adams, Steven Antler, Rachel Binah, Bruce Burton, Els Cooperrider, Norman de Vall, Victor Hansen, Rod Jones, Christopher Neary, Ron Orenstein, William Ray, Madge Strong, Dickey Weinkle and Joe Louis Wildman.

Willits Weekly is publishing the candidates' answers to eight questions posed at Tuesday's forum by longtime Ukiah Daily Journal Editor K.C. Meadows.

Why are you the better candidate?

Faulder – Life experience and legal experience. I've been in this community since 1998, and I've been serving this community in many different capacities: as a public defender, as a prosecutor and as a private attorney.

Pekin – Once you determine whether a person is qualified to be judge, the next and probably more pertinent question is, are they a right fit for the office?

The question you need to ask is, can they be independent and can they be fair? The way you determine that is, what is the person's commitment to service in the county? Have they volunteered for the county? To what extent do they give back to the county?

Once you've figured out a person has done a lot of homicides, gone to a great school, and done a lot of work in the law, the real question is, can that person be fair?

What is the biggest challenge facing a judge?

Faulder – I have to understand I am representing the community as a whole. You are not representing this individual or that individual. In fact – just to say it bluntly – whoever you elect as judge, you have to understand we would never be able to do anything for you again. You have to make sure everyone who passes through the system gets an absolute fair shake.

Pekin – As an attorney, you're investigating facts, you're researching the law, and you're trying to win. That's a laudable and honorable goal. That's how the system is set up. I have no qualms with that.

But as a judge, you're listening to the facts, you're researching the law, and you're trying to do what's right. You're not trying to win. And that's an equally laudable goal. Strangely enough, it's almost like a return to law school, in a way, where you're trying to find the right answer to a thing.

What is the biggest challenge to being a judge?

Pekin – Being patient. In the criminal or

legal field, you have to understand a lot of people that you're dealing with have lived their entire lives in crisis. From the day they started to remember, they are getting expelled, or dad's getting arrested, or something terrible is happening, and it's one crisis to the next.

And so, you're dealing with people in their darkest moment. They're frightened and they're scared, and you have to be patient.

Faulder – If you've ever been in the courtroom recently, as a juror or just an observer, you'll see that caseloads can be quite large. There's a lot of people that go through the criminal justice system and also through the juvenile court and civil courts. So being able to put in the hard work, the preparation, and the time it takes on every case [is vital]. It's not a difficult thing to do, because that's what we do in our private practice already, but that is the most important thing: to be thorough, to be fair and to be consistent.

What is the salary of a judge, and do you think it's the correct amount?

Pekin – It's \$189,000 and maybe some change, but whether it's the correct amount, I couldn't say.

Faulder – I think we have a few judges here tonight who might be able to answer that question, but that's my understanding, as well.

What court department would you prefer to sit in?

Pekin – Criminal; homicide. I like criminal law. It's interesting. You get to deal with people quickly, on a fast-moving basis, on a lot of different cases that move through and have different fact patterns. Criminal law is an interesting area of the law, because it's quicker, and you get to have interesting stories from it.

Faulder – There's a saying, "In criminal law, it's the worst people on their best behavior and in civil law, it's the best people on their worst behavior." I became a lawyer because I like the challenge of the law, and it won't be my decision where I will serve as a judge. I've had experience in civil, juvenile and family law – although [family law] admittedly is my weakest area. But there is no place in this county where I wouldn't be honored to serve as judge.

What experience have you had in civil law?

Faulder – I have worked in a number of asset forfeiture cases, where I worked to get property that had been seized back for people. I have had civil jury trial experience, but a lot of cases I've done have [been] settled short of a jury trial.

Pekin – After law school, I worked for the law firm of Gordon and Reese, where I did a lot of construction litigation, and insurance litigation. Basic, high-end, civil-corporate stuff. I wasn't necessarily a good fit, but it was interesting. I've done family law, I've done family law trial, and I've also handled some anti-SLAPP litigation, which involves strategic lawsuits against public participation. It's an area of civil law dealing with the First Amendment.

What would you change about the legal system in Mendocino County?

Pekin – I'd be curious about having more conferences in chambers, with judges, DAs and defense attorneys. That's something I've seen in most other counties: Santa Cruz, Monterey County, Santa Clara County. When there are negotiations, it forces all the attorneys and the judge to get together and discuss a case for a little while, before it goes on to trial. I like the way things work here, and I'm not criticizing it. I'm just suggesting that, maybe we could try something else.

Faulder – Without a doubt I'd like to see the way we handle juvenile cases [done] differently. In bringing juveniles from juvenile hall, and bringing them down the main street. It's a big deal.

Juvenile cases are supposed to be confidential. We're not supposed to know the names of the juveniles who are going through the juvenile proceeding. But when they're brought in handcuffs and shackles and orange jumpsuits down the main streets of Ukiah, I think that's wrong, and I'd like to see that changed.

As a judge, what would you like your legacy to be?

Pekin – I suppose, that I kept Mendocino County the way it is. This is an exceptionally unique county, and it's really worth pointing out.

If I were to leave any legacy at all, whatsoever, it would be that things in Mendocino County stayed as they are. I think they are worth preserving.

Faulder – I worked hard. I worked intelligently. I worked thoroughly. I was fair and honest and treated everyone with the respect and dignity you would expect from a superior court judge.

Brooktrails proposes \$3.8 million budget

Brooktrails Township directors on Tuesday resolved to establish a \$3.8 million spending plan for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The new budget will be formally adopted following a June 14 public hearing.

The spending document allocates some \$1,206,615 to the township's water department, and an additional \$1,407,631 to sewer department

operations. The township anticipates revenues of \$1,249,435 from Brooktrails water users and \$1,414,131 in sewer department revenues.

The majority of the monies budgeted for both departments – almost \$935,500 for the water department and \$1,082,000 plus change for the sewer department – will be spent on supplies and services.

The water department revenues are slightly smaller than last year's amended \$1,318,466, due primarily to the fact Brooktrails residents are using less water due to California's historic drought. Sewer department revenues, on the other hand, are expected to increase slightly from last year's amended \$1,385,423.

Total water department expenditures for the 2014-2015 fiscal year were \$1,102,356, while it took \$1,356,611 to keep the township's aging sewer system

operating. The Brooktrails Fire Department budget has been preliminarily set at about \$498,000, and expenditures are estimated to eat up all but a few hundred dollars of that budget, a little over half for supplies and services, the remainder – about \$231,000 – for salaries, wages and benefits.

Last year, the department was budgeted at a bit more than \$551,000 and spent just short of \$472,000.

Total expenditures for the township's park facilities department in the new fiscal year are an estimated \$165,000, up from last year's \$87,000. Golf course revenues are anticipated to bring in a little more than \$43,000, and that much will be spent in supplies and services.

General government revenues are anticipated to fall slightly – from last fiscal year's \$317,404 to an anticipated \$314,216. However, wages, salaries and benefits are also anticipated to be less – \$365,162 compared to last year's \$370,539.

Total general government expenditures are budgeted at \$506,754, compared to last year's \$513,589.

The budget also anticipates almost \$358,000 in fund transfers between budget categories, other than transfers from designated reserves for capital outlays and contingency funds.

Defensible space inspections to begin in Brooktrails

In cooperation with Brooktrails Fire Department, CalFire personnel will begin conducting defensible space inspections in the Brooktrails area next week, on Monday, May 16.

The inspections will help "educate landowners and ensure they have created and are maintaining defensible space around their homes and structures," says Fire Prevention Specialist Lesley Smith. Inspections are planned from

As drought conditions continue in California, Smith notes, "defensible space is critical for the protection of homes and the safety of citizens and firefighters during a wildfire."

Smith offers some tips to help homeowners increase their properties' fire resistance as well as safety for residents and firefighters:

- Maintain 100 feet (or to property line)

of defensible space around all structures.

- Remove all leaves, needles or other vegetation from roofs, gutters, decks, porches, etc.

- Remove branches away from roofs and 10 feet away from the chimney.

- Keep wood piles and flammable materials at least 30 feet from the home.

- Clear all vegetation and combustible materials 10 feet around and above propane tanks.

- Display address numbers so they are readable from the street or access road.

For more detailed information on preparing for wildfires and defensible space, visit www.ReadyForWildfire.org.

— submitted by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Mendocino Unit

Dispute leads to kidnapping, arrest

A longtime property dispute between two Willits residents ended in violence on May 1.

The confrontation between a 64-year-old Willits man and 57-year-old Brett Raymond Cooper began around 4 pm, when Cooper fired a blast from a 12-gauge shotgun through a window near where the man was sitting in his home in the 6000 block of Big John Road, according to sheriff's Sgt. Michael Davis.

Cooper then held the 64-year-old at gunpoint and forced him to lay face down on a bed, Davis said. "Copper then held the gun to the 64-year-old male's head and threatened to kill him before discharging a round into the bedroom wall."

Cooper then forced the

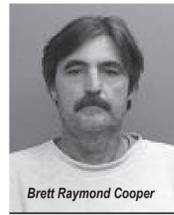
man to open his gun safe, from which he took two shotguns and two handguns before leaving the home, the sheriff's report said.

After Cooper drove away, the 64-year-old went to a nearby residence and called law enforcement.

At around 8:50 pm, deputies from the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office arrested Cooper on suspicion of kidnapping, recklessly discharging a firearm, assault with a deadly weapon and making criminal threats.

Cooper was taken to county jail, where he is being held in lieu of \$600,000 bail.

This report was based on a press release from the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office.



Brett Raymond Cooper

The rest of Main Street | From Page 1

Commercial Street between Main and Humboldt Streets, Moore said. Design concepts and traffic calming measures will be "tested" by pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, and concepts for the 3-mile stretch of the Main Street Corridor will be on display for public comment.

East Commercial Street was chosen to demonstrate proposed changes to Main Street because the street has the same width as the downtown portion of Main Street, Moore said.

The Noyo Theatre also will be screening two free showings of "The Prowler," at 3 pm and 5 pm. The film, produced by the 1939 Willits High School drama class, is set in historic downtown Willits. At 4 pm, the Little Lake Fire Department will navigate the proposed changes with its largest fire truck.

"Pop-up street designs like this sneak preview are hands-on opportunities to actively reimagine public spaces and demonstrate what is possible, while providing an opportunity to garner public support for streets that are safer for pedestrians and bicyclists," Moore

explained. "Residents of all ages, needs, and backgrounds are encouraged to attend the sneak preview, test this sample street layout, and let city officials know what they think," she added.

City staff and consultants will be on hand to explain design concepts and answer any questions. The team is seeking community feedback on the proposed concepts for the Willits Main Street Corridor. A Draft Willits Main Street Corridor Enhancement Plan will be available for review this fall.

The sneak peek is sponsored by the City of Willits with support from a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant. The project team is led by the Local Government Commission with support from WRT, Fehr & Peers, and GHD, Inc.

For more information about the Willits Main Street Corridor Enhancement Plan, visit www.willitsmainstreetplan.com, or contact City Hall at 459-4601.

This report was based on a press release from the City of Willits.



Friday politicking in Willits

Sheriff Allman collects signatures and local Sanders supporters do voter outreach

With the June 7 election approaching, political activists, including Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman, were out tabling for their causes on Friday afternoon around Willits.

Members of the local Berne Sanders for President campaign were doing voter registration and voter education in front of the Post Office, and enjoyed enthusiastic conversations with some Post Office visitors. "People are as interested in and engaged with this election as I've ever noticed," said Sanders supporter Ellen Dreil. "We feel especially good about clarifying to people who can vote for which party candidates in the June primaries."

To vote for Clinton or Sanders in the June 7 California Democratic Presidential primary, voters must be registered as Democrats or "no party preference" (independent) voters by the May 23 deadline. But no-party-preference voters have to specifically request a Democratic Party Presidential primary ballot, either at the polls or if they are mail-in voters, by calling the Mendocino County Voter Office at TK.

To vote in the Republican primary, voters must be registered Republicans. Voters can call the local voter office to check on how – or if – they are already registered to vote.

Sheriff Allman announced on his Facebook page that he'd be in Willits Friday afternoon in front of ER Energy in the Safeway plaza to collect signatures for his mental health half-cent sales tax initiative. If at least 2,502 valid signatures are gathered, "Mental Health Facility Development Ordinance of 2016," will be on the ballot countywide this November. It will require a two-thirds vote to pass.

"Today's been awesome," Allman said. "I've gathered 130 signatures in 2.5 hours. [Final total: 157 signatures.] There were six people waiting for me when I arrived. This is such a great community!" Allman said he'd had about 20 voters from Covelo sign his ballot petition that afternoon, too.

Allman explained to those who came by to say hello that the new tax for an in-county mental health facility would be a temporary tax for five years, that tax revenues would have an oversight board and could not be used for salaries.

Allman said county figures show a half-cent sales tax could bring in about \$22 million over five years. Allman said a sales tax made sense for this project instead of a parcel tax because many of those who would benefit from a county mental health facility would be non-property owners, including tourists and other visitors.

Voters who want to sign the petition to put the question on the ballot can follow Allman's Facebook page or the "Revive Mental Health Services" Facebook page for notifications about opportunities to sign the petition. Allman said he'd also have a table at the Memorial Day Community Car Show and Festival at the Rec Grove in Willits.



Photos by Jennifer Poole

Jennifer Poole
Editor & Reporter
jennifer@willitsweekly.com

The rest of
Prop. 172 | From Page 1

money will be split up based on each district's population.

Third District Supervisor Tom Woodhouse, who attended the fire district meeting, said that although LLFD was not receiving a large sum, he felt it was at least a start in the right direction. "I was real proud of [the supervisors]," he said. "It's a good first step. It's a small amount of money, and the need is much bigger than that ... but it shows a good focus, and that [supervisors] really care."

He also pointed out the difficulty of balancing the county's budget, noting the money allotted for the fire districts will temporarily come from Proposition 172 funds earmarked for the sheriff's office. Supervisors plan to "backfill" that money later with funding from other sources.

"So it's going to hit the general fund," Woodhouse said. "Every time we give anybody money it means somebody else has to give up money, because we have pretty much a flat budget.... But this [fire district] issue is very serious."

It's been a long saga for Proposition 172, which was passed as a state measure in 1993 to give local public safety departments more funding through a half-cent statewide sales tax increase. Local fire districts like LLFD have mostly received no money from the measure.

Proposition 172 was largely seen as a way to make up county funding lost when state legislators created the Education Revenue Augmentation Fund in 1992. ERAF "shifted" money from local and county property taxes to pay for state education budgets, which were running short in '92. Fire districts have lost money to ERAF over the years, but have mostly received no money from Proposition 172. Magann noted his district has "contributed" \$117,108 to ERAF during the 2015/16 fiscal year.

The board also briefly discussed a proposed initiative for the November ballot called the Fire First Responder Agency Special Sale and Use Tax. If passed, it would impose a countywide half-cent sales tax and create around \$7 million in fire district funding. LLFD directors agreed that before they formally discussed it or thought about endorsing it, they would wait for the county fire chiefs association to look into it at an upcoming meeting. Magann said the Brooktrails Community Service District is the only entity he knows of that's endorsed the measure so far.

Woodhouse said supervisors also were waiting to see what the chiefs thought of the proposal. Though he did point out there may be a lot of competition on the November ballot, with tax measures involving "roads, mental health and marijuana" all possibilities.

Another point of discussion was the possibility of the LLFD helping out with the process of condemning "nuisance properties" around the Willits area. In general, these are properties with dilapidated structures that are basically unused, and have been so for a long period of time. This was something Woodhouse had asked about at the last meeting.

Magann said he does have some ability "to declare a structure as a nuisance or a fire hazard to life and property" and "condemn a building for current occupancy." But as for "abatement," or to intervene legally to alter a nuisance property, the city has more legal authority and avenues than the fire department.

"The city is earmarked," he said. "They've got all that set up. My recommendation is that we can assist the city in abatement of properties."

Woodhouse said it was his hope the LLFD board could help inspire the city to act to clean up these dangerous structures, and both the board and the city could work together to see it through.

Also at the meeting, the plans for a June 25 fundraiser to benefit Little Lake Firefighters Association and a new firehouse for LLFD was reported to be progressing smoothly. Many local public safety departments and organizations have already signed up to be involved. The event will include auctions, an MC/DJ, and live demonstrations of firefighting equipment and techniques, among other things.

Magann noted Willits Frontier Days went "out of their way" to make the fundraiser a part of the Frontier Days celebration, which was rare. "Normally they don't endorse anybody. But it was kind of a payback for all the things we've done for Frontier Days and for the community."

Magann also reported at the meeting that the LLFD's finances were in good order. "We're currently in line with our expenditures. When you look at the total package, we're very well within our budget."

The rest of
MCOE | From Page 1

a private citizen, not as president of the board of trustees.

Neary's blast stems from three events. The first was the receipt of \$775,000 from the state government in December 2015; the school board has been deliberating what to do with the funds since then.

The second was WUSD Director of Fiscal Services Tanya Michel's March 16 recommendation that the school board curtail what Michel termed the district's "deficit spending." Michel told the school board the district has engaged in deficit spending for years, that the practice had exhausted the district's reserves, and that, if the school board didn't change its ways, the district was in danger of being taken over by the state Department of Education.

The third cause of Neary's missive was an April 18 letter from MCOE Assistant Superintendent Becky Jeffries, in which she commented on the district's second interim financial report.

Jeffries' letter named four areas of risk and uncertainty she felt needed to be addressed: deficit spending, which she said needed to be beefed up; a labor contract with the district's teachers giving the teachers a second 2.5 percent salary and benefit increase, which Jeffries characterized as ill-advised; and the hiring of a new district superintendent, which she claimed "could create a risk in this time of pivotal decision-making."

A substantial portion of Neary's letter criticized MCOE for assuming WUSD's finances were in disarray, when it appears, Neary claims, MCOE either knew, or should have known, the district had just acted to correct the imbalance.

"If your office was aware the district's reserves had been substantially increased, and spending substantially decreased, then it was active misrepresentation to conceal that material fact," Neary wrote. "If your office did not know, it borders upon negligence that you did not know."

"It was your representation to me yesterday [May 3] that Tanya Michel, the district's director of fiscal services, 'works well' with Ms. Todd, and, given that ongoing relationship, it is inconceivable Ms. Todd was not informed of the action by the Willits Unified School Board at its April 13 meeting, an action telegraphed in March by the board agendaizing the action for the April meeting when the second interim report was delivered to the board."

"The April 18 letter should be recalled because it misrepresents the status of the Willits Unified School District financial picture by omitting material facts, and because it follows a pattern of your office attempting to manipulate policy to conform with the personal beliefs of the letter's apparent author, somebody other than the letter's signator," Neary wrote.

Assessing that portion of Neary's letter leads into a fog of conjecture and hypothesis. As of this writing, Willits Weekly doesn't know when Michel sent the second interim report to the Office of Education, or when the Office of Education had the opportunity to review it. The MCOE letter was written on April 18; the action to reduce Willits Unified's expenditures and increase its reserves wasn't taken until May 4. However, something that could be construed as signaling corrective action was about to be taken was announced by WUSD Superintendent Patricia Johnson on April 13, five days before the letter was written.

At the April 13 school board meeting, Johnson announced she had swept the troublesome \$775,000 into a special reserve fund, and would hold it there until the May board meeting, when trustees could vote on what to do with it.

Minutes from the April 13 meeting, however, state the issue was only discussed, but imply the anticipated action was considered to be as good as done, at least by some WUSD staff members.

Here are the minutes verbatim: "Superintendent Johnson spoke about sweeping funds into the reserve account to boost our reserve. Director of Fiscal Services Tanya Michel advised the reserve has been brought up to 6.99 percent and the board will receive the resolution in May to vote upon."

At the May 4 board meeting, trustees voted 5-0 to approve a resolution increasing the "reserve for economic uncertainty" beyond the maximum percentage allowed by the state.

The minimum percentage for these reserves allowed by the state is 3 percent; the maximum percentage allowed is 6 percent. Moving the \$775,000 into the REC increased it to \$1.37 million, which is 6.99 percent of the district's budget. That is .99 percent too high. So the board had to adopt a resolution telling the state and the public that trustees knew they were increasing the reserve fund nearly a full percentage point beyond the maximum allowed.

The May resolution signifies the money was

actually moved at that time. However, district Administrative Secretary Trina Cardillo's minutes suggest the action discussed at the April 13 meeting was considered a slam dunk, which is why Michel spoke of the district's reserves having been "brought up to 6.99 percent."

Neary's letter also criticized Vicki Todd, who has worked for MCOE for the past 44 years. For all, or certainly for much, of that time, Todd has been head of both MCOE's administrative and business services, and as such, is responsible for crafting the financial advice MCOE gives to county school districts. Todd is currently listed on the MCOE website as head of administrative services; in the MCOE board minutes for March 7, 2016 she is named associate superintendent. Jeffries is now head of both administrative and business services, and for the past several months Todd has been training Jeffries. Todd is due to retire June 30.

"I have come to observe that Ms. Todd has a personal aversion to the finances of the districts in this county being used for salaries and benefits, and [is of the opinion that] reserves should be established for contingencies three years out.... It is my belief districts in the county have been encouraged by your office to present information to the governing boards in this county which would have the effect of depressing the willingness of policy makers to negotiate salary and benefit increases as a matter of policy," Neary wrote.

Neary expressed dismay that a 5 percent salary and benefit increase for district employees negotiated in 2013 – the second half of which remains scheduled to take effect in July – was omitted from the second interim report presented to MCOE for its review. The 2013 agreement called for a 2.5 percent salary and benefit increase in 2013-14, with a second 2.5 percent increase in 2016. However, that second increase was not reflected in the January 2016 second interim report.

This omission was referred to by Jeffries, who wrote: "New potential increases above the already negotiated 2.5 percent salary schedule increase have not been incorporated into budgeted salary and benefit expenditures. Any additional negotiated salary increase will further increase the shortfall between operating revenue and operating expenditures, requiring the district to make additional reductions to ensure fiscal solvency and maintain required reserves."

Both the district's oversight and the Office of Education's failure to catch the omission in the second interim report sparked Neary's ire.

"I am personally dismayed our budget did not reflect the contractual obligation for a 2.5 percent salary increase for this year," Neary wrote. "As board members we rely on our staff to provide us with accurate information. The county office has an important role to play in supervising the finances of the districts in this county. The question is raised as to why Ms. Todd did not catch this glaring accounting error when reviewing our finances."

"I also submit that distorting financial information to further an undisclosed policy objective is a great disservice by your office."

According to Superintendent Johnson, who spoke to Willits Weekly on Monday, the agreed-upon 2.5 percent salary and benefits increase for Willits teachers is still in the 2016-17 budget, which is set to be approved in June.

Finally, Neary criticized MCOE's letter because it described the district's hiring of Mark Westerburg as WUSD's new superintendent of schools as risky. Jeffries wrote: "The district has hired a new district superintendent who will begin July 1, 2016. This key administrative change could create a risk in this time of pivotal decision-making."

Neary's letter excoriated MCOE on this point: "I am confident the district has secured a highly effective and competent administrator, and it is not the place of your office to disparage our choice or to characterize it as being a 'risk,'" Neary wrote. "The upheaval at the county Office of Education [where county Superintendent of Schools Warren Galletti, arrested for drunk driving on February 12, was absent on personal leave from March 7 to April 5] could also be characterized as a realized risk, there being a vacuum in the county office administration during key times related to the evaluation of our financial condition during the month of March and what I perceive to be substantial lapses of judgment in your issuance of the April 18 letter."

Neary asked that the April 18 letter be recalled and a new letter be written. "Such a revised letter would be helpful to our board in evaluating the effectiveness of its action to sequester budgeted spending and to dramatically increase the district's reserves," Neary wrote.

During the May 4 board meeting, Willits Teachers Association President John Haschak thanked Neary for writing the letter.

According to Johnson, the board of trustees will review the 2016-17 budget at its June 1 meeting and will adopt the budget on June 22.

The rest of
Grist Creek |

From Page 1

alternative penalties sought range from \$250,000 into the millions of dollars.

The lawsuit lists numerous causes for action, including unlawful emissions of air contaminants; knowledge that the plant was emitting air contaminants and owners were unwilling to take the necessary steps to correct that situation; failing to obtain a permit for the crumb rubber heating and blending unit prior to bringing the unit on site; failing to minimize fugitive dust emissions; failing to operate all air pollution control equipment with all access covers and inspection hatches sealed; failing to operate the plant in a way that would not cause a public nuisance; exceeding limits for the emissions of particulate matter; failing to report breakdown and replacement of equipment; failing to comply with state standards on diesel engine idling and plant signage; and failure to designate a responsible person whose job it was to make sure the plant operated within district regulations at all times.

The air district's lawsuit brings to six the number of lawsuits arising from the plant's operation. The Friends of Outlet Creek have filed four of those lawsuits.

The first is a lawsuit against Mendocino County, for allegedly failing to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act when it allowed Grist Creek Aggregates to construct and/or install a plant at the Longvale site without undertaking an environmental impact report. The second is against the Mendocino County Air Quality Management District for issuing an "authority to construct" permit in June 2015 for the plant as a whole, allegedly without ensuring that CEQA had been followed.

The third lawsuit is against the air quality district for issuing a second "authority to construct" permit in November 2015 for the crumb rubber heating and blending unit – again, allegedly without complying with CEQA.

The fourth is a federal lawsuit brought by the Friends of Outlet Creek against Grist Creek Aggregates based on the federal Clean Water Act. In it, Friends of Outlet Creek argues that operating an asphalt plant in a 100-year flood plain next to a protected watercourse is a violation of federal law.

The fifth lawsuit is by Grist Creek Aggregates and is against the county air quality district. This lawsuit claims the air district acted in bad faith, when, first, it issued its June 2015 "authority to construct," telling Grist Creek everything was fine and no other permits would be needed, and then, in November 2015, when it demanded the company obtain a separate permit for one of the elements of its already permitted operation, the crumb rubber heating and blending unit.

This fifth lawsuit asks the court to set aside the \$173,000 in fines the air quality district had levied against it in 2015 and also to set aside the notice of suspension of the "authority to construct," which the air district sent to Grist Creek in October 2015.

The sixth lawsuit is the one filed April 7 by the air quality district against Grist Creek and Mercer-Fraser.

The Longvale plant was approved by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors on March 17, 2015, when supervisors voted unanimously to allow Grist Creek Aggregates to construct an asphalt plant there without doing an EIR. Supervisors reasoned that since there had been an asphalt plant there previously – operated by a different owner – a new asphalt plant could be operated there by a different owner under a permit issued in 2002.

Three months later the board rescinded the resolution allowing construction and operation of the plant to go forward. Former County Counsel Doug Losak acknowledged the action was taken to insulate the county against potential lawsuits. Losak set forth his reasoning in a demurrer filed in Mendocino County Superior Court against the Friends of Outlet Creek's lawsuit against the air quality district's June 2, 2015, "authority to construct."

"The first cause of action alleging the respondents [i.e., the county board of supervisors] abused their discretion in approving the 'project,' by failing to undertake any CEQA review, is moot because respondents rescinded their March 17, 2015 action, and there is no other action that can be considered a project," wrote Losak.

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At top: Sanders tablers Ellen Dreil, left, and Matt Callaghan, right, pose with Sanders supporter and Willits resident Les Tarr.
Center, left: Brenda Moss of Kemmy's Pies gets ready to sign Sheriff Tom Allman's ballot petition Friday afternoon. "We need this here," she said. Center, right: Sheriff Allman talks with David, center, and Noah Willoughby about the reasons to support the Mental Health Facility Development Ordinance of 2016.
Above: Sheriff Allman gets a signature from Carol Brinkerhoff as baby Makayla ponders the question.

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Sit N Sew

Willits Library hosts new sewing group

By Rachel Cash, contributing writer

Eleven sewing enthusiasts attended the first meeting of the Willits Sit N Sew at the Willits Library on Saturday afternoon, April 30. The group is hosted by Rachel Cash and Lani Nagy. Both of us are quilters and members of the Grapevine Quilt Guild of Mendocino County, which meets on the first Wednesday of the month at the Holy Trinity Church in Ukiah. We wanted a place to be able to meet as a small group here in Willits; to just "sit and sew."

We want people to bring whatever project they are working on, to a gathering of people with creative and like minds. The Willits Library is the perfect place: It is free, there are plenty of electrical outlets, and the environment is very pleasant.

Anyone who wants to sew is welcome. Bring a working sewing machine, sewing tools, and project to sew. If you have questions about your project, just ask; there should be someone who can help you. The community room at the Willits Library, 390 East Commercial Street, has been reserved again for Sit N Sew on Sunday, May 15, Saturday June 11, and Saturday, July 9, from 1 to 5 pm each day. Hope to see you there!



Above: Seamstresses, from left, Penni Greer, Susan Pollesel, Caroline Saulcedo, and Leslie Roberts enjoy working together at the first Sit N Sew at the Willits Library. At right, above: Rachel Cash, left, watches Juanita Lucero show off her quilt. At right, below: Pat Wilson concentrates on her sewing project. Below: Jennifer sets up her workspace at Sit N Sew.



Photos submitted by Rachel Cash



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