

# Willits Weekly

EST. 2013

Online & Print



A Nostalgic & Modern Record of Community and Life in Willits

Donations Accepted Edition No. 637

Thursday, May 7, 2026



## Vice Mayor Alaniz questions hiring of consultants

B.B. Kamoroff  
Reporter  
willitsweekly@gmail.com

The Willits City Council is still hiring outside consultants, which was a major concern of Vice Mayor Matthew Alaniz at the April 22 council meeting. "In the beginning of the year we were talking about excessive contracts, contracts for this person, contracts for these lawyers. We chastised the previous council for making these decisions, and here we are again, after laying off seven

Read the rest of **Questions**  
Over on Page 9

## 4 firefighters burned during Covelo prescribed fire

Submitted by CAL FIRE MEU

On May 1, 2026, while performing vegetation management activities near Covelo, four firefighters from the CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit received burns and were transported to UC Davis Burn Center and Howard Memorial Hospital for assessment and treatment.

Due to the remote location and the need to ensure our employees received rapid care, two of the firefighters were flown by helicopter to UC Davis. All four firefighters have been evaluated and released from the hospital.

Editor's Note: CAL FIRE MEU was unable to give Willits Weekly any further information Tuesday afternoon about whether there'd be a public report on the incident, or when it might be released.

## Covelo man arrested for arson

By Sgt. B. Juntz, for MCSO

On April 29, 2026 at approximately 1:30 pm, Mendocino County Sheriff's Office deputies were dispatched to a reported arson that occurred during the early morning hours. The reporting person arrived at work and observed burned items near a family member's vehicle. Upon further investigation, the reporting person observed burn marks on the outside and inside of the vehicle.

The reporting person checked video surveillance footage and observed Ambrose Fallis, 26, from

Read the rest of **Arson**  
Over on Page 9



Above: Returning Willits Frontier Days Sweetheart winners who will be selling tickets for the 2026 event include, from left: Nicol Kunka, Kinzie Vogel, Lindsey Bowlds, Hailey Riley, Jaden Doak, Danielle Barry, Hazel Cooke, Elena Arkelian, and Lisa Arkelian.

Photos by Maureen Jennison

# They're Back!

## Willits Frontier Days past Sweetheart winners return for event's 100th anniversary and a second round of ticket sales

Nine past winners of the Willits Frontier Days Sweetheart title will be out selling tickets again this year, trying for a second time to promote Willits Frontier Days, connect with the community, and support the event's 100th anniversary this June and July.

Dubbed "The Year of the Sweethearts," this centennial celebration will take place starting June 19 with the Hometown Celebration, and run all the way through July 26, concluding with the WFD horse show.

Participants include: Nicol Kunka, Kinzie Vogel, Lindsey Bowlds, Hailey Riley, Jaden Doak, Danielle Barry, Hazel Cooke, Elena Arkelian, and Lisa Arkelian.

These nine Sweethearts will be selling tickets to all the usual events, now through June 23, including the California Cowboys Professional Rodeo Association rodeos, junior rodeo, truck pulls, barbecue, pancake breakfast, and more.

They will be honored at the annual Sweetheart Dinner on June 28 along with many other returning Sweetheart winners of the past.

Along with lots of planned surprises for the 100th year, a few new events are also scheduled this year, including the Whiskerina Contest, that's all about growing facial hair, and the Western Art Show, where talented artists will display their Western-themed artwork at the Willits Community Center. Country music headliner Ned LeDoux will also be back with guest Buck Ford, singing in the arena on June 20 with a live show and concert.

Check out all the events, get more info, and entry forms online at [www.WillitsFrontierDays.com](http://www.WillitsFrontierDays.com) and contact your favorite Sweetheart right away to get your tickets for all the fun things happening at this year's big event! See their contact info below.

- Maureen Jennison

## MEET THE WILLITS FRONTIER DAYS 100th YEAR ALL-STAR PARTICIPANTS

 <b>NICOL KUNKA</b> 916-996-7126 1988 Winner	 <b>KINZIE VOGEL</b> 707-972-3108 2008 Winner	 <b>LINDSEY BOWLDS</b> 707-534-4802 2009 Winner	 <b>HAILEY RILEY</b> 707-272-1088 2017 Winner	 <b>JADEN DOAK</b> 707-513-9040 2019 & 2020 Winner
 <b>DANIELLE BARRY</b> 707-272-1340 2022 Winner	 <b>HAZEL COOKE</b> 707-354-0985 2023 Winner	 <b>ELENA ARKELIAN</b> 707-354-2877 2024 Winner	 <b>LISA ARKELIAN</b> 707-354-3114 2025 Winner	

Scan for 2026 Schedule



JUNE 2026 See schedule of events online at JULY 2026

[www.WillitsFrontierDays.com](http://www.WillitsFrontierDays.com)

**WILLITS FRONTIER DAYS WESTERN ART SHOW**

JUNE 27TH THRU JULY 5TH



**SCAN FOR ENTRY**

ENTRY DEADLINE JUNE 19TH

**WILLITS FRONTIER DAYS**

WHOSE READY FOR THE RETURN OF THE WHISKERINA CONTEST!

**GROW YOUR BEST BEARD!**

Send in a photo of your CLEAN SHAVEN face on MAY 1ST... THEN SHOW UP JULY 3RD OR 4TH WITH YOUR BEARD! WHOEVER GROWS THE MOST WINS!




MAY 1ST SHAVEN JULY 4TH BEARDED

AN OLD TIME TRADITION RETURNS... WHO'S IN?

## Soccer coach arrested by ICE back in Willits

Jennifer Poole  
Editor & Reporter  
willitsweekly@gmail.com

Soccer coach Otis Ffriend, 39, who was arrested by ICE agents near the Willits Charter School campus on Friday, May 1 is back home after a federal judge released him with a May 2 court order.

A statement obtained from ICE San Francisco by online news site Redheaded Blackbelt confirms the arrest. "ICE San Francisco arrested illegal alien Otis Nicholas

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

## Mail ballots now out for June 2 election

Submitted by Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder's Office

May 1 - Official ballots are being mailed to ALL active registered voters in Mendocino County by Monday, May 4, 2026. Ballots will be available on May 4, 2026 at the County Clerk's Office, for the statewide Primary Election, to be held on June 2, 2026, according to Katrina Bartolomie, Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder.

The County Clerk's Office is located in Room 1020 of the County Administration Building located at 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah. The USPS normal delivery is

Read the rest of **Ballots**  
Over on Page 9

## Willits woman finds unknown man sleeping in her home

By Sgt. J. Woida for MCSO

On May 2, 2026 at approximately 11:03 am, Mendocino County Sheriff's Office deputies were dispatched to a residence in the 400 block of Della Avenue in Willits, for a reported unauthorized subject inside a home.

The reporting party and victim, 40, informed MCSO deputies that she discovered an unknown male subject sleeping inside a bedroom of her residence. When confronted, the subject exited the home and walked away toward the City of Willits.

Deputies canvassed the area and located Tyler Cales, 28, from Willits, who matched the description

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

# What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from our readers

## Buffey Wright Bourassa for supervisor

To the Editor:  
I want to share with you why I am voting for Buffey Wright Bourassa for District 3 Supervisor.

First let me say that I have no interest in politics. I believe in ideas, not ideology, and believe that the divisive nature of our two-party system has only served those in power and not those of us who give it to them. This is why I have stayed out of the political arena. Though I have voted in every election, at age 53 I have never publicly supported any candidate in my 35 years of my voting history.

It is only because of who I know Buffey to be as a person, as a public servant and as a community leader, that I am willing to openly support her. Hearing of her personal and professional background and her willingness, commitment and unrelenting drive to rise above every challenge she faced is what led me to meet with her initially. After many hours of conversations, questions and discussion, I am convinced that she is the right person to serve as our supervisor.

Buffey has experienced and overcome many of the issues that plague countless numbers of our neighbors. I know there is no substitute for lived experience in understanding how to address these complex issues on a personal and societal level. She has used her experience to support others both individually and in professional roles in Public Health and now working with those who are incarcerated.

In addition, Buffey has been showing up in many different roles throughout our district long before she entered this election. Because of her consistent service to the community, many who knew her in these public service roles encouraged her to seek this position. For over 15 years, she has been engaging in roles that have improved the well-being of all individuals, families and groups in our community for no personal gain of her own.

Finally, in conversations with Buffey, she has consistently shown a willingness to listen to and evaluate ideas based on their merit not on

political ideology. The "winner take all" mindset of our current political climate is not benefiting "we the people." Many times, I have heard Buffey express her willingness to support ideas that she knows are best for the greatest number of people, even when they are not her own wishes. I'll never agree with anyone on every issue, but I trust her to engage in a sincere process to come to the best outcome for our community. In a county with a diversity of ideas and opinions, this is the type of leadership needed.

It is for these reasons I will be voting for Buffey to lead our district, and I invite you to consider doing the same.

Michael Reynolds, Willits

## Eric Hart for supervisor

To the Editor:

I would like to thank Willits Weekly for publishing the 3rd District Supervisors Forum Transcripts. Before I read the transcripts, I hadn't made up my mind on who to vote for, but after reading them, my choice was made easy: Eric Hart.

Hart is the only candidate of the four who has actual operations and leadership experience in managing large budgets and in fixing broken systems like our current county government.

Hart brings concrete ideas on how to modernize the system and make it more efficient and responsive to deliver services to county residents; none of the other candidates have a clue on how to do that.

Hart articulates a clear vision for the 3rd District and for Mendocino County that could position us well to compete in the economy of the future; I couldn't detect any clear vision coming from the other candidates.

The people of the 3rd District are very fortunate to have such a quality candidate running for county supervisor. Our county needs someone with know-how to whip the board of supervisors into shape and get this county moving in the right direction. A vote for Eric Hart is a vote for functional government in Mendocino County.

Jon Spitz, Laytonville

## Senior Center menu for the week

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

**Thursday, May 7:** Country Fried Steak

**Friday, May 8:** Chicken Florentine Pasta

**Monday, May 11:** Mini Pepperoni, Sausage and Olive Pizza

**Tuesday, May 12:** White Chicken Chili

**Wednesday, May 13:** Spinach Lasagna

**Thursday, May 14:** Mediterranean Chicken Sandwich

**Friday, May 15:** Carnitas Burrito Wet w/Green Sauce

**Activities:** Bingo on Friday nights, 5 to 7 pm. Exercise class weekday mornings from 9 to 10 am.

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

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

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

## THIRD DISTRICT SUPERVISOR'S UPDATE

### May 2026

By Supervisor John Haschak

As the saying goes, we are always one dry winter away from drought. Kudos to the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council for facilitating the water tank program. They delivered close to 200 free water tanks to more than a dozen Firewise Communities, Neighborhood Fire Safe Councils, and fire departments throughout the county. Overall, the program, through Department of Water Resources, provided 450 water tanks in Mendocino County.

Speaking of water, there has certainly been a weird twist to the Potter Valley Project. While we want local control over many issues, especially one as critical as water, the federal government has stepped in and found a water agency in Southern California that is interested in taking over the dams. This comes after years of negotiations and compromises throughout the North Coast to make sure that we have sustainable water after PG&E decommissions the dams. PG&E doesn't want the dams because of liability and losing money, not a good combination for a profit-driven corporation.

I think this flirtation with the Elsinore Water District is a distraction that could only do us wrong. They either want the water or want to make money with the water. As the coalition partners have said repeatedly, the Round Valley Indian Tribes have the senior water rights, and the last thing we need is an outside entity attempting to take control of the water. The Inland Water and Power Commission's goal is "to secure a reliable water future with supply and storage solutions we can control and deliver." The board has approved a resolution supporting the IWPC's goals, thus this new scenario seems counter to securing "a reliable water future."

There has been discussion at both the board level and at the General Government Committee meetings about the cannabis tax. The Auditor/Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector says that the current structure is very time-consuming and unreliable. Out of the 600 or so permits, 200 owe back taxes. We approved tying a cannabis cultivation license with having taxes paid up to date. With that in place, we are looking at changing the way those taxes are paid. This change will treat cannabis like other agricultural crops, taxed on the amount of gross receipts.

With election season here, we have had visits from our State Senator Mike McGuire in Willits and State Assemblymember Chris Rogers in Laytonville. These sessions have been informative and a powerful way for we the people to have conversations with our state representatives.

There will be a Talk with the Supervisor on Thursday, May 28, from 10 to 11 am at Brickhouse Coffee. You can always contact me at haschakj@mendocinocounty.gov or call 707-972-4214.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

By John Baker, Superintendent, WUSD

It is hard to believe that we are already in May, with fewer than 20 school days remaining in the 2025/2026 school year. This week, we also celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week. I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our teachers for the incredible work they do every day to educate and prepare our students for the future.

We are currently in the midst of our annual state testing, which will continue over the next couple of weeks. This time of year is always filled with exciting activities, including open houses, field trips, and various school events. I have been especially encouraged to see so many parents attending open houses at Brookside Elementary, Willits High School, Sanhedrin High School, and Sherwood Elementary. Next week, I look forward to visiting the open houses at Baechtel Middle School and Blosser Elementary School. These moments are meaningful opportunities for families to see and celebrate the work their children are doing in school. Students take great pride in sharing their artwork, writing, and creative projects.

As a district, we are continuing to strengthen our instructional practices by developing a plan centered on the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). In addition, we will be piloting a new math curriculum in the fall of 2026 that aligns with the updated California Math Framework.

Looking ahead, we are also planning facilities improvements, including roof repairs at Willits High School, over the summer.

Thank you for your continued support of Willits Unified School District.

## It's our anniversary!

Willits Weekly is starting our 14th year of publishing, with this May 7, 2026 edition. I think I can speak for co-founder Maureen (Moore) Jennison, when I say we both feel considerably older, but also, a little wiser, than we did back in May 2013 when we both decided to embark on this crazy journey. We're so happy that the newspaper keeps on going strong, thanks to our advertisers, all the editorial contributors, the outlets that keep Willits Weekly in stacks for customers to pick up, and to all our readers. Thank you to everybody who supports Willits Weekly. It truly is a community effort.

— Jennifer Poole, editor / publisher

Maureen side note / newspaper fun fact: Though today we are now on Volume 14, I never reset the edition count back to 1 at the start of a new volume, so therefore, it's been fun watching the edition number just count upwards — this one being #637. We've done this 637 times. That's insane!

— Maureen (Moore) Jennison, art director

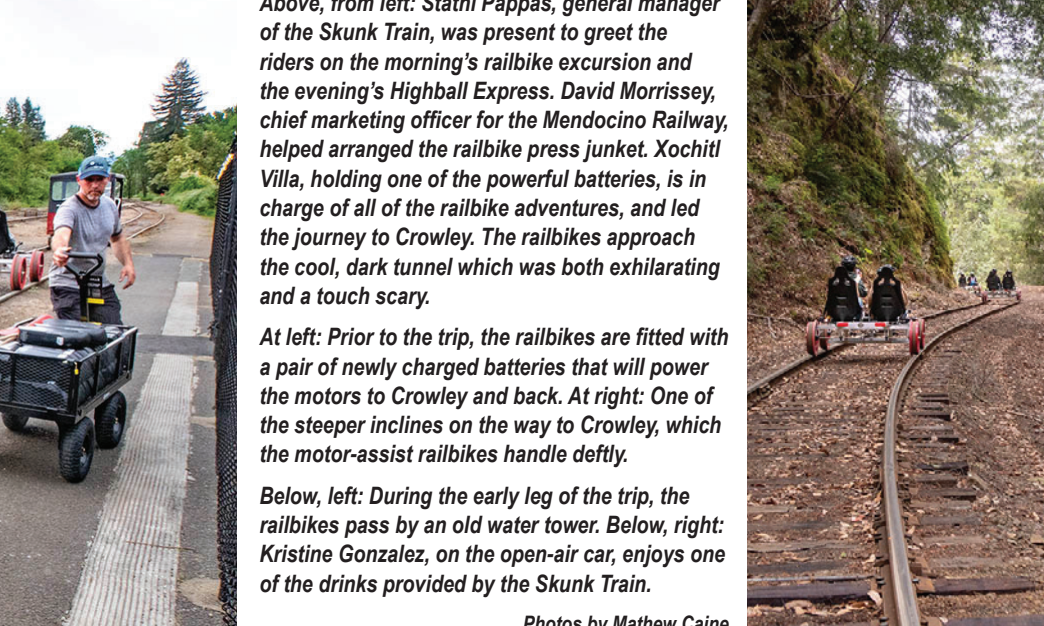


Above, from left: Stathi Pappas, general manager of the Skunk Train, was present to greet the riders on the morning's railbike excursion and the evening's Highball Express. David Morrissey, chief marketing officer for the Mendocino Railway, helped arrange the railbike press junket. Xochitl Villa, holding one of the powerful batteries, is in charge of all of the railbike adventures, and led the journey to Crowley. The railbikes approach the cool, dark tunnel which was both exhilarating and a touch scary.

At left: Prior to the trip, the railbikes are fitted with a pair of newly charged batteries that will power the motors to Crowley and back. At right: One of the steeper inclines on the way to Crowley, which the motor-assist railbikes handle deftly.

Below, left: During the early leg of the trip, the railbikes pass by an old water tower. Below, right: Kristine Gonzalez, on the open-air car, enjoys one of the drinks provided by the Skunk Train.

Photos by Mathew Caine



# Railcoasters and the Highball Express

## Skunk Train offers 2 special summer excursions out of the Willits Depot

On the cool morning of Saturday, May 2, about 25 journalists, bloggers, and local officials, with family members, ventured out on a unique journey through the redwoods, live oak, manzanita, and rolling hills, through Willits, up some steep inclines, all the way up to Crowley, where the Skunk Train usually stops.

But they weren't riding the train. This was the inaugural run of the new Mendocino Railroad Railcoasters, railbikes with welcome power-assist technology, which allowed a tandem team to either peddle or to utilize the thumb-switch throttle to whisk them up the rails, through the twists, turns, and tunnel. Riders enjoyed 7.5 miles of exhilarating views and a cool breeze, up to the meadow where they could relax, eat lunch al fresco, and contemplate the trip back.

Being a press junket, there was the requisite swag bag of T-shirts, hoodies, stickers, etc. as well as a pre-ordered lunch of sandwiches, chips, wine or soft drinks. The trip back down was much more relaxed, as by that time the drivers were more used to the controls, which were becoming second-nature and intuitive.

Prior to the caravan of railbikes leaving the Willits Skunk Train Depot, the participants were briefed on the safety aspects and the simple controls by Xochitl Villa, who is in charge of all of the railbike adventures that are offered by Mendocino Railroad.

"This is the launch of our Railcoaster railbikes, and our Highball Express Trains, out of Willits," said Stathi Pappas, general manager of the Skunk Train. "We're leaning into a lot more work out of Willits, a lot more products in making Willits a destination. This is a very exciting day for us. The California Western Railroad has operated out of Willits since 1907, but this is basically a new era out of Willits and how it factors into the general importance of the California Western Railroad and the Skunk Train."

"The Highball Express is our bar train product that runs out of Willits on Saturday evenings in the summertime. This is the first one of the year. We go out to our event facility at Crowley Meadow where we have fire pits and musical entertainment. It's a beautiful area. We have a bar aboard the train, so on the way out and when we are there, you can have your libations, beer, wine, and mixed drinks. Generally, we have a good time with 120 of your best friends you didn't know you had before you showed up that day. The Highball Express will run every Saturday through the summer."

Read the rest of Skunk Over on page 11

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067822

**Willits Weekly**  
Willits Weekly is a locally owned independent newspaper, founded in 2013, covering the greater Willits area.  
Volume 14, Number 637  
3,500 - 4,000 copies printed by Western Web on Thursdays  
P.O. Box 1698 Willits, CA 95490 / 707-459-2633; 707-972-7047  
willitsweekly@gmail.com / www.willitsweekly.com  
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Locally Owned | Independent | Editions Every Thursday | Online & In Print  
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Sunday Services:  
10:00 a.m. - Worship  
Adult Sunday School 8:30 a.m.  
Info? 707-459-1905  
www.agapebilechurch.com

**Amazing Grace Assembly of God Church**  
803 Coast Street  
P.O. Box 489, Willits  
Worship Service - 5:00 p.m.  
Pastor Kris Strickland  
**EVERYBODY IS WELCOME**

## Church of Christ

"What must we do to be saved?"  
Acts 2:37  
1095 S. Main St., Willits  
(next to Super 8)  
(707) 459-5023  
Sunday Bible Study-10:00 a.m.  
Sunday Worship-11:00 a.m.  
Sunday Evening Service-6:7:00 p.m.  
Wednesday Bible Study-7:8:00 p.m.

**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**  
265 Margie Drive  
Willits, CA 95490  
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Sacrament Meeting  
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## Grace Community Church

*Celebrating Life In Christ*  
25 Hazel Street, Willits  
Worship Service 10 a.m.  
For appointments call:  
(707) 459-3106

## St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church

61 W. San Francisco Ave.  
Willits, CA 95490  
Father Aaron Bandanadam  
Mass times:  
Wednesday-Friday 9:00 a.m.  
Saturday-5:30 p.m.  
Sunday-9:00 a.m. - English  
10:30 a.m. - Spanish  
Confessions on Saturday  
4:45 - 5:15 p.m.  
Or by appointment at  
707-459-2252

https://santhonywillits.org/  
sainthonywillits@gmail.com  
We welcome All Walks of Faith

## St. Francis Episcopal Church

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

## St. John Lutheran Church

Sunday Service 10:00 a.m.  
(707) 459-2988  
24 Mill Creek Drive  
Facebook.com/stjohnswillits  
**ALL ARE WELCOME**

## Willits Seventh-Day Adventist Church

707-459-5714  
Friendly, open worship  
Saturdays  
Bible Study - 9:30 a.m.  
Worship Service - 10:45 a.m.  
Zoom Transmission Available.  
Wednesday  
Prayer Meeting - 7:00 p.m.  
399 W. Mendocino Ave.  
**All are welcome!**

## Willits United Methodist Church

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Pastor Jaime Rogers-Fairchild  
Sunday Worship at 10:30 am  
286 School St. (at Pine)  
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www.umcwillits.org  
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Facebook: facebook/willitsumc

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



## Thursday, May 7

**Willits Farmers Market:** Join your neighbors at Summer Market outdoors at City Park on Commercial Street, Thursday, May 7, from 3 to 5:30 pm, for the freshest produce available, local meat, farm fresh eggs, hot and cold food from local businesses, along with crafts, live music, the new edition of Willits Weekly, and more. The market honors EBT and WIC cards and matches benefits to double your dollars.

## Friday, May 8

**Waldorf School's Spring Soirée at Frey Tasting Room:** Waldorf School of Mendocino County hosts Spring Soirée & Silent Auction, Friday, May 8, from 5:30 to 8 pm, at Frey Vineyards Winery & Tasting Room, 11700 West Road, Redwood Valley. Live music by Mama Grows Funk, tasty food, award-winning organic wines, silent auction showcasing unique pieces from local artists, and the Super Raffle drawing. Tickets are \$10 to \$25 sliding scale and include food! More info and online tickets: www.mendocinowaldorf.org/event-details/spring-soiree-1

**Art Talk at WCA:** This month's Art Talk, "Fakes and Forgeries," is by Ruby Ming, lecturer from the Institute for the Study of Western Civilization. "Beautiful artworks have been faked since antiquity. Why do forgers do it? Hear some of the most fascinating and surprising stories involving famous artists, unscrupulous dealers, and priedful connoisseurs." Friday, May 8 at 6:30 pm at the Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street. No charge.

**'4 Dogs and a Bone' at WCT:** Playwright John Patrick Shanley's 'hilariously savage' Hollywood satire runs through May 17 at Willits Community Theatre, 37 West Van Lane. Directed by Mathew Caine; starring Dayle Deer as Bradley the producer, Zoe Robertson as Brenda the hopeful new starlet, Jeremy Dax as the impressionable writer Victor, and Sarah France as the wily leading lady Collette. Fridays and Saturdays at 7 pm; Sunday matinees at 2 pm. Tickets are \$25 and available online at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door.



**Seraphin Band at Shanachie:** Performing as a full band and playing original music in classic Northern California guitar-heavy rock & roll style, Friday, May 8 at 8 pm. With founding member Michael Parlangas, along with Joe Morf on bass, Remedy on drums, and Raleigh (formerly with Michael Franti) on keys. Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

## Saturday, May 9

**Bell Springs Fire Spring Plant Sale and Breakfast:** Join the Bell Springs Volunteer Fire Department on Saturday, May 9, 10 am to 1 pm, for their Spring Plant Sale fundraiser, with an array of starts: Vegetables, flowers, herbs, perennials, bulbs and more. \$20 for breakfast, plus homemade baked goods table. 61680 Bell Springs Road, Laytonville. Please bring cash for plant starts and breakfast ticket.



**Willits Photography Club at the WCA:** Are you a local photographer looking to connect? The Willits Photography Club is a community of creators who share a passion for visual storytelling. Join us every 2nd Saturday of the month to find inspiration, sharpen your skills, and showcase your vision. Saturday, May 9 at 10 am. Enter through the back of the art center and up the stairs. If the door is closed, knock. Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street

**Mother's Day Craft Fair:** Little Lake Grange presents a Mother's Day Craft Fair on Saturday, May 9, from 11 am to 4 pm at the Grange, 291 School Street. Local crafters & artisans; handmade goods & unique gifts; Jewelry, Candles, Art & more; one-of-a-kind treasures for Mom.



**Edgar Loudermilk Songs & Stories:** Join us for a house concert with national touring musicians Edgar Loudermilk and Tucker McCandless on their West Coast "Duo Tour." Saturday, May 9 at 4 pm at 350 Sherwood Road. \$20. For info: 707-489-0155.

**'4 Dogs and a Bone' at WCT:** Playwright John Patrick Shanley's 'hilariously savage' Hollywood satire, Saturday, May 9 at 7 pm, at Willits Community Theatre, 37 West Van Lane. \$25. See Friday, May 8 listing for more details.

featuring D.J. Smoke Show. Saturday, May 9, 7 to 10:30 pm at Willits Center for the Arts, 71 East Commercial Street. Mocktails by Botanical Beverages and food by Zenith Rose Catering. \$20. All Ages.

**Sean Lehe Trio at Shanachie:** California based guitarist for West Coast festival favorites Jelly Bread, Sean Lehe, also formerly with Poor Man's Whiskey and Izabella; plus special guests on an Emerald Triangle Tour. Saturday, May 9 at 8 pm at Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

## Sunday, May 10

**Happy Mother's Day! Mother's Day Breakfast at the Senior Center:** Join us at the Willits Senior Center for a buffet-style breakfast, Sunday, May 10, 8 to 11 am, Pancakes, Scrambled Eggs, Vegetarian Egg Casserole, Sausage, Bacon, Pancakes, Biscuits & Gravy, Fresh Fruit, Orange Juice, Milk, Coffee, and a free mimosa for Mom. 1501 Baechtel Road. \$18 adults; \$10 moms.



**Succulents & Teacups at the Museum:** Friends of the Mendocino County Museum presents a Succulent Teacup Making fundraiser. Sunday, May 10, from 12 to 4 pm. Enjoy creating this fun planting project

for Mother's Day, or purchase one readymade as a gift. Mendocino County Museum, 400 East Commercial Street, Willits. Email FOTMCM@gmail.com to reserve your spot.

**'4 Dogs and a Bone' at WCT:** Playwright John Patrick Shanley's 'hilariously savage' Hollywood satire, Sunday, May 10 at 2 pm at Willits Community Theatre, 37 West Van Lane. \$25. See Friday, May 8 listing for more details.

## Tuesday, May 12

**Digital Skills for Everyday Life at the Library:** Learn valuable online skills including e-mail correspondence, identifying authentic and reliable sites and sources, internet security, and much more. You can bring your own device, or library Chromebooks will be available for check-out. Tuesday, May 12 from 11 am to 12:30 pm at the Willits Library, 390 East Commercial Street.

**'Bach is for Everyone' at WCS:** The Mendocino College Choir performs a free all-Bach concert, with guest musicians from the

Ukiah Symphony Orchestra, Tuesday, May 12 R 7 P.M. Willits Charter School, 1431 South Main Street.

## Wednesday, May 13

**2MuchFun at Brickhouse Coffee:** Wednesday lunchtime live music series features 2MuchFun on May 13, with Dave Pierce, Vocals, Guitar, Synths, and Paul Haley, Vocals, Guitar, Keys, brewing up more of your musical faves. 3 pm at Brickhouse Coffee, 3 South Main Street.

## Thursday, May 14

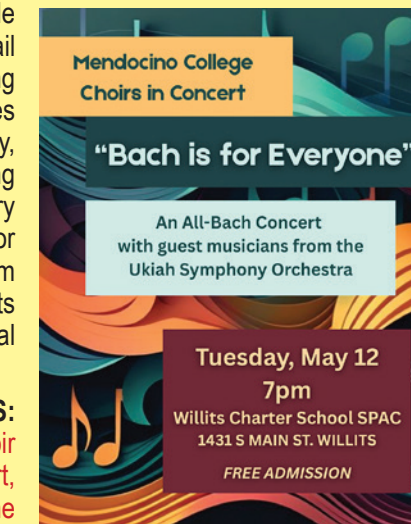
**Book Club at the Library:** Come be a part of a welcoming community centered around the love of reading every 2nd Thursday of the month at 3:30 pm, Thursday, May 14 this month, at the Willits Branch Library, 390 East Commercial Street. This club welcomes readers 18

and over to discuss notable books. Titles will be chosen during the meetings.

**Willits Farmers Market:** Join your neighbors at Summer Market outdoors at City Park on Commercial Street, Thursday, May 14, from 3 to 5:30 pm, for the freshest produce available, local meat, farm fresh eggs, hot and cold food from local businesses, along with crafts, live music, the new edition of Willits Weekly, and more. The market honors EBT and WIC cards and matches benefits to double your dollars.

## Friday, May 15

**'4 Dogs and a Bone' at WCT:** Playwright John Patrick Shanley's 'hilariously savage' Hollywood satire, Friday, May 15 at 7 pm, at Willits Community Theatre, 37 West Van Lane. \$25. See Friday, May 8 listing for more details.



King Lung, and Nevaeh Travis. Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

## Saturday, May 16

**Brooktrails Fire Department Golf Tournament:** This fundraiser for the Brooktrails Fire Department on Saturday, May 16 features a Golf Tournament, a Putting Competition, and a Ribs BBQ Cookoff. Tournament starts at 9 am; entry is \$50 per person; contact Jeremy at 707-367-8565 to register. Hole sponsorships for local businesses are still available at \$50 each; contact Jeremy at 707-367-8565. Also still a few spots open for the Rib BBQ cookoff: \$200 entry fee per team of 3, and we provide the ribs. Prize packages for all 3 team members. Please contact Jeff at 707-367-2219 to enter your BBQ team.

**Medicare 101 Workshop at the Library:** Free Medicare workshop by Sky Savarese for community members turning 65, retiring, or simply wanting a clearer understanding of their Medicare options. Saturday, May 16, from 1 to 2 pm, at the Willits Library, 390 East Commercial. Refreshments provided.

**'4 Dogs and a Bone' at WCT:** Playwright John Patrick Shanley's 'hilariously savage' Hollywood satire, Saturday, May 16 at 7 pm, at Willits Community Theatre, 37 West Van Lane. \$25. See Friday, May 8 listing for more details.

**Hillshaker at Shanachie:** Clay Hawkins and Andrew Robertson bring rapid-fire fingerstyle slide guitar and honest, heartfelt songwriting to create a unique brand of acoustic rock on Saturday, May 16 at 8 pm at Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

## Sunday, May 17

**'4 Dogs and a Bone' at WCT:** Playwright John Patrick Shanley's 'hilariously savage' Hollywood satire, closes Sunday, May 17 at 2 pm, at Willits Community Theatre, 37 West Van Lane. \$25. See Friday, May 8 listing for more details.



# TOWN-WIDE ONGOING EVENTS

**Trivia Night at The Munchery:** Every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at 6 pm at The Munchery, 1797 South Main Street, Willits.

**Trivia Night at Northspur Brewing Co:** Put your knowledge to the test on the first and third Wednesday of the month starting at 6:30 pm at Northspur Brewing Co., 101 North Main Street.

**Food Not Bombs at Rec Grove Park:** Receive a free meal, supplies and zines every first and third Friday of the month at 4 pm in Rec Grove Park at the picnic tables. Everyone is welcome.

**Skunk Alley Improv Lessons at WCT:** Every Sunday from 6:30 to 8:30 pm with instructor Schuyler Marcier at Willits Community Theater. Cost is \$5, cash or Venmo.

**Free Meal by Willits Daily Bread:** Every week on Monday through Thursday from 4:30 to 5:30 pm at 66 East Commercial Street.

**Willits Tennis Club:** Meets every Monday and Wednesday from 9 to 11 am at the Willits High School Tennis Courts. All levels welcome. More info: 707 484-3385.

**Drop-In Life Drawing Group at WCA:** Every Thursday from 1 to 4 pm at Willits Center for the Arts. Cost is based on sliding scale. More info: Margaret 707-459-9251.

**Brown Bag Lunch Program:** Saturdays at 1 pm, sack lunches are served by local churches, community organizations, and families at Bud Snider City Park on East Commercial. Come at 1 pm to be assured a lunch!

**Willits Indivisible Democracy Vigil:** Every Friday from 5 to 6 pm at Babcock Park on South Main Street. More info: "Willits Indivisible" on Facebook.

**Pickleball:** Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 5 pm and Saturdays at 9 am at the Willits High School tennis courts. Free to play and all levels welcome.

**Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Group:** Meets every Monday at 6 pm at the Muse in Willits, 30 East San Francisco Street. More info: 707-354-1866.

**Willits Drum Circle:** Every second and fourth Friday at 7 pm, at St. Francis of the Redwoods on the corner of Main and Commercial Streets. Info: Bill Bruneau: 459-3390.

**Literacy Volunteers of Willits:** We teach adults to read! Free personal tutoring at the library.

**Call or email to make an appointment:** LiteracyWillits@gmail.com or 707-456-7729.

**Mobile Showers Available in Willits:** Mobile shower is in Willits every Monday and Tuesday from 2:30 to 4:30 pm, behind St. Francis Church at the corner of Main and Commercial Streets. Toiletries, towels and washcloths provided. Those with disabilities

may need to bring a helper. Sack dinners are served from 4:30 to 5:30 by Willits Daily Bread.

**Inland Valley Women's Chorus:** Every Thursday (except holidays) from 6 to 7:30 pm to sing songs of peace, joy, social justice and healing. No audition or experience required. Carpooling available from Willits. Holy Trinity Church, Mary & Martha Room, 640 South Orchard Avenue, Ukiah. More info: Madge Strong, 707-459-1493.

## Shanachie Pub Ongoing Events

**Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street**

**Saturday Sessions at Shanachie:** Every 2nd and 4th Saturday from 3 to 6 pm, one of our locals will host an open jam at Shanachie Pub. Bring any instrument and explore your creativity!

**Bluegrass String Jam:** An official jam for the California Bluegrass Association, every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month starting at 3 pm, with all Bluegrass musicians welcome!

**Wednesday Open Mic Night:** Every Wednesday- Enter your name in the lottery from 3 to 7 pm to choose your 20-minute time slot, with performances beginning at 7:20.

## Willits Library Ongoing Events

**Willits Library, 390 East Commercial Street. Info: www.mendolibrary.org or 459-5908. Open hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 10 am to 7 pm; Friday, 10 am to 6 pm; Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm; now open Sundays, 12 to 4 pm. Closed Monday.**

**Penny University Coffee Klatch:** Wednesdays, 11 am to 1 pm, in the Willits Library meeting room to discuss various topics while enjoying a "cup of joe."

**LEGO Club:** Tuesdays from 4 to 6:30 pm. "Bring your imagination and start building."

**Tech Help:** Saturdays from 11 am to noon, come get computer help and your technical questions answered!

**Spinning and Knitting:** Saturdays at the library; from 1 to 4:30 pm. All skill levels welcome! Spinning, 1 to 2 pm; Knitting, 2 to 4:30 pm.

**Story and Playtime:** Fridays from 11 am to noon, bring the kids for a story followed by play time in the Children's Area.

**Art Session:** Join other artists every Thursday and Friday from 1 to 3 pm in the Willits Library meeting room to discuss and work on your personal projects. For ages 18 and up.

**Create it, Make it, Break it:** 3:30 to 5 pm, 1st & 3rd Fridays: Join the S.T.E.M. club to explore creativity and reasoning through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Each meeting will present new ideas and challenges! For ages 9-14.

## COLUMN | AT THE MOVIES

# 'Jurassic Park 3D'

**The Story:** John Hamm (Richard Attenborough), a kindly and wildly ambitious entrepreneur, learns how to grow actual dinosaurs. He bought an island off the coast of Costa Rica and intends to create a sort of dinosaur zoo/ tourist attraction. He brings two paleo-zoologists (Laura Dern, Sam Neill) and an analytical mathematician specializing



**Dan Essman**  
Columnist

in chaos theory (Jeff Goldblum) to witness the creation of Jurassic Park.

Traveling with the group are Hamm's two grandchildren. It turns out that breeding and growing a tyrannosaurus rex and velociraptors is a highly questionable enterprise. And dangerous.

Such creatures, who never existed in the same timeline as we mammals, and (spoiler alert) are not Fussy Eaters, have no problem with eating mammals! The majority of this thrilling flick is about huge toothy beasts of one species chasing bite-size beasts (homo sapiens) of another species. It's blood sport deluxe! GACK!!!

**My Thoughts:** This is a great movie in every facet. And in 3D, it rocks the Big Screen. Curiously, there are good guys in this, but no actual bad guys. That noted, there is one quite problematic dude who gets an appropriately ugly comeuppance.

Because this is a Steven Spielberg movie, it celebrates honesty, science, the family, and common decency. Also, Noyo Theater owner and renowned Mendocino goat-meister Jim Devine wants to reassure everybody that though one quite handsome goat dies in the story, no

goats were actually harmed in the making of this flick.

And I while I'm on the subject, I must note my one criticism of this movie is that "the poor gobbleid got" got no screen credit. One hopes that in future releases of Jurassic Park this appalling injustice will be ameliorated.

**Parents:** Too scary for little children. I remember myself as a 10-year-old boy, and know with certainty that I would have loved the movie because It's Dinosaurs! So, parents, you know your kids.

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

**LETTER CARRIERS' STAMP OUT HUNGER**  
TIME TO STAMP OUT HUNGER  
2nd Sat. in May  
IN EVERY COMMUNITY!

**Edgar Loudermilk Songs & Stories**  
May 9, 2026 4 PM  
House Concert  
Admission: \$20  
350 SHERWOOD, WILLITS, CALIFORNIA  
INFORMATION: 707-489-0155

**MEDICARE 101 AT THE WILLITS BRANCH LIBRARY**  
Saturday May 16, 2026 1:00 - 2:00 PM  
Welcoming community members turning 65, retiring, or simply wanting a clearer understanding of their Medicare options.

**Beginning Bellydance Workshop**  
May 29th through June 24th  
Wednesdays, 7:30-8:30  
The Muse Studio at 30 T. San Francisco St., Willits  
This class will start from the ground up. You'll learn the fundamentals of bellydance with local dancer and teacher, Julie. If you've ever wanted to learn to shimmy, do clean poses and kicks, or dream of being a bellydancer... here is your start!

**101 GRILL & BBO**  
4 YEAR ANNIVERSARY Celebration!  
SATURDAY MAY 9th, 2026  
LIVE MUSIC! PAVLO'S GARAGE PERFORMING 5PM-8PM  
COME CELEBRATE OUR FOUR YEARS OF BEING IN BUSINESS WITH CUSTOMER APPRECIATION SPECIALS AND FAMILY FUN!

**Why Are People So Sick? Lyme, Mold & Mystery Illnesses Demystified**  
Thurs May 21, 6-7pm  
For 30 years Dr. Tarter has worked with patients facing complex and multiple diagnostic medical conditions, including Lyme disease, mold exposure, and multiple system "wrecker" illnesses. In this talk, she breaks down those confusing health challenges and guides us to the next steps for answers.

**SUCCULENTS & TEACUPS fundraiser!**  
Enjoy this fun planning project, or purchase a ready-made creation!  
Saturday May 2, 2026 12-4 P.M.  
Mendocino County Museum 400 East Commercial Street

**Spring High Tea**  
May 9, 2026 - 1-3pm  
Methodist Church 286 School St., Willits  
Limited Seating Get tickets early.  
"A fun time to dress up and wear a hat!"  
Tickets: \$25/person  
For information or ticket purchase, contact Jennie 707/872-5237

**NOYO Theater Willits, CA.**  
57 East Commercial Street - Willits 707-459-6660 www.noyotheater.com  
Mid week promotions: Wednesday - Matinee prices to all shows all day.

**THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA 2**  
THEATER 1 DELUXE LUXURY RECLINERS, LASER PROJECTION  
(PG) 13 2H  
Fri: 4:45, 7:30  
Sat/Sun: 1:45, 4:45, 7:30  
Wed/Thurs: 4:45, 7:30

**MICHAEL**  
(PG) 1H 49min  
Fri: 4:15, 7:15  
Sat/Sun: 1:15, 4:15, 7:15  
Wed/Thurs: 4:15, 7:15

**THE SHEEP DETECTIVES**  
We now have Open Caption Wednesdays  
Sun, July 5 7:00 am  
Lions Club Cowboy Breakfast  
Recreation Grove  
\$15 - Adults  
\$10 - Child (12 and under)

## Willits Frontier Days - 2026 Events - Tentative

Date	Time	Event	Location	Admission
Fri, June 19	5:00 pm	Hometown Celebration	Main Street Willits	Free
Sat, June 20	6:00 pm	Ned Ledoux Concert	Jack Tharp Arena	\$40.00
Fri, June 26	6:00 pm	Truck Pulls	Jack Tharp Arena	\$25 - Adults \$15 - Child (12 and under) Free - Child (2 and under)
	9:00 pm	Street Dance Featuring Brody Stewart Band	Tennis Courts	Free
		Carnival Opens	Old Ball Field	
Sat, June 27	5:00pm	Western Art show Show closes on July 5th	Community Center	Free
Sun, June 28	6:00 pm	Sweetheart Dinner	Rodeo Grounds	\$25 - Adult (limited tickets)
Friday, July 3	7:00 pm	CCPRA Rodeo Rockin' M Rodeo	Jack Tharp Arena	\$30 - Box Seats \$25 - Adult \$15 - Child (12 and under) Free - Child (2 and under)
	9:00 pm	Western Dance Chad Bushnell	Tennis Courts	Free
Sat, July 4	10:00 am	Horseshoe Competition	Rec Grove	\$75 Entry Fee Free to watch
	11:00 am	Main Street Parade "Year of the Sweethearts"	North Main Street	Free
	12:00 pm	Country Music Rodeola	Recreation Grove	Free
		Western BBQ	Recreation Grove	\$25 - Adult \$15 - Child (3 & up)
	4:00 pm	Water fights	Fire House	FREE
	7:00 pm	CCPRA Rodeo Rockin' M Rodeo	Jack Tharp Arena	\$30 - Box Seats \$25 Adult \$15 - Child (12 and under) Free - Child (2 and under)
Sun, July 5	7:00 am	Lions Club Cowboy Breakfast	Recreation Grove	\$15 - Adults \$10 - Child (12 and under)
	8:00 am	Jr. Rodeo (Junior Rodeo ticket price includes entry to Bulls and Broncs)	Jack Tharp Arena	\$20 - Adult \$10 - Child (12 and under)
	6:00 pm	Bulls and Broncs		

# Furry Friends Hoping for a Home



## Big Bam

Bam is a big, happy 70 pound bundle of enthusiasm. At just 2 years old, he's got energy to spare and a heart full of happiness and love. Bam entered the shelter as a stray with a note on his collar calling him a good boy – and he absolutely lives up to it. Bam knows sit and shake, loves making new friends, and wants a family who will keep him active and involved.

If you're looking for a fun, friendly adventure buddy, Bam is your guy!

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

## Sweet Ruby

Ruby is 6 years old, and everything you love about a cattle dog – loyal, loving, and completely devoted to her people. She's the kind of dog who just wants to be near you, whether that's joining you for a walk or stretching out in the sunshine by your side.

Ruby has a gentle, affectionate nature and gets along well with other dogs, too. If you're looking for a steady, sweet companion to share your days with, Ruby might be your girl.

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



## Loving Senba

Senba is a cuddle bug extraordinaire. When you get settled in on the couch or bed, he will be there next to your feet. He also LOVES his feline friends and makes all the purrs and biscuits when they decide to settle in too. Senba is a young indoor / outdoor cat currently at a foster home, and has lived with other cats. This spunky little kid is always up for fun too!



The Humane Society for Inland Mendocino is located at 9700 Uva Drive in Redwood Valley. Feel free to visit us, no appointments needed! We are open Wednesday through Friday, 1 to 5 pm; Saturday and Sunday, 11 am to 3 pm; closed Monday and Tuesday (closed select Thursdays, check website for details). Check out all of our available dogs and cats on our website: [www.mendohumanesociety.com](http://www.mendohumanesociety.com), on our Facebook page, and on [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com). Call 707-485-0123 for more information.



Spencer Brewer, at left, and his multi-talented friends Elizabeth MacDougall, Ed Reinhart, Paul Yarborough, Frankie J and Wenbo Yin.

## A 'Musical Feast' comes to Art Center for Mother's Day, May 10

By Margi Gomez for WCA

Get ready for a spectacular Mother's Day "Musical Feast" in the beautiful Great Room at Willits Center for the Arts, Sunday May 10 from 4 to 6 pm, featuring Spencer Brewer and his multi-talented friends Elizabeth MacDougall, Ed Reinhart, Paul Yarborough, Frankie J, and Wenbo Yin. Experience an exciting kaleidoscope of classical, jazz, boogie-woogie, contemporary, and original music, all while treating your loved ones to champagne and Craft House Bakery treats.

Producer extraordinaire Spencer Brewer is an accomplished pianist as well as a visual artist, and is beloved in Mendocino County for starting the ever-popular Concerts in the Park in Ukiah. Brewer explains: "My favorite part of putting together these piano concerts is assembling different combinations of musicians, and then waiting for the magic! I feel like I'm setting the table for a delicious musical feast."

This is the third such concert the Brewer has put together for Willits Center for the Arts, bringing a wealth of well-known professional musicians to our area. "The Mother's Day Musical Feast has become a heartwarming tradition that just keeps getting better!" Brewer recalls: "The Willits audience is always so welcoming and so appreciative, it's really very special. We expect this concert to be a rare delight for everyone."

This special afternoon brings together some of the region's most accomplished

and beloved musicians for an unforgettable experience honoring the incredible moms in our lives. The afternoon will be filled with inspired solos, duets, and ensembles of music. Brewer and Wenbo Yin will be performing original compositions of blues, jazz, funk, contemporary, and classical. Ed Reinhart, the king of boogie-woogie, will be rocking the house, and will be joined on a few tunes by singer Dawn Sentfen. Elizabeth MacDougall and Paul Yarborough will be performing classical standards and arrangements, melting the hearts of all in attendance, and Frankie J will bring his celebrated mix of soul, R&B and smooth jazz melodies to the stage. There will truly be something for everyone!



Spencer Brewer, Paul Yarborough, Elizabeth MacDougall, Ed Reinhart, Frankie J, Wenbo Yin. Tickets \$25 online -or- \$30 at the door. 71 East Commercial St., Willits - [www.willitscenterforthearts.org](http://www.willitscenterforthearts.org)

Treat Mom (and yourself!) to a relaxed, joy-filled Sunday featuring beautiful live music, delicious bites, and a curated selection of Northern California wines and champagne. It's the perfect way to slow down, connect, and celebrate with family and friends in a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Make this Mother's Day one to remember, filled with music, laughter, and love.

Tickets (limited seating) are \$25 online at <https://willitscenterforthearts.org/event/mothers-day-musical-feast/> or \$30 at the door on Sunday, May 10, when doors open at 3:30 pm. Willits Center for the Arts is at 71 East Commercial Street. For more info contact 707-459-1726 or [manager@willitscenterforthearts.org](mailto:manager@willitscenterforthearts.org).

**RIDE THE THRILL!  
SKUNK TRAIN  
RAILCOASTER**

Power down steep terrain, pass through a historic tunnel, and take in breathtaking redwood views on this 15-mile journey, complete with a picnic lunch.

SkunkTrain.com  
707.964.6371  
299 East Commercial Street  
Willits, California 95490

**Mike McGuire CONGRESS**

**FIGHTING FOR NORTH STATE FAMILIES**

- ▶ Hold ICE accountable
- ▶ Pass Medicare for All
- ▶ Make billionaires pay their fair share

**ENDORSED BY:**  
Local Firefighters  
Nurses & Teachers

**VOTE BY MAIL STARTING MAY 5 OR ON ELECTION DAY, JUNE 2**

Paid for by Mendocino County Democratic Party FEC #C00404145 FPPC #82268

The rest of

## Arson

From page 1

Covelo, had entered the vehicle, placed a cloth object over the passenger door, and lit it on fire. Ambrose then used the burning cloth object to light other things on fire he found in the vehicle.

From reviewing the video surveillance, Ambrose exited the view of the camera and returned shortly after holding an item resembling a mop, which was also on fire. Ambrose set the mop onto the vehicle, then used the mop to light various items in a barrel on fire. Ambrose was captured on camera footage at the location for approximately 2.5 hours before he left the area. The damage to the vehicle was estimated to be about \$1,000.

On April 30, 2026 at about 4:45 pm, an MCSO deputy located Ambrose on Main Street near Greely Street in Covelo. Ambrose was taken into custody on charges of 451(d) PC - Arson, and transported to the Mendocino County Jail where he is being held in lieu of \$50,000 bail.

Anyone with information related to this incident is requested to contact the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office at 707-463-4086 (option 1). Information can also be provided anonymously by calling the non-emergency tip-line at 707-234-2100.

The rest of

## Ballots

From page 1

five to seven days; if you have not received your ballot within 10 days (by May 14) from the date of mailing, please call our office at (707) 234-6819 for a replacement ballot. If you have moved since the last election, please re-register at <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>

Each ballot envelope you receive will contain two large, 17" ballots with races on the front and back of the first page/card and the front side of the second page/card.

Sample Ballots (local voter information booklets) were mailed by our vendor and should be arriving in your homes within the next few days, if you do not receive your Sample Ballot please call our office so we can send you one. Local candidate statements for our county can also be found on our website at: <https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/government/assessor-county-clerk-recorder-elections/elections/election-candidate-information>

Katrina Bartolomie would like to remind voters who wish to vote in the June 2, 2026 election, that **THE LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE IS MAY 18, 2026** to receive a regular ballot in the mail. Please call our office for a Voter Registration card or go to: <https://registertovote.ca.gov/> to register to vote online.

The Elections Office in Ukiah will be open the Saturday before Election Day – May 30, 2026 from 9 am to 3 pm to assist voters.

For additional information or questions, please contact the Election / County Clerk's Office by calling 707 234-6819.

Editor's Note: According to the California Secretary of State's Office, "to ensure your ballot is postmarked by Election Day, make sure to mail it at least five days before Election Day, June 2, 2026. If mailing on Election Day, get a hand-stamped postmark from a postal employee inside a United States Post Office."

## More from the 3rd District Supervisors Forum

Here is a transcript of another set of questions and answers from the candidates at the April 19, 2026 3rd District Supervisors Candidates Forum, with Buffy Wright Bourassa, Russell Green, Eric Hart, and Clay Romero. You can watch the forum on Willits Community Television's YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/@WillitsCommunityTV](http://www.youtube.com/@WillitsCommunityTV)

### QUESTION: Do you believe the 2020 and 2024 federal elections were fair and accurate? What is your political party affiliation? How will you handle ICE when it comes to Mendocino County?

**Eric Hart:** The 2020 and 2024 elections were as fair as any other elections we've ever had. There's been very little evidence of fraud. I don't know if there's anything else to say about that. We can always make improvements. I spent years manning the polls. Both here in Mendocino and before that in Alameda County, I was an inspector and judge for the elections for a total of 10 years/ I've never seen any problems. I know the process deeply, and we have no problems with election fairness. The second question was party affiliation, and I am a member of the Democratic Party.

The third question was, How will you handle ICE when it comes to Mendocino County? Tell them to go away. I mean, they listen to me, right? That's a complicated issue. It's a legal issue. We have limitations as to what we can do. Those limitations are set by federal law and state law. We can make additional laws locally in Mendocino that say what we allow, and we should be looking at that, but they can't supersede state or federal. And a good example of that is what the state has done with the mask law saying if you're going to be in California, you can't be wearing masks. They couldn't tell ICE that they can't come here. That would be going against federal law. We can look at that countywide and see what we can do to make sure that our sheriff has a real clear outline of what he can and can't do, and what he should be doing if ICE comes here. And then of course we need to be supporting our citizens who are impacted – anybody who is taken by ICE who is a resident here, and also the families that are impacted when they are taken. There's a lot that we can do to support them and there's several organizations that are doing that. We need to support them. Thank you.

**Buffy Wright Bourassa:** This question is about getting to know Buffy, right? So, the 2020 and 2024 elections were fair. I mean, at least I think so. And I'm a Democrat. As far as ICE is concerned, what I would do as

The rest of

## Questions

From page 1

people, entering into new contracts. It doesn't smell right."

Alaniz was particularly troubled by the way the contracts were buried in the "consent calendar" section of the agenda, which is supposed to be used only for routine items that are approved without any discussion. "Why is it on the consent calendar? The implication is that it's just routine. But it's absolutely not routine."

One of the contracts, to hire a consultant to help the city negotiate a new wastewater agreement with Brooktrails, is with a business called RW Consulting. Nothing in the contract or any of the supporting documents discloses that RW Consulting is Rod Wilburn, the former interim city manager.

When Wilburn left the city five months ago, he signed an agreement with the city not to have any business dealings with the city for six months after leaving office. Alaniz asked how the city can award a contract to Wilburn "with this language being so obvious." Alaniz also asked why Wilburn's name was nowhere on the contract. "He calls himself RW Consulting. Why wouldn't the name Rod Wilburn be anywhere in the contract? I believe that was a tacit admission of guilt by purposefully not putting his name on his own contract."

A main issue with approving the Wilburn contract is a possible conflict of interest that Alaniz said needs to be clarified. Alaniz is married to Tamara Alaniz, the general manager of Brooktrails Township. Alaniz wants to know if

a supervisor? I would work with the sheriff. Because I work in the sheriff's office, I know that we have policy. The sheriff upholds the state law. ICE upholds the federal law. I also know that I trust in that because the sheriff hires DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] people to work in the Sheriff's Office, which is highly important and, you know, says something about his character. The other thing is that, you know, I would work closely with the other supervisors and see what it is that we could actually do. I know that people in other counties have put in resolutions and tried to create some policies around that, but we really would have to have conversations with our county counsel to see what it was that we could do, and also support all of the local agencies that are helping like Nuestra Alianza. They're doing a great job working with our families here in our community, and then there's also UVA, that's Ukiah Vecinos en Accion. I also know that NCO has some information out that they're giving to families, and First Five. So really paying attention to those organizations and partnering with them. Thanks.

**Clay Romero:** Yeah, concerning the election in 2020, locally, I think we were fine. I did hear some accounts that came in from across the country of which I have about as much grounding in what really happened as any of you do, because all we're doing is we're looking at the internet and we're going, "Well, what happened here?" Now, there was one account that I heard that came in from Michigan where there was a poll worker that had been there all day and about 3 in the morning, they had several more ballots come in, and the ballots were purportedly mailed in ballots. The poll worker was questioning why these ballots had never been folded. They had never been in an envelope, but yet they were recording them. Now, I never heard the outcome of that, but it does sound suspicious. I also heard a report from Pennsylvania [that claimed] they issued 1.8 million mail-in ballots and they received 2.4 million back. Is this true? I don't know, but this is the report that I'm hearing.

And the second part was what is your political party affiliation? And the third is how will you handle ICE? Actually, I've been a registered

he must recuse himself from any participation in the agreement between the city and Brooktrails. Alaniz filed a request for a ruling from the Fair Political Practice Commission, a State of California government agency. The city council agreed to postpone any further discussion of the Wilburn contract until the state replies, which the state is required to do within 21 days.

The second consultant contract that Alaniz pulled off the consent calendar is with Deborah Muchmore of Muchmore Than Consulting, for HR (human resources) services to the city. One of the employee positions eliminated in the city restructuring was the Human Resource department, now to be overseen by Muchmore, who was awarded a \$210,000 three-year contract, \$70,000 a year, with an option to extend the contract after the three years. The details of the contract (on the city's website) do not state how many days or hours the \$70,000 covers.

This is the third contract that Muchmore has had with the city in the last six months. Muchmore was previously paid \$85,900 for assisting the interim city manager in the restructuring of the city staff. Muchmore also received an additional \$25,000 "retroactive" payment for undefined services dating back to last September. The \$25,000 was also only on the consent calendar, with no explanation what it was for.

For the new contract, Alaniz expressed

Republican since 1978. I still am to this day. And as far as ICE goes, I'm not quite sure what we can do there, because we're running up against federal law here. The problem I'm seeing is like, say, when you say we want a sanctuary here. Well, if you're an elected official, and you're saying this, this is going up against Title 8, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(iv) which carries a 5-year prison sentence for encouraging and instigating illegal immigration. It's something I want to avoid. Thank you.

**Russell Green:** In regard to election integrity, the evidence seems to be clear. Multiple audits, court cases, investigations across states found no widespread fraud that would have changed outcomes. Election officials, many Republicans, certified the results. The 2020 and 2024 elections were fair by any objective measure. That said, dismissing people's concerns outright is a mistake. When you say the election was rigged, what you're often saying is, "I don't trust institutions anymore." And that's a real problem worth addressing. The fix isn't indulging conspiracy theories. It's transparency that rebuilds trust. Things like open-source voting machines, hand counted audits of random precincts, same day registration and verification, possibly public observation of ballot counting. As far as political party. I'm a registered Democrat, but my views are more like the Democratic party of 10 or 15 years ago.

In regards to ICE, like has been said, I think it's actually the sheriff's department who would mostly be deciding that more so than the board. But the sheriff decides cooperation level with ICE, and the board controls the budget and can set expectations, though they can't directly order law enforcement what to do. So, I assume that would be working with uh the sheriff's department on that. I personally am no fan of the immigration system here. I've married an Ecuadorian woman, and just to go through the 130 process myself has cost thousands and thousands of dollars and a huge amount of time, and it's way harder for me as a U.S. citizen to even get my loved one a visa, and that's not right. And neither is it right to tear apart families that are here, regardless of however they got here.

concern regarding who Muchmore would be working for: "We don't have a city manager. We don't have anybody who she would be reporting to. Who's going to make sure she's fulfilling her contract? Who makes the calls on what she does or doesn't do? As it is, it's practically unenforceable."

Alaniz proposed postponing the new Muchmore contract, to see if there might be other options. This was also requested by Nicole Caldwell, long-time city employee: "There are concerns among employees regarding trust and confidence in this consultant." Caldwell said that "several past incidents" involving Muchmore caused "unnecessary stress for affected employees." Caldwell asked the council to reconsider the Muchmore contract and possibly pursue alternate HR options.

The other city council members did not agree with Alaniz or Caldwell. Councilmember Bruce Burton stated that he had confidence in Muchmore. "This is part of our plan in the reorganization, to turn this into a contract job and not a fulltime employee job."

Burton added, "I think there are some things that might come around in the future that might change the way these kinds of services are delivered to cities, with the advent of AI answering any kind of personnel question you want to ask it."

The vote was 4-to-1 to hire Muchmore. At least until the robots take over.

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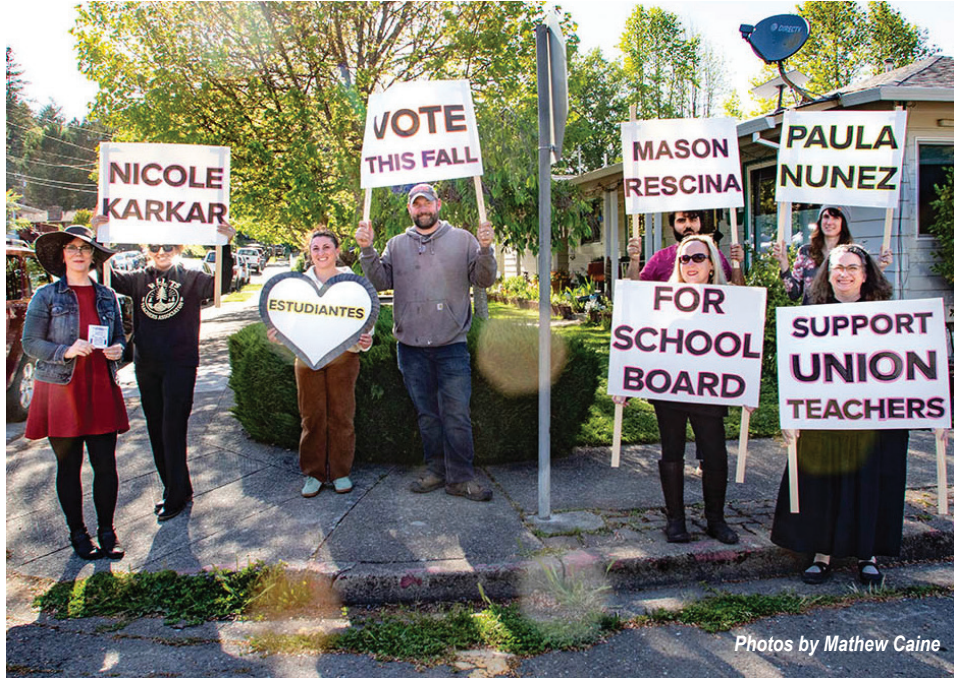
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Above, from left: Daniel Lamprich and Alisa Smith show signs endorsing Paula Nunez and Mason Rescina for the Willits school board. Members of the Willits Teachers Association wanted to show their endorsements for the school board to people attending the Brookside School Open House on Wednesday. On Thursday, the WTA celebrated their endorsements in front of Willits High School. Below: Members of the Willits Teachers Association show off their endorsements for the Willits school board Wednesday on the corner of Spruce and West Mendocino. At bottom, from left: Brian Bowles, president of the Willits Teachers Association, woodworking teacher, and district athletic director, asks residents to vote in the June 2 election. Christine Felton wears her Willits Teachers Association hoodie. Becky Button, independent study and New Horizons teacher, takes part in the celebration of the Willits Teachers Association endorsements.



Photos by Mathew Caine



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# Celebrating endorsements

Willits Teachers Association supports Nicole Karkar, Paula Nunez, Mason Rescina for school board

"I've worn a lot of hats in this school district, and I greatly care about this community and the students in it," stated Brian Bowles, athletic director for Willits Unified and Willits Teachers Association president. "That's why we're here tonight. We have three fantastic candidates. We've got three vacancies in the school board, and it's time for a change. We need people in the school board that listen to the students and the teachers and all of the families in this community and not just one single superintendent. That has been happening for too long and we're missing the boat of what's going on in our community and what's going on with our students."

Last Wednesday, April 29, during the Brookside Elementary School Open House, a group of dedicated Willits teachers, members of the Willits Teachers Association, converged at the corner of West Mendocino Avenue and Spruce Street, holding signs that declared their studied choices for the upcoming vacancies on the Willits Unified School Board as well as signs which asked people to support union teachers.

The endorsement signs were in support of Nicole Karkar, incumbent Paula Nunez, and Mason Rescina, Nicole Karkar, who the WTA decided, after interviews, be the best three choices to serve the students

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The rest of **Ffriend** From page 1

Friend, 39, of Jamaica, May 1, without incident near his residence in Willits, California," said public affairs officer Jason Sweeney. "Ffriend entered the United States illegally at an unknown time and place and has a final order of removal issued by an immigration judge in 2024. He was released from ICE custody May 2 following a district court order from the Northern District of California."

The Redheaded Blackbelt story, by reporter Lisa Music, also reports that Ffriend has an upcoming court hearing on May 14.

According to multiple reports, the family disputes that Ffriend is an illegal alien, with cousin and Willits attorney Colby Friend telling Redheaded Blackbelt that in 2024, an immigration judge granted Ffriend a withholding of removal under the Convention Against Torture, a form of protection that bars deportation to a person's home country when they face credible danger there. "He's not an illegal alien anymore. He's a legal alien," Colby said.

Rumors ran wild online – and in person – on Friday after Willits schools sent out messages to their school's families after receiving calls from people worried about ICE in Willits.

"Dear Willits Unified Families and Staff: We have been made aware of ICE activity in the community. At this time, ICE has not come to any of our school campuses, and all students and staff are safe," said the message from WUSD Superintendent John Baker. "As a reminder, Willits Unified School District has protocols and procedures in place to respond to situations like this in order to protect the safety and well-being of our students and community. We also want to share the Rapid Response Hotline, which you may contact directly if you or someone you know comes into contact with ICE: 707-621-8220. Thank you."

The Willits schools were not able to comment much further on the incident,

but Director Charlene Bredder of WCS sister school, Willits Elementary Charter School, said: "Willits Elementary Charter School has a clear policy regarding ICE activity, which is to notify the school community of any ICE presence or action in the local vicinity. We will continue to act on our policy as needed so members of our community will have the information they need. We have a duty of care, not only to our students, but to our school community."

Policies regarding local schools and ICE are set by the local district school board.

The Rapid Response Hotline reported getting many calls from residents reporting that they'd heard about or seen ICE in Willits. The volunteer organization helps track ICE activity and connect community members in need with legal help.

The Redheaded Blackbelt story reports that on May 1, Ffriend was expecting a routine compliance check-in with federal immigration agents. When he got a call saying ICE was at his home, near the WCS campus where he was working, he walked home to find six ICE agents waiting.

According to Attorney Friend, who was present, Redheaded Blackbelt reports: "Agents physically restrained Ffriend against a fence and handcuffed him before he reached the door. Colby and Ffriend's wife ran out and repeatedly demanded to see a warrant. Agents told them they had one and would discuss it," Colby said, "but placed Ffriend in a vehicle and left, only briefly showing the paperwork to his stunned family."

Ffriend, a professional soccer player in Jamaica, has volunteered with youth soccer players in Willits since he arrived around 2018 and plays with the adult men's Mendocino Soccer League.

An early online report about the arrest had both Willits Mayor Tom Allman and Mendocino County Sheriff Matt Kendall saying they weren't aware of ICE activity in

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The rest of **WTA** From page 10

High School and fourth-grade teacher at Blosser Lane, came to support her sister, Nicole Karkar, as well as the other candidates. "I'm supporting all three candidates. They are all good candidates to be on the school board. It seems like we need a shift on the school board to bridge the teachers, the community, with the district. I think all three of these have the best interest of our teachers in mind," she said.

The candidates who participated in the process, who came to the candidates night, were asked a series of questions, some of which were: How do you believe the district can best support and retain high-quality educators? How will you ensure transparency and accountability in your role as a school board trustee? How do you believe the district can best support and retain high-quality educators? What

The rest of **Skunk** From page 3

are your thoughts on maintaining positive and collaborative relationships between the school board and our teachers union?

Further questions were: What role should the school board play in ensuring all students have access to a high-quality education? How do you believe the district can best support students with diverse learning needs, including English learners and students with IEPs [individual education programs]? What do you see as the biggest challenge currently facing our district, and how would you work to address it? Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

The following afternoon, on Thursday, April 30, the WTA convened in front of Willits High School to let their voices be heard and their members to be seen with their signs declaring their endorsements for the June 2 elections.

After returning from the railbike experience, the participants were invited for light snacks, drinks, and conversation at Northspur Brewery. At about 5 pm, the group reconvened at the depot, along with another 100 or so invitees, mostly from Willits, to ride the Highball Express, back up to the Crowley Meadow, where a tasty dinner provided by Scoops Deli was served, along with drinks from the open-air bar. The riders could sit around several fire pits, enjoy their dinner and conversation, and listen to music by the talented guitarist/singer JJohnny Heldstab. Once dinner was over, there was cake and kits containing all the makings for the campfire favorite, s'mores.

"I believe we started the railbikes, operating from Fort Bragg, in 2019," explained David Morrissey, chief marketing officer of the Mendocino Railroad. "They really took off after COVID because it was kind of the first time for people to get outside and have an adventure. At this point, we now have four different railbike experiences, three leaving from Fort Bragg, two leave from the depot and one actually leaves from the other side of the closed tunnel off of Sherwood Road. This is our first Willits railbike experience. We're super excited to launch this," he said.

"The other really incredible railbike experience we have on the Fort Bragg side is 'Railbikes on the Noyo.' That's the one that launches from the other side of the collapsed tunnel. There's a really steep, short hike down. Xochitl leads a naturalist discussion on the hike there."

The railbike experience runs, like other Skunk Train rides and specials, are half price for Willits residents, with IDs, and 25% off for people from other Mendocino locations. The Railcoasters are \$557 per bike which accommodates two people. With the locals' discount, it becomes a good price for a four-hour adventure.

"We live in such a magical place and being able to share that with people is one of my passions and pure joy," said naturalist and railbike guide Villa.

To learn more about the Railcoasters and the Skunk Train rides, and all that the Mendocino Railroad has to offer: https://www.skunktrain.com/, or https://www.facebook.com/SkunkTrain/.

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## Kindergarten class helped created small riparian zone at Willits Elementary Charter

By *Rebecca Daun-Widner for WECS*

Willits Elementary Charter School kindergarten students explored pond and wetland ecosystems during our northern California rainy season this spring. As a culmination of their studies, the class created a small wetland habitat on the WECS campus.

The class built a 5' x 15' riparian zone that includes two small ponds and a shallow vernal pool-type area, native and ornamental plants, and varying logs and stones. The ponds are lined with clay, gravel, mud, decaying leaves and branches, stones, and plants that student families and staff contributed from around Little Lake Valley, the Fonsen Ranch between Willits and Laytonville, Shimmins Ridge, and Potter Valley.

Students introduced micro fauna like scuds, tardigrades, snails, and larger creatures including Pacific Chorus Frog tadpoles and a red-bellied newt. Rosy minnows will ensure there are no mosquitos! In addition, tiny, stingless mason bees were introduced to the habitat through a grant from Crown Bees. Early on, a mature Pacific Chorus Frog made its way to the area on his own. He can be heard calling throughout the day!

The area will be used by classes to observe life cycles and teach stewardship of our vital wetland areas.

Special thanks to Friedman's, Sparetime Garden Supply, and the Browning and Fonsen families for contributing materials.



*Kindergarten students at the Willits Elementary Charter School worked on creating a small wetlands habitat on the school campus this spring.*



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