



# What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from our readers

## A loss to our community

To the Editor:

I was sorry to hear of Rich Padula's death. From his obituary, it's clear he did much good work – mostly behind the scenes – to conserve our region's forests.

My experience was Rich's quiet support for WELL (Willits Economic Localization) painting the concrete K-rails on his company's property at the highly visible corner of Main Street and West Commercial.

The beautiful murals, designed by Ileya Stewart, Rebecca Daun-Widner and Carolyn Bakewell and painted entirely by volunteers, spurred further WELL Paint the Town projects, with colorful, creative fire hydrants and trash receptacles around town. Rich approved the K-rail designs and also made a generous donation for the paint supplies.

I know he envisioned eventually rebuilding a handsome lodge on that empty lot. As Willits becomes a launching place for the northward Great Redwood Trail, I hope his vision will come to fruition. Rich Padula would have quietly made it happen. His death is a loss to our community.

Madge Strong, president, WELL

## The wrong direction

To the Editor:

Open letter to the board of supervisors: Why haven't the supervisors, as well as all Mendocino County officials, noticed that they are sending our county in exactly the wrong direction? As the rest of the country acknowledges climate change and calls for sustainable practices, our county is focusing on promoting a recreational mono-crop that is accompanied by water shortages, wildfires, violence,

and community conflicts.

Historically, Mendocino County has been a high-profile role model for bio-diversity. Many native tribes call the county home. We have attracted farmers, ranchers, fishermen, artists, and retirees. Our redwood groves, fish friendly rivers, and rugged coastline have fostered an artistic community that features unique restaurants promoting local organic farms, ranches and fisheries. We take pride in our gardens, our 4-H kids raise prize winning livestock, and local festivals feature homegrown musicians, artists and food specialties.

And yet, county officials continue to promote expansion of a single product (cannabis) as our salvation. As springs, creeks, rivers and lakes go dry and wells fail, water trucks continue to pump whatever water they can find and truck it to growers who will drain our local aquifers.

Rangeland should not be transitioned into cannabis plantations and vineyards. It is a formula for more destruction: Wildfires follow expansion into these fragile areas. The lack of proper roads, water, and basic infrastructure leads to more and more damage to our natural resources. Our salmon are on the brink of extinction, our redwood groves are dwindling, and the bio-diversity we need for basic survival is threatened by the short-sighted drive to expand a product that is the current financial fad. Remember the gold rush, the salmon canning rush, the timber rush, and the other boom/bust catastrophes?

Please don't continue promoting a seriously flawed ordinance. Please support a serious update to our Planning Department (including compliance) and support our sheriff and his heavy burden of protecting this county with limited resources.

Dee Mullen, Covelo

## Ballots for recall election mailed Monday

Submitted by Mendocino County Elections Office

Official Mendocino County ballots for the September 14, 2021 gubernatorial recall election were mailed to every registered voter in the State of California, including Mendocino County voters, on August 16, 2021. If you do not receive your ballot by August 30, 2021, please call our office or come by our Ukiah office so we can get you a replacement ballot. The local Sample Ballot information pamphlet will be included with your official ballot. You will also receive a statewide Voter Information Guide that will be mailed directly to you by the State of California.

During this pandemic, we encourage you to stay home, stay safe, vote the ballot you receive in the mail, and return your ballot either through the mail or a Ballot Drop Box Location (listed below) at your earliest convenience. With this election, we can open and process your ballot as soon as we receive it. We cannot upload any results until 8 pm on Election Night.

When returning your voted ballot – NO postage is necessary, whether you mail your ballot/envelope or deposit it into a Ballot Drop Off box.

All Mendocino County Ballot Drop Box Locations will be open 24/7, beginning August 16 through 8 pm on Election Day, September 14:

- City of Willits, 111 E Commercial St – Willits
- City of Fort Bragg, 416 N Franklin St – Fort Bragg
- City of Point Arena, 451 School St – Point Arena
- Mendocino Co Admin Bldg., 501 Low Gap Rd – Ukiah
- City of Ukiah, 300 Seminary Ave – Ukiah

You are welcome to call our office and verify your residence address, to make sure we have your most current information.

When returning your ballot – don't forget to sign the back of the return envelope, we can't count your ballot if it doesn't have your signature. If you forget to sign it, we will contact you by mail so we can get a signature from you.

If you are worried that your signature has drastically changed, please re-register at [www.registertovote.ca.gov](http://www.registertovote.ca.gov) or call our office, we will be happy to mail you a new voter registration card.

We check every signature – if your signature does not match, we will contact you by mail so it can be corrected.

We will have "In-Person Polling" locations throughout the county for those voters who need assistance or need to visit a polling location. You can drop your ballot off at any polling location in Mendocino County on Election Day.

\*\*If you wish to vote at a polling location – You must take the ballot you receive in the mail with you to surrender, or you will vote a provisional ballot\*\*

Third District Polling Locations – Open Election Day only, 7 am to 8 pm – include:

- Brooktrails Community Center, 24860 Birch Street
- Willits Community Center 111 E Commercial Street
- Laytonville Lions Fire Hall, 44920 Willis Avenue
- Round Valley Justice Court – Drop Off Only 76270 Grange Street, Covelo

If you are mailing your ballot through USPS, it must be mailed by Election Day. If mailing on Election Day, be sure to get it postmarked. If you use a Ballot Drop Off Location, please drop it off by 8 pm on Election Day; all drop box locations will be locked at 8 pm on Election night.

All of our "In Person" Polling Locations will follow all Public Health orders, including social distancing, wearing facial coverings, and having hand sanitizer and gloves available.

If you have any questions, please call the Elections Office at 707-234-6819 or email us at [mcvotes@mendocinocounty.org](mailto:mcvotes@mendocinocounty.org)



Above, left: The site of the new Mendocino County Library Laytonville branch is under renovation and is projected to be ready by year's end.

Above: A sign advertises the Friends of the Long Valley Library Book Store, which sells books to raise money for the new library.

At left: Jayma Spence and Shawn Haven of the Friends of the Long Valley Library show off the rows of books.

Below: This sign outside the bookstore proclaims the annual book sale fundraiser.

Photos by Mathew Caine



## ‘Culture of Literacy’

### After years of planning and fundraising, Laytonville nears its goal of opening a public library

A library enriches the community in which it is located by providing a place to gather information, exchange ideas, archive knowledge, and act as a meeting place to find people who are interested in exercising their intellect. The Friends of the Long Valley Public Library, formed in 2015, is dedicated to providing their community with such a place. They plan to create an ever-expanding depository of lore and knowledge by bringing a fully-accredited and subsidized county library to the people, especially the youth, of Laytonville.

To this end, they have, since 2015, sold donated books for \$.50 to \$2 out of the abandoned Laytonville High School building at 200 Branscomb Road, at which they have leased space for an extremely reasonable price from the very supportive school district, under Superintendent Joan Potter.

To raise money for the lease of a space in which to locate their library, the Friends have run several fundraising efforts, including their annual book sale, during which adults can purchase a paper shopping bag of books for \$5 and children for \$2. This year's effort was not extremely fruitful due to local fires and extreme heat, netting just \$187. However, they are still on course to complete their new library at 44960 North Highway 101 in the Foster's Market Shopping Center.

"In 2014, John Pinches and some others had the idea that Laytonville should have a library," explained Shawn Haven, volunteer with the Friends of the Long Valley Public Library. "We got together a focus group. Lists were made on butcher paper on a table, envisioning what they desired. It was really a fun meeting.

"Out of that meeting," she continued, "we

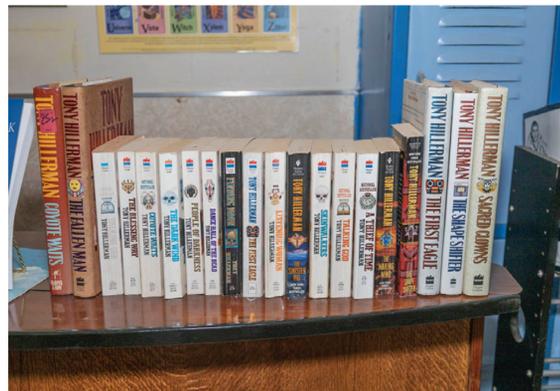
formed a group of people to explore how to bring a library to Laytonville. We had our first giant book sale in 2015. We got donations of books from the Ukiah Library. Since then, we've stored boxes of books in here. We thought as long as we had the space and the boxes of books, we should organize them. Then we thought we should allow people to come in and look. The school district allowed us to expand as far as there is space to expand in here."

The current book store location also serves as a meeting place for smaller groups that do not want to rent the much larger Harwood Hall. The meeting room, which will continue to operate even after the new library opens, hopefully before the end of the year, has been a place for families to access WiFi for distance learning during the pandemic. The entire book store will continue to provide their services as complement to the library.

"People come in here for many purposes: WiFi, computer, printing," explained Jayma Spence, executive director of Laytonville Healthy Start and Friends volunteer, "or a quiet meeting space, or with the pandemic, parents were desperate for reliable internet in a quiet space, so we had a couple families in here over the last year who had to do their distance learning because their home internet was not working well enough. This place has really done it all for so many people.

"Under our non-profit umbrella," continued Spence, "are several small programs in Laytonville which wouldn't necessarily be able to operate by themselves because of overhead administration, what it takes to form a non-profit. Harwood Park is the sponsor of Friends of the Laytonville Library, Long Valley Dance, Laytonville Healthy

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



Above: The books are arranged into collections.

At left: A seed library will be available at the location as well.

Below: Renovations are underway to prepare the space for occupancy.



## Willits Senior Center Indoor Lunch

Willits Senior Center's dining room is open for fully vaccinated diners, at least two weeks after their final shot, or those with proof of a negative COVID-19 test in the last 72 hours. New hours: from 11:45 am to 1 pm, Monday through Friday. Lunch is \$6.50 for those 55+, or \$60 for a 10 meal pass; non-seniors, \$8; child under 7 years old, \$5. Please bring vaccination card or proof of a COVID test in the last 72 hours.

at 459-6826 for more info.

### Drive-Thru & Walk-Up Meals

The Willits Senior Center will continue to provide drive-thru and walk-up meals, from 12 to 12:30 pm, outside the Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road, even after the dining room reopens.

### Home Meal Delivery

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

**Thursday, August 19:** Beef Tips & Noodles, Veggie, Roll, Green Salad

**Friday, August 20:** Ham & Turkey Deli Sandwich, Chips, Carrot Salad

**Monday, August 23:** Chili Rellenos Casserole, Rice, Beans

**Tuesday, August 24:** Ground Sirloin, Mashed Potatoes/Gravy, Roll, Green Salad

**Wednesday, August 25:** Chicken Salad Sandwich, Pea Pasta Salad

**Thursday, August 26:** Spaghetti with Meat Sauce, Veggie, Garlic Bread, Green Salad

**Friday, August 27:** Turkey w/ Stuffing, Cranberry Sauce, Veggie, Roll

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

## The Rules: LETTERS

Letters & Commentaries: Email letters to [willitsweekly@gmail.com](mailto:willitsweekly@gmail.com). Letters focusing on Willits and Third District issues, activities, events and people have priority. Willits Weekly prints letters from residents of Willits and the Third District only. To encourage a variety of voices, Willits Weekly limits letter publication from any one writer to once every four weeks.

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.

## Do you want to submit a letter to the editor?

It's easy. just email us yours: [willitsweekly@gmail.com](mailto:willitsweekly@gmail.com)

The rest of **Public art** *From Page 1*

Camp, said the family wanted to see something happening on the strip of grassy city property located on Highway 20 behind the Arco station on Main Street.

"When I saw a painting of pinwheels at the art center earlier this year," said Camp, "it triggered a thought of pinwheel sculptures, and I contacted a pal [Jay Roughgarden] who had attended one of the events at our farm."

Camp's pinwheels will be painted silver and black and twirl in the breeze.

"I thought the swath of green just as one turns on Highway 20 from Willits," she continued, "would be a lovely site as sculptures there could be enjoyed by not only Willitsians but also by visitors to the coast who often use that route.

"I hoped that it would add to the artistic nature of Willits in the hope that it might bring more visitors, especially if we were able to put more sculptures along that piece of land," the philanthropist explained.

Camp presented the idea to the Willits City Council at the end of July. At that meeting she said, "I'd like to pay for this. I'd like to install this, and I'd like your permission to do it. I hope this would become a regular thing. I could finance a new installation every other year."

At that July meeting, the Public Art Ad Hoc Committee was formed to look at the ramifications around indemnifying, securing, installing and maintaining the sculptural pieces donated to the city. According to city council and Public Art Ad Hoc member Saprina Rodriguez, a committee met once and will be meeting again to work on the proposal to the city for approval for this sculpture and installation.

Since Camp and others want to donate more pieces in the future, the ad hoc committee will also be discussing a process and parameters for future art donations and may become a more official organization.

Willits City Council member and Public Art Ad Hoc Committee member Greta Kanne noted: "So now there are all the details to work out: How to come up with some parameters so the art is a good fit for our community; how to make sure it's safe, sturdy, stable, and will withstand the elements; how it won't become a liability for anyone. All of these fun details that the city gets involved in."

WCA's Martin said, "Willits is being very generous in offering to install these for us. [Installations] are a tricky part, and I know the city will do it well and the right way."

Rodriguez added that the committee also wants diverse voices helping make decisions around the appropriateness of art pieces. "We're a culturally diverse community, and we don't want to install any art that's offensive. So, we want to invite everyone to the table, especially people in leadership roles from non-profit organizations. We're hoping someone from Roots of Motive Power, Nuestra Alianza, Willits school district, tribal leaders, and more will come to the meeting to represent their communities."

"The city is on board. We all seem to be on the same page, and I'm very excited about this!" Martin concluded.

Martin and the Public Art Ad Hoc Committee encourage anyone interested in public art to attend the next Public Art Ad Hoc meeting Friday, August 27, at 9 am at Willits City Hall, 111 Commercial Street. Masks and distancing required. Contact Willits City Hall at 459-4601 for further information.

Taxes\* | Investments | Insurance  
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Nicholas Casagrande, EA  
**855.240.6606**  
675 S Main St, Willits, CA 95490  
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Laytonville Rodeo Princess Contestant Willow Peregrina, 7.

## Live music, food, and fun at Laytonville Junior Rodeo, August 28 and 29

Submitted by Laytonville Rodeo Association

Laytonville's Junior Rodeo is on Saturday, August 28 and Sunday, August 29. Grand entry is at 10 am both days. There will be live music performed by the Scott Forbes Band and food will be provided by Lioness & Lions and Ramirez Tacos as well as other vendor booths and a full bar with beer on tap. The adult scramble will be back by popular demand on Saturday and there will be a live-animal kid scramble on Sunday.



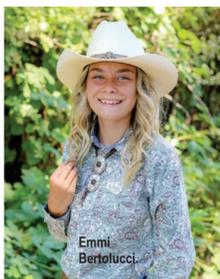
Paige Whitcomb.



Emerald Mueller.



Alina Wilson.



Emmi Bertolucci.



Lily Glass.

her to rope and helping her better her riding skills. She would also like to thank Family Tree, Freudenberg Fencing, Buster's, LaRue Trucking, Pacific Coast Outdoors, and Serenity for supporting her in rodeo and wants to invite everyone back to Laytonville August 28 and 29 for some Junior Rodeo fun.

**Emmi Bertolucci** is an 11-year-old Laytonville local and a member of the Willits Junior Horsemen's Association. Her favorite thing to do is rope n' ride with her mentor, Walt, and expand her equestrian knowledge. She looks forward to the opportunity of becoming an ambassador for a sport that holds so much tradition and brings communities together. To support Bertolucci in conquering her dream of becoming Junior Sweetheart of her hometown of Laytonville, please text or call 707-349-3983 to purchase tickets. She would like to thank her sponsors It Takes Two to Tangle and Mirror Mirror.

**Alina Wilson**, 8, is running for Junior Sweetheart of Laytonville. Wilson loves working with her horse, BB, to learn to do different events in the junior rodeo world. She wants to be a horse trainer as well as work with animals. Wilson is inviting everyone to Laytonville Junior Rodeo August 28 and 29. You can help support her dream by buying admission tickets and raffle tickets with a cash prize. Call 707-354-8533 to meet up with Wilson to get tickets. She thanks Briana Jenney and family and her sponsors RAINBOW Ag of Ukiah.

**Willow Peregrina** is 7 years old and running for Laytonville Rodeo Princess. She loves rodeo and wants to thank her family and her horse, 45, for getting her this far. Peregrina also enjoys playing with her friends, playing with her baby dolls, riding her dirt bike, and making slime. She has rodeo and raffle tickets available. Please call or text 707-621-2116. Thank you for your support and for keeping rodeo strong!

**Laytonville Junior Rodeo Sweetheart and Junior Sweetheart contestants include, from top: Paige Whitcomb, 17, Emerald Mueller, 13, Alina Wilson, 8, Emmi Bertolucci, 11, and Lily Glass, 10.**

Junior Rodeo contestants can sign up for events through the Laytonville Rodeo's Facebook page or website at [www.LaytonvilleRodeo.org](http://www.LaytonvilleRodeo.org). Check-in for contestants will be at 9 am.

We are looking forward to seeing all our rodeo fans and encourage all to be safe.

The following are the girls running for Sweetheart, Junior Sweetheart, and Princess:

**Paige Whitcomb**, 17, is running for Laytonville Sweetheart. She is going into her senior year at Laytonville High School. Whitcomb has been riding horses since she was 5 years old. She has also been in 4-H and does horse shows along with rodeos. Whitcomb would like to thank her sponsors 101 Trailer and RV Supply, Peterson CAT, Campbell and Son Failing, and Long Valley Auto Parts. Please call or text 707-354-2138 for raffle and entries tickets.

**Emerald Mueller** is 13 years old and running for Laytonville Rodeo Sweetheart. Mueller is a straight-A student. She enjoys spending time with her friends, playing basketball, raising 4-H animals, and of course rodeo! Mueller was 2020 District 2 Junior High School Rodeo Rookie Cowgirl of the Year, a state-final qualifier, and is a two-time qualifier for Vegas' toughest Junior World Championship. She wants to thank her family for their support and wishes the best of luck to all the contestants. Mueller has rodeo tickets and raffle tickets. Please call or text 707-621-2116.

**Lily Glass** is excited to be running for 2021 Laytonville Junior Sweetheart. She is a 10-year-old cowgirl from Willits. When she grows up she wants to be a large-animal veterinarian. Glass enjoys traveling around to rodeos, riding her horse, Peanut, and learning all the events. Her new passion is breakaway. Glass wants to thank Briana Jenney and the Fonsen family for teaching

### The rest of Library

From Page 3

Start, Family Resource Center, the skate park, and more."

Haven explained how the new library will be situated in the hierarchy of county institutions: "It's going to be a branch of the Mendocino County Library. It's called a satellite branch because it will be smaller than any of the other branches.

"To start, at least, it will not have full-time hours," said Haven. "It will be open three or four days a week. It will be staffed with a library technician, not a librarian. We won't have someone with a master's degree in our branch, but we will have an educated, competent person. There are set procedures with a county library, like how to donate books. This library technician will have a lot of experience in administration as well. She'll be able to get people the answers they need quickly."

Haven also said that the new library space will have approximately 1,000 books in the small 1,000-square-foot storefront space but, being a county library, people will be able to order books from any of the other branches. In addition, the current Mendocino County Bookmobile will continue to make its rounds of the more rural areas.

"It's important to have books available to everyone and to provide internet," added Haven. "A library brings with it a culture of literacy. If you can't read well, you can't navigate in the world. Our mission with the Friends of the Long Valley Public Library is to cultivate a culture of curiosity and wonder. Our library will certainly be able to do that."

For more information about the Friends of the Long Valley Public Library, visit their Facebook page or [www.mendolib.org/about/friends-of-the-library/future-branch-in-long-valley](http://www.mendolib.org/about/friends-of-the-library/future-branch-in-long-valley) or email [shawnnee84@gmail.com](mailto:shawnnee84@gmail.com).

### SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS

#### Agape Bible Church

290 S. Lenore Ave.  
Willits, CA 95490  
Where love is first and the Bible is central.  
Sunday Services: 10:00 a.m. - Worship  
Awana: Tuesday, 6:15 p.m.  
Info? 707-459-1905  
[www.agapebiblechurch.com](http://www.agapebiblechurch.com)

#### Amazing Grace Assembly of God Church

803 Coast Street  
P.O. Box 489, Willits  
707-303-5456  
Morning Worship - 10:30 a.m.  
Pastor Burton Jernigan  
EVERYBODY IS WELCOME

#### The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

265 Margie Drive  
Willits, CA 95490  
ALL ARE WELCOME  
Sacrament Meeting  
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

#### Eckankar: The Path of Spiritual Freedom

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- Spiritual Discussions
- ECK Light & Sound Services

More information?  
Call 530-224-8703  
[www.eckankar.org](http://www.eckankar.org)

#### Grace Community Church

Celebrating Life In Christ  
25 Hazel Street, Willits  
Modified Worship Service 10 a.m.  
Other ministries suspended for now.  
For appointments call:  
(707) 459-3106

#### St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church

61 W. San Francisco Ave.  
Willits, CA 95490  
Father Aaron Bandman  
Mass times:  
Confessions by appointment:  
459-2252  
Sunday Mass inside:  
9:00 a.m. English  
10:30 a.m. Spanish  
Saturday Mass: 5:30 p.m.  
Covid guidelines apply.  
We welcome All Walks of Faith

#### St. Francis Episcopal Church

1 North Main Street, Willits  
707-272-0177  
Sunday Service - 10 a.m.  
In-person and on Zoom  
Call for information.  
ALL ARE WELCOME  
The Rev. Betsy Brunau

#### St. John Lutheran Church

Karl Bliese, Pastor  
Church Service:  
Sunday 10:00 to 11:00  
Bible Study/Sunday School  
following the service.  
(707) 459-2988  
24 Mill Creek Drive  
ALL ARE WELCOME

#### Willits Seventh-Day Adventist Church

707-459-5714  
Saturdays: Meeting place  
at church located at  
399 W. Mendocino Avenue  
Bible Study - 9:45 a.m.  
Worship Service - 11:00 a.m.  
<https://willitsca.adventistchurch.org>  
All are welcome!

#### Willits United Methodist

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

If you want to be included in this column please call:  
**April Tweddell**  
(707) 972-2475  
[april@willitsweekly.com](http://april@willitsweekly.com)

### Letter from WUSD superintendent

By Joe Aldridge, WUSD superintendent

Dear Willits families: It is an honor and privilege to have been selected as the superintendent for Willits Unified School District. I am excited by the opportunities we have to work together to build on the already established work of our schools to create a system that is responsive to student and community needs.

I have had the pleasure of working with the Willits community in the past. I was previously a principal and director of Special Education with Willits Unified. Over the last 19 years, I have served students from a wide variety of backgrounds in four states as both a teacher and administrator. I have served as a principal, director and superintendent throughout California. Through all of these experiences, I have found Willits to be an amazing place to live and work. My family and I are excited to once again call Willits home.

As you know, we are looking forward to a more traditional year for the 2021-2022 school year. We have plans in place to address the learning and social-emotional needs of our students. Our staff has also been working hard to ensure students have access to academic and enrichment support through summer school as well as clean, safe facilities ready to welcome students back in the fall. Our staff have engaged in training to ensure they are ready to support our students as we move forward.

While we look forward to a return to a more normal setting, some COVID restrictions will be in place. We have received updated COVID response guidance from the California Department of Public Health for the 2021-2022 school year summarized below.

- Students and staff when in the presence of students must wear a mask indoors unless there is a medical exemption from a physician. Masking is optional outdoors.
- There will be no physical distancing requirements as long as everyone is appropriately masked.
- We will continue to reinforce hand-washing practices.
- We also must exclude anyone who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 pending a quarantine period.
- Independent study will be the only alternative to in-person instruction. There will be new rules requiring more frequent interactions for independent study students.

We will send out more detailed information as we approach the start of the school year. If you would like to read the CDPH guidance, it can be found at this address: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>

I welcome the opportunity to engage with you about our shared vision for our schools and our community. If I or any of our district staff can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. I can be reached by email at [joealdridge@willitsunified.com](mailto:joealdridge@willitsunified.com) or by calling the district office at 459-5314.



### CHP: Stop for the school bus

Posted by California Highway Patrol

As students head back to school, California Highway Patrol reminds the public that it's imperative all drivers know when to yield and stop for a school bus.

Drivers must stop when a school bus stops in front of them and extends its stop sign with flashing lights. When on a two-lane road without a median, traffic on both sides of the road must stop. When on a two-lane road with a center turn lane, traffic on both sides of the road must stop.

Cars can pass the school bus after the stop sign is not extended.

### New 'Growing Our Own' program for teens seeks students, adult mentors

Submitted by North Coast Opportunities

North Coast Opportunities' Caring Kitchen Project and Leadership Mendocino are partnering to launch Growing Our Own, a youth economic and leadership development volunteer opportunity providing job skills training, career exploration, and mentoring for teens at the Caring Kitchen facilities at the Mendocino College this fall.

Funded by the Community Foundation of Mendocino County's John and Sandra Mayfield Family Economic Development Fund and the Ted and Wilma Westman Fund, Growing Our Own will offer hands-on-training for youth in the culinary arts, food service management, and agriculture. Teens will hear directly from professionals in healthcare, nutrition and dietetics, the restaurant industry, catering, and hospitality to learn about opportunities and industry expectations.

Growing Our Own is also recruiting adult mentors and volunteers who are ready to make a positive impact in a young person's life. Adult volunteers can participate by giving a presentation about their industry or organization, volunteering with the teens in the kitchen and garden, or mentoring students in their fields of expertise.

"It takes just one trusted adult in a young person's life to improve their outcomes related to health, school, and transitions into adulthood," said Holly Madrigal, Leadership Mendocino program director.

The Caring Kitchen Project trains youth and adult volunteers in a commercial kitchen to create organic and nutrient-dense meals to support the healing of individuals undergoing cancer treatment. Leadership Mendocino, now in its 28th year, educates and inspires local emerging leaders who believe in the future of Mendocino County and are ready to make a difference.

Building on the existing framework of both programs, Growing Our Own will provide skills to teens to advance them to the next level of community engagement and professional growth, help them build confidence and agency, and connect them with local mentors to guide them as they enter the workforce or take the next steps towards their career goals.

Growing Our Own will run each Wednesday, September 1 through November 17 from 3:15 to 5:15 pm at the Caring Kitchen at Mendocino College in Ukiah. All volunteers must be fully vaccinated to participate this year. Masks are required.

If you are interested in becoming an adult volunteer mentor, or if a teen in your life could benefit from this opportunity, please contact Molly at [mrosenthal@ncoinc.org](mailto:mrosenthal@ncoinc.org) or 707-409-4149.

For more information visit [www.ncoinc.org](http://www.ncoinc.org) or call 707-467-3200.



Volunteer Isabel Van Sant, left, and Mentor Kathy Albright prepare vegetables for meals for individuals undergoing treatment for cancer and severe illness at the Caring Kitchen facilities at Mendocino College. The new "Growing Our Own" program will offer hands-on training for teens in the culinary arts, food service management, and agriculture.

### It's back to school time! Stay alert, drive safely, and keep our kids safe

Submitted by Doug Shald, communications officer, Ukiah Unified School District

It's never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when kids are going back to school - Tuesday, August 24 in Willits. Back to school brings more traffic congestion. School buses are loading passengers, kids on bikes are hurrying to get to school, and parents drop their kids off before work.

Remember these things to keep our children safe as they go back to school: Slow down and pay attention. If you

are driving around schools, look out for children and pedestrians at all times, everywhere. Expect the unexpected. Foot traffic is higher as children are going back to school.

Exercise caution if you're driving near a school bus and allow a greater following distance than when you're driving behind a car. Watch for children when school buses stop to unload and load children. And don't forget passing a school bus is illegal.

Watch out for bicycles. Children on bikes can be hard to see, and they usually don't understand traffic conditions.

By exercising extra care and caution when driving in school zones, pedestrians and children will be safer in our community. Visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website for more back to school safe driving tips. [www.nhtsa.gov/school-bus-safety/keeping-children-safe](http://www.nhtsa.gov/school-bus-safety/keeping-children-safe)

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459-2775  
104 W. Mendocino, Willits  
I am not an attorney, and can only provide self-help services at your specific direction.



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**EAT. SLEEP. CAMP. REPEAT.**

**BUSHWHACKER TRAILER GIVEAWAY**

**August 1 - August 29**  
**Earn Entries Daily**  
200 points = 1 Entry  
May redeem points for extra entries.

**GRAND PRIZE DRAWING**  
**AUGUST 29 AFTER 6 PM**

You could win the  
**2021 Bushwhacker Travel Trailer!**

**VOGEL'S RVS**  
Actual make, model & color may vary. Winner is responsible for any taxes, fees and licensing. Non-transferable. For complete rules and details please visit the Players Club. Gambling a problem? Call 1-800-GAMBLER.

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## METALfx hosts Hiring Fair

Submitted by **Connie Bates**, for METALfx

Faced with record growth and rising demand, METALfx, a precision metal fabricator in Willits, held its first ever Hiring Fair on Monday, August 16, 2021.

Interested candidates arrived at 200 North Lenore Drive between 11 am and 2 pm. They were greeted by BJ Gutierrez, director of Human Resources, and invited to complete an application. Qualified candidates toured METALfx' 125,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and learned more about the company.

Gutierrez was happy with the turnout. "We had 36 candidates sign in for the event," she said, "and made offers to 14 which were accepted on the spot." She continued, "We were especially pleased that over 90 percent of our applicants came from Willits and Brooktrails."

"It was a huge success," declared Henry Moss, METALfx president. He credited Gutierrez with organizing the event that allowed potential candidates to meet the hiring manager, tour the facility, and learn more about MFX's benefits and growth plans. They were also treated to a delicious hot lunch of pulled pork and gifted with an MFX promotional item.

When asked if all positions had been filled, Gutierrez was quick to respond. "No," she said, "Although the Hiring Fair filled many openings, some positions are still available." She added, "A handful of applicants were not able to wait for a manager and need further follow-up."

Privately owned, METALfx employs over 160 employees running across two shifts. METALfx serves a wide range of customers within various markets and size, from Fortune 500 to startups. For more information about METALfx, see their website at [www.metalfx.com](http://www.metalfx.com).



METALfx HR Director BJ Gutierrez.

Photo by Marissa Gutierrez

## Community Immunity Resilience and Wellness for Our Time

Learn how to boost your family wellness with herbal immune system support

Featured Speakers:

- Donna d'Terra
- Diane Smalley, LAc
- Claudia Wenning, PhD
- Sara Grusky
- Anna Hope
- Autumn Whitaker

28 August 2021 — 12 to 5 pm  
Herbal Marketplace open from 12 to 5  
Speakers from 1 to 4:30 pm  
Little Lake Grange, 291 School St, Willits  
A Free Outdoor Event Sponsored by the Grange  
Current Health Dept Protocols Will Be Observed

## Community Immunity: Resilience and wellness for our time

Submitted by **Little Lake Grange**

Learn how to boost your family's wellness with herbal immune-system support! Whether you are vaccinated or not, your immune system needs support and can help you stay well during this time of COVID. Come check out this free outdoor event on August 28, 2021, noon to 5 pm, at the Little Lake Grange, located at 291 School Street. There will be an herbal marketplace with herbal medicines and tonics for sale and multiple speakers, with talks occurring between 1 and 4:30 pm.

This event is brought to you by a collective of herbalists and health care practitioners and is sponsored by the Little Lake Grange in Willits. Current health department protocols will be observed.

Speakers and topics include:

### Donna deTerra, "Herbal Lung Support"

A demonstration of making a tincture with local native plant, Yerba santa, plus a handout and discussion of other herbs that can support the respiratory system.

*Donna d'Terra is an herbal educator, whose focus is on local, sustainable, regenerative herbalism.*

### Diane Smalley, LAc, "Know and Nurture Your Lymphatic System"

Smalley will discuss how the lymphatic system is the highway of the immune system and how it is easy to influence and support free flow.

*Diane Smalley, LAc, has offered acupuncture and herbal medicine since 1985. She focuses on wellness and empowerment through education about the amazing human life form. Her office is located at 750 Central Avenue, Willits. Call her at 707-456-9514.*

### Claudia Wenning PhD, "Resilience for the Immune System and Stress Relief – a Holistic Approach"

Practical suggestions and demonstrations to support the immune system and relieve stress, with handouts.

*Claudia Wenning, PhD NM, is a holistic health consultant, functional medicine practitioner, and naturopath, whose office, Quantum Level Health, is located at Little Lake Grange, room 4. You can reach her at 707-371-6103.*

### Autumn Whitaker, "Treating COVID with Herbs"

This talk and Q&A session will focus on the herbs and protocols Whitaker used for treating her family during a challenging bout with COVID. She will discuss the extra measures taken and herbs used when more intensive treatment was needed. Whitaker will also briefly discuss the Buhner formulas, which she utilized throughout her experience.

*Autumn Whitaker CMT, CTR and certified herbalist of 15 years, specializes in supportive care for nutrition deficiencies, chronic illness, and patients undergoing cancer treatment. She is an owner / farmer at Bramble Mountain Farm, growing organic medicinals, veggies, and healthy goats.*

### Sara Grusky, "Local and Easy-To-Grow Herbs to Support Our Immune and Respiratory System"

This workshop will highlight three amazing healing plants: Bay laurel, Bidens pilosa, and Tulsi / holy basil that can support the body through these challenging times. Plant samples, medicine-making demonstrations, and handouts available. Stephen Buhner's COVID-19 formulas will also be discussed and available for sale.

*Sara Grusky is an herbalist trained at the California School of Herbal Studies and the Columbinus School of Botanical Studies. She is also a co-owner of Green Uprising Farm and a Mendocino Renegade certified grower providing healthy, nutrient-dense food and medicine for the community.*

### Anna Hope, "Ancestral Herbs and Anti-Racism"

Hope's talk will deepen the understanding of social locations and ancestral connections to herbs, then investigate why the CDC has declared racism to be a serious threat to the public's health, what can be done about it, and how herbs can help.

*Anna Hope is an herbalist living at the cutting edge of regenerative environmentalism and social justice. She takes a multidisciplinary approach to cultivating deeper understanding of the problems faced in these times as well as potential solutions.*

# NEW WILLITS FIREHOUSE GRAND OPENING DEDICATION & OPEN HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 11, 2021  
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

FLAG CEREMONY

9:00 am

911 TRIBUTE

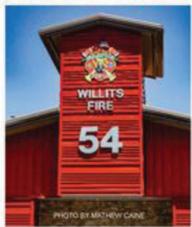
9:15 am

RIBBON (HOSE) CUTTING

10:00 am

FIREHOUSE DEDICATION

10:15 am



## FIREHOUSE TOURS

11:00 am - 2:00 pm

SILENT AUCTION BOUNCE HOUSES  
FIRE DANCERS  
LIVE AUCTION FACE PAINTING

## BBQ LUNCH

TICKETS SOLD IN ADVANCE  
\$25 ADULT \$10 CHILD  
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT SPARETIME SUPPLY  
JD REDHOUSE  
WILLITS SENIOR CENTER  
OR CALL  
707-841-7758



This event is sponsored by Little Lake Fire Protection District along with Willits Rotary, Willits Lions Club, Soroptimist, American Legion Post 174, 4H, FFA, Boy/Girl Scouts, Willits Chamber of Commerce, and Willits Senior Center. All proceeds will go toward furnishing the new firehouse.

208 E. San Francisco Ave.  
**Blow Out Parking Lot SALE**  
(707) 459-6791  
**Damaged Products at DIRT CHEAP PRICES**  
All Items Priced as Marked  
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CASH ONLY  
Monday - Saturday 8 am - 6 pm  
Closed Sunday  
All Proceeds will be Donated Back to our Community

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WW332

### AMENDED NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: SANDRA HARTMAN CASE NO. 21PR00130

To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate of both of: SANDRA HARTMAN

A Petition for Probate has been filed by SARAH O'ROURKE in the Superior Court of California, County of Mendocino. The Petition for Probate requests that SARAH O'ROURKE be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent.

The petition requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority.

A hearing on the petition will be held in this court as follows: Date: August 27, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. in Dept.: E of the Mendocino County Superior Court, located at 100 N. State Street, Ukiah, California 95482.

If you object to granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney.

If you are a creditor or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code.

Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law.

You may examine the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code Section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk.

Attorney for Petitioner: MARGARITA S. RICE, ESQ., CARTER RICH PC, 305 N. Main Street, Ukiah, CA 95482. Telephone: 707-462-6694

Publication Dates: August 5, 12 and 19, 2021

## LEGAL NOTICES

WW333

### CITY OF WILLITS PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT NOTICE TO BIDDERS PROJECT NO. 2021-01

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Sealed bids for: The work shown on the project plans entitled:

CITY OF WILLITS PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT PROJECT PLANS

For:

California-Penn Water Main Replacement Project - Project No. 2021-01

The work for this project includes replacement of approximately 713 linear feet of existing water main with new 6" C-900 pipe, installation of new water services and meters, installation of one fire hydrant, installation of new 6" gate valves, restoration of concrete sidewalks, and trench paving.

IN

City of Willits, County of Mendocino, State of California &

The work described in specifications books entitled: CITY OF WILLITS - BID BOOK & TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS CITY OF WILLITS - PROPOSAL PACKET CITY OF WILLITS - AWARD PACKET

For:

California-Penn Water Main Replacement Project - Project No. 2021-01

IN

City of Willits, County of Mendocino, State of California will be received by a designated representative, of the City of Willits, County of Mendocino, State of California, until the hour of 2:00 p.m. on September 7th 2021, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud in the City Council Chambers, of the City of Willits, located at 111 East Commercial Street, Willits, California.

THE ENGINEER'S ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE COSTS IS: \$322,000.00

Interested bidders should contact the City at 707-459-4605 \*1 in order to obtain a complete copy of the Bid Book, Proposal Packet, Award Packet, Contract, General Provisions, Special Provisions, and Project Plans:

A non-refundable fee of \$40.00 will be collected for each set that is obtained from the City of Willits.

Plans and specifications are also available for review at the following Builders Exchange offices:

**Construction Bidboard (Ebidboard)**  
11622 El Camino Real, #100  
San Diego, CA 92130  
Phone: 800-479-5314  
Email: [support@ebidboard.com](mailto:support@ebidboard.com)  
Website: [www.ebidboard.com](http://www.ebidboard.com)

**Dodge Data & Analytics**  
830 Third Avenue, 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10022  
Phone: 877-784-9556  
Email: [support@construction.com](mailto:support@construction.com)  
Website: [www.construction.com](http://www.construction.com)

**Humboldt Builders Exchange**  
1213 5th Street  
Eureka, CA 95501  
(707) 442-3708  
Website: [www.humbx.com](http://www.humbx.com)

**North Coast Builders Exchange**  
1030 Apollo Way  
Santa Rosa, CA 95407  
707-542-9502  
707-542-2027  
Website: [www.ncbeonline.com](http://www.ncbeonline.com)

CITY OF WILLITS: s/Cathy Moorhead, City Clerk  
DATED: 08/02/2021

Publication Dates: August 5, 12, 19, and 26, 2021



### Current Job Openings:

- Animal Facility Attendant – Fort Bragg/Extra-Help
- Communications Technician
- Corrections Deputy
- Deputy Sheriff-Coroner I/II
- Human Resources Manager
- Legal Assistant
- Library Assistant – Point Arena
- Library Assistant – Extra-Help
- Social Worker Assistant I – Extra-Help
- Vocational Assistant

For a complete list of current job openings and to apply: [www.mendocinocounty.org/government/human-resources](http://www.mendocinocounty.org/government/human-resources)

EOE



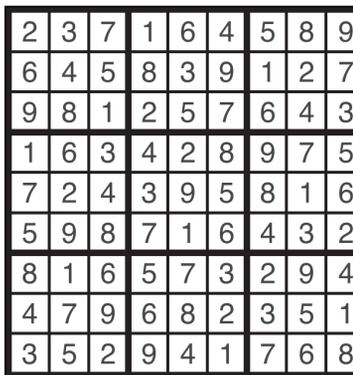
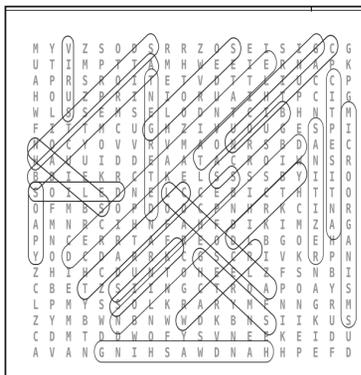
— Hiring Notice —

### BROOKTRAILS TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

Is accepting applications for a Utility Operator I/II. Compensation is Range 30/34 of the District compensation schedule and includes health and retirement benefits. Heavy equipment or construction experience preferred.

FILING DEADLINE: Applications must be received by BTCSO no later than August 31, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

Interested candidates may forward their application (and resume if desired) to General Manager at 24860 Birch Street, Willits, CA 95490, or by email to [btcsd@btcsd.org](mailto:btcsd@btcsd.org).



## CLASSIFIEDS

### Computer Help

Need help with your computer? PC, Macintosh, Android and IOS devices. Repairs, configuration and tutoring. \$50/hr. Call Liam 459-2470 or email [uicearbhall@gmail.com](mailto:uicearbhall@gmail.com)

### Firewood for Sale

1 true cord of 16-inch dry firewood, \$300 and up. Will deliver. Call 459-2868.

### For Rent

Office space for rent, 400+ sq ft. Central Heat, A/C. Off street parking. Utilities included. \$440. Available Sept 1. 707-354-2473

### For Rent

1 Bedroom Studio Apt. In Willits at Private Residence. \$875.00 month plus Last, \$1000.00 Security Deposit. Proof of Employment Required. No Smoking or Drugs. Water & Garbage Paid. Phone 972-7075.

### Freezer Empty? We can help!

Due to health concerns in Mendocino County, John Ford Ranch will be taking meat box orders (not individual package orders) for pick-up: Rancher's Choice Box - 50 pounds: steaks, roasts, and ground beef. Still \$325 (\$6.50 per pound). Hamburger Box: 25 pound box of hamburger in 1 or 1.5 pound packages: \$150. Natural ranch-raised grass fed beef, no hormones or antibiotics. Call 459-5193 to arrange pick-up. Leave a message, and we'll call back.

### Help Wanted

Merchandise Processor /Stocker. \$14.50 Hour. Part Time (24 hours weekly) Send resume to [wsidirector@willitsseiorcenter.com](mailto:wsidirector@willitsseiorcenter.com). Please include 3 references or pick up application at the Willits Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Rd. or call Richard Baker at 459-6826 for more information.

### Help Wanted

Outreach Worker. Earn as you learn. \$15/Hour. 32 Hours Weekly. Send resume to [widirector@willitsseiorcenter.com](mailto:widirector@willitsseiorcenter.com) (please include 3 references) or pick up job application at the Willits Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road, or call Richard Baker at 459-6826 for more information

### Help Wanted

North Coast Opportunities: Head Start Child Development Program Recruiting for Willits: Associate Teacher I-II, Preschool Teacher \$14.58- \$16.65/hr DOQ. Bilingual Preferred. Lead Teacher I-II, Preschool Classroom \$14.58- \$16.65/hr DOQ. Bilingual Preferred. For full job description details & required application form [www.ncocinc.org/about-us/jobs](http://www.ncocinc.org/about-us/jobs) or 707-467-3200 Open until filled. EOE

### Moving Sale

Saturday only, August 21, 9 am. Moving Sale at 23701 Eastside Road. From furniture to sailboats. Come check it out.

### RV/Trailer Space for Rent

Space for RV's and Trailers \$425 per month, includes water & garbage. Close to Safeway in Willits. Call Tony (707) 510-5895. See at <http://www.oakrvine.net/p>

### Gleaners Update

Willits Grateful Gleaners harvest fruit to share with people in need. If you have extra or if you are willing to help, call (707) 367-7391.



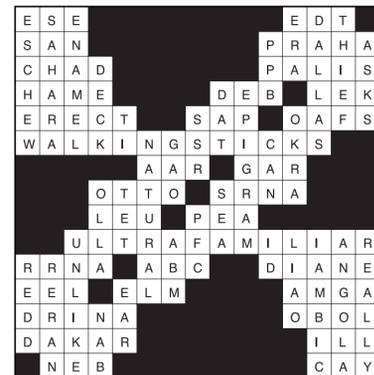
Classified ads are just \$10 for 30 words for 2 weeks!

Deadline is every Monday!

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to the 500 block of Croyple Lane in Willits to serve a search warrant at a property regarding an unlawful marijuana/cannabis operation, Incident Number: 2021-19790. On arrival, law enforcement encountered a large marijuana/cannabis processing operation which was contained within a large warehouse.

Law enforcement officials encountered and ultimately detained twenty-nine (29) individuals. Twenty seven (27) of the twenty-nine (29) individuals were determined to be from Southeast Asia and Laos.

At the time of the search warrant service law enforcement officials were uncertain if this particular marijuana/cannabis operation was engaging in human trafficking.

Due to a language barrier, a deputy sheriff from Butte County was transported by helicopter to the search warrant location for interpretation purposes. This interpretation process determined all detained persons on the property were at the location on their own free will and were employed laborers.

During the detainment of several of the individuals, large sums of U.S. currency were found at the location. A total of \$230,632 in cash was seized pursuant to asset forfeiture laws and later turned over to the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office.

A total of 9,447.9 pounds of processed/packaged bud marijuana/cannabis for the purposes of sales was located at the location. All marijuana/cannabis other than what was retained as evidence per 11479 HS was destroyed at the scene.

At the completion of this investigation, a criminal case will be filed with the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office for potential criminal prosecution.

The Mendocino County Sheriff's Office would like to thank all law enforcement personnel who participated in the targeted operations.

**Aerial overflights IDd numerous locations**

Over the past several weeks, the County of Mendocino Marijuana Enforcement Team (COMMET) conducted aerial overflights of Mendocino County focusing on unlawful marijuana/cannabis operations. During that time, numerous locations were identified where focused operations were planned.

The following is a list of focused operations that recently took place with more expected to follow in the future.

Crime/Incident: 182 PC (Felony - Criminal Conspiracy) and 11358 HS (Misdemeanor - Unlawful Cultivation of Marijuana)

- 500 block of Croyple Lane in Willits, CA
- 4800 block of Highway 20 in Willits, CA
- 7100 block of Highway 20 in Willits, CA
- 49000 block of North Highway 101 in Laytonville, CA

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property in Laytonville, CA
- 20000 block of Hollands Lane in Willits, CA

The Mendocino County Sheriff's Office wants to be transparent with the populace of Mendocino County that if you are cultivating marijuana/cannabis unlawfully, that you are taking the risk of criminal action being taken against you as enforcement efforts are ongoing.

Despite potential criminal prosecution, Mendocino County is capable of issuing severe monetary fines to persons operating unlawful marijuana/cannabis operations, which can also result in liens being placed on properties.

**Case# 2021-19891**

The listed law enforcement personnel responded to the 7100 block of Highway 20 in Willits regarding an unlawful marijuana/cannabis operation. On arrival, an adult male fled the property on foot eluding capture.

A total of five (5) plastic style hoop houses containing 2,337 illegal marijuana/cannabis plants were eradicated and destroyed on scene.

**Case #2021-19892**

The aforementioned law enforcement personnel responded to the 4800 block of Highway 20 in Willits regarding an unlawful marijuana/cannabis operation. The marijuana/cannabis found at this location is commonly known as an "open field" operation.

On arrival, five (5) individuals fled the property on foot and into the brush. Law enforcement observed several plastic-style hoop houses all containing marijuana/cannabis in excess of state law. This location/property did not have proper county or state permits to cultivate cannabis. This location was found to have 5,871 illegal marijuana/cannabis plants.

As this investigation was afoot, law enforcement was able to link the neighboring

property to this particular unlawful growing operation. The property was secured as a search warrant was obtained. After obtaining the search warrant for the neighboring property, it was found to contain several fabricated rooms to cultivate marijuana/cannabis unlawfully. A total of 1,376 pounds of processed marijuana/cannabis was found at this location.

All marijuana other than what was retained per state law (11479 HS), was destroyed on scene.

While on scene, law enforcement contacted Mendocino County Code Enforcement, finding all structures on this particular property were erected without obtaining proper permits through Mendocino County. A report will be forwarded to code enforcement for potential code enforcement investigation/enforcement.

Investigators also seized a .22 caliber rifle which had its serial number modified and painted over.

Further investigation into the person(s) responsible for this unlawful marijuana/cannabis growing operation is ongoing by COMMET at this time.

**Case# 2021-20125, Case# 2021-20277**

Law enforcement personnel responded to the 49000 block of North Highway 101 in Laytonville (Black Oak Ranch) for an illegal trespassing marijuana/cannabis cultivation operation.

On arrival, no persons were located at the property although evidence at the scene suggested several people were trespassing and residing on the property.

This is a remote piece of property where the property owner requested the assistance from the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office after locating a trespassing marijuana/cannabis operation on the property.

COMMET found several acres of private property had been removed (clear cut) and thirteen (13) plastic style hoop houses were constructed. Not all the hoop houses contained growing marijuana/cannabis as some had been recently harvested and were no longer at the location.

A total of 2,056 illegal marijuana/cannabis plants and 106.8 pounds of processed marijuana/cannabis were destroyed at the location.

While investigating this particular property, distinct roads/trails were observed leaving this same property which entered onto government lands owned by the Bureau of Land Management (Case# 2021-20277). A helicopter, which was being used by law enforcement located three (3) more plastic hoop houses just north on BLM property. Based on the roads and vehicle tracks, it was clear this operation was connected to the illegal trespassing marijuana/cannabis cultivation operation.

This BLM property contained 4,000 marijuana/cannabis plants, which were eradicated/ destroyed on scene.

**Case# 2021-20244**

The aforementioned law enforcement personnel responded to the 20000 block of Hollands Lane in Willits where a search warrant was served regarding an unlawful marijuana/cannabis operation. On arrival, a female subject was observed actively "trimming" marijuana. The female subject attempted to flee the property and after a short foot pursuit, she was caught/detained.

Three (3) other persons were later contacted on the property during the search warrant service.

During this investigation, 913 illegal marijuana/cannabis plants were found at the location and ultimately eradicated and destroyed. In addition to the growing plants there were 1,756.8 pounds of hanging/drying marijuana/cannabis found at the location and also destroyed other than what was retained as evidence per state law.

Sunday  
August 22  
2 pm  
Willits Soccer Field  
East Commercial St.  
Willits First Annual Kite Fly-up  
(707) 272-9521  
For Information

**New City Pool Schedule**

The City of Willits has announced a new swimming pool schedule through the end of the season:

**August 12 - 28**

**Lap Swim:** Monday-Friday, 6 to 8 am  
**Water Aerobics:** Monday-Friday, 12 to 1 pm & 4 to 5 pm; Saturday, 12 to 1 pm

**August 30 - October 1**

**Lap Swim:** Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 6 to 8 am  
**Water Aerobics:** Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 12 to 1 pm & 4 to 5 pm; Saturdays, 12 to 1 pm

**Firehouse Dedication coming up on September 11**

The Grand Opening Dedication & Open House is set for Saturday, September 11, from 9 am to 2 pm at the new Willits Fire Station 54 on East Commercial Street.

The schedule for the event includes: 9 am: Flag Ceremony; 9:15 am: 9/11 Tribute; 10 am: Ribbon (Hose) Cutting; 10:15 am: Firehouse Dedication.

Tours of the new firehouse will be offered from 11 am to 2 pm, along with silent and live auctions, bounce houses, fire dancers, and face painting. Tickets for a BBQ Lunch will be sold in advance: \$25 adult, \$10 child; tickets are available at Sparetime Supply, J.D. Redhouse, or the Willits Senior Center, or call 707-841-7758.

This event is sponsored by Little Lake Fire Protection District, along with Willits Rotary, Willits Lions Club, Soroptmist, American Legion Post 174, 4H, FFA, Boy/Girl Scouts, Willits Chamber of Commerce, and Willits Senior Center.

All proceeds will go toward furnishing the new firehouse.  
Follow Willits Fire Protection District on Facebook at "Willits Fire Station 54"  
- Little Lake Fire Protection District

**Grange cancels Pancake Breakfast**

This is announcing that the Grange Pancake Breakfast scheduled for August 22 is cancelled in consideration of the high COVID numbers in the last few weeks. We

**Blackberry Festival cancels**

The Round Valley Blackberry Festival Committee has given careful consideration to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Mendocino County and, after much discussion, has decided that we must cancel the festival that we were planning for August 21 and 22. Please stay safe and healthy, and we hope to see you in 2022.

- Sharon Durall, Round Valley Blackberry Festival Committee

**Native grasses workshop in the Willits Watershed**

Conservation Works is offering a free workshop, "introducing Native Grasses - Ecology, Fire and Climate Resilience in the Willits Watershed," on Saturday, August 28, from 9 am to 1 pm.

Participants will:  
• Learn about grasslands ecosystems, fire ecology, and the relationship of native grasses and climate change

• Walk with a conservationist to view native grasses and see a post-fire habitat in recovery

• Make "seed bombs" aiding native grasses propagation

All ages are welcome. "We will be walking uphill on a partially shaded fire road. Please wear comfortable shoes with a tread, sun protective hat and clothing. Bring your own snack and a water bottle."

Social distancing and masks are required.

Directions: Meet at the gate entrance to the City of Willits Water Treatment plant. The turn-off for the gate is a right off Highway 101 1 mile north of the CalFire Howard Forest Station at the top of the grade (and before Exit 588 toward Willits/Highway 20).

Please contact Oona Heacock at 707-978-4149 or oona@conservationworksnc.org for more information.

**Grange cancels Pancake Breakfast**

look forward to flipping cakes as soon as the numbers warrant it. Please stay safe.

Liam U'Ceabhail, president, Little Lake Grange #670

Face Masks Required  
Saturday, August 21st  
11-5  
EVENT CANCELLED  
SALES & RAFFLE ARE STILL ON!  
Raffle Baskets & more!  
707.459.9630  
500 S Main St. Willits

DESTINATION: Healthy Kids  
✔ Sports physical  
✔ Dental checkup  
✔ Immunizations  
✔ School supplies  
✔ Masks  
Call (707) 456-9600 for an appointment  
LITTLE LAKE HEALTH CENTER  
45 Hazel St., Willits  
We accept Medi-Cal, Medicare, Partnership and other insurance.  
SE HABLA ESPAÑOL.  
MCHC HEALTH CENTERS IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

The safety plan is accessible at willitsunified.com. Click on explore and then news to find the link to the plan.

And it is anything but set in stone, and "will be updated as conditions and guidance changes," according to the district office.

For example, just the day before the meeting, a new order from the governor required "mandatory vaccinations or testing for staff that work at the schools," superintendent Joe Aldridge told the board.

"Obviously, just like last year when we dealt with COVID to begin with, the target keeps moving," said board president Alex Bowlds. "My assumption is that this safety plan will be updated as changes occur."

Testing may be one of those areas where changes may be expected.

"There's ... a suggestion now from the Public Health officer around testing for students," said Aldridge. "I'm trying to analyze our capacity to be able to do that ... working with an outside company that can come in and provide us with a full spectrum of testing services."

He added that "it wouldn't be mandatory testing for students, it would just be making it available if there's an issue, so that they don't necessarily have to get down to Ukiah ... to the fairgrounds."

"We can't mandate testing," said Bowlds. "However, we don't even provide, for example, voluntary ... testing for students."

"We provide voluntary ... if there's an issue or symptoms ... because we can do the rapid test and can see within 15 minutes. And if it's positive, they have to get a PCR test to confirm," said Aldridge. "We provide it for athletics, but that guidance is shifting so we're kind of in limbo with that."

Bowlds brought up the fact that the plan's mandate that "face coverings are required for all persons (staff, students, or community members) who are at a school site indoors regardless of vaccination status," presented what he described as "some interesting catch 22 stuff about the mask mandate and independent study."

Aldridge explained that "right now, the choice is, if the student doesn't wish to mask at school, they're making the choice to go to independent study."

"It's my understanding you can't force anybody to go on independent study," said trustee Jeanne King. "That seems to be a contradiction."

"It would appear that way," agreed Aldridge. "But from a legal standpoint that's how it's being interpreted. The choice not to wear a mask is the choice to go to independent study."

Bowlds urged everyone to "please read the plan," and get in touch "via email, via phone call, or stop in and see the superintendent ... if you see something in there that does not appear to be ideal or you have a suggestion for improvement."

"We don't want to miss something that has the potential to have an impact on anyone here, particularly a negative impact," he continued. "Good suggestions are always welcome."

Propos of that, during time set apart for public comment, Suzanne Matheson offered two "suggestion[s] for improvement."

"I am delighted that we are going back to school full time. Nothing could make me happier," she began.

"My [first] concern is about masking. I'm concerned that the elementary students, none of whom are vaccinated, will be playing outside without their masks on," she said. "I would like to urge you to consider, until this very scary Delta variant, which is so much more contagious than the alpha variant that we had last spring, ... Until the delta variant is over, that you temporarily modify your reopening to have the students masked when they play outside, the same way that the

students on the sports teams are masked.

"My second concern is about eating," she continued. "I would encourage you not to have the students eat in the cafeteria. It's like going into a restaurant. And during this delta time ... modify our reopening orders to have the students eat outside and well spaced."

"This delta time" indeed, when even the best-laid plans ...

"I was looking forward to having a more normal school year, though I have to admit that with respect to what's going on with COVID right now, it's off to less than an ideal start," said Bowlds. "Hopefully this too will pass and quickly."

"According to directions that are coming from the county health office, the county schools, the state Board of Education, state health department ... We're all suffering from whiplash ... [and] have to go with the flow," said trustee Jeanne King.

**New programs**

In the meantime, the show must go on, and the district is pushing ahead with new programs to make sure "all our students leaving Blosser (fifth-graders) are able to read at grade level" and to increase support, coaching and professional training to strengthen the English language learning (EL) program.

"Staff are ready to implement reading programs ... starting out really strong," said Aldridge. "Brookside (k-2) programs hammer the phonics, and we have interventions all the way up to fifth grade."

Bowlds asked about the EL program, and Aldridge responded that it was "our next step."

Director of Fiscal Services Nikki Agenbroad described her understanding of the EL plan as "professional development for a majority of the staff," and Aldridge agreed, adding that "we're also looking at having some coaching and supports."

The show is also going on for district-wide school grounds and buildings upgrades, repairs and replacements.

At Blosser Lane, "almost all the new portables have HVAC, [which] makes a huge difference," said Aldridge

At Baechtel Grove Middle School, there's "a new roof on the permanent building, and the new windows look really good."

At the high school, "the new parking lot looks great, [we] have air conditioning in the main hall for the first time ever ... the roofs are almost done ...and [we're] working on the breezeway that connects the main wing to the cafeteria," said Aldridge.

"We're still working on [high school] science rooms," he added, completion of which had to take a back seat to "emergency repairs ... at Brookside ... to replace a floor" that went to the "top of the list."

Hopefully, going into the future, Brookside will not be needing emergency repairs, as the whole west wing of very old portables, some of which are too unsafe to be used as classrooms, are slated for replacement.

The board took the first step in this very big project at its meeting by approving a contract with Almeida Architecture in Sebastopol "to start the work for replacing the west wing at Brookside ... to be ready to go in the summer ... to get it done next year," said Aldridge.

Bowlds pointed out that the funding for this long-overdue undertaking could come from the sale of bonds approved by voters in November 2020 or from state grant funds to add classroom space in order to accommodate new state requirements for TK (transitional kindergarten) teacher-student ratios.

Aldridge agreed, adding that the state grant would require matching funds, and "we're looking at both paths."

"As soon as that application process is available, we'll be on it," he said.

immediate area due to the time of day and known residences in the area."

Nearby residents first received evacuation orders, which were posted at 4:09 am on the Mendocino Sheriff Twitter feed; then at 4:48 am, the order was downgraded to a warning, and at 5:16 am, Nixle sent an alert cancelling all warnings but advising caution for those in the area.

Noyer's report continues: "We arrived to find approximately 3 to 5 acres threatening structures. Swift action by responding units kept the fire away from the structures and contained the fire in quick order."

Investigations into the cause of the Timber Fire are still ongoing.

In addition to Brooktrails Fire, Noyer wrote: "Also responding were Cal Fire, Little Lake Fire, Ridgewood Ranch Fire, Laytonville Fire, MCSO, and Willits Police Department."

Meteorologists had predicted a change in the wind Tuesday night, which would blow smoke to the Willits area from the big fires to the north and east of Mendocino County, but some local residents reported smelling fresh smoke Wednesday and seeing ash they attributed to the Timber Fire.

to the press release. In an August 17 press release, Public Health announced a 49-year-old Ukiah man was the county's 56th death from COVID. "The individual in question was not vaccinated," the press release stated.

As of the case numbers announced Monday afternoon, COVID cases by zip code are: 78 cases in Willits, 95490 zip code; 7 cases in Covelo/95428; 59 cases in Fort Bragg/95437; 7 cases in Potter Valley/95469; 28 cases in Redwood Valley/95470; 8 cases in Talmage/95481; 186 cases in Ukiah/95482; all other zips, 0-5 cases.

Public Health Officials Dr. Andy Coren and Dr. Noemi Doohan have been alerting residents to the likelihood of a surge due to the "more contagious and deadly" Delta variant for some weeks now, and urging residents to wear masks, avoid gatherings, and to get vaccinated.

Dr. Coren gave the board of supervisors an update with Monday's numbers at Tuesday's virtual board meeting, which also had Adventist Health President Judson Howe and Adventist Health Chief Medical Officer Fassant Parker with an update about hospital capacity in Mendocino County.

As of Monday's numbers, there were 27 people in intensive care units throughout the county. By Tuesday afternoon, "as we speak," Howe said - that number was down to 24.

Under normal circumstances the three local Adventist hospitals have 16 ICU beds, 8 in Ukiah, Dr. Parker said, and 4 each in Fort Bragg and Willits. As of Tuesday afternoon, the Willits ICU was full, with 2 out of 4 available beds available in Ukiah, and 3 out of 4 available on the coast.

"We are currently in phase 1 of our surge plan deployment," Dr. Fassant said, "using our Flex Unit," which has 11 dedicated rooms for COVID patients."

The hospital also has the ability to reach out to "to high-cost agency resources in Sacramento," and as those resources are exhausted, there's a third phase, which involves working "more closely with the county and state."

Howe emphasized that despite the pandemic "teaching pandemic highs here as we move into mid-August," Adventist does have bed availability "as we speak," and the hospitals have been "able to fill our shifts through the week." Part of the availability is due to the hospital "restricting surgical cases," he said.

"We are starting to see some significant fatigue," Howe added, "although I do want the community to know we're still safely staffed, but I do want to share an emotional connection, there is some fatigue as we move into 18 and 19 months of this pandemic."

"We are seeing about 85 percent of our admissions are non-vaccinated members of this community.... We're professionals at this, and we're here to serve everyone in the community, both vaccinated and nonvaccinated, but that is a very important piece of this pandemic that I would like to share with the community," Howe said.

"My ask of the community would actually be, for the nurses, clinicians, the respiratory therapists, the imaging techs, the physicians of the hospital, we highly recommend this community reevaluate the appropriateness of the vaccine in their life.... it would really resource the hospital and allow us to provide COVID care and other important care."

in addition to the Sherwood Road entries in Willits and near Laytonville.

"There's been an incredible amount of work done on this over the last couple years," said Third District Supervisor John Haschak, who is on the ad hoc committee dedicated to the project. "Howard Dashiell, [county] director of transportation, has stepped up and really helped out in moving this project forward. It's just that there's a few decisions that we need to make and there's additional costs. It's a pilot program, we didn't know what we were totally getting into, but we're working those things out.... It's requiring more time than we thought."

Haschak said that the area has already seen some of the benefits from the work when the Oak Fire struck in September of 2021, and all of Brooktrails and other Sherwood areas had to be evacuated. He said that one of the emergency routes into Brooktrails which had been cleared was used by emergency vehicles to enter the area, so both lanes of Sherwood could be used for exiting.

"Certainly last year with the Oak Fire, the Firco Road ... was critical in getting access into the fire, and the ability to use Sherwood Road [with] both lanes going out. So as Sheriff Kendall and [the county] Office of Emergency Services] have said, this was the best evacuation they've ever seen. And so I think we saw immediate fruits from this effort. And what we want to do is keep these roads maintained at that level so that we can access them."

As shown on a map during a presentation at the meeting, the Firco Road emergency route starts just north of town and winds into Brooktrails just above the airport. The other emergency route, still in the process of becoming usable, has an entry in the Northbrook area and travels along the Willits Creek going up to the Brooktrails park course.

Dashiell explained during the meeting that both emergency routes go through private property and require an agreement with those owners to use.

Haschak said that Rich Padula, who passed away in July, was one of the land owners who agreed to let the roads be used for emergencies, which he was thankful for.

"He was a signer of these [memorandums of understanding] in part - he's one of the owners," said Haschak. "And really his efforts for collaborating with the county were really commendable, and I'd just like to recognize that."

The roads are primarily to be used by emergency vehicles only when needed. Sherwood Firewise, a local group dedicated to making Brooktrails and other Sherwood communities safer from fires, state on their website, "These routes may only be used by residents under the direction of the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office."

Keith Rutledge, who is on the steering committee of Sherwood Firewise, called in during public comments to express his thankfulness to the county for helping the group with their mission.

"I really appreciate the efforts," he said. "This has taken quite a while to get to where we are. Sherwood Firewise was started with one of our major goals was to see the reopening of these emergency access routes.... So it's really important that we keep moving, and county counsel, and the ad hoc committee, and Howard Dashiell ... have all been just wonderful to work with. County counsel has done a tremendous amount of work with the pro bono legal services that Sherwood Firewise was able to bring in, which was tens of thousands of dollars' worth of work that was donated there."

Rutledge also mentioned others who have helped with Sherwood Firewise's efforts, and talked of their ongoing work.

"We got a \$10,000 grant from the Community Foundation as well," he said. "That helped pay for the [North Coast Resource Management] work on defining what needed to be done to maintain these routes. The good news is they're both in very good shape as far as road bases. And so vegetation [removal] is mostly what we have to do."

"The Firco route was cleared under the governor's emergency program so we got that cleared," he continued. "And great that it was cleared before the Oak Fire. Sherwood Firewise has received a grant from CalFire to do a bunch of roadside work - Sherwood Road and some other roads in Brooktrails."

He added that some of that CalFire money will be used to get the Willits Creek emergency access route up and running.

"And I just got the report that we're finishing up the archaeological work on that - the CEQA work," said Rutledge. "So we should get a clearance to be able to perform that work soon, and we have the funding to go ahead and do that vegetation management and get it opened. And once these routes are both open like that, they should stay in pretty good shape for quite a while. But as Supervisor Haschak's mentioning, the whole point of this is to keep them in good shape."

During his presentation at the meeting Dashiell showed a "boundary benefit zone map," which outlined hundreds of parcels that had been improved in their emergency preparedness or are planned to be improved with the Sherwood area work. These included parcels in Brooktrails, Spring Creek, the Gates (1st, 2nd and 3rd), and Sylvandale.

On their website, Sherwood Firewise said that the creation of "benefit zones" is "in order to fund the maintenance of access routes which would provide ways for emergency vehicles and crews to gain access to fires and other natural disasters, while at the same time providing a clear route for evacuations of residents."

Dashiell said he was hopeful that some of those in the "benefit zone" agree to pay a small annual fee to keep the roads continually improved and maintained. He also said he hoped that they could find a way to have the emergency access routes permanently available when needed, even if the private properties should change in ownership.

After some discussion by the board, it was agreed that Haschak and Board Chair Dan Gjerde, who is also on the ad hoc, should begin to look for ways to provide similar help to some of the areas east of Ukiah, where there are also issues with limited access routes during emergencies.

According to the agenda, by approving the item Tuesday, the supervisors agreed to "authorize expenditure of designated funds in the Planning and Building budget for contracting up to \$15

# Illini 4000

**Bicyclists raising money for cancer research and support recharge for the night at the Willits United Methodist Church before continuing on their 5,000-mile journey**

After about 4,800 miles, 75 days, sore muscles, and a few scrapes and bruises, the Illini 4000 bicycle team arrived at the United Methodist Church in Willits, an overnight stop on the way to their final destination of San Francisco.

**Mathew Caine**  
Features Writer  
mathew@willitsweekly.com

"We're raising money for cancer research and patient-support services," explained rider Jacob Minin. "Our beneficiaries range from American Cancer Society and organizations like B+ Foundation that provides money to families of children with cancer. We raise money in the school year preceding the summer ride. A lot of our money comes from local businesses, family, friends, fundraisers that we hold throughout the year. We also receive donations during the ride.

"Each person of the ride is responsible for raising \$4,000. There are some team efforts but different team members have different ways of fundraising. I did ask my donors to sponsor miles. I have one person sponsoring miles one through 50, and another 51 through 100, etc.

"Our organization is based out of the University of Illinois," said Minin. "Most of us are students. We started the program in 2007. It started as an idea from two friends who said, 'let's bike across the country for a good cause.' Then they did it the next year and thought it was time to formalize it and formed a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Our original official address was a dorm at the University in Champagne."

The first riders into town were greeted by Pastor Rosemary Landry, who gave them a tour of, and the keys to the church where they would be able to spend the night, have their fill of donated dinner and breakfast, prior to continuing with the last three legs of their journey, Healdsburg, Petaluma and San Francisco.

In addition to their raising money, the University of Illinois student-created group is tasked with the Portraits Project, "It's to paint a portrait of cancer across America," continued Minin. "It's an oral history effort that documents the American cancer experience through interviews with people who have had cancer or have been affected by cancer.

"We compile those into short videos that we post on our website or sometimes longer documentaries," he explained. "You hear a lot of awesome stories, you see a lot of cool places, you meet a lot of super-kind people. The experience not only changes the way you think about the things you do every day but also opens your mind to the wealth of experiences that people have."

According to their website, [www.illini4000.org](http://www.illini4000.org), the group of 30 riders has raised \$42,384 so far this year and approximately \$1,122,500 since 2006.



Photos by Mathew Caine



At top: The first arrivals pose for a photo in the courtyard of the church. Above: The first wave of the Illini 4000 riders arrive at the United Methodist Church. At left: Pastor Rosemary Landry shows a couple of the riders where they can find food for dinner and breakfast. Below: United Methodist Church Pastor Rosemary Landry greets the utility truck.



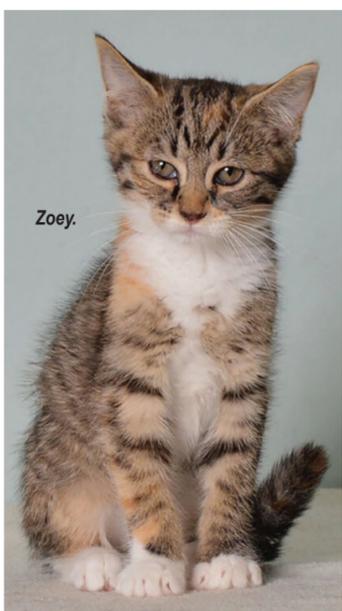
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Coming Soon:  
**SHANG-CHI & THE LEGEND OF THE 10 RINGS**

**FREE GUY**  
(PG13)  
1 hr 55 mins  
Fri.: 5:15 & 8:00pm  
Sat./Sun.: 2:30, 5:15 & 8:00pm  
Mon.-Thurs.: 5:15 & 8:00pm

**REMINISCENCE**  
(PG13)  
1 hr 56 mins  
Fri.: 5:00 & 7:30pm  
Sat./Sun.: 2:15, 5:00 & 7:30pm  
Mon.-Thurs.: 5:00 & 7:30pm

**RESPECT**  
(PG13)  
2 hrs 25 mins  
Fri.: 4:45 & 7:45pm  
Sat./Sun.: 1:45, 4:45 & 7:45pm  
Mon.-Thurs.: 4:45 & 7:45pm

Movie Times for August 20 thru August 26      Masks Required      Private Screenings Available. Call Lois @ 707-354-3295 to schedule.



Zoey.

## Joey and Zoey

Two sibling kittens – 2 months old – are available at the Ukiah Shelter: Joey and Zoey. Joey is a male domestic medium hair, orange and white tabby. He is a happy and playful young guy. He loves to play with his sister, Zoey, as well as with people. Zoey is a female domestic medium hair, black tabby and tortie. She is a sweet, happy, athletic kitten. She loves to play around with her brother, Joey, but also likes to be held and petted.

For more info about Joey and Zoey or to see the Mendocino County Animal Shelter's canine and feline guests, and for information about services, programs, events and updates about COVID-19 and the inland shelter, located at 298 Plant Road in Ukiah, visit: [www.mendoanimalshelter.com](http://www.mendoanimalshelter.com). For information about adoptions, please call 707-467-6453.

## Cute Sir Uva

Welcome our new friend Sir Uva! This little fella was found by our gate. That is no place for a puppy to be left. We of course brought him in and got him set up nice and cozy in a kennel. Sir Uva is about 3 months old and living in a foster home currently. In his foster home he is learning to live with cats, dogs, kiddos, and even a mini pig! We are excited to learn about this little ball of cuteness! Apply to love Sir Uva at [mendohumanesociety.com](http://mendohumanesociety.com)

The Humane Society for Inland Mendocino is located at 9700 Uva Drive in Redwood Valley. We are currently open by appointment only Wednesday through Friday, and open to the public Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 3 pm, no appointment needed on the weekends! You may also look at available dogs and cats on our website: [www.mendohumanesociety.com](http://www.mendohumanesociety.com), our Facebook page, and on [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com).



Joey.



COLUMN | AT THE MOVIES

## 'Free Guy'

**The Story:** A fantasy. An action flick. A comedy. A romance. The frantic (and kinda pretty) video game designer "Molotov Girl" (Jodie Comer) notices something truly weird in the online game she designed. She's studying the friendly bank teller "Guy" (Ryan Reynolds) as he parades happily and obliviously through his day never knowing that he's just an unimportant pawn in a video game.



**Dan Essman**  
Columnist

But then, quite out-of-character and quite outside of his parameters, Guy says he wants a girlfriend. He's just a minor sub-routine. That's not in his program. He's not supposed to want anything. While back in the "real" world, the kinda pretty Molotov Girl is kinda in love with him. Though the tension mounts for us movie fans (spoiler), the problem does get solved! The flick is, after all, a fantasy-action-romance-comedy.

**My Thoughts:** Ryan Reynolds is terribly likable. He's clever, moderately good-looking (rather than "movie star" perfect), and he's self-deprecating. Except for the people who hate him (I'm sure some do), everyone likes him. Now consider the peculiarity of rooting for a character who (by definition as a plot point) doesn't exist. For that to work story-wise, depends on the actor's charm.

"Free Guy" was built around Mr. Reynolds, who we all agree is exceedingly charming. We care whether or not he gets the girl. Or the girl gets him. Or if the infinite variety of computer-generated bad dudes have the power to crush his hopes. If we are sympathetic with our protagonists, we can accept contradictory storylines. Our willing suspension of disbelief is human nature. It's on the big screen, and we believe what we see.

**Parents:** Though it's hidden beneath tons of noisy spectacle and explosions and impossible artificial intelligence code, the moral of this flick is that friendship and self-sacrifice are rewarded. That's a great message for kids.

*Willitsian Daniel Essman prefers his reality attenuated by the wisdom of the imagination.*