

What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from readers

Support for REACH

To the Editor:

Willits Municipal Airport recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Originally built by local volunteers and authorized as an official airport by the state of California, it is designed to serve all types of aircraft, including airplanes and helicopters, public and private.

Ongoing airport maintenance is primarily funded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and inspected for safety by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Aeronautics Division. It is owned by the City of Willits for the public good.

Recently, Caltrans Aeronautics was asked by a local citizen to "immediately suspend night operations" at Willits Municipal Airport for perceived safety reasons, effectively disallowing any aircraft, including emergency aircraft such as the REACH Air Medical Services helicopter, from using the airport at night.

Caltrans disallowed the request, noting that safety issues have been addressed and stating that if normal flight operations are followed: "Caltrans would have no jurisdiction over approval of the REACH base."

A local environmental group, Keep The Code, has threatened legal action against the city if the REACH helicopter takes off or lands at the airport until an environmental review is completed: a review that has not previously been deemed necessary by public officials for any other operations at the airport.

Willits Municipal Airport is a public airport, funded by the FAA and overseen by Caltrans and the City of Willits for the public good. It complies with federal and state operations and safety requirements. CalFire, CHP, and other emergency services, as well as many commercial and recreational aircraft commonly use the Willits Airport for operations.

REACH should not be stopped from using our public airport by threats of costly and unfounded legal action. Please support REACH's efforts to improve our local quality of life with safe operations from our airport.

Dan Ramsey, manager, Willits Airport

Thanks from the crafts fair

To the Editor:

The Willits Center for the Arts would like to thank everyone who supported, organized and participated in this year's 28th Annual Holiday Craft Fair. The WCA would like to acknowledge and thank: Nancy Reed, our volunteer coordinator, and all the volunteers for organizing the raffle table, Jon Maglante for designing the poster, Hal Wagenet for doing the sound and electricity, and Sparetime Supply for providing the Christmas tree for this year's successful Holiday Craft Fair.

A huge thank you must be extended to all the artists, without whom the fair would not exist. Each artist donated a piece to the raffle, volunteered their time to distribute posters, decorated the Willits Community Center, and helped clean up. A special thanks also goes to the Willits Charter School parents and students who provided the delicious food and wonderful goodies throughout the event.

The WCA also would like to thank Shauna Martin for organizing the Kid's Crafts Fair held on Saturday, and the schools and organizations that participated. Music always adds a lot to the fair, and we would like to thank Creek Norris, Tom DeMarchi, and Dave Knudsen for helping with the sound and set-up, and the musicians: Falco, David Parth, George Husaruk, Janice Winters, John Wagenet, Anita Blu, Keith Rutledge, Nancy Smith, the Emandal Chorale, and Nancy New & the Rowdy Choir, who volunteered their time and talents to bring a festive atmosphere to the fair.

The artists also want to thank the citizens of Willits and the

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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Willits, CA 95490
willitsweekly@gmail.com
www.willitsweekly.com
707-459-2633; 707-972-7047

Jennifer Poole, editor and reporter / jennifer@willitsweekly.com / 707-459-2633

Maureen Moore, designer and photographer / maureen@willitsweekly.com / 707-972-7047

Mike A'Dair, reporter / mike@willitsweekly.com

Zack Clinek, reporter / zack@willitsweekly.com

Kate Maxwell, reporter / kate@willitsweekly.com

Justin Stephens, webmaster

For advertising inquiries, please call 707-459-2633 or 707-972-7047 or email advertising@willitsweekly.com

surrounding areas for coming out to support and help sustain our artists and economy. Being together as a community at this holiday time of year is a big part of the fair, and everyone appreciates the kind words from everyone who attended this year's fair.

We would like to thank the Willits News and Willits Weekly for all their efforts to promote the fair with interesting and informative articles. Thanks especially to Rachel Belvin of Willits Weekly.

Every year it takes a special group of dedicated people to provide our community with a high-quality, festive, fun and profitable Holiday Craft Fair. With the support and participation of everyone, we look forward to another annual Holiday Craft Fair in December 2015.

Bonnie Belt and Ann Maglante, Holiday Craft Fair coordinators

Response to Bob Whitney

To the Editor:

Dear Mr. Whitney (regarding your December 4 letter to the editor): I have a feeling that you have alienated a good portion of the community with your insistence that a REACH helicopter base in Willits will be harmful to the environment as well as adversely affect the well-being of a handful of citizens living adjacent to the Willits airport.

You imply that the existing locations of REACH and CALSTAR's base ports are sufficient, with flights from Lakeport and Ukiah to Willits being approximately 12 minutes and 10 minutes respectively.

Mr. Whitney, you are insulating yourself from the rest of our community, which, by the way, does not end at Willits High School. Have you given any thought to the needs of Laytonville, Covelo or Fort Bragg? A REACH base in Willits would substantially reduce rescue time to these areas, by perhaps as much as an hour or more round-trip.

An hour is a crucial amount of time for someone who has suffered a heart attack, a stroke or been critically injured in an accident.

Mr. Whitney, I do not know where you live, but I assume that it is in close proximity to the airport, since you seem so concerned with "harmful noise disturbance." You have been "compelled to hire an attorney to defend environmental laws." Wow. When I hear a REACH or CALSTAR helicopter (and, yes, we also hear them in town), I say a silent prayer for the person inside and the crew.

Norma Hanson, Willits

Bragging and complaining

To the Editor:

As usual, Willits bypass protesters contradict themselves and each other. In her letter to the editor, last week Naomi Wagner complained (again) that Caltrans alone is responsible for bypass construction delays and millions of dollars in cost overruns:

"Any 'cost overruns' were caused by Caltrans' cavalier approach to the law, callous disregard for the environment and disrespect for Native Americans, arrogant attitude towards the public, and intransigent resistance to reasonable change."

www.willitsweekly.com/documents/WillitsWeekly_12112014_AandBPages.pdf – see page 2.

In a previous letter, Wagner apportioned blame for Willits bypass delays and cost overruns: "Caltrans 100%, protesters 0."

But SOLLV is still bragging on their website about bypass protesters causing construction delays:

"Direct actions also slow the construction of the bypass, putting stress on Caltrans and its contractors, who are under deadlines with the project. For example, not only did



It's Here! It's Here! It's Here!

The 2015 Soroptimist International Willits Community Telephone Directory!

Located inside today's edition of Willits Weekly, the 2015 Soroptimist phone book is filled with local listings for Willits businesses, residences and cell phones, all surrounded by advertisements from area merchants and interesting information about the Soroptimist group of Willits women! Though all of the papers distributed at local businesses and in our black Willits Weekly newspaper boxes will have the phone book included, it is not possible to mail or home deliver the phone books to our wonderful subscribers. Fear not, however, as we will be cheerfully handing them out at the Winter Farmers Market at the Little Lake Grange on Thursdays from 3 to 5:30 pm (except Christmas Day, of course!), and they can also be found at Gateway Realty near Safeway, the Willits Library, and the Savings Bank of Mendocino County in Willits. A copy of the phone book will also be available online at www.WillitsWeekly.com. If you would like to be included in the directory next year, or have changes you would like to request for your listing, please email willitsphonebook@gmail.com.

the occupation of the wick drain sticher entirely immobilize the tower Will was on for 11 and a half days; it also put the other sticher out of commission for at least one extra working day after he and another climber attached a truck rope traverse line between each of the machines. It is estimated that there are currently around 3,000 fewer wick drains in Little Lake Valley than there would be had it not been for the occupation. Taking into account their cumulative impact, delays like these can translate into far-reaching political consequences, while helping buy time for the ecosystems that are at stake."

SOLLV goes on to proudly recap every illegal action to obstruct bypass construction to date: www.savelittlelakevalley.org/timeline-of-direct-action-resistance-to-caltrans-bypass.

I guess bypass protesters want all the glory, such as it is, but none of the responsibility.

After cataloging all the ways Caltrans has "messed up," Wagner urged the California Transportation Commission to deny Caltrans' request for an additional \$64 million to cover cost overruns. Sadly for Wagner and other local environmental extremists, happily for the rest of us, the CTC unanimously approved Caltrans' request.

Also sadly for Wagner et al., bypass protesters' persistent complaints about the delays they themselves have caused contributed to the Army Corps of Engineers' insistence on an accelerated mitigation schedule. That accelerated schedule requires Caltrans to use herbicides on 67 acres of mitigation lands to eradicate invasive non-native blackberry bushes in order to restore the mitigation lands to their original condition. Caltrans had planned to use entirely non-toxic methods of removal, but that takes too long. www.willitsbypass.wordpress.com

Once again bypass protesters have made things worse instead of better. Once again bypass protesters have the nerve to complain about the consequences of their own actions. They seem oblivious to the laws of cause and effect. They seem oblivious to all the contradictions in their statements and actions. And they seem oblivious to all the silly, irresponsible claims they have made that have proven groundless (i.e., wick drains will create an underground dam and turn Little Lake Valley into a desert, pile driving will turn fish brains to jelly and cause neurological problems for local children).

Have bypass protesters ever once admitted they were wrong about anything? They brag and complain, contradicting themselves and each other continuously, apparently forgetting that the rest of us are listening. Carry on Caltrans! Looking good out there!

E-mail me with a mailing address if you would like a "Thank You Caltrans" or "I (Heart) Willits Bypass" bumper sticker: rcovin13@gmail.com.

Randi Covin, Brooktrails

Willits Weekly

EST. 2013

A Nostalgic & Modern Record of Community and Life in Willits

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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Walk-A-Thon Winners

Blosser Lane Elementary School honored winners of the school's fall Walk-A-Thon at an afternoon assembly last week: from left to right: Blosser Lane Principal Robert Chavez, Windi Kvasnicka of Blosser PTO, students Shelby Bowen, Jared Dunham and Maranda Swearing, and Tiffany Weeks of Blosser PTO. The annual Walk-A-Thon is Blosser's biggest fundraiser each year, and the monies raised go toward student activities, including field trips, free books, and assemblies. First place went to Shelby Bowen, who won a 26 inch Huffly bicycle; second place went to Jared Dunham, who won an overnight stay at Willits KOA Campground; and third place went to Maranda Swearing, who won a Noyo Theatre package.

Young Milo

Milo is a friendly, playful pup. He loves the treats, which always makes training a little easier, and what 10-month-old puppy doesn't need a little training here and there? Milo would be a great family dog and would probably enjoy hanging out and playing with kids older than 12, or another dog. He is super smart and aims to please! This joyful boy will bring all sorts of smiles to his forever home! If you are active, 30-pound Milo just might be the guy for you. Come see him at the Ukiah Animal Shelter, located at 298 Plant Road in Ukiah.

Adoption hours are Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and Wednesday from 10 am to 6 pm. We have many wonderful dogs and cats, awaiting their forever homes here. To view photos and bios of more of our wonderful adoptable animals, please visit our website: www.mendoshelterpets.com or visit our shelter during shelter hours. More info about adoptions: 467-6453.

Studio Joy

THE place for Zumba Fitness in Willits

Give the gift of fitness for the holidays!

Studio Joy is offering 5 class cards for \$35 (regularly \$47.50) and 10 class cards for \$70 (regularly \$90)

Cards must be purchased between December 1 and December 31, but do not expire. Use them any time for any of our 14 weekly classes, including R.I.P.P.E.D. Purchase as many as you like. Bring a friend to Zumba!

Starting in January, Studio Joy will be adding **R.I.P.P.E.D. with Judy Coughlin** on Tuesday and Thursday nights at 6:30 p.m. Want to take your fitness to the next level? R.I.P.P.E.D. is THE thing! Free demo classes at 6:30 Monday and Wednesday, Dec. 8 and 10.

We offer Zumba, Zumba Gold, Zumba Toning and now R.I.P.P.E.D. **Your first class is free!**

See www.studiojoywillits.com for full schedule.

Like our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/studiojoywillits

1262 Blosser Lane • Willits, CA 707-841-7499

Helping the Willits Community meet its fitness goals with Zumba since 2011.

Lucky Blue Ribbon quilt winner

At left: Betty Lemmer of the Brooktrails Women's Club gives Elizabeth Basterrechea, right, her 2014 Brooktrails Women's Club Scholarship Fund Quilt, "ShooFly Ties." Basterrechea works at Howard Memorial Hospital's Physical Therapy Department. Her winning ticket in the annual raffle was drawn at the Brooktrails Property Owners Association Holiday Dinner on December 14.

"ShooFly Ties," a queen-size quilt constructed by Amy Elliott and Betty Lemmer and quilted by Linda McCallum, was awarded a blue ribbon at the 2014 Redwood Empire Fair. The quilt features fabrics salvaged from men's ties.

WIN ATVs & CASH

Saturdays in December!

CASH DRAWINGS 7P-11P • ATV GIVEAWAY AT 11:15P

\$75,000 HOLIDAY GIVEAWAY!

PLUS! \$3,000 IN CASH DRAWINGS ON CHRISTMAS AND \$17,000 IN CASH DRAWINGS ON NEW YEAR'S EVE!

See Player's Club for details.

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Weekly Promotions for December

Christmas Bonus

December 22: 7:30-10:30 p.m. Hourly Hot Seat Drawings for \$100 Cash	December 23: 7:30-10:30 p.m. Hourly Hot Seat Drawings for \$150 Cash	December 24: 7:30-10:30 p.m. Hourly Hot Seat Drawings for \$200 Cash	December 25: 7:00-10:00 p.m. Hourly Hot Seat Drawings for \$250 Cash
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MONDAYS - Rooster & Owls

Earn 3X Points all day.
Morning Session: 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Hourly Hot Seat Drawings for \$50 Cash at 9, 10, 11 a.m. and 12 p.m.
Evening Session: 6:00 - 10:00 p.m.
Hourly Hot Seat Drawings for \$50 Cash at 7, 8, 9 and 10 p.m.
May win once per promotion day!

For both Morning and Evening sessions: Play 50 coin-in (150 sessions), receive \$5 Freeplay and a \$2.00 Food Coupon

TUESDAYS - Guy's Night

Earn 2X points all day. • 6:00-10:00 p.m.
Play 50 coin-in (100 sessions), receive \$5 Freeplay. Hot Seat Drawings every half hour from 6:00-9:30 p.m. for \$25 cash, last drawing at 10 p.m. for \$100 Cash.

WEDNESDAYS - Ladies Night

2X points all day. • 6:00-10:00 p.m.
Play 50 coin-in (100 sessions), receive \$5 Freeplay. Hot Seat Drawings every half hour from 6:00-9:30 p.m. for \$25 cash, last drawing at 10 p.m. for \$100 Cash.

THURSDAYS - Super Senior Day

The Senior Freeplay will be preloaded to the Players Club Card.
10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.: Hot Seat Drawings each hour. Winners receive \$40 Cash. Drawing at 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 p.m. for \$200 Cash.
Specials posted at Creekside Cafe. 11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Lunch hours.

FRIDAYS - Friday Fun

1:00-9:00 p.m.: Earn 100 points, receive \$10 Freeplay
2:00-8:00 p.m.: Hourly Hot Seat Drawings for \$75 Cash • 9:00 p.m.: Hot Seat Drawing for \$100 Cash

SATURDAYS - Saturday Night Paydays

6:00-11:00 p.m. — Tickets will be randomly handed out twice an hour starting after 6:00 p.m. Drawing at 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 p.m. for \$200 Cash.

SUNDAYS - Football Frenzy

12:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. — Random Hourly Hot Seat Drawings. The Winner will choose a Football of their choice and have a chance win up to \$150 Cash.

December 31, 2014 — Come in and win your share of \$10,000! Drawings begin at 7:00 p.m., Grand Prize at Midnight for \$1,000 Cash!

100 Kawi Place in Willits 459-7330 Management reserves all rights.

Puzzle Page & More

Activities & fun for kids of all ages

Sudoku

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

Crossword 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	28	29							30							
31										32							
33										34	35	36	37	38			
						39	40	41		42	43						
					44	45				46							
					47					48							
49										50			51	52	53	54	55
56										57				58			
59										60				61			
62										63							
														64			

CLUES ACROSS

- Cuts off a branch
- 13th Hebrew letter
- 'Hair' producer Joseph
- Giraffa camelopardalis
- Indicates near
- Capital of Samoa
- Roving adventurously
- Help
- Deafening noises
- Spanish neighborhood
- Portable computer screen material
- 20th Hebrew letter
- 'Blue Bloods' lead actor
- Scholarly
- Raleigh NC river
- Alongside each other
- Electronics Support Module
- Dogma
- New Deal statesman Harold
- A corporation's first stock offer
- Slender tower with balconies

CLUES DOWN

- Murderers Leopold & _____
- Southern veggie
- Henry's 6th wife
- Practice fight
- Dinners
- Hermaphrodite
- Centers
- Fathers (Spanish)
- For each one
- SW Belarus city

CLUES ACROSS

- Australian slang for a kiss
- Ability to begin
- Short whistle blasts
- Were introduced
- Glowing quality
- Ingest
- Relative biological effectiveness
- Footed vase
- River in NE Scotland
- English Univ. river
- Malaysian Isthmus
- Soft-finned fish
- Eyelid infection
- Fred & Wilma's baby
- New __, Louisiana city
- Tse-tung or Zedong
- Hindu weather god
- ____ May, actress
- Hauled laboriously
- One suspender
- More peculiar
- N. Central African country
- Macaw genus
- Rhythmic swing or cadence
- Ballerina skirt
- Arabian sultanate

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, things are going to change with regard to your professional life. Expect some good news at work and possibly a promotion. Make the most of this opportunity.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Home matters have been on your mind, Leo. This week you will reach a resolution to your issue. Your hard work has paid off so you can have some fun.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, you tend to get restless with routine, so take some time to switch things up this week. Take a different route to work or school. Otherwise, make new friends.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, your love of travel continues this week, and you won't be content until you hit the road. If you have the chance to travel, make the most of this opportunity.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, now is a great time to aim for a promotion at work or make some changes to make yourself more marketable. It's time to push ahead in your career.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, this is an exciting period for you, as both personal plans and career goals come to fruition. Enjoy the ride in the days ahead.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

This week is bound to be very social, and your calendar is full, Taurus. You can pick and choose what you want to do, and you can expect to enjoy all of your experiences in the week ahead.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

This is a week you are bound to enjoy, Virgo. The next several days will be full of structured fun, and that is right up your alley. Enjoy the company of friends and family.

GEMINI

May 22/June 21

Expect to start the week on an exciting note, Gemini. Big news is coming your way, and you can allow yourself to enjoy this exciting time in your life.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, you may prefer to keep to yourself this week, but you are more likely to be surrounded by friends and family. Make the most of this time with loved ones.

CANCER

June 22/July 22

Cancer, enjoy time with your significant other in the days ahead. A romantic trip could be just the way to go, and both of you will appreciate the one-on-one time.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, things are set to go your way and you couldn't be happier. You thrive on being in control, and that's right where you will be this week. Good things are ahead.

COLUMN | Well Mannered Mutts



What to give the dog that has everything

Like so many pet owners, I like to give gifts to my pets during the holidays. For the cats, this usually involves cat treats and fuzzy toy mice. For the dogs, it usually involves some interesting new gadget.

I recently learned about a new toy that I really like. It's the "Tether Tug." This is a toy that has a pole you securely place into the ground and attach a ball on a rope to the top of the pole. It's similar to the old tether ball poles some of us had as kids.

The idea is that the dog grabs the ball on the rope and tries to tug it loose. Because the ball is securely fastened to the flexible pole, the dog isn't able to dislodge it. It bends, it twists, the dog can move around in a circle – and all of this keeps the dog very motivated to get it. The pole pulls back.

The wonderful part about this toy is that it helps to burn off energy in most dogs, and we all know that a tired dog is a happy owner. It's a toy that the dog can play with while the owner is away. Another feature that I like about this toy is

there isn't any food involved. The dog naturally burns off calories throughout play.

Another non-treat toy is the "Bully Ball" or "Almost Indestructible Ball." These are balls that are made of hard plastic. The dog is not able to pick up the ball by their mouth no matter how hard they try, and boy do they try. The surface is smooth and there isn't a way to put the ball into their mouth. This forces the dog to bat it about with his body and paws.

The balls come in a variety of sizes from small to large. Some are shaped like ostrich eggs. There is an appropriate size ball for different size dogs. Because the dog cannot pick up the ball, they can only push it around.

This becomes a big challenge to most dogs, especially the herding breeds. They push, roll, wrestle and chase the ball all around the yard. You can also put it in water, because the balls float. Again, when the dog has had enough play and the ball has worn them out, they usually go and find a comfy place to take a dog nap.

Another toy that I really like is the "Kong Wobbler." This one does dispense food. This is a dog puzzle. You unscrew the large plastic toy and fill it with dog kibble. Then you screw it back together.

There is a small hole in the side of the cone-shaped toy. The bottom section of the toy is weighted. So every time the dog rolls or knocks over the toy, kibble spills out and the toy pops up again ready for action. It's a "Weeble Wobbler" for your dog.

This is a great toy for those dogs that have a tendency to eat too fast. Because only a few pieces of kibble are dispensed at a time, the dog is forced to eat slower.

The idea behind these toys is to exercise your dog and give them some mental stimulation. One of the leading causes of unwanted behavior with dogs is boredom. These are just a few ideas to help entertain your canine buddy when you – their most favorite toy – aren't able to.

Sallie Palmer is a Certified Dog Trainer with the International Association of Canine Professionals. She has been training dogs and their people for over 25 years. To learn more about Sallie, go to www.wellmanneredmutts.com.

COLUMN | Mendocino County Fisheries

Flows, fish, and funds

Flows

The recent rains have brought our creeks back to life after a harsh summer. Although these rains have helped fill local reservoirs, our region is still listed as being in an "Exceptional Drought" by the U.S. Drought Monitor (<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>). From all over the county, sad stories have been shared this summer of wells and springs going dry for the first time in decades. If you have a municipal water provider, be thankful for the continued supply and don't stop with your water conservation activities.

Fish

In November before the rains came, many creeks showed some surface flow because trees take up less water as air temperature cools, thus leaving more water in the channel. The late November rains provided water depths needed for adult fish to move upstream. Fall run chinook salmon are presently in many of our local creeks to reproduce and keep the cycle going. If these periodic storms continue, some of the creeks will receive runs of coho salmon, and soon thereafter, steelhead trout.

These tenacious fish, considered indicator species for health in our waters, have been impacted at every life stage, from egg to spawning adult, and their numbers have decreased dramatically as a result of human activities. What can local communities and individuals do to support native salmonids? Preventing poaching of adult spawners is one of the most valuable efforts that can be done to retain salmon in our streams. Changing water management on your property to draft from the creek in the winter and not in the summer improves habitat for juvenile salmonids. Implementing watershed restoration projects such as: erosion control, riparian planting, ranch road improvement, and aquatic habitat enhancement, are other important strategies for helping fish.

Funds

Changing water management strategies and implementing restoration projects on your land can require significant funds and technical expertise. There are agencies with funding and technical assistance programs designed specifically to accomplish the tasks listed above. Several ranches, farms, and rural homesteads in the Outlet Creek watershed have participated in grant programs, with measurable success.

These funds typically involve a competitive grant process, so identifying the benefits clearly with cost-effectiveness in mind improves the chances for approval. The next round of funding for California Department of Fish & Wildlife programs will be announced in February and due in March 2015. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a program called the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), which provides technical and financial assistance to landowners, and has multiple application dates throughout the year.

Projects such as forest stand improvement, culvert replacement, and road improvement have been implemented on properties throughout the county through EQIP and by CAL FIRE grant programs. EQIP may also benefit landowners who were impacted by the recent Lodge Lightning Complex fire.

Entities such as the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD), the NRCS, Trout Unlimited (TU), CalTrout, and others who are well-versed in project development are available to provide information and assist landowners in the application process.

Read the rest of

Fish | Over on Page 13

COLUMN | Relationships

Grief during the holidays

Dear Doris:

I have lost a lot of loved ones in the last year. I am not looking forward to the upcoming holidays.

I don't even feel like celebrating. It seems so hard to get away from those holidays. Everywhere I go there are signs of them.

R.

Dear R:

My heart goes out to you for your losses! The upcoming holiday season can be challenging for many, but especially for those like you who have lost loved ones. You can get swept away by grief, or it may feel like you have to let your loved ones go all over again and make peace with the fact that they have passed on. Know that you are not alone in experiencing feelings like that.

In my eyes, you are already doing the best you can by honestly acknowledging and expressing how the holidays make you feel. If it feels right to you, allow yourself to not celebrate this year, at least not in the usual way. When we experience grief, it is especially important that we stay true to our feelings. Other people's expectations have to wait. I call this taking good care of yourself, and that is what you need to do right now. Think about what would serve you best this year. Would you prefer to be alone over the holidays, or would you prefer to have company? Perhaps a mix of both?

If you choose to be alone, figure out how and where you would like to spend your time with the intention of being especially loving and gentle toward yourself. When grief strikes you, try to find a joyous way to honor and remember the loved ones you miss so much. Let your connection with your loved ones and your own creativity be your guides. And last, if being alone doesn't work out the way you were hoping, I recommend you have a plan B just in case. If you feel the need for company, don't hesitate to reach out to others. Share your thoughts and feelings about the upcoming holidays with a person you feel close to and trust, and ask if he or she could be your "holidays" ally. Be honest and straightforward with your needs. Remember how good it feels when others ask you to support them in a specific way.

If you choose to be with others, find out ahead of time who might be available. Check out what is going on in your community and nearby that interests or sounds fun to you, and find out who you could ask along if you don't want to go by yourself.

When we are in touch with our needs and with what is meaningful to us, the commercial world or what others think, affects us less.

Here are some examples that others have shared with me or I found helpful in coping with the holidays while grieving. May they inspire you to discover what the best course of action is for you: Treat yourself to a nice meal with candlelight and your favorite music. Take a warm bath. Go for a hike. Journal (about what made you loved ones so special or write them a letter and share with them your thoughts). Read, draw, look at old pictures, cook your loved one's favorite dishes and/or drink their favorite wine. Start the special project that has been on hold for years. You may want to invite friends for dinner or volunteer to help out at a soup kitchen or walk dogs at an animal shelter or...

I hope that you will find a way to turn the upcoming holidays into a good experience despite your losses.

Happy Holidays to you and everyone else! And a Happy New Year!

Read the rest of

Relationships | Over on Page 13

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Mushroom season returns

Big rains bring abundant fungi to Mendocino County

With the returning rains, mushroom season is back in Willits, and buyers are popping up at local motels like the multitudes of fungi flourishing on the hillsides. This year's crop is so abundant – after slim pickings caused a multi-year drought – that some experienced pickers say it's the best in years. Yet the quantity has brought a drop in prices, and on one recent day those with full buckets to sell were sent home disappointed.

Kate Maxwell
Reporter
kate@willitsweekly.com

"I'm going out to pick tomorrow, and I only expect to make about \$120, but in other years I'd make \$200 to \$300," said one visiting buyer, Nick, who returned to Willits from Oregon two weeks ago. He explained prices vary by the stage of growth and are also affected by constant competition and "lots of drama" between buyers and pickers, many of whom migrate with the mushroom seasons. The night before he'd bought over 1,000 pounds of mushrooms from around 20 people.

Popular edible mushrooms appear in the Pacific Northwest sooner than in Mendocino County, and wholesale purchasers often travel south when buying prices are right. The county is home to a diverse range of mushrooms, for which the market varies throughout the fall and winter, but matsutakes, black trumpets, chanterelles, hedgehogs, candy caps, and morels are some of the common commercial picks.

Prices for pickers can change daily, depending on the wholesale needs of mushroom brokers, who set prices and coordinate shipments from the Bay Area and the northwest, sending mushrooms to Asia once the domestic market is saturated. This Monday, matsutakes prices were \$5 or \$4 or \$3 or \$2 per pound, depending on condition. Black trumpets and hedgehogs were bringing between \$3 and \$4.

Local stores buy from distributors like Eric Schramm of Mendocino Mushrooms, who first discovered matsutakes in the county, or mushroom farmers like Mad Hatter of Laytonville, said Mariposa Market's Mary Ann Trevey.

Nick said the Japanese market "had opened up a bit recently," but that

American mushroom pickers were competing with European crops there. "Once they get a freeze in Europe, then there will be better prices here," he said. "It's an international market." Others said a recession in Japan was also affecting wholesale prices.

One picker, Tom, a long-term return picker from Montana, says the quantity and quality of mushrooms here now "is the best I've seen in 15 years." To survive the low prices offered by local buyers, he works with a group of five other pickers who maintain long-term relationships with regional customer accounts. "When prices are \$3/pound here, I can get \$12/pound in the Bay Area," he explained. Other pickers will drive trucks to local airports to send mushrooms across the country. Picking competition started increasing, said Tom, as property owners got into the business and more mushrooms drove down prices. More people from industries fallen on hard times, like logging, started to pick, too. "In the old days you could just wander the hills, but now it's hard work," he said. Tom still comes back because picking "just gets in your blood."

Sorting through her buckets in the Pepperwood Motel parking lot, local property owner Donna said her usual long-term buyer wasn't buying that day due to abundance. For over a decade, Donna has sold matsutakes from her acreage for extra income for the grandchildren's Christmas presents, but says she only comes out to sell when she knows people are buying.

Donna said she'd had increasing issues on her land this season with mushroom-seeking trespassers. "We always take extras and either freeze them for ourselves or throw them back on the patch," she said, but she's found inexperienced pickers raking the patches on her property, which can severely damage returning growth.

This problem also occurs at Jackson State Demonstration Forest, which issues unlimited \$20 mushroom collection permits at the Fort Bragg office. Permit holders provide name and vehicle info, and get forest maps to avoid closed areas, picking guidelines to protect fungal ecology, and safety information.

"There's lots of families in the area that have

Read the rest of **Mushrooms** | Over on Page 13



At top: Bins of the prized matsutake mushrooms, also known as "pines."

Above: Mushroom pickers line up to show a buyer their wares one Sunday, right before he filled up his orders and sent them away.

Below: Unusually late-season bright red lobster mushrooms – they smell like lobsters! – fill up a basket.



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The rest of **Pinches** From Page 1

in 2010, defeating Holly Madrigal by 291 votes.

In essence, then, Pinches has been a county supervisor for 12 of the past 20 years. His particular brand of politics has been a combination of Republican-style conservatism, laced with a swirl of Libertarian populism and topped off with a strongly pro-marijuana, Don't Tread On Me radicalism. It was a political recipe that appealed to a majority of Mendocino County voters in three elections.

Pinches has been noted for his support of business, industry and marijuana. He was the first elected official in California to state publicly that marijuana should be legalized, making that statement in January 1995 during his second meeting as a supervisor.

For that, he was both ridiculed and lionized. However, it can be said he was the first elected official in California to give establishment credibility to a political movement that has only gotten stronger with time, and which now seems only a few years from being realized.

Pinches was well-known for his detailed knowledge of the county budget. He would often surprise his colleagues, and whoever happened to be county administrator or executive officer at the time, by knowing where this or that pot of money lay dormant and buried in the massive document.

He was also very accessible. He once told this reporter that he worked 80 hours a week. In 2010 and 2011, when Little Lake Grange was flexing its muscles as a newly reinvigorated force in local politics, Pinches appeared at a series of forums at the Grange, during which he informally debated county policy on a number of issues. It was an amazing display of democracy and popular access to the levers of power.

Many of those present at the forums took a political posture varying from liberal to progressive to radical left, and it appeared to this reporter they were attempting to turn Pinches into a Green. They failed to do that, and after about four of the events, the sponsoring group cancelled the planned series.

Nevertheless, even Pinches' most embittered opponent had to admit Pinches had showed up and had told the audience what he really thought. He managed to do it without coming across as arrogant or demeaning. In fact, he was almost always gracious and polite, injecting his own brand of earthy humor into discussions that had the potential of getting very ugly. Within the context of politics, he had the ability to be charming.

He also had a rare ability to work long hours behind the scenes. In 1997 he scuttled Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority General Manager Mike Sweeney's plans for a countywide garbage hauling network to fuel a proposed solid waste transfer station on North State Street near Ukiah, in favor of a private contractor system. He continued to work on that agenda until, in August 2010, the board of supervisors approved a proposal to have a private company, Solid Waste of Willits, take over operations at the county's six small rural transfer stations.

With that approval Pinches achieved one of his most cherished goals: "getting Mendocino County out of the garbage business."

Another of his more successful campaigns involved persuading fellow board members to direct the county administration to get out of an array of rented or leased buildings county agencies were then occupying, and to consolidate

those services into a few county-owned buildings in Ukiah and Fort Bragg. This move was eventually accomplished in 2010, and for several years thereafter Pinches would remind anyone who would listen that the move had saved the county a million dollars a year, in perpetuity.

He was right. It did.

On one occasion, Pinches was willing to back up important issues with his own money. In 2011, while the county was still suffering from the financial collapse of 2008, a group of library supporters put forward Measure A, a proposal to increase countywide sales tax by 0.12 percent in order to better fund the county's library system. When proponents submitted the measure to supervisors, Pinches supported it, while his colleagues on the board balked at putting the measure on the ballot because of the cost to the county of running a ballot measure.

Pinches then made a deal with the board. If it would authorize putting the measure on the ballot, supervisors could rewrite it so that, if the measure passed, election costs would come out of the revenue generated by the tax. If the measure failed, Pinches promised to pay those costs himself – an amount roughly equivalent to one year of his supervisor's salary.

The board accepted his offer and authorized putting Measure A on the ballot. It was approved overwhelmingly by the voters. So one of the reasons we have a better library system today is John Pinches.

While being strongly supportive of business, he also supported the arts. Even in the toughest budget years, he insisted on the county setting aside at least some money, \$15,000 or \$25,000, to help fund the Mendocino County Arts Council and other artistic or cultural groups.

Water was one of Pinches' strongest issues, and one he never tired of hammering on. He put the fear of God into a wide swath of Mendocino County's environmental community when he began touting a plan to pump water from the Eel River at Dos Rios to Lake Mendocino. That idea never reached critical mass.

He also pushed a plan to pipe water from Scout Lake at the Wente Boy Scout Camp east of Willits. According to Pinches, water from that small reservoir could have been available for Willits, or for water-starved Redwood Valley, but neither entity was interested in pursuing the idea.

He spent years putting out feelers to see if there was political will and a legal leg to stand on for another idea he had: suing Sonoma County for water. His idea was to claim water rights in Lake Sonoma, a huge reservoir near Cloverdale that holds runoff from hills that are part of Mendocino County, and then to trade the claim to that water for additional water from Lake Mendocino. That idea never got the green flag from the Mendocino County Counsel's office.

In spite of these setbacks, Pinches continued throughout his second and third terms to address the water issue in a fundamental way. He often would argue it was pointless to talk about strategies to conserve more water or to wheedle an extra 5 or 10 percent out of Sonoma County, when the real issue was that Mendocino County did not control even one drop of its own water. He pressed his fellow board members and the public to get real about water but, to date, that idea, too, has failed to take root in the pragmatic world of county

Third District Supervisor-elect Tom Woodhouse with outgoing Supervisor John Pinches at last week's board meeting.

Photo by Mike A'Dair



politics.

Pinches' entrepreneurial, small-business background sometimes got him into trouble. For example, in 2014, he floated an idea to run the county's Department of Transportation like a private business. Pinches suggested, in open session, that department Director Howard Dashiell loosen up his books and fund county road projects on what Pinches termed a "float" system, under which the department would pay for project C with funds that had been given to the county to pay for projects A and B.

It would mean the Department of Transportation would run the risk of ending up in the red, year after year. County CEO Carmel Angelo told Pinches for the county to approve such a system would be illegal. His idea was allowed to die a quiet death.

In a recent interview, Pinches talked about the direction he would like to see the future board of supervisors take:

"Number one, as far as leading for the future, you got to be on good financial stable ground, and I feel real good about how I'm leavin' the county," Pinches said. "When I say 'I,' that's just my part. Of course I'm on a board and everybody wants to take credit. But years ago, a report from our own auditor came out that said it was questionable if the county was going to be able to continue as an ongoing concern. Now, we got over a \$10 million general fund reserve. Even though our revenues are pretty flat – they're only increasing about 1 to 2 percent – we're kind of havin' smooth sailing, now. So we got the financial situation in shape.

"County government is all about services. It's not about the power of the board or the power of any individual. It's about how are you going to get the level of services out there? Now in my term we have built or we have in the process over 20 bridges. We've taken complete advantage of the federal highway transportation bill that pays about 98 percent of the cost of the bridges. And we're a county that has a lot of bridges. I feel good about that.

"There's always more you can do,"

Pinches continued. "For instance, mental health. We get the Mental Health Services Act money, that certainly helps. But that's an area, if we had three times the budget, we probably couldn't meet all the needs. And the roads, too. One could say we're \$100 million behind in our roads, and what not. But for the money that we have, and the people – I mean, it's a vote of the people. Basically you can't raise the sales tax without a vote of the people, you can't raise the property tax. So, for the money we have comin' in, I feel good about the level of service.

"Any board of supervisors – and city council members, too – needs to stay focused on that. Not so much on the policies and what not. You can get overloaded on that. You notice, in my term of office, I haven't shied away from all these making comments on what goes on at the state or what goes on at the federal [levels]. I focus on Mendocino County, what goes on here. It's about focusing on the level of services, tryin' to keep the level of services up to the top level that you have the money to do."

When asked for any parting words as his third term as county supervisor draws to a close, Pinches said: "In not just in the Willits valley, and not even the Third District, but for that matter, the whole county: people have been extremely good to me. I've taken my fair share of criticism, but that's kinda like a boxer gettin' in the ring. You know you're gonna get your nose punched in once in a while, and you accept it. But the people have treated me extremely well. I'd like to think that I've been worth it to them, too.

"Now when I ran for office, I thought we were kinda gettin' the short end of the stick. Maybe every supervisor thinks that, but I think, really, we were. And that's no criticism of my predecessor or anything; it's just that I felt I could do a better job. And that was my motivation when I ran. And I think I've done that. I think it's fair to say that I'm leavin' Mendocino County in a little better shape than when I come into this office."

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December 22

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- Dear Santa,**
Please bring me a remote control car.
Love,
Maelie, age 4
- Dear Santa,**
Please bring me a big truck.
Love,
Michael, age 4
- Dear Santa,**
Please bring me an octonauts set. I love you.
Love,
Sophia, age 4
- Dear Santa,**
I want a teddy bear.
Jaden, age 4
- Dear Santa,**
I want a Barbie doll, a house, a horse, and some friends for Barbie.
Love,
Chloe, age 4
- Dear Santa,**
Please bring me a present.
Love,
Bronach, age 3
- Dear Santa,**
Please bring me one present.
Love,
Broide, age 5
- Dear Santa,**
I want 5 presents.
Love,
Payton, age 3

Letters to Santa
from Les Schwab of Willits

Dear Santa,
I want a singing Elsa doll that sings "Let it go"! And I want to go to New York City and to see the Statue of Liberty with my family, and a dress for my dog Tika ... oh and a horse!!!
Arabella Mondo, age 4

Dear Santa,
I was hoping for a robot. Maybe a new little sister who will listen to me better, and wooden bananas for the kitchen in my bedroom, and a gingerbread house covered in candy to eat. I have been a good girl and I want you to put me on the good list. My grandpa too. P.S. He needs 4 tires. Thanks!
Aurora, age 4 1/2

Dear Santa,
I would like a Sew Cool sewing machine, a little live pet Bird in a cage or a smartwatch.
Milagros Patino, age 9

Dear Santa,
I would like a dancing elf and a singing elf. Or stuff of Elsa.
Valera, age 3

Dear Santa,
I would like cube box games of fighting. Could it come with controls please? If it or you can't, please get me Njago Legos. Santiago Patino, age 6

Dear Santa,
What's it going? I'm okay. Are your reindeer up on the party roof? Give them carrots. I would like a present please. I need socks but want toys. Turtle presents & paw patrol I like. My baby brother wants Giraffe stuff. Thank you!
Jerrett N., age 3 1/2

Dear Santa,
I want a Sew Cool sewing machine, Vtech Watch, Dohvinci, Crazy Lights, Iphone5, Little Live Bird, Laptop, and neff rebelle agent bow.
Destiny Martinez, age 10

Dear Santa,
Thank you for the presents from last year.
Elvia, age 5

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Above, from left: Sheryl McFadden of Room to Bloom preschool sings with the students, one of whom especially enjoyed a little time on the microphone. Willits Brass band members including, from left: Tom Allman on tuba, Jim Church on the trombone, Eduardo Brito on the trumpet, and Dan Church on baritone. Tom Allman of Willits Brass smiles at the audience.

Below: The LDS Choir, directed by Patti Walczykowski.

Bottom: Attendees at the chorale listen to the array of musical selections.



Christmas Chorale raises the roof

The 27th annual Community Christmas Chorale at the LDS Church Sunday evening was packed with entertainment and with music lovers. Organizer Roni McFadden said she thought this year's chorale was "the best one in several years," with about 400 attendees. "The weather cooperated this year," McFadden said. "Last year we had that ice storm!"

There were 13 acts on the bill: "I can't pick one that stood out above others, because they were all memorable," McFadden said. "We were so happy to have the Developing Virtue Girls Chinese Orchestra back with us again this year from Talmage. They opened our show. The pre-school kids were great! The choirs (Emandal, Chanterelle, St. Francis, and LDS Church) were awesome."

"Willits Brass was a crowd favorite. The pianists were spellbinding: Elizabeth McDougal fittingly played the theme from Charlie Brown as the pre-school exited the stage. Local pianist Richard Bragdon mesmerized the crowd with his beautiful Christmas medley. And Ed Rinehart brought down the house with his "Christmas Boogie"! Patti and John Walczykowski each did solos to rousing applause."

"The closing act of the evening was a very spiritual rendition of 'Silent Night' performed in six different languages. John Walczykowski sang in English; Gloria Ulrich sang in German; Marilyn Simpson sang in French; the Sister Missionaries sang in Spanish; Robert Stewart sang in Japanese; and Brooke McFadden sang in Latvian, with the audience joining in on the last two verses."

"It was a magical evening," McFadden said. "I received so many comments about how wonderful the show was. And many of the performers asked if they could come back next year! I think overall it was a rip-roaring success!"

At right, top: Pianist Elizabeth McDougal, who played two numbers for the crowd. Right: A player in the Developing Virtue Girls Chinese Orchestra, directed by Nick Reid. The girls opened the show with two numbers, "Angels We Have Heard on High" and "Western Mongolian Dance."

Below, left: Patti Walczykowski and Marilyn Simpson sing. Below, right: Two attendees share a sweet moment while listening to the performance.



Bring in your tree tags!

Willits Community Christmas program getting ready

With Christmas less than one week away, volunteers with the Willits Community Christmas program are urging anyone who has selected a green or pink tag to bring in purchased items - EVEN IF THE TAG IS NOT COMPLETELY FILLED. As soon as they get the tags back, they can make the necessary adjustments to ensure all gifts are ready come Christmas Eve, when the toys will be delivered.

Program coordinator Sandy Turner also stressed that anyone wishing to donate any denomination of money to the

program will be greatly appreciated, too, as the volunteers are short on clothes to fill the requests on the tags. "We could really use some extra funds to help us shop for all the clothing requests this year," explained Turner. "But there are still tags out at local businesses, and we would love to have those filled and brought back, too. Whatever works!"

Read the rest of **Christmas** | Over on Page 13



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WHS Raffle Basket Winner

The lucky winner of the Willits High School senior class raffle was Adrienne Schafer, who received more than \$500 worth of goodies, including a \$35 Starbucks gift card, a Bumble & Bumble hair gift set valued at \$81, and an emergency road-side kit valued at \$30. Proceeds raised from the raffle will go to the WHS senior class for their field trip at the end of the school year.

Seniors expressed their thanks to the raffle sponsors, including, they said: Tammy Demarco of Les Schwab Tire Center, Omayia and Ken Sisemore of Earth's Treasures, Jenna and Mike Wright of Pazzo Di Capello, Tammi Elliott of Buttercups, ER Energy, Bonnie and Paul Riley, Tammy Lynch, Julie Orr, the Thiels, the Kanonchoffs, Annie Ronberg, Leslie Leon and many more.

New Bountiful Gardens catalogue available now

A special delivery truck arrived in Willits Tuesday, carrying the 2015 Bountiful Gardens catalog, with 80 pages of new heirloom, untreated, and open-pollinated seed varieties, garden tools, and many gardening resources. More than a pallet's worth of free catalogs were unloaded at Sparetime Supply, which generously provides storage space for the catalogs as they are distributed around Mendocino County and beyond. "It's more than we can handle here!" said Bountiful's Betsy Bruneau.

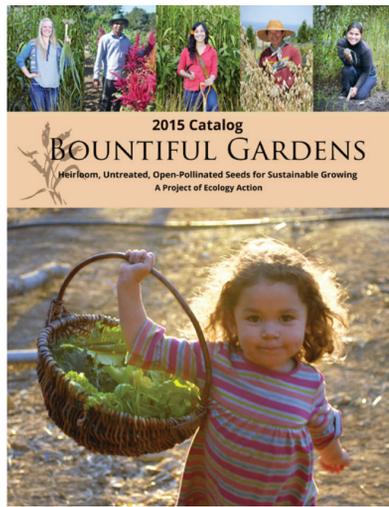
Though the shortest days and rains are here, the catalog's publication is just in time to start planning next year's garden, or to pick out holiday gifts for gardeners: many of the catalogue items are in stock at the Bountiful Gardens storefront in the Evergreen Shopping Center. Some of the "Top Ten" gifts include hand-forged forks and spades, gardening books, mushroom kits, a home oil press, hand tools, a "potmaker" tool to make newspapers into seedling containers, and seeds for stocking stuffers.

This year's catalogue includes 41 new seed varieties and 25 newly selected books and DVDs, along with high-quality tools and supplies. Bountiful Gardens' seeds, a project of the non-profit Ecology Action, include vegetables, compost crops, grains and fibers, oil and forage crops, trees, shrubs, herbs, flowers, mushroom spawns, and special mixes and collections, all rigorously tested.

New seed collections, selected by Bountiful's experts, include DVDs with seed sets on perennial vegetables, fermentation, and natural beekeeping. "These are the perfect way for someone – you or the person you gift – to learn a new type of gardening with confidence," the catalogue promises.

The Bountiful Gardens storefront features an added bonus this year: a special sale with a variety of garden supply goods such as tools, amendments, pest control items, and more. "We've got a lot of items from our Palo Alto location, which was more of a garden supply location," Bruneau said. The Palo Alto location closed this year, and the remaining goods will be sold at 50 percent off here in Willits.

Another special, available only to locals who can come by to pick them up, are ollas, ancient water-conservation



devices made of clay that are buried in garden beds and filled with water to keep roots moist. The ollas, which are too fragile to ship, are \$20 each or \$75 for four.

The storefront also hosts a shelf of books in stock and Ecology Action publications, along with a comfortable couch where visitors can sit and check out the books, ranging from "The Year Round Vegetable Gardener" to "Create an Oasis with Groundwater" and beekeeping resources.

Pick up a free catalog at Bountiful Gardens, on the north side of the Evergreen Shopping Center, open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4 pm, or at Sparetime Supply. Email bountiful@sonic.net or call 459-6410 to be added to the catalogue mailing list.

Sparetime Supply, at 208 East San Francisco Avenue (459-6791), and Sanhedrin Nursery, at 1094 Locust Street (459-9009), are two other local stores where shoppers can find great Christmas gifts for gardeners: gloves and tools, potted plants and decorative planters, bare-root trees, spring bulbs, or living Christmas trees are among the possibilities.

— Kate Maxwell

Book Juggler gives to Educational Foundation



Chris Harper, left, of The Book Juggler, shakes hands with Annette Pinon of the Willits Educational Foundation, right, with Greta Kanne of The Book Juggler holding store dog, Zeus, in the middle. The WEF was delighted to find a check for \$500 in the mail from The Book Juggler last week, part of the book store's Black Friday and Small Business Saturday sales (plus a bit more).

"We are so blessed to have so many caring people in this community who support education," said WEF's Kathleen Lewis. "We need to be shopping locally to support our hometown merchants, who then in turn give back to all of us in such generous ways." The Willits Educational Foundation raises funds to distribute to schools in the Willits Unified School District to help with their library, art and music departments.

Photo by Jennifer Poole

~Kemmy's Pie Locations~

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Pastor Stan Caylor, at left, Betty Bird, and her husband, Charlie.



Karen Oslund, her husband, Gordon, and their son Joseph

2014 Hearts for Willits Banquet

The Willits Christian Churches Association recognized four members of our community this fall, who represent the best in care and service to our Willits community. They are Betty Bird, Bruce Andich, MD, Karen Oslund, and Betty Lemmer.

Each received the "Hearts for Willits" award during a banquet in the Agape Church gymnasium earlier this fall, surrounded by 150 friends and family members

This was the second Hearts for Willits banquet/award ceremony. The first was in March of 2013, when Bill Bowen, MD, Allyn Nonneman, Margie Handley, and Cindy

Savage were the recipients. Both events were blessed with excellent and tasty food provided by chef Kyle Evans from Howard Memorial Hospital.

The Willits Christian Churches Association has taken on the privilege of identifying outstanding members in our community who best exemplify the caring and service Christianity is known for: people who have a Heart for Willits. As you read their stories, be thankful we have such people as these in our town.

Editor's Note: here are the stories of two of the 2014 Hearts for Willits honorees, Betty Bird and Karen Oslund.

Betty Bird

Betty Bird couldn't recall a time when she didn't have a passion to help people. After giving her heart to the Lord in her 30s, she remembers a time when the Lord clearly told her that she must help a pregnant lady in an abusive relationship, having her fourth girl. She gathered together clothes, did some shopping, took her to church, and was there at the birth of her child. Later, while attending a retreat, she was moved

at the thought of a single father raising three young boys. That became her longest and most extensive ministry – her husband and his boys.

"Why does Betty do it?" "It feels good," she said. "It's the right thing to do. I feel blessed knowing I am blessing others." It is a godly thing, only stopped when God withdraws her hand. But repeatedly, she says: "God supplies the need."

For close to 15 years Betty has cheerfully helped at various service agencies in town (Daily Bread, serving food to the needy; Willits High School baseball concession booth; Sip Some Soup; and Brown Bag Lunches, serving the hungry on Saturday afternoons).

At her Seventh-day Adventist Church, she coordinates the after-church meal every Saturday for guests. Her ministry of feeding the hungry keeps her always cooking, but never complaining. She delights seeing people enjoying having a meal and enjoying one another.

With Louise Brown, coordinator of SDA Church Community Services, Betty has arranged for housing, bedding, clothing, and food, assisting the poor traveling through town in finding rooms and food, and helping them fill out forms for housing. She has helped families who have been burned out: donated clothes and furniture

she stores until she finds a home for them. When people die, Betty wonders if they have a place for a service and reception. She is the embodiment of the Biblical Dorcas or Lydia. Asked "what would you do if you couldn't help people?" Her reply: "I would probably die."

Karen Oslund

Anyone who has lived in Willits for a while knows Karen Oslund and her involvement in the community. She has effected changes that have continued to be an integral part of the town. As a member of the City Council (1999 to 2008) and mayor (2002 to 2004), she was able to help bring about the skate park and ball fields on East Commercial Street. She wrote grant requests and opened the Willits Kids Club. She continues to serve on the Kids Club board, keeping the community abreast of what is happening there by writing articles for the newspaper. She is also actively involved in her church.

Throughout this time her family (husband, Gordon, and her two boys Tim and Joseph) was right there working as a team, attending civic and council meetings, the Kids Club and school functions, and supporting Karen. The lesson she wanted to pass on to her sons was that "you get back more than you give."

The rest of School | From Page 1

drawing to a close, six members of the school's leadership team resigned from the team, as a protest against how the school was being run. The team's more salient complaints were that the leadership team wasn't being given an opportunity to lead, that not enough work was being done to remedy the threatened loss of the school's accreditation, that Ritchley was dismissing the school's culture and the faculty's institutional memory, and that he wasn't making enough of an effort to socialize with students.

This year Ritchley has mobilized the faculty, students, community and various school leadership groups to address the accreditation issue in a methodical and thorough manner. The lack of a full complement of two school counselors – the main cause of the threatened loss of accreditation – has been addressed, and the school now has a counselor, a counselor/psychologist and a career technical advisor.

The district also has hired an assistant principal for WHS.

However, the leadership team, as it existed last year, is defunct. Instead, there is a much larger leadership group, which includes the six department heads who formerly made up the leadership team, plus three AVID (Achievement via Individual Determination) counselors, the two school counselors, and physical education teachers, as well as other staff members who meet with the group on occasion.

According to Marisela de Santa Anna, a teacher and department head at Willits High School and a member of the leadership team that resigned last year, the leadership team from 2013/2014 hasn't met this year as the leadership team. But the six department heads who were members of the old leadership team have met as part of the new group.

According to de Santa Anna, the business of teaching well and keeping the school running efficiently and intelligently is being addressed.

De Santa Anna confirmed staff has been working hard to prepare for the mid-year review from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). "It's been WASC and WASC and more WASC," said de Santa Anna. "Boy, be careful what you ask for."

Board tables district office discussion

At the December 3 meeting, Willits Unified School District trustees tabled further discussion on a new district office until their next board meeting on December 17.

The board had seemed poised to approve Superintendent Patricia Johnson's request to move the district office into an array of portable buildings on the Blosser Lane Elementary School campus. But Trustee Christopher Neary was uncomfortable with that plan. He told Johnson that, as an attorney representing several commercial property owners in Willits, he knows of a number of properties that might serve the district well as a district office. He asked Johnson if she would be willing to listen to his ideas, and Johnson agreed to do so.

City water-savings kits available

Water conservation kits given away by the city could save about 15 gallons per day or more, for those able to pick one up and put it to use.

The contents of 50 five-gallon buckets, free for the taking at City Hall, include a low-flow shower head, a low-flow sink adapter, and an adjustable spray nozzle or outdoor watering.

"We want people to think conservation even though it is raining like hell outside," said city Code Enforcement Officer John Sherman.

The kit that can be had by dropping by City Hall, 111 East Commercial Street, and the bucket can be almost immediately deployed to retain about five gallons of water per shower.

A low-flow shower head found in the buckets can help to ease water consumption by one gallon per minute of shower time.

Aerators that reduce bathroom sink flow to less than one gallon per minute can save about 1.2 gallons each day per person.

Another aerator in the kitchen sink would reduce water flow to 1.5 gallons per minute, saving 1.2 gallons per day per person.

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research says in an informational flyer that using organic mulch around plants to reduce evaporation can add up to 100s of gallons saved in a year.

There will be no Willits Weekly Christmas week; we're on holiday break! But don't worry, we'll be back with another edition on New Year's Eve!

Willits man held in gas station holdup

A 24-year-old Willits man has been arrested on suspicion of robbing a South Main Street Chevron station just before midnight on Sunday, December 7.

According to Willits police, Torren Andrew Hebel, fled on foot after brandishing a sawed-off shotgun at the station clerk and demanding money.

Hebel escaped with an undisclosed amount of money, police said, but was arrested hours later on East San Francisco Street. Police also recovered the firearm reportedly used in the robbery.

This is not Hebel's first brush with the law. On July 20, 2013, he was arrested on suspicion of cultivation, possession and transportation of marijuana for sale. On November 26, 2013, he was arrested on suspicion of possession and transportation of marijuana for sale.

Hebel was booked into Mendocino County jail on suspicion of possession of a short-barreled shotgun, robbery, burglary, felony possession of a firearm and violating probation, according to jail officials. He's being held on \$125,000 bail.



What's Happening Around Town

Things to do, see and enjoy in and around Willits

Friday, December 19

Willits Weekly's Annual Christmas Cookie Party: 5 to 7 pm, at Ardella's Downtown Diner, 77 South Main Street. Come join us for an evening of community, Christmas music (thanks to Nancy New and Devon Jones), and our annual cookie contest. Last year's big winners, Tam Adams of Emandal, who won the Judge's Choice award for her Caramel Nut Bars, and Lisa Reed and her daughter Kylie Reed of the Les Schwab Tire Center team, who won the People's Choice award for their Mocha Crinkles, will be back, as will a field of challengers including Annette Pinon of Flowers by Annette, Christine Griggs and Diana Hosford of Sparetime Supply, Israel Perry and Shawna Handschug of Healing Central Chiropractic, Ashtan Bloomquist of J.D. Redhouse, Mary Fosen of ER Energy, and Fernanda Ramos Diaz of Ridgewood Ranch. Judges include Sheriff Tom Allman, Willits City Manager Adrienne Moore, and Misty Gonzales from Willits Power. Bring your own cookies to exchange with other holiday bakers!

Community Outdoor Christmas caroling: 7 pm at Grace Community Church, 25 Hazel Street. Students of Grace Christian Academy will be presenting a Christmas program preceding the carols at 6 pm, followed by refreshment. "Come and gather around the fire as we celebrate Christmas together. All are welcome to attend."

Shanachie Pub: The 454 Band, blues-based rock and roll by a high-octane power trio. 9 pm. \$5 cover. 50 South Main Street, behind Adam's Restaurant. Info: 459-9194.



Saturday, December 20

Shanachie Pub: annual Christmas Party with music by DJ Podge: "House Music from 1996 to the present concentrating on deep, funky & groovy tunes, with some Latin & Jazz undertones." 9 pm. No cover. 50 South Main Street, behind Adam's Restaurant. Info: 459-9194.

Sunday, December 21

An Old Fashioned Christmas: "You're invited to celebrate with Caroling, Worship and Skits" at Agape Bible Church, 390 South Lenore Avenue. Free. 6 pm.

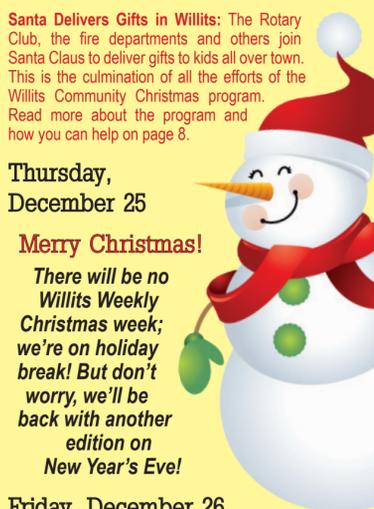
20th Annual Winter Solstice Spiral Dance: 6 pm at the Little Lake Grange, 292 School Street. "Welcome the Sun's return with our traditional drumming, candle lighting and songs, followed by the Spiral Dance! The spark of Yule turns our hearts to gratitude in the cold & dark. Let us celebrate our interconnectedness and relationship to all beings, the cycles and seasons. You are invited to wear a mask or costume that reminds you of a favorite wild animal or plant." A benefit for the new Grange windows \$5 to \$10 at the door, children welcome and free.

Tuesday, December 23

Tightwad Tuesdays at the Noyo Theatre: All 2D movies that are in their second week are \$5 on Tuesdays at the Noyo Theatre for all ages, all showings. This week's Tightwad movie: "Exodus: Gods & Kings." For showtimes: www.noyotheatre.com. 57 East Commercial Street. 459-6660.

Wednesday, December 24

Welcome Santa to Laytonville: Come say hello to Santa on Christmas Eve, starting at 1 pm at Geiger's Long Valley Market, 44951 Highway 101, Laytonville. Info: 984-6911.



Thursday, December 25

Merry Christmas!

There will be no Willits Weekly Christmas week; we're on holiday break! But don't worry, we'll be back with another edition on New Year's Eve!

Friday, December 26

Shanachie Pub: Julian & The Upside Sound. 8 pm. 50 South Main Street, behind Adam's Restaurant. Info: 459-9194.

Saturday, December 27

"Wake Up for Kayla": A benefit to raise money for "Dragonfly," a new foundation dedicated to ending sexual assault and substance abuse in our community; first in a series. Live music by Blue Luke and the Elements and Schindig. A sober event. Sound by Ancestor Radio Productions: 6 to 11:30 pm. Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street. Hors d'oeuvres by Marie Blancas, Chef de Cuisine, and Jill Persico, Loose Caboose. \$25; children under 12 free. Tickets available at Main Street Music and J.D. Redhouse.



COLUMN | At the Movies



'Exodus: Gods and Kings'

The Story: If you've read Torah aka "The Old Testament," then you know how God led Moses, and Moses led the Hebrews away from their 400 year enslavement to Pharaoh in Egypt. That's what this movie is about... including the Ten Plagues.

Christian Bale as Moses is quite strong. The parting of the Red Sea quite spectacular. The oppression of the Jews quite graphic, and the battle scenes believably staged.

Director Ridley Scott of "Blade Runner" and "Gladiator" fame is known for his meticulously detailed and beautiful films. "Exodus" is no exception. This is an epic movie.

Parents: Lots of onscreen violence... but not pornographic violence (i.e. close-ups of disembowments, spurting blood). There are hundreds, maybe thousands of bodies and a particularly grisly giant crocodiles scene which is kinda bloody, but in its defense, turning the Nile River red is the First Plague....

Willisan Daniel Esman prefers his reality attenuated by the wisdom of the imagination.



Wrap for the Pups at Willits Power

Love dogs? Hate wrapping presents? Willits Power Carhartt has a solution: Bring in your gifts to the store at 1600 South Main Street, and for \$2 to \$4 per gift, staff will wrap gifts for you. Proceeds will be donated to Rascal's Rescue, a new fund to help pet owners with veterinary care in emergency, life-threatening situations. Willits Power will match the total raised. Boxes and a selection of festive papers are both available at Willits Power; all you have to do is bring the gifts! More information: 459-6420.

Santa Trains run thru December 23

The Skunk Train is running special Christmas Trains through Tuesday, December 23 at the Willits Depot: 90-minute round-trip train rides, including a visit from Santa and his elves, music, hot chocolate and cookies. All guests encouraged to wear pajamas! Tickets: \$35 for adults; \$25 for kids (2 to 12); \$10 for dogs. Departures from Willits and from Fort Bragg. Trains from the Willits Depot: Thursday, December 18 at 3:30 pm. Friday, December 19, at 3:30 pm (only a few tickets left!) and at 6:30 pm. Saturday, December 20, at 12:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 6:30 pm (only a few tickets left!). Sunday, December 21, 12:30 pm, 3:30 pm (sold out) and 6:30 pm. Monday, December 22, 12:20, 3:30 and 6:30 pm. Tuesday, December 23, 12:30, 3:30 and 6:30 pm. Info: 964-6371 or www.skunktrain.com.

Willits Library Christmas Book Sale

Friends of the Willits Library is offering a \$1 book shelf, featuring new and used hardback books from now through Christmas to give as gifts for the holidays. 390 East Commercial Street. Info: 459-5908.

Toys for Tots

Little Lake Fire Department will be a drop-off center for the "Toys for Tots" program this holiday season. Come by our office, 74 East Commercial Street, for a visit, bringing an unwrapped gift for a girl or boy and make someone's Christmas morning memorable. Thank you from the staff and volunteers of the Little Lake Fire Department. Info: 459-6271. Also, drop off your "Toys for Tots" gifts at Mendo Mill, 305 East Commercial Street. Open Saturday from 8 am to 6 pm, Sunday from 8 am to 5 pm, and Monday through Friday from 7 am to 6 pm. Info: 459-4631.

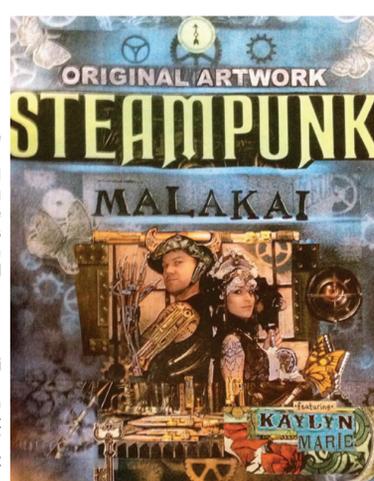
Willits Center for the Arts

The December show at the WCAC showcases Malakai Schindel's "steam punk" three-dimensional and canvas exhibit, featuring Kaylyn Marie's steam punk fashions. Runs through Sunday, December 28. Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street. Gallery hours: Thursday and Friday 4 to 7 pm; Saturday and Sunday, noon to 3 pm. Info: contact Malakai at malakaiart@yahoo.com.



The Twelve Strays of Christmas Special

The Ukiah Shelter offers this holiday special: Through December 23, the first 12 dogs who are adopted can go home for the low adoption fee of \$50. The Fine Paw Print: Only dogs who are already spayed and neutered qualify for this special event. If you live in Mendocino County, an additional fee of \$25 for a dog license must be paid. Lastly the dog must go home the day of adoption. The Ukiah Shelter is located at 298 Plant Road and is open Tuesday through Saturday (closed Wednesday, December 24 and Thursday, December 25). Info: www.mendoshelterpets.com or 467-6453.



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A subscription to Willits Weekly is a great gift for anybody who wants to keep up with what's happening in Willits. Home delivery (to the greater Willits area) is \$30/6 months and \$50/year. First-class mail delivery is \$40/6 months and \$75/year. Send a check to Willits Weekly, P.O. Box 1698, Willits CA 95490, or call 459-2633 to get a subscription started right away.

Help Wanted
Experienced business secretary. Reliable, competent. Must know Excel, Quickbooks. 6 hours a wk, \$360 mo. some regular office hours necessary. Resume required. Willits Grange. Hiring now. Start Jan. 459-6362.

Help Wanted
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Rummage Sale
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The rest of Christmas | From Page 9

Donations of toys, clothes and other gifts can be brought to any of the drop-off locations including J.D. Redhouse, Main Street Music and, of course, to Santa's Workshop itself, located at the Sparetime Supply warehouse, 475 East San Francisco Avenue. Stop in at the Sparetime office and ask for directions, or just pull into the Sparetime yard and follow the signs that wrap around the south end of the yard. Anyone who gets lost can call Sparetime at 459-3576 to get directions.

Misty Gonzales at Willits Power has decided to create ready-to-purchase children's outfits which match the requirements on tags located at her shop. The outfits are all hung together and easy to grab for a quick purchase. The store will also be giving anyone who purchases tag items 20 percent off that purchase.

Kids clothing is also available at J.D. Redhouse which is offering 30 percent off clothing during their Christmas sale, now through December 24.

Volunteers are also needed to help finalize all the toys brought into the workshop. Wrappers and taggers are really needed now, as the final push is fast approaching.

Everything for the job is there: wrap, tape, scissors. You can just come by, and the group will set you up with a stack of gifts at a wrapping station. Turner noted it is best to contact her first to set up a time to ensure they can be ready for you. Give her a call at 490-8872.

Above: The inside of Santa's Workshop at the Sparetime Supply wholesale yard.

Left: Rick Maddox peels the number stickers that will identify which family receives which bag come December 24.

Photos by Maureen Moore



The rest of Mushrooms | From Page 5

come out for generations," says Forester Lynn Webb, but novice pickers can unknowingly select poisonous species, hurt fungal growth, or get lost in the woods. Webb recommends first-timers get guides and learn IDs and picking practices from local experts and classes.

This year, the commercial and recreational picking permit programs were combined due to "massive abuse of the system," said a press release. Previously, a free permit was available with a 1 gallon limit, and an unlimited commercial permit could be bought for \$100/year, though Webb says she never saw anyone "with just one gallon." The agency will evaluate the new system next year, but Webb said "there's been good acceptance."

Foresters patrol to ensure pickers are following permit procedures and not harming patches. Webb says, despite educational efforts, several pickers have already been cited this year with \$1,000 violations for lacking permits.

Dominick "Nick" Montealeone, a mushroom picker and part-time buyer, stands in front of more than 1,000 pounds of mushrooms he purchased the night before.

The rest of Fish | From Page 4

If you are interested in improving conditions on your property through technical and/or financial assistance, consider attending a Saturday workshop planned for January that is geared toward funding programs, details and deadlines. This free workshop will be held on Saturday, January 31 at Harwood Memorial Hall in Laytonville from noon to 4 pm. Presenters invited to speak include representatives from: MCRCD, NRCS, CAL FIRE, TU, and CalTrout.

If you have questions about the project development process or have any projects you have in mind, please call Joe Scriven, fisheries biologist, at the MCRCD: 462-3664 ext 104.

Joe Scriven is a conservation geek and fisheries biologist for the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, and can be reached at 462-3664 ext. 104 or joe.scriven@mcrd.org.



The rest of Relationships | From Page 4

P.S. Phoenix Hospice holds bereavement groups and will start a new one soon. For more information call Roland Hulstein, 707-456-3248.

If you have any relationship questions, please send them to dorismw@embracconflicts.com or to the WW directly, P.O. Box 1698, Willits, CA 95490. I am happy to answer them anonymously on the third Thursday of the month.

Doris Wier is a certified relationship and life coach who works and lives in Willits. She coaches individuals, couples, families, and professionals. In addition she offers Explore-Shops on conflict resolution and deepening your intimacy and connection in your partnership.

For more information on the process, call 707-456-9246.

www.embracconflicts.com and www.facebook.com/dorismwier.

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Above: A panorama of the Centennial Reservoir taken December 12, 2014. Photo below was taken from the air on December 28, 2013, and the photo at right was taken just before our recent big storm, on December 3, 2014. The best way to compare to the photos is to use the bare tree on the right-hand side to see how far the water line has risen.



'Viva La Virgen de Guadalupe!'

Parishioners of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Willits made their annual procession honoring the Virgin of Guadalupe last Sunday. The feast day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, is December 12. In Willits, the procession takes place on the closest Sunday to that date. Councilwoman Holly Madrigal, who took this photo, says: "My mom and I were honored to join the procession for the Virgin of Guadalupe this morning. With all the children and music, it reminds me how blessed we are to call Willits our home."



Photo by Holly Madrigal

Name	Location	Recent	So far this season
3rd Gate, south-facing	2,400 feet elevation	2.8 inches from 4:30 pm, 12/16 thru 11 am, 12/17	38.5 inches thru 11 am, 12/17
Lucky Monkey's Ranch	2 miles west of Willits where Skunk Train tracks cross Hwy 20	1.65 inches as of 12/17 am	20.72 inches as of 12/17 am
Blackhawk Drive	2,300 feet elevation	.91 inches, from midnight, 12/16 to 5:30 pm, 12/17	
W6PKT	Laughlin Ridge 3,300 feet elevation 6.8 miles SE of Willits	1 inch, last 24 hours as of 6:30 pm 12/16	
k7wwa	Clover Drive, Brooktrails	6.6 inches from midnight 12/10 thru midnight 12/16 Peak wind for the week: 28.3 mph, 12/11 at 6:40 am	

Willits residents had their first sight of snow this season, with the peak behind Red Hill looking to the northeast from town (is that Big Signal Peak?) showing white Friday as the fog and clouds cleared. Willits Weekly also heard reports of snow falling, but not sticking, up on Sherwood Ranch and in Covelo. Willits Weekly welcomes reports of rain and other weather information at willitsweekly@gmail.com.

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Navy SEAL
Jesse
Pittman.

The rest of Pittman

bravery and dedication to his country," Wood told Willits Weekly. "It will be my honor to present this legislation as a tribute to SO1 (SEAL) Jesse Pittman."

The mile-long viaduct, still under construction, is officially called "Bridge No. 01-0165" and extends north from where the bypass crosses over East Valley Street.

Pittman, who died with 30 others in a 2011 helicopter crash in Afghanistan, was born in Arcata, and raised in Willits, attending high school and working as a wild land firefighter with the Mendocino Unit of CAL FIRE before enlisting in 2005.

Prior to his death in service at age 27, Pittman participated in top-secret and dangerous missions in Afghanistan and Yemen, earning prestigious medals of service, including a Joint Service Commendation Medal with Valor, two Navy Achievement Medals, a Bronze Star with Valor, and a Purple Heart.

A Navy petty officer second class, Pittman was a member of San Diego-based SEAL Team Five. He was on his fourth deployment.

The BOS resolution reads: "Mr. Pittman had a saying among his SEAL teammates: 'I don't run, I charge,' which is exactly how he lived his life."

The filings in support of the resolution include more than 30 signatures, including Willits City Councilman Larry Stranske and many local business owners, teachers, firefighters, and residents.

The resolution was sponsored by outgoing Third District Supervisor John Pinches, who would have represented Pittman. The signage will be furnished and installed to the county at no cost. Members of Pittman's family were in attendance when the resolution passed.

Letters in support included one from his teacher and platoon leader, Jeremy Triston, who wrote Pittman was "the finest SEAL I have had the privilege of working with," describing him as "a good-natured hard-worker who always gave his best effort in whatever he did," sentiments repeatedly invoked in the other letters.

Support of the resolution also came from Pittman's commanding officer at the time his helicopter crashed, Michael McCabe, who says the naming would not only "honor him and his legacy as a true American hero, but also be a fitting way to show those who transit through that great area of California how patriotic and grateful the community is."

Mendocino Sheriff Tom Allman referred to first meeting Pittman as a Cal Fire worker. Allman wrote the bridge naming would "be the perfect reminder of what he sacrificed for our freedom. His name and his story will serve as a role model for generations to come."

The rest of Caltrans

southbound lanes," Frisbie said.

The problem is a slide, which is going down under the roadway and lifting it up. "Right there where Caltrans a number of years ago straightened out a couple of curves, it's starting to get kind of bumpy," Frisbie said. "That whole area has that unstable Franciscan soil."

Caltrans has hired a contractor to do the emergency work, which will include some excavation to repair and repave the road.

How long the repairs will take "depends on what happens when they get in there and perform the work," Frisbie said.

Asked about the "slope failure" just south of Willits above the bypass detour, Frisbie said the slide, as confirmed by local residents driving by, "has moved a little bit more."

"They're still watching it, and still deciding how and when they're going to address it," Frisbie said. "It's not going to imminently close a lane or something like that."
If the slide did end up closing both lanes of the detour, Caltrans has made plans to have two lanes open for traffic on the old Highway 101 "within a day," Frisbie said.

- Jennifer Poole

The rest of Burton

Another idea that interests Burton is forming a new district to include the community's ball fields, tennis courts and Center for the Arts.

"I would like to see us put effort in the next couple of years to see if we could create an independent district to operate," Burton said.

Burton was edged from the council in a close 2004 city council election and returned following a 2008 election in which he was the top vote-getter.

Choosing a mayor

A council member may suggest a name for mayor. It takes another member to say "I second that" before the city clerk takes a vote by a roll call of the council.

Councilwoman Madge Strong suggested former Mayor Holly Madrigal. No council members seconded Strong's motion for Madrigal's fourth term as mayor.

Madrigal nominated Burton, a move Councilman Larry Stranske seconded. Council members voted 4-1 to seat Burton as the new mayor of Willits.

Burton thanked the council for its support, and he and Madrigal swapped chairs to take their new positions on the stand.

Burton moved to nominate Orenstein to continue as vice mayor. Orenstein had voted against Burton

The rest of Pension

Approximately 50 percent of the hike will come out of the county's general fund.

Supervisors debated whether to ask the Mendocino County Employees' Retirement Association to phase in the increased contribution to soften the blow to the county budget and avoid increasing the plan's unfunded liability.

Board Chairman John Pinches put it bluntly: "Deferring contributions in the past got us into the current mess in the first place, and we cannot keep kicking the can down the road. We need to get to a positive amortization of the unfunded plan liability, and we need to do it now. Borrowing money to pay off debt is not the right direction."

But after CEO Carmel Angelo assured supervisors the county will be able to handle the required increase in the pension contribution due to improved financial conditions, the board unanimously agreed not to ask MCERA for a phase-in of the contribution increase.

Supervisor Dan Hamburg noted county "employee raises are coming in the form of contributions to the retirement system."

Pinches went a step further, stating the present "benefit system is not sustainable. At some point, we will need to have a discussion about lowering the benefits."

Supervisor John McCowen suggested a seminar, preferably jointly with MCERA, focusing on what can be done to reduce spiraling pension costs.

Angelo said her staff is planning a seminar in January 2015 on compensation philosophy, which will include a discussion about pensions.

A joint meeting with MCERA will be scheduled when the organization is ready, probably in March 2015.

McCowen and Angelo reported the board's decision at the MCERA trustee meeting the following day. McCowen even hinted the county might still make additional contributions to the pension plan, since \$1.5 million has already been set aside at the last budget meeting. McCowen said "county departments will be asked to find the necessary dollar amounts in their budgets."

At the same MCERA meeting, Andy Yeung, actuary with Segal Consulting, presented the company's annual actuarial valuation and review report.

Due to the changes in the actuarial assumptions, the county's contribution will increase from 26 percent of payroll costs in fiscal 2014/15 to 33 percent of payroll costs in fiscal 2015/16. The changes in actuarial assumptions also increase the plan's unfunded liability from \$132 million in June 2013 to \$179 million in June 2014.

Yeung and MCERA trustees agreed the unfunded liability

The rest of WCA

work was involved," City Manager Adrienne Moore said, "I do not think I [would have felt] confident selecting anyone to take on the task."

Realtor Barksdale said he was putting in 30 hours a week at the center in addition to working at real estate.

"With a team of volunteers it will work. I am certain it will work," Barksdale said.

Money was an ongoing concern during Barksdale's term. He said the center was looking at about \$3,000 to insure itself, and there was an \$800 fee for filing not-for-profit paper work.

Previously Barksdale told the council he was making headway to secure nonprofit status for the center. Barksdale was to formally become the art center's executive director when the center became incorporated.

The center's efforts to incorporate under the new name of the "Willits Art Center" have been pulled back.

Barksdale assembled a group to form an advisory commission that would have become the organization's board of directors.

"They certainly were a talented group of people," Councilman Larry Stranske said.

Moore said there are other individuals interested in keeping efforts going. "The effort can be picked up by another group," she said.

as mayor, but secured his vice mayor seat with four votes. Stranske cast the only "no" vote.

Councilwoman Holly Madrigal suggested that the council consider going to a rotating mayorship.

Election business

As a matter of government business, the city needed to put a mark of approval on November's election results and send a certified document to Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder Susan Ranochak.

Incumbent councilmen Stranske and Orenstein were challenged by Robin Leler, who tallied 25 percent of the vote.

Stranske topped Orenstein and Leler in all Willits precincts and achieved his best results, 49.70 percent, in the East Hill precinct.

Orenstein fared best in the Holly precinct, where he secured 35.32 percent. Leler edged Orenstein to finish second in the Blosser and Lenore precincts.

Leler's best results came in Blosser, where she won 30.30 percent of the vote.

In the final tally, Stranske took 41.82 percent of the vote, 721 votes, and Orenstein took 31.90 percent, or 550 votes.

and employer contributions will decrease in the future if actual investment gains are higher than anticipated.

MCERA trustees unanimously accepted the report.

Changes in retirement administration and board

New Mendocino County Employees' Retirement Association Trustee Kathryn Cavness was sworn in December 3. Cavness replaces general member Lloyd Weer, whose 3-year term ended November 30.

Cavness also serves on the Executive Board Budget and Finance Committee for Region B of SEIU Local 1021.

In her introduction, Cavness noted she has worked for the DA's office since 1998 and has an MBA in accounting.

Like Cavness, current trustees Richard Shoemaker and Timothy Knudsen had filed declarations of candidacy for the open general seats. All three candidates were unopposed and, therefore, appointed without election.

MCERA trustees voted on officers after current chairwoman and county Treasurer-Tax Collector Shari Schapmire agreed to stand for election as chair for another year on condition there will be a succession plan.

Schapmire was elected chairwoman, Randy Goodman vice chairman, and Knudsen secretary. Schapmire appointed Knudsen, Ted Stephens, and Cavness to the Audit and Budget Committee.

Following a closed session, trustees announced the appointment of James Wilbanks as the new retirement administrator. Wilbanks will replace Jim Andersen, current interim retirement administrator, whose contract ends at the end of December.

According to an MCERA press release, Wilbanks was employed as an economist and financial executive by the State of Oklahoma for 17 years. The last five years, he served as executive director of the Oklahoma Teachers Retirement System.

"With his expertise in economics and his experience as a professor, the board also believes Mr. Wilbanks is the right person to engage stakeholders in continuing discussions about public pension plans, including how best to ensure MCERA will be able to meet its obligation to pay pension benefits in an environment of scarce funding resources for local governments," the press release stated.

Moore noted the city does not have enough staff to handle administrative work related to operations at the center.

Previously, Barksdale had come before the council with a request that council members approve \$20,000 for the center.

Council members declined to provide the money, but did ask Barksdale to return in a few weeks with a more detailed request for their consideration.

An effort has formed to continue with changes at the center, but Barksdale said it would not operate as a nonprofit for the time being.

Another option for art center supporters could be restarting the city's Art Commission. Moore has told center supporters that reopening the commission would mean administrative reports, keeping meeting minutes, and following Brown Act rules.

Mayor Bruce Burton asked council members to see what the art center brings forward in 2015.

"Let us see what they bring us," Burton said. "I am optimistic. I have spoken to some of them."

Located in a historic Willits building once occupied by the Women's Improvement Club, the two-story Willits Center for the Arts shares property lines with the Noyo Theater and the Carnegie Library building.



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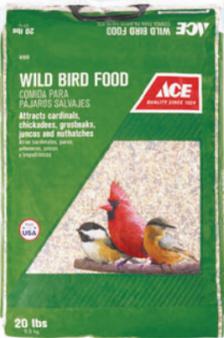
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Amazing Athletes

Photo by Rachel Belvin of Willits High School



BASKETBALL |

Dimitri Betts, 17, Senior

Breakfast of Champions: Oatmeal with walnuts and brown sugar

Position: Point guard

Love for the Sport: I've been playing ever since I was little, and have always enjoyed it.

Dimitri Betts is an excellent choice for Amazing Athlete this week. Two weeks ago he was MVP of the St. Helena Tournament, helping us win the championship. This past weekend, he was selected as all-tournament at the Healdsburg Tournament, as we went 3 and 0 in a disrupted-by-weather tournament, and we were selected runner-up. Dimitri has become the leader of a very young team en route to our early 6-1 start.

– Coach Duane Nelson

BASKETBALL |

Dara Collicott, 17, Senior

Breakfast of Champions: Cereal

Position: Every position

Love for the Sport: I love the contact in this aggressive sport.

Dara is a senior on the Girls Varsity basketball team. Dara had shoulder surgery at the end of last school year, and was cleared to return to play sports the week before basketball tryouts. Dara has worked hard and earned a starting position. She has always been one of our most relentless and valuable players. This last weekend at our tournament in Healdsburg, I saw her confidence returning, and Dara really played well. She played solid minutes, and she applied defensive pressure, baseline to baseline. Dara also scored some much-needed points! She's fun to watch!

– Coach Jody Ward



Community Crossroads Coat Drive

Please join Community Crossroads in the parking lot of Les Schwab, 1565 South Main Street, on Saturday, December 20 and Sunday December 21 from 9 am to 5 pm. We are collecting coats, hats, sleeping bags, gloves and scarfs, and just about anything warm that can be distributed and worn by those in need during this cold season. Info: Shannon, 489-3044.



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