

WUSD board hears about school site goals

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On the evening of September 9, 2026, Willits Unified School District held September's Board Trustee meeting. In closed session, present board trustee members and Superintendent John Baker discussed inter-district transfers, conferred with legal counsel, and with labor negotiators; and upon officially opening the meeting, the board trustees jumped right into informational items, comments, and agenda items.

To begin the meeting on a positive note, WUSD warmly celebrated the reclassification of English learners. The board and Superintendent Baker honored students across various grade levels learning English as their second language whose skills are being recognized for reaching proficient academic English levels by scoring a Level 4 on the state English Language Proficiency Assessment for California. Though many students could not attend in person due to other district-wide commitments, all students were recognized for their

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Board
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Lucas Fire started by lightning

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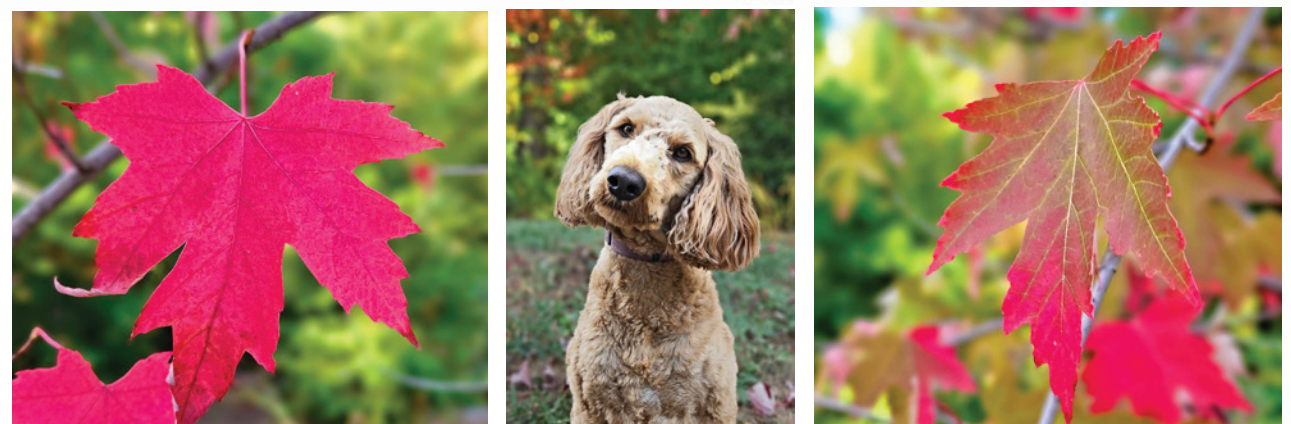
CAL FIRE Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit announced Sunday evening the Lucas Fire that started September 10 in northwest Lake County was at 100% containment. The Lucas Fire burned 4,128 acres in Lake and in Mendocino counties. "After more than a week of sustained firefighting efforts," the unit posted, "crews have successfully established full containment of the fire. It will now move into patrol status where crews will continue to monitor the site until there is no smoke observed coming from it for three consecutive days."

"We thank the firefighters, cooperators, Lake County Sheriff's Office, and the Lake County communities for their support throughout the incident," the CAL-FIRE Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit said.

In a September 16 press release, CAL-FIRE Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit reported: "CAL FIRE determines lightning as the cause of the Lucas Fire."

"CAL FIRE Law Enforcement has concluded its investigation into the

Read the rest of
Lucas
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Above, from left: Some leaves are already turning a brilliant red on a few branches around Willits. Ginger, the 4-and-a-half year old Golden Doodle was out for a morning walk Monday and enjoying the fall-time ambiance. Seeing the leaves transition from green to red makes a beautiful gradient. Below: Pip, the 2-year old mixed terrier, left, poses in front of the glorious fall foliage with Call (short for Caliente!) the 3-year old boxer and pit mix. The pair were both originally adopted from the animal shelter, and were out for a last-day-of-summer morning walk with their humans Monday morning. First day of fall is Tuesday, September 22!



Photos by
Maureen
Jennison



Maples
show
off their
changing
colors
around
Willits.

All the Fall Feels

Tuesday marked first day of official autumn season for 2026

While the calendar technically declares the end of summer is here, we're surely still in for a few warm days before the cold settles in for the end third of the year. However, the crisp mornings, cool nights and starting-to-change foliage sure make fall's approach feel imminent. Before the rains and glooms come, get out, look up, and enjoy the show, of which Mother Nature is just starting the opening acts. Maples are the quick choice for glorious color, but also the controversial Bradford pear, and even poison oak put on amazing autumn shows.

— Maureen Jennison



Candidates Forum for November 3, 2026 election

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Last Sunday, the Little Lake Grange hosted a forum for the candidates in the November 3 election for Third District supervisor, the Willits Unified School District board, and the Willits City Council. Although not a full house, the audience was engaged and interested in the answers given by all the candidates. Sponsored by the Little Lake Grange, Willits Economic Localization, the League of Women Voters of Mendocino County, the Mendocino Women's Political Coalition, and the American Association of University Women of Ukiah, the format consisted of a 2-minute opening statement, 1-minute answers to questions both from the sponsors and the audience, and a 2-minute closing statement. The shortness of the answer time was necessitated by the number of candidates and races at the forum. Willits Librarian and Branch Manager Denise Jessie moderated the proceedings.

In future editions, Willits Weekly will publish portions of the transcript of the candidates forum, so that

Read the rest of
Forum
Over on Page 8

A strong start to the school year at Willits Unified

By John Baker,
Superintendent, Willits Unified School District

We are off to a great start at Willits Unified School District. We are now about one month into the school year, and I have enjoyed visiting our schools and seeing the great learning taking place in classrooms throughout the district. Our students are engaged, our teachers and staff are working hard, and there is a positive energy across our schools.

Great teaching and learning remain at the center of everything we do. At our September board meeting, our principals shared their goals for the school year, with a strong focus on our Multi-Tiered System of Supports, or MTSS. Simply put, MTSS ensures students receive the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional support they need to succeed. We want every student to be challenged, supported, and given the opportunity to succeed.

We also had wonderful Back-to-School Nights throughout the district. I want to personally thank the many parents and family members who attended.

Read the rest of
Baker
Over on Page 9

What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from our readers

Modern timber management

To the Editor:

There is a giant misconception regarding the way we manage our forests here in Northern California. There is a picture in everyone's mind of how it's been done in the past because we all know our timber stands got blitzed from every draw to every ridge. Redwoods were feeding a demanding market from the mid-1800s onward, and transported through oxen, railway, cable blades, and truck roads, they were felled and milled. There was no regard for ecosystems, erosion, sustainability, etc. The resource was rebuilding cities one patch of big trees at a time. Then it started growing back.

The timber resource of Northern California began growing back as fast as it could be wiped out. Redwoods sprout from the stump, and Douglas fir seeds out and will expand wherever it wants. The definition of renewability. I'm not saying the loggers of the old days started off with concern or knowledge of a renewable resource, they got lucky. But still, nobody can argue the science. One misconception about our area is thinking certain areas were always covered in timber. We had more open grassland. Timber has encroached upon grassland because it no longer gets burned or grazed. Native Americans burned the landscape for centuries. Homesteaders burned and grazed the landscape.

It's nice to think about a landscape of Mendocino County where there are magnificent stands of old growth and open ground full of vast resources. The open ground is attainable, simple management through livestock movement and yes, burning. Although that would make some citizens' eyes well up, it's still scientific. Vast stands of old growth suddenly appearing any time soon? Not attainable. But management of this constant regenerating resource is happening, and it's happening using a completely different method, feeding different markets. Pairing local economy with land management and fire resilience sounds like a good thing because it is. It's common sense that most universities won't give you.

Recently, there has been a lot of talk of two harvest plans in the Charlie Creek area of Branscomb. I'm very familiar with this area and the work being done around it. An organization has sued CAL FIRE over approved harvest plans that surround Charlie Creek. So I simply want to lay out what is being said by the organization's website, in local news outlets, and what is actually occurring.

First off, every timber harvest plan in the state of California goes through an extremely rigorous process before work begins. Through CEQA and a little book called the Forest Practices Rules, plans are examined for any issues that could arise. Slides, silvicultures, too many WLPZ landings, etc. Four state agencies in addition to numerous professional foresters are on site. The forester writes a plan, the agencies put boots on the ground to examine the possible impact. This is not a three-day process. It is a long, drawn-out process. The "experts" from the other side who claim the whole mountain is gonna fall into the creek, have never set foot or eye on the plan area. Government agencies, especially within the state of California, are not on the side of working-class people. They are not trying to give anyone a pass. The two Branscomb harvest plans currently in the courts are fully compliant following the strictest regulations, not just in the country, in the entire world! Here is the truth about the two plans in the lawsuit.

If you look on website of the Friends of Dutch Charlie Creek, you will see claims about logging practices that

make it seem less like misconception, and more about hatred for the people in the timber industry. On the website, there is a picture of a painted redwood with the claim that it is an old growth being harvested from Charlie Creek. They also claim of the abundance of old growth in Charlie Creek. These are both false claims. Sorry, old growth in that area was cut and milled a long time ago. There is a private strip of property below the property being sued that encompasses Dutch Charlie Creek that may have trees that look like old growth, but they are not. Not saying there are none, but not an abundance. The property in question, none. I know the property extremely well, Friends of Dutch Charlie Creek does not. If they were familiar, it would mean they had trespassed.

And we have strict rules to follow in the industry. Charlie Creek is a class 1 stream. In a class 1 or a large class 2 stream, it is illegal to harvest the 13 largest trees per acre. That goes for old growth, second growth, doesn't matter. If the tree is one of the largest and it's only 10 years old, it's retained. That's a fact. This is checked pre-harvest, numerous times through the duration of the project, and after completion of the project. I'll add, harvest plans are ALL inspected that way. Every aspect of them. So to claim that a giant, beautiful old growth is getting sawed down next to a creek is not just misconception, it's rage baiting.

Another claim is that logging roads next to the creek are being used in winter. This is also false. Certain harvest plans can have winter operations written in, but there are conditions. Rocked roads on ridge tops are a condition, weather permitting and after a 48 hour wait after a rain event with an inspection from CAL FIRE to make sure saturated roads aren't being used. The picture on the website, if it is a road down in the stream zone of Charlie Creek, will not, and cannot be used in winter. The actual truth, is after October 15, with a 30 percent chance of rain, all trails and truck roads must have drainage structures (waterbars) installed and no use until saturated conditions are non-evident. After November 15, winter period begins and that road in the picture will become illegal to travel on and all drainage structures will be in place, or the logger faces violations and citations. Loggers will face fines of monetary value and possible jail time if they're not. Working people don't have time for jail so good luck finding that road being used in January.

Another claim is how these plans are reckless and have broad exceptions to the Forest Practice Rules. That word "exception" is used a lot on website. I'll explain exception skid trails. Tractors or any machinery use is prohibited in a stream zone. If one grouser from a track of a cat enters past the flag line of WLPZ, CAL FIRE cites logger with a violation. An exception skid trail is written into a plan for two reasons. One, yes, to get understory trees. Remember, Forest Practice Rules don't allow the large trees to be harvested in these zones. The other reason is to enter an existing skid trail for the purpose of repairing it. An exception skid trail is never new construction. It's an old trail built in the days of no concern, being repaired in the days of good stewardship. The timber industry is repairing old mistakes across California, and people are suing it because of misconception and ignorance. Slowly rebuilding scarred mountains to halt erosion. Seems like a great thing to me!

Finally, I'll explain new road construction not just for these two plans, but for plans all over our area. Any existing road and any new road has what are called map points. These are areas that have to have a ditch, culvert, berm, etc. Old existing roads are surveyed to see what treatment is necessary to never slide, and never deliver sediment, no matter how high on the ridge. Addressing issues if they were missed before. New road construction can occur for a few reasons. Some roads from the old days can be decommissioned, due to their lack of attention and concern over the past several decades. Not from a year ago, but from decades ago. That road is put to bed to never be used again, and another road is built with modern concern and care to facilitate logging the area.

Funny in this case, as with many cases, these new roads being built in Branscomb are being built to run a skyline from. A skyline yarder is a machine with a tower that sits stationary on a ridge top, and from that a cable is strung across the canyon. Logs are lifted in the air to this line and flown across to the truck road. These roads were built so that these so-called steep hillsides of Charlie Creek wouldn't be disturbed. Logs flying through the air and no machines in the forest make it pretty hard to claim logging on steep hillsides will choke coho salmon out.

I want to let people know what I do, and what many people do in our county to feed their families and drive an economy. The things I have said here are the truth. I invited Mike McGuire and Assemblyman Chris Rogers to one of our jobs to show them our methods and explain sustainability. After agreeing, they ended up sending one staffer who had zero interest. Obviously, they both have the same misconception. Everything I've written here, I can prove. The other side cannot. Misconception can be fixed. Ignorance and hatred, a little tougher battle.

We are held to the highest standards. Logging practices

Read the rest of **Letters** Over on page 11

Governor vetoes demonstration state forest bill

Submitted by Environmental Protection Information Center

SACRAMENTO – On Friday, Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed AB 2494 (Chris Rogers), a bill to modernize the management of state-owned "demonstration forests." Under existing law, these public lands are to be managed for "maximum sustained production" of timber products, while only "giving consideration" to other management values, like recreation, biodiversity, research, and wildfire resilience. Under AB 2494, California would have shifted the core mission of these public lands away from a historical mandate focused primarily on commercial timber logging toward a broader set of goals including ecological conservation, climate and wildfire resilience, and tribal stewardship.

"We are so encouraged by the overwhelming message from the Legislature that they want to see state lands managed to prioritize wildfire resilience, protecting public lands, and tribal co-management. We only wish Governor Newsom agreed with them," said Tom Wheeler, Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Information Center. "We're looking forward to working with our next governor to ensure public lands are managed for 21st century public trust values and not for the benefit of corporations."

The veto message says the bill would narrow management of the Demonstration State Forests to "a limited set of public benefits." The bill does the reverse. Current law directs management toward maximum sustained production of forest products. AB 2494 replaces that single-commodity mandate with a broader multi-benefit framework that includes biodiversity, durable carbon storage, watershed health, wildfire resilience, recreation, and the forests' role as a living laboratory for ecological research.

The veto message also warns that California would lose flexibility in forest management. Again, the opposite is true. AB 2494 would have continued to allow timber harvest and research in furtherance of the public benefit objectives. Under existing state law, research and other public uses of the land are a lesser priority for land management than commercial timber production.

If passed AB 2494 would have improved management of more than 84,000 acres of publicly owned land and would have aligned management of these lands with Governor Newsom's directives on biodiversity and land conservation, tribal co-management, and wildfire resilience. California is quickly approaching 2030, a target year by which Newsom himself has pledged to conserve 30% of state lands to confront our biodiversity and climate crises. Despite the fact that California is often a global climate leader, the governor failed to use AB 2494 as an example of how the state's own lands could demonstrate active management in meeting its ambitious conservation goals.

Earlier this year, the state set a goal to comanage 7.5 million acres with tribes. The bill would have strengthened tribal co-management opportunities, by authorizing co-management agreements for demonstration state forests and encouraging the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into forest management. These actions would have furthered Governor Newsom's own commitments on tribal stewardship and 30x30. Despite this policy backdrop, the veto message was silent on the commitments Newsom made to tribal nations and failed to acknowledge the impact tribally focused management would have on forest health.

"Tribes have sustainably managed California's forests since time immemorial. We have a lot to learn from their traditional ecological knowledge that has been developed over many centuries. Unfortunately, state law will continue to deprioritize the full exercise of tribal sovereignty over these precious forest landscapes," said Melodie Meyer, Conservation Attorney at EPIC.

Demonstration state forests have been mired in controversy following proposals from CAL FIRE to intensively log mature second-growth stands in the Jackson Demonstration State Forest. There, protestors have stopped multiple attempts to log big, old trees by physically blocking logging roads, engaging in tree sits, and by locking themselves to logging equipment. AB 2494 sought to break the stalemate over management of the Jackson and

Read the rest of **Bill** Over on page 11

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. To-go lunches are available from 12 to 12:45 pm, in front of the main desk, 1501 Baechtel Road. Due to increasing food costs, dine-in and to-go meals are now \$9.

Thursday, September 24: Fish Sticks & Rice Pilaf

Friday, September 25: Turkey, Stuffing, Gravy, Veggies, Roll

Monday, September 28: Green Chili Crispy Chicken Sandwich

Tuesday, September 29: Open Faced Turkey Sandwich

Wednesday, September 30: Fried Shrimp w/Sides

October menu not available

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.



From far left: Although there will eventually be a fence separating the trail from the tracks, the trail will still afford an opportunity to see the trains and crews in action. Phillip Davidson inspects the Willits section of the Great Redwood Trail. The Great Redwood Trail parallels the Willits segment of the historic Northwestern Pacific Railroad for most of its length.

Photos by Mathew Caine



Great Redwood Trail

Construction update on the grant-funded Willits segment of the rail trail

"The Great Redwood Trail construction project gives us the basic infrastructure, but I'm also interested in what we can do over time to make this feel uniquely Willits: public art, local history, landscaping, and other amenities that turn it from simply a path into a community space," said Duley Duley, Community and Economic Development Director for the City of Willits.

"There may also be opportunities to create destinations along the trail, whether that's a small bike pump track, gathering areas, recreational amenities, or other features that give people another reason to get out and use the trail. The exciting part is that completion of the trail doesn't have to be the end of the project, it can be the foundation that we continue to build on as opportunities and community ideas emerge. I think the real success will be when we stop thinking of this as 'the new rail trail,' and it simply becomes part of how people move around Willits."

On a recent Wednesday afternoon, both Duley and Phillip Davidson, Willits Capital Improvements Manager, conducted a tour for Willits Weekly of the current state of construction of the Willits segment of the Great Redwood Trail. Although the 1.6-mile trail is graded, and the bridges have been built over three streams, there is still about three months of work remaining until the city can declare a soft opening. Asphalt, dusk to

dawn lighting, fencing between the trail and the railway, cameras, and other amenities are being planned and implemented before Willits can consider it open. Not that the lack of asphalt has deterred some citizens from utilizing the well-defined trail. People can be seen walking their dogs or just strolling along the route, which runs from the Skunk Train depot to East Hill Road by Howard Hospital.

"Tomorrow, we're on the agenda for the state Coastal Conservancy," continued Duley. "The Great Redwood Trail has authorized them to release \$935,000 in additional funding to support the project. Some of that is going to finish up the gap in the construction budget and a lot of that money will be available for amenities. While we're still focused on finishing up construction, we're going to have an opportunity to work with the community to identify some cool amenities that we will actually have money to install. The total construction cost is around \$9,800,000."

Capital Improvements Manager Davidson commented on the use of cameras and other aspects of the trail, "They've [Bouthillier Construction] installed three bridges. They go across Haehl Creek, Baechtel Creek, and Broadus Creek. All the bridges are set above the 100-year flood mark. We have a proposal to put the

Read the rest of **Trail** Over on page 9



**STRONGER TOGETHER**
FOR MENDOCINO SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 3

A stronger county government, working with residents, tribes, cities, businesses, and community organizations, can accomplish more for all of us.

- HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**
Help people build a life here. Expand housing people can afford and help local businesses and agriculture grow and create jobs.
- PUBLIC SAFETY AND INFRASTRUCTURE**
Maintain roads, push for improved cell service and broadband, and strengthen emergency preparedness and crime prevention with clear priorities and accountability for results.
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The things none of us can solve alone are exactly what county government is for.

1st: Fix the Foundation > 2nd: Find a Way to Yes > 3rd: Stronger Together
Each builds on the last.

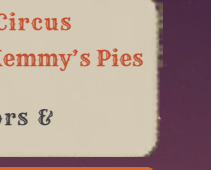
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The Perfect Start to the Fall Season - Harvest Moon Celebration in Downtown Willits!

Kick off Fall Festivities on Main Street in Downtown Willits (between Wood Street & E. Commercial Street) with a Fun & Free Family Event!





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10:00 a.m. - Worship
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Info: 707-459-1905
www.agapebilechurch.com

Amazing Grace Assembly of God Church
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P.O. Box 489, Willits
Worship Service - 5:00 p.m.
Pastor Kris Strickland
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"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.

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265 Margie Drive
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Grace Community Church
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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 Bandanadham
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/
santhonywillits@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 Brunetti

St. John Lutheran Church
Sunday Service
10:00 a.m.
(707) 459-2988
24 Mill Creek Drive
Facebook.com/stjohnwillits
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
Labyrinth and Peace Garden
A place to find comfort where all are welcome.
Pastor Jaime Rogers-Fairchild
Sunday Worship at 10:30 am
286 School St. (at Pine)
707-459-2855
wum@outlook.com
www.willitsumc.org
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If you want to be included in this column please call:
April Tweddell
(707) 972-2475
april@willitsweekly.com

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.

FORGOTTEN ISLAND
(PG) 1 hrs 49 min
Fri: 4:30, 7:15
Sat/Sun: 1:45, 4:30, 7:15
Weds/Thur: 4:30, 7:15
Showtimes: September 25 to October 1

HEART OF THE BEAST
(PG-13) 1 hrs 45 min
Fri: 4:45, 7:30
Sat/Sun: 2:00, 4:45, 7:30
Weds/Thur: 4:45, 7:30
Closed Monday/Tuesday

PRACTICAL MAGIC 2
DELUXE THEATRE
(PG-13) 2h 10min
Fri: 4:15, 7:00
Sat/Sun: 1:30, 4:15, 7:00
Weds/Thur: 4:15, 7:00
Thrifty Thursday: \$8.00 tickets. Thrifty Thursday films this week in red.

Open Caption Wednesdays
Every Wednesday, all movies are shown with open captions.
Every Wednesday All Shows (when available)

Thursday, September 24
Willits Farmers Market:
Join your neighbors at Summer Market outdoors at City Park on Commercial Street, Thursday, September 24, 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, September 25
"Bakersfield Mist" at WCT: Willits Community Theatre presents a dark and meaningful comedy by Stephen Sachs, loosely based on the story of a woman who bought a painting at a thrift store and came to believe it was a Jackson Pollock worth millions of dollars. Directed by Jim Williams, and starring two WCT veterans: Cindi Mohr as the boozy, hard-tongued ex-bartender Maude and Steve Marston as Lionel, the effete and expert art appraiser. Friday, September 25 at 7 pm. 37 West Van Lane. Tickets are \$25 and available at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door. Runs through October 4, with 7 pm shows on Fridays and Saturdays, and 2 pm matinees on Sundays.

Dolly Parton Night at The Munchery: Dust off those boots and join us Friday, September 25 from 7:30 to 9 pm for a night of line dance lessons, social dancing, and Line Dancing with Rise and Thrive. Come dressed in your best Dolly-inspired look. \$10. 1797 South Main Street, Willits.

Glow in the Dark Hide and Seek at WHS: Join us for our 2nd annual Glow in the Dark Hide and Seek on the Willits High School Campus, 299 North Main Street, Friday, September 25. Registration starts at 7:30 pm; first game at 8 pm. We will play four 15-minute rounds. \$20 entry - to raise funds for Willits High School's Homecoming celebration.

Deanne "Bunny" California at Shanachie:



Percussionist and second singer for Willits Farmers Market Band, "Bunny" is a prolific songwriter and cover artist, whose live piano and vocal sets span melancholy goth-infused pop, jazz, rhythmic stompers, happy standards, and soul-stirring siren wails. Friday, September 25, at 8 pm at Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

Saturday, September 26
Willits Community Clean-Up Day: Join us and help keep Willits clean. Saturday, September 26 from 9 am to noon. "We'll be jumping down into Willits' creeks and rivers to clean them out before the rains come. Bring closed-toed shoes!" Meet at Willits City Hall, 111 East Commercial Street.

Mabon Market at the Munchery: Join us Saturday, September 26 from 1 to 5 pm, as Mabon Market at the Munchery returns to celebrate the autumn equinox with an afternoon of music, shopping, food, and fall fun! Live music by Lindsay Gang & Cedric: Local vendors offering goods, services, crafts & more; Kids activities & a jumpy house; Food & drinks available from The Munchery, 1797 South Main Street.

"Bakersfield Mist" at WCT: Willits Community Theatre presents a dark and meaningful comedy by Stephen Sachs, Saturday, September 26 at 7 pm. 37 West Van Lane. Tickets are \$25 and available at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door. See Friday, September 25 listing for more info.

Blue Luke at Shanachie: Prodigy guitarist "Blue Luke" Andrews takes the soul of the blues, the groove of funk, the grit of rock & roll, and the harmonies of jazz into the modern world. Saturday, September 26, 8 pm at Shanachie Pub, 50 South Main Street.

Sunday, September 27

Grange Pancake Breakfast: Join us at the Grange for a wonderful collection of comfort foods - our "scratch" pancakes (sourdough wholegrain, Hank's famous buttermilk, or gluten-free) plus organic, local farm-fresh scrambled eggs, Beeleer's Quality bacon, real butter, juice and organic coffee or tea for only \$13! (\$11 for Senior plate, \$5 for kids under 10). Extra sides of organic fruit, Amish organic maple syrup, fresh fruit syrup or bacon for a small additional fee. Every fourth Sunday, Sunday, September 27 this month, from 8 to 11 am at the Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street. Punch cards are available for purchase: \$100 buys 10 months of breakfasts, a savings of \$30 a year.

"Bakersfield Mist" at WCT: Willits Community Theatre presents a dark and meaningful comedy by Stephen Sachs, Sunday, September 27 matinee at 2 pm. 37 West Van Lane. Tickets are \$25 and available at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door. See Friday, September 25 listing for more info.

Wednesday, September 30
"Chalk the Walk" at Howard Memorial: Adventist Health invites the community to

"Chalk the Walk, Have the Talk" events for Suicide Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness, encourage open conversations about mental health, and remind those who may be struggling that support is available. The Willits event is set for Wednesday, September 30 at Howard Memorial, 1 Marcela Drive, from noon to 12:30 pm in front of the hospital. Attendees will hear about suicide prevention and resources available in Mendocino County before walking the hospital grounds and using colorful chalk to leave messages of hope, encouragement and support along the sidewalks.

Thursday, October 1

Willits Farmers Market: Join your neighbors at Summer Market outdoors at City Park on Commercial Street, Thursday, October 1, 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, October 2

"Bakersfield Mist" at WCT: Willits Community Theatre presents a dark and meaningful comedy by Stephen Sachs, Friday, October 2 at 7 pm. 37 West Van Lane. Tickets are \$25 and available at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door. See Friday, September 25 listing for more info.

Saturday, October 3

Harvest Moon Celebration downtown: Kick off autumn at the Willits Chamber of Commerce's annual Harvest Moon Celebration in downtown Willits. Join us on Main Street for our FREE, family-friendly event - live music by Soul Circus, games, a pie eating contest with Kemmy's Pies, vendors, and of course the great community of Willits, family, friends, and neighbors ready to have fun, enjoy good eats, and shop local! Saturday, October 3, 4 to 8 pm. Wood Street to Commercial Street, around the bend to Humboldt Street.

"Bakersfield Mist" at WCT: Willits Community Theatre presents a dark and meaningful comedy by Stephen Sachs, Saturday, October 3 at 7 pm. 37 West Van Lane. Tickets are \$25 and available at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door. See Friday, September 25 listing for more info.

Sunday, October 4

"Uncorked & Uncharted" at Ridgewood Ranch: A "Spirited Luncheon" to benefit Friends of the Mendocino County Museum, Sunday, October 4 from 1 to 5 pm, at Ridgewood Ranch. Featuring lunch by Harvest Market and libations by Northspur Brewery and Frey Winery. A theatrical history tour, plus live auction. Tickets \$65, available online at https://mendocinocountymuseumfriends.org or email Fotmcm@gmail.com, or buy in person

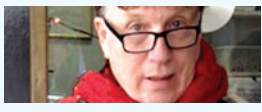
at the Friends of the Museum Gift Shop, 400 East Commercial Street.

THE WILLITS COMMUNITY THEATRE PRESENTS
Bakersfield Mist
Written by Stephen Sachs
Starting Cindi Mohr & Steve Marston
September 18 - October 4, 2026
Directed by Jim Williams

"Bakersfield Mist" at WCT: Willits Community Theatre presents the final performance of this dark and meaningful comedy by Stephen Sachs, Sunday, October 4 matinee at 2 pm. 37 West Van Lane. Tickets are \$25 and available at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door. See Friday, September 25 listing for more info.

COLUMN | AT THE MOVIES

'The Weight'



Dan Essman
Columnist

The Story: Stolen Gold!!!
The genre: adventure and suspense in an exotic location. The era: it's the beginning of the Great Depression. Six desperate convicts breaking up rocks with picks and strong backs are given a chance at erasure of their charges ... and freedom. All they have to do is travel on foot across the Oregon wilderness. Each man carries a gold mine filled with gold ingots from a gold mine that was being closed by the U.S. government. Do the convicts trust each other? Mostly. Are they being followed? Possibly. Are there guns involved? The convicts don't have any guns, but yes, guns are involved.

My Thoughts: Good movie with a tight script, tense situations, and solid acting. We movie buffs will probably recognize this flick as an homage to a great film: "Wages of Fear." In that movie, instead of stolen gold in the wilderness, it was touchy nitroglycerin being transported by truck over rough roads. And again, it was a saga of desperate men risking their lives for freedom.

Parents: Teens and up. Courage and a "can do/make do" attitude, and the guts to push on in risky situations are rewarded.

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

Enchanted Pumpkin Path
Saturday, October 31st • 4:15 - 8 pm

Tickets go on sale October 1 for Enchanted Pumpkin Path

The Waldorf School of Mendocino County's Enchanted Pumpkin Path offers a spectacular and scare-free Halloween adventure suitable for all ages! Guests can enjoy whimsical performances and receive a small gift at the end of each skit. Families can also gather at the Smokey Cauldron Café to enjoy seasonal treats and nourishing food. Please leave full-face masks at home. Keeping faces visible helps our Halloween celebration feel warm, playful, and comfortable for everyone in our community. Saturday, October 31st (Halloween Night); pick your time slot from 4:15 to 7:15 pm, rain or shine! Babies in arms are free. Tickets are \$10 and non-refundable. If you need special assistance to attend this event, please contact us at office@mendocinowaldorf.org

THE MUNCHERY
September 25th
9 to 5 Dolly Parton Night
7:30-9:00pm \$10
Line Dance Lessons and Social Dancing
LINE DANCING WITH RISE AND THRIVE

Mendo College Fall Plant Sale, October 2 and 3

The Mendocino College Agriculture Department presents the annual Fall Plant Sale, Friday, October 2, 9 am to 5 pm, and Saturday, October 3, 9 am to 3 pm at 1000 Hensley Creek Road in Ukiah. Featuring Heirloom Vegetables, California Natives, Succulents, Cacti, Shrubs & Berries, Drought-Tolerant and Hard-to-Find Plants. Plus our friends from Ceramics Clubs and others. Visit www.mendocino.edu/plantsale for more info, plant list, and updates. Cash, check, or charge (charge available now, and preferred).

WILLITS FRONTIER DAYS
15th ANNUAL
MARY BURGESS Memorial RANCH RODEO
OCTOBER 10th, 2026
Come out watch local cowboys compete on a THREE MAN TEAM in ranch events, all while enjoying a BBQ RIB COOKOFF!
FOLLOWING THE RANCH RODEO
BULLS RANCH BRONCS BREAKAWAY
\$1,000.00 ADDED \$1,000.00 ADDED \$500.00 ADDED
A full day of western action, great food, and family fun!
SUPPORT LOCAL • COMMUNITY STRONG • WESTERN TRADITION
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WILLITS TOWING FRED BARRY
WESTERN / VINTAGE VENDORS
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Ballot Info Parties in Willits, October 7, 11, 12

Confused about the 14 state Ballot Measures on the November 3 ballot? Find out who's in favor, who's against, who's funding them. Ask questions, exchange opinions.... All viewpoints welcome! Bring your ballot! (Ballots in California are set to go out starting October 5). The first Ballot Info Party is set for Wednesday, October 7, at 5:15 pm at the Willits Library* Meeting Room, 390 East Commercial Street. ("This program is neither sponsored by nor affiliated with the Mendocino County Library.) Sponsored by WELL (Willits Economic Localization) and WEC (Willits Environmental Center). The next two Ballot Info Parties are set for Sunday, October 11 at 2 pm, at the Hub, 630 South Main Street, and Monday, October 12 at 5:30 pm, also at the Hub. Most important: Vote on or Before Nov. 3. Mail-in, use drop box at Willits City Hall, or at your polling place Election Day.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 4, 2026
1PM - 4 PM
LOCAL FOOD HARVEST CELEBRATION
LITTLE LAKE GRANGE, WILLITS, CA
SEED SAVING TECHNIQUES
• Harvest • Dry • Clean • Storage • RePlant •
Mendocino County Seed Saving and Sharing Event, Willits Chapter
ACORN PROCESSING DEMONSTRATION
modern methods for making food from local Tan Oak acorns
taught by Lisa Plake, Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians
CIDER PRESSING
CORN HUSK DOLL CRAFTING
PUMPKIN PAINTING
GRANGE GARDEN TOURS
WOOL PROCESSING
UPDATES FROM FOOD SECURITY ACTION GROUPS
LEARN ABOUT LOCAL FOOD PROGRAMS
sponsored by WELL and the Little Lake Grange

Skunk Train Pumpkin Express

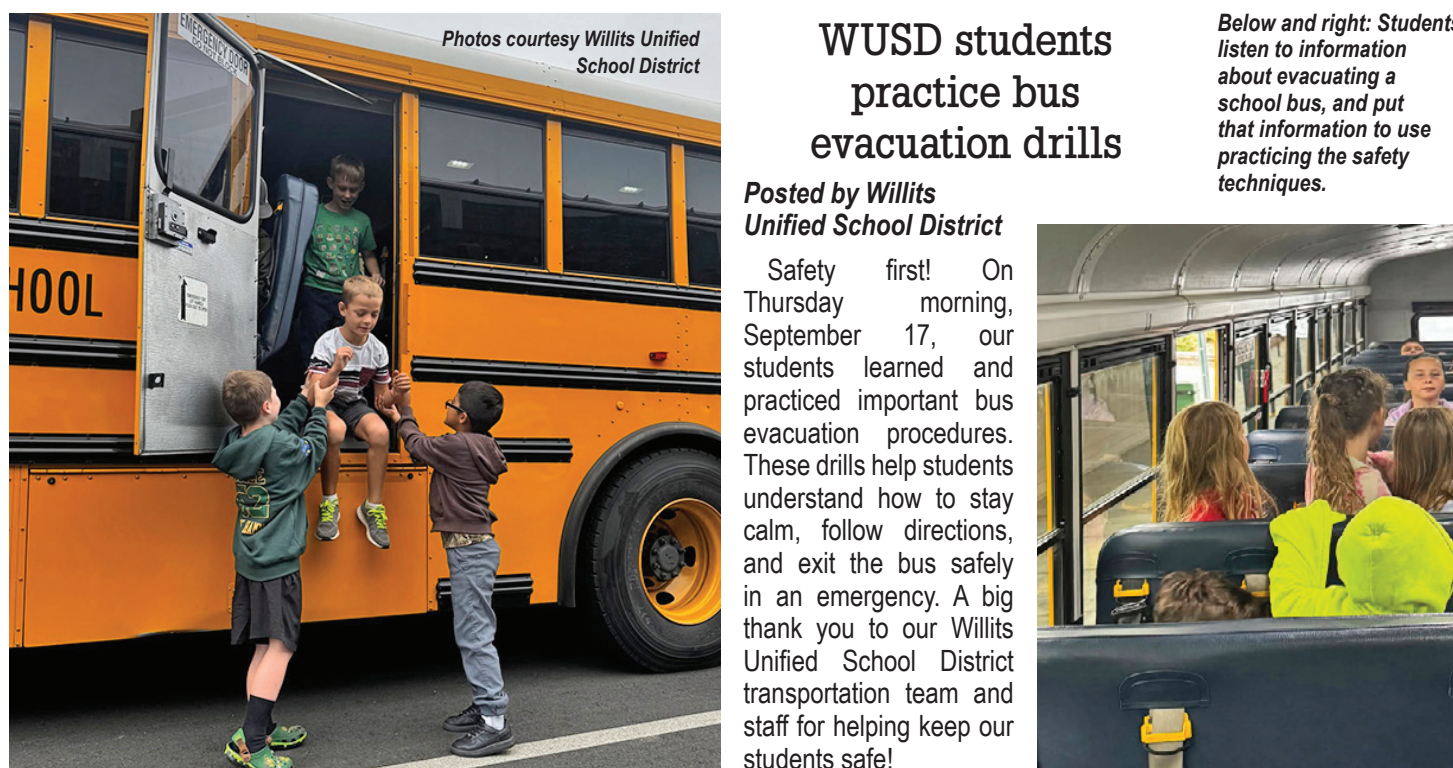
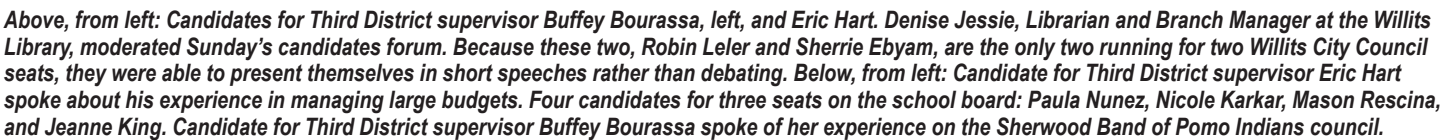
The Skunk Trains starts its annual Pumpkin Express out of the Willits Depot on Friday, October 2, with 10:30 am and 1:30 pm runs. Make fall memories in Willits this October with a journey to Crowley, where a pumpkin patch awaits. Pick out the perfect pumpkin, enjoy seasonal treats, and soak up the magic of harvest season beneath towering redwoods. Pumpkin Express runs on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm, with a third trip at 4:30 pm on Saturdays. Some dates may be waitlisted already. Local discounts available: For more information or to purchase tickets, visit https://fareharbor.com/embeds/book/skunktrain/items/133579 It's the last weekend for the Flynn Street Circus Skunk Train runs out of the Willits Depot, check dates for ticket availability at https://fareharbor.com/embeds/book/skunktrain/items/707776

Textile Recycling is Now Available at Select Transfer Stations!
Textile recycling bins are meant for textiles that are not suitable for donation, including:
✓ Torn fabrics, damaged clothes, mismatched shoes, and old blankets.
✗ Textile recycling bins are NOT meant for soiled items, stinky items, or trash
Lake County Transfer Station 230 Soda Bay Road Lakeport, CA 95453
Ukiah Transfer Station 3151 Taylor Drive Ukiah, CA 95482
Willits Transfer Station 350 Franklin Ave. Willits, CA 95490
C & S Waste Solutions | P.O. Box 40 Ukiah, CA 95482 | 707-234-4400 | www.CandSWaste.com

WILLITS CENTER FOR THE ARTS Presents
ART TALKS MESOPOTAMIA
Often called the "Cradle of Civilization," Mesopotamia developed between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers more than 5,000 years ago. Here, the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians created some of the world's earliest cities, writing systems, monumental architecture, and works of art.
Friday, October 9, 2026 at 6:30
71 E. Commercial St. Willits, 95490
https://willitscenterforthearts.org/

CALIFORNIA INDIAN DAYS
CO-ED SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT
2026
SEPTEMBER 26-27, 2026
★ HIDDEN OAKS PARK ★
76699 COVELO RD., COVELO, CA 95428
PRIZES
1st PLACE
2nd PLACE
3rd PLACE
MVP
ALL-TOURNEY
\$250 ENTRY FEE DUE BY 1st GAME
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 983-8341

SEPTEMBER 26-27, 2026
★ HIDDEN OAKS PARK ★
76699 COVELO RD., COVELO, CA 95428
PRIZES
1st PLACE
2nd PLACE
3rd PLACE
MVP
ALL-TOURNEY
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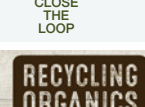


Cold Creek Compost Inc.

**NUTRIENT-PACKED COMPOST,
PLANTER MIXES & CUSTOM BLENDS
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 CLOSE THE LOOP	 SAVE MONEY	 REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	 GROW MORE
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WW626 Fictitious Business Name Statement 2026-F0319 The following person or persons are doing business as Hydration Dealer, 25595 Poppy Drive, Willits, CA 95490; 704-354-4744. Registered owner: Shalee Hansen, 25595 Poppy Drive, Willits, CA 95490. This business is conducted by an individual. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on September 3, 2026. FBN statement filed with the Mendocino County Clerk Recorder on September 3, 2026. /s/ Shalee Hansen Publication Dates: September 17, 24, October 1, 8, 2026	WW627 Fictitious Business Name Statement 2026-F0313 The following person or persons are doing business as Soul Flowering Holistic, 3001 Blackhawk Drive, Willits, CA 95490; 831-713-3238. Registered owner: Thallia Bird, 3001 Blackhawk Drive, Willits, CA 95490. This business is conducted by an individual. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on N/A. FBN statement filed with the Mendocino County Clerk Recorder on August 25, 2026. /s/ Thallia Bird Publication Dates: September 17, 24, October 1, 8, 2026
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**LIGHT UP
THE NIGHT**

**JOIN US FOR GLOW
IN THE DARK HIDE IN
SEEK AT WHSI**

**FRIDAY,
SEPTEMBER 25**

**7:30PM - 9:30PM
299 NORTH MAIN ST, WILLITS CA.**

WILLITS HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD

20\$ FOR 4 GAMES

•PRIZES INCLUDE GIFT CARDS!

served by local churches,
 community organizations,
 and families at Bud
 Snider Park on East
 Commercial. Come at 1
 pm to be assured a lunch!

Indoor Yard Sale
 Giant Indoor Yard Sale
 - Deep Valley Christian
 School, 8555 Uva
 Drive, Redwood Valley,
 (across from the Broiler).
Saturday, September 26
 - 8 am to 4 pm

You are invited to an
 open discussion, "How
 to Recognize Inner
 Guidance in Your Daily
 Life," on Tuesday,
 October 6, 11 am to 12
 pm at the Willits Library,
 390 E. Commercial
 St. Questions?
 Call Joy (707) 367-
 3777. Sponsored by
 Eckankar of CA &
 NV. This program is
 neither sponsored by
 nor affiliated with the
 Mendocino County
 Library.

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

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Above: "You matter" is just one of the messages of hope, encouragement and support chalked along the sidewalks at previous "Chalk the Walk, Have the Talk" Suicide Prevention events in Mendocino County.

Adventist Health hospitals invite community to "Chalk the Walk, Have the Talk" for Suicide Prevention Month

Submitted by Adventist Health Mendocino County

September is Suicide Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness, encourage open conversations about mental health, and remind those who may be struggling that support is available.

Adventist Health is bringing "Chalk the Walk, Have the Talk" to its hospitals across Mendocino County, inviting employees, patients and community members to come together to raise awareness about suicide prevention, learn about available resources, and share visible messages of hope and encouragement.

Community members are invited to participate at any of the three events:

The Willits event is set for Wednesday, September 30 from noon to 12:30 pm at Adventist Health Howard Memorial, 1 Marcela Drive, in front of the hospital.

In Fort Bragg and Ukiah, the "Chalk the Walk" event is set for Tuesday, September 29, from 12 to 12:30 pm, at both hospitals. In Fort Bragg, at Adventist Health Mendocino Coast, 700 River Drive, outside the hospital near the flagpoles, and in Ukiah, at Adventist Health Ukiah Valley, 275 Hospital Drive, in front of the Family Birth Center entrance.

Each event will create an opportunity for the community to come together around suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and hope. Attendees will hear about suicide prevention and resources available in Mendocino County before walking the hospital grounds and using colorful chalk to leave messages of hope, encouragement and support along the sidewalks.

The messages will remain after the events, offering reminders to patients, employees, visitors and others passing by that they are valued, their lives matter, and support is available.

No artistic ability is needed, just a willingness to share an encouraging message. Chalk will be provided.

Behavioral health support in Mendocino County

While Suicide Prevention Month provides an opportunity to bring greater attention to mental health, support and treatment are available throughout the year.

Adventist Health provides outpatient behavioral health services in Mendocino

County for adults and adolescents experiencing a variety of mental health and emotional challenges. Services include diagnostic assessments, individual and family therapy, neuropsychological testing, substance use treatment, medication-assisted therapy, and collaboration with primary care providers for medication navigation.

Learn more about behavioral health services available through Adventist Health:

Fort Bragg: adventisthealth.org/mendocino-coast/services/behavioral-health

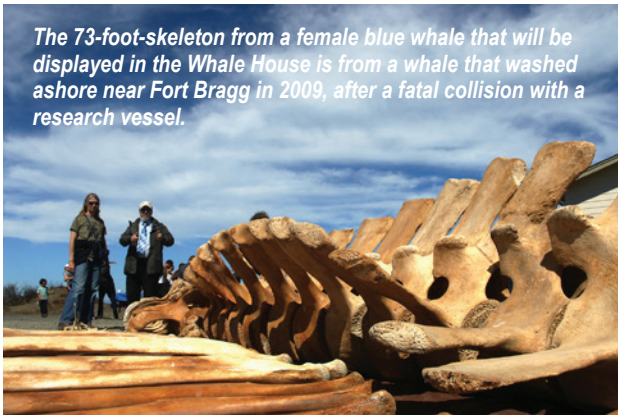
Ukiah: adventisthealth.org/ukiah-valley/services/behavioral-health

Additional behavioral health and crisis resources are available throughout Mendocino County. Anyone needing immediate mental health crisis support can call the Mendocino County 24/7 Crisis Line at 855-838-0404.

Anyone experiencing a mental health, suicide, or substance use crisis can also call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. In an immediate, life-threatening emergency, call 911.

Through "Chalk the Walk" and behavioral health services available throughout the year, Adventist Health hopes to help reduce stigma, encourage conversations about mental health, and make resources more visible and accessible to people throughout Mendocino County.

Adventist Health is a faith-based, nonprofit, integrated health system serving more than 100 communities on the West Coast and Hawaii with over 440 sites of care, including 27 acute care facilities. Founded on Adventist heritage and values, Adventist Health provides care in hospitals, clinics, home care, and hospice agencies in both rural and urban communities. Our compassionate and talented team of more than 38,000 includes employees, physicians, medical staff and volunteers driven in pursuit of one mission: living God's love by inspiring health, wholeness, and hope. We are committed to staying true to our heritage by providing patient-centered, quality care. Together, we are transforming the healthcare experience with an innovative and whole-person focus on physical, mental, spiritual and social healing to support community well-being.



Noyo Center opens new Whale House facility, October 18

Submitted by the Noyo Center

The Noyo Center for Marine Science will celebrate a milestone in Mendocino County history on Sunday, October 18, with Homecoming 2026: Whale House Ribbon Cutting and Fall Fundraiser, welcoming the community to come see the new Whale House LaBONEatory on the Noyo Headlands.

The free community event will showcase the Noyo Center's newest facility – and the homecoming of the bones of a 73-foot blue whale skeleton. The Whale House is the first building on the Noyo Center's Ocean Science Center campus, and the first new building on the Fort Bragg headlands in generations. The Whale House will enable the Noyo Center to articulate the blue whale skeleton and expand its marine mammal, marine science, and education programs.

The "Homecoming 2026" event will bring together community members, ocean enthusiasts, scientists, educators, and Noyo Center supporters for an evening of celebration, music, food, and a first look at the whale bones in their new home.

The public festivities will run from 5 to 7:30 pm on October 18, on the Noyo Headlands, 331 Jere Melo Street in Fort Bragg. The event will feature a ribbon-cutting and community toast, live music from Soulshine and the Big River Horns,

food and drinks, a live auction, and a raffle.

The event is part of the Noyo Center's fall fundraising campaign, with a goal of raising \$80,000 to support the non-profit's ongoing marine science, education, and conservation programs. Donations are gratefully accepted, and attendees will have the opportunity to support the Noyo Center through the live auction, raffle, and additional contributions.

The event is open to everyone and is a celebration for the entire Mendocino Coast community, as well as visitors and supporters from afar. There is no cost to attend.

Please RSVP in advance to receive day-of-event information, program updates, and live auction and raffle details.

RSVP, event, and donation details: www.noyocenter.org/whale-house-opening-2026

The Noyo Center for Marine Science is a Fort Bragg-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing ocean conservation through education, exploration, and experience. Through marine science, education, research, and community engagement, the Noyo Center works to inspire greater understanding and stewardship of the ocean and California's North Coast.



Above, left: One of the moon-themed artworks featured at the current exhibit at the Artists' Co-Op of Mendocino gallery.



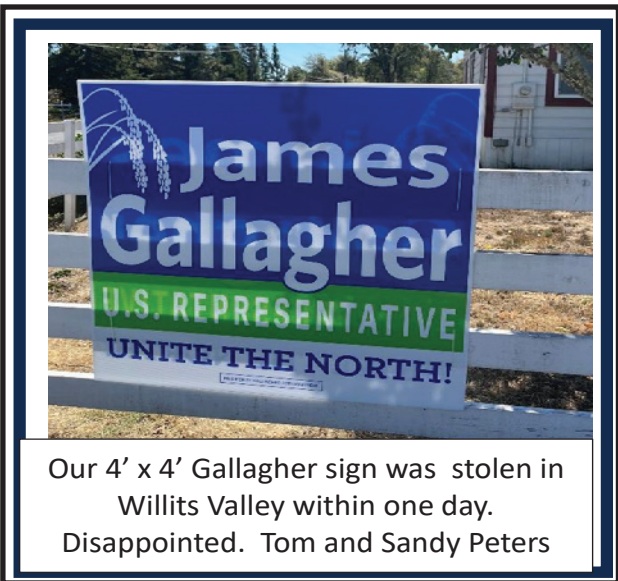
Artists' Co-Op of Mendocino features moon-themed art through October 6

According to the Farmer's Almanac, September's full moon is called the Harvest Moon. Four artist friends from the Artists' Co-Op of Mendocino, Shanti Benoit, Sev Ickes, Debra Lennox, and Lynne Zickerman, have joined together to present moon-themed artworks this

September appropriately titled "Harvest Moon."

The Earth and Moon were created at the same time, eons ago. Their special relationship has been celebrated throughout time when ancient calendars were based on the cycles of the moon. Tides show us the daily rhythms of that gravitational pull, and unseen, the moon is linked to our climate and every living creature on the planet. The very shape of the moon creates forms that are fundamental in art today. We marvel at the beauty of its light. Who hasn't stopped to watch a particularly gorgeous full moonrise?

Expect a tour de force as these four women celebrate the Moon in September with their own unique interpretations that reflect a special relationship between Artist and Muse. The exhibit runs through Tuesday, October 6 at the Artists' Co-op of Mendocino, located at the corner of Kasten and Albion in Mendocino. The gallery is open daily from 11 am to 4 pm. Visit the gallery online at www.artcoopmendocino.com



The rest of Board Lucas From page 1

significant achievement at the meeting, including: Daisy M., Kaylee C., Charlie L., Abigail M. James D., Jose V., and more.

After honoring the WUSD students, school sites shared their Annual Site Goals Presentations. Opened by Sanhedrin High School Principal Yuliya Ritchley, we heard how Sanhedrin approaches education, "Rooted in Willits Unified core values of trust, transparency, alignment, and shared purpose, alternative educational programs led with clarity, courage, and compassion." Principal Ritchley shared the site's three goals, in differentiated instruction, social-emotional learning, and engagement and partnerships, align with Sanhedrin's alternative education programs already in place.

Second, Willits High School Principal Kenneth Mansfield shared the site's three goals in student support, learning environments and community, and student success sharing "My intention with these is to tie them into what we did last year, because I want to have continuity between what we do from one year to the next so that we can build towards something." From last year to this year, student in-class time has increased positive, and scaffolding has been built to support these proactive systems being implemented in the past, present, and future.

In addition, the board heard presentations from all four primary school site administrators. Across both the elementary and middle school sites, the WUSD schools showcase a focus on writing, foundational fluency and progress tracking, positive behavioral interventions and supports, measuring school climate and student voice, and lastly, social-emotional learning and family engagement. Baechtel Grove Principal Shane Topolinski is implementing expectations consistently across the campus sharing hopes it will help achieve "student belonging, engagement, attendance improve[ments] while behavior referrals decrease ... [because] when kids attend school more, they do better and get in less trouble. The stats are very clear on that one, and when they feel like they belong and like they're significant, they're more likely to show up."

Following the site goal presentations given by site administrators, the meeting shifted to communications, opening with a personal moment as Trustee April Lamprich introduced her daughter, Brady Lamprich, as the new student board member. "Thank you guys so much for letting me be here," Brady said, also speaking on the start of the school year, announcing that the Homecoming Football Game and Dance will take place on October 9 and 10 with fundraising happening shortly prior. Building on her daughter's update, Trustee Lamprich led off individual board member comments with her reflections on the opening weeks of school. In addition to sending good wishes to WHS athletic teams, and positively reflecting on attending exit interviews at Sanhedrin, she also shared that this year would mark her final year supporting and leading WUSD's Sober Grad and her excitement stating, "I'm just looking forward to the year."

Joining Trustee Lamprich in her enthusiasm for the new year, Trustee David Wilker noted he was "blown away" by site administrators expressing strong optimism for WUSD's direction sharing that he was "amazed at the extent that we have things articulated so well between sites, grade levels." Board Trustee Jennife Sookne, nearing the end of her term as trustee, will continue teaching music at the elementary schools for WUSD. Her positive influence in the music scene at WUSD is building a hefty foundation as Sookne is "working with the other music teachers to make sure that they have what they need." Echoing a similar message, Trustee Paula Nunez shares: "I'm really looking forward to what I hear will become new changes in our district.... It looks like there will be a concerted and serious focus on how to make things run smoothly."

Finally, Board President Jeanne King, shared: "It's a tremendous effort this first month of school ... and I wanted to thank and appreciate all the staff members for their efforts, extra efforts, that they put into the beginning of the school year." President King also expanded that she will be a member of the financial committee discussing the budget and "functioning as a school district really weighs heavily on me." Keeping focus on positive change, King also encouraged staff and students to be mindful of their electrical usage after the district received a whopping \$135,380.84 PG&E bill for August.

Following board comments, trustees and WUSD Superintendent John Baker heard from the new Willits Teachers Association President, Amanda Laskovics. Laskovics jumped right in, bringing up the budget and her immediate dissatisfaction and that "WTA is interested to be participating in this budget reduction committee, [as] we are interested in identifying cost savings and methods to improve program efficiency." Laskovics informed the board she views her role as WTA president is for advisory purposes, and also asking questions. "Like one thing," she said, "we have solar panels at every site, but [the] question is also do they work?" Committed to making lasting change, President Laskovics also asked the community to educate themselves on Proposition 3 appearing on the November ballot stating: "We're going to figure out and see what we can do.... Thank you."

In concluding comments, Superintendents Baker reflected positively on the start of the school. After attending all open houses across the sites, Baker said: "It's amazing to see all the parents coming to school, coming to the classrooms and seeing the teachers ... welcome students, and they're doing a beautiful job making a beautiful, inviting classroom and making people feel comfortable, so thank you." Along with this, Superintendent Baker extended his gratitude to athletic and administrative staff in addition to WUSD teachers as they started the school year off wonderfully.

Presently, the district is still developing a strong budget advisory committee consisting of WTA president, board members, and other members of the Willits district and public communities. However, despite budget concerns, Superintendent Baker remains positive, concluding: "We have a great sense of direction. We know where we're going ... and we're all working together on that. We have a mission. We have a vision. We have goals, and we're going to be consistent and we're going to climb up."

The rest of Lucas From page 1

cause of the Lucas Fire," the press release began, "determining that the wildfire was ignited by lightning.

"On the morning of Thursday, September 10, there was a cloud-to-ground lightning strike that was confirmed through both the Northern California Geographic Area Coordination Center and CAL FIRE's Intel program. Through the investigation into the origin and cause of the fire, all other possible causes of ignition were ruled out.

"The fire was first detected at approximately 9:18 am by the ALERTCalifornia/UC San Diego Laughlin Ridge 2 camera, utilizing artificial intelligence during the continuous monitoring of the area that the camera can see. When the AI spots a potential fire on a camera's view, the system alerts the local CAL FIRE Emergency Command center, so the communications operator can determine if it is a new fire.

The Lucas Fire started northwest of Upper Lake in Lake County, near the Mendocino County border. It turned 4,128 acres before being declared 100% contained.

At the height of the incident, 2,609 personnel were assigned to the Lucas Fire.

In 2025, there were 409 fires caused by lightning across California that burned a combined 43,424 acres. In August 2020, a severe lightning storm broadsided the central and northern portions of the state. This storm was largely dry and produced over 15,000 lightning strikes, ultimately resulting in both the LNU Lightning Complex and CSU Lightning Complex fires. In total that there, were 264 lightning-caused fires that burned a combined 1,159,009 acres.

CAL Fire Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit also posted a warning Tuesday morning on its Facebook page, not to think fire season is over with the successful fight against the Luca Fire.

"History has shown us that some of California's largest and most destructive wildfires have ignited during the fall months," the post warned."

"The shift in seasons can bring cooler mornings and shorter days, but it doesn't mean the wildfire threat is over. Dry conditions along with strong winds and low humidity can create dangerous fire weather."

In Mendocino County, the most significant major fire within the CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit's jurisdiction was the Redwood Fire (part of the October 2017 Redwood Complex). The Redwood Fire started the evening of October 8, 2017, primarily impacting Redwood Valley and surrounding areas north of Highway 20. The Redwood Fire burned 36,523 acres, destroying 543 structures, and causing 9 civilian deaths. CAL FIRE investigators determined the fire was sparked by trees or parts of trees coming into contact with Pacific Gas & Electric power lines.

Take time now to:

- Create and maintain defensible space around your home
- Know multiple evacuation routes from your home and community
- Build go-bags for you and your family
- Sign up for local emergency alerts

"Don't wait for the next wildfire to think about preparedness. Make wildfire readiness a year-round priority."

Find more preparedness tips at: ReadyForWildfire.org

Retired WPD Chief Scott Warnock has passed

Posted by Willits Police Department

Our department and community mourn the passing of retired Police Chief Scott Warnock.

Chief Warnock dedicated many years to the Willits Police Department in many roles, serving the residents of the City of Willits, Mendocino County, and beyond.

Chief Warnock began his law enforcement career as a reserve officer in 1978 with the San Diego Police Department. Warnock also served the US Navy aboard the USS O'Callahan during his time as a reserve officer for San Diego.

Upon moving to Willits, Chief Warnock worked for the Mendocino Public Defender's Office as an Attorney Investigator, and later for the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office as a DA Inspector. Chief Warnock retired from public service in 2007 under the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control as a Supervising Investigator.

In 2008, Warnock answered the call to serve again and accepted an offer to join the Willits Police Department as an extra-help police officer. In service to the City of Willits he worked as a patrol officer, school resource officer, and detective. Warnock accepted the role of Interim Chief in 2016 and was later appointed as permanent Chief in 2017 until he retired again in 2020.

We extend our most heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing and working alongside him.

The rest of Letters From page 2

are not what they once were. We are in the business of growing trees, and the only way to do that is manage it. I am a true environmentalist. I teach my children about sustainability and caring for our resources. We love salmon and steelhead as much as anything our area produces. The fish kept spawning even after the old growth was leveled, contrary to what everyone is told. Anybody questioning this writing should simply google "How fish interact with silt?" Seriously, just google that. And then read back to what I've written and ask yourself how much, if any silt will enter this stream? Loggers can log with modern methods, and fish can come and go as they please. If you believe that we're just driving equipment up and down spawning beds, I feel sorry for you. You've been lied to.

It is truly hard for me to believe that honest industry working people have had to be put out of work for this lawsuit. Someone can start a go fund me page to sue a private landowner for conducting a project that is fully legal and compliant with the strictest regulations that exist, because their feelings are hurt. What is worse, is that a Mendocino County judge granted these people an injunction because she isn't ruling on law. I attended the August 27 hearing in support of the men and women of the timber industry. News articles claim the other side had 40 people there. We had 80 or better. The judge acknowledged her own inexperience and lack of knowledge on the case, as working people pondering on how to buy groceries without a job stared at her, waiting for a common sense ruling. Her ruling came on September 2, which granted an injunction forcing the halt of any more cutting of trees. There was no basis for this. She took an oath to uphold the law. No laws have been, or will be broken on either of these two harvest plans.

These are truths I have written, and I hope before anyone donates money to any cause like this they realize it's not about the old growth. It's not about the fish. It's about hatred for people who they don't know and have no concept of what they actually do. It only sets our timber stands back. All this has done is make local working citizens worry about how to pay their bills.

The fish are coming as soon as rain season starts. Whether we log or not. The salmon will spawn and die like they have forever, and the steelhead will spawn and head back to ocean, like they have forever. I would ask people to take a little pride in themselves. If you know a narrative is false, why follow it? Maybe question if what you have believed is right or wrong. If it's proven wrong maybe talk to someone on the other side. I'm always approachable.

Steve Arkelian, Laytonville

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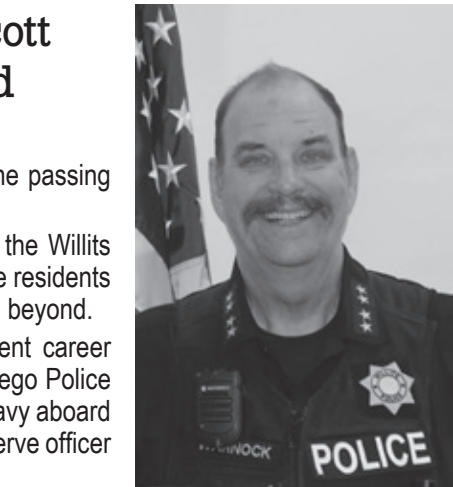
Steve Arkelian, Laytonville

Steve Arkelian, Laytonville

The rest of Bill From page 2

other demonstration state forests. Now, the future of management of these forests is uncertain.

EPIC thanks Assemblymember Chris Rogers for being responsive to both his own district as well as environmental organizations and tribal nations across the state. We are also grateful to Senator Mike McGuire for co-authoring this legislation. We owe a significant debt to Scott Alonso at Assemblymember Rogers' office who leaned into this legislation and helped deliver big majorities in both the Assembly and Senate. We are also grateful to the Mendocino Board of Supervisors, who requested this legislation to deal



Chief Scott Warnock.

the Mendocino Public Defender's Office as an Attorney Investigator, and later for the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office as a DA Inspector. Chief Warnock retired from public service in 2007 under the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control as a Supervising Investigator.

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Steve Arkelian, Laytonville

Local Harvest Celebration, October 4

To the Editor:

We are inviting everyone to celebrate the abundance of the harvest with us! Friday, October 4 from 1 to 4 pm at the Little Lake Grange in Willits.

And we encourage the community to bring extra fruit and vegetables to the Grange to share freely at the Local Harvest Celebration: "Food Matters."

There will be apple cider pressing, hot popcorn, doll making, pumpkin painting, wool spinning, an acorn processing presentation, and much more.

We will have tables where you can learn how to collect, process, and save seeds for food and flowers, and we will share how to plant what, when, and where.

There will also be Grange garden tours to demonstrate how we are doing this and how easily it is done in our area, including ways we can be growing an incredible array of herbs.

We shall have a big bin for donations to the Willits Food Bank, and we will deliver all that is collected to them.

Food is essential. Food matters! It does not grow on grocery shelves.

We are all in this together. Let's help each other out, be creative, to navigate what the future holds in regard to food security. There is no better time than now.

I'm very much looking forward to seeing many friends and to making more new friends. Until then,

Claudia Wenning, Willits

A ZUMBA FUNDRAISER FOR
**BREAST CANCER
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Party IN Pink

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FRIDAY, OCT 23, 2026
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Party in Pink: Help raise money to fight breast cancer during free Zumba event

Submitted by Anne Hammond

Come join the fun during a free fundraising event on Friday, October 23. Doors will open at 6 pm, and Zumba will start at 6:30 pm. It will be one and a half hours of Zumba followed by a social hour. We will have at least eight instructors, DJ Juice, a 50/50 raffle, a raffle basket, hair tinsel, survivors wall, honor wall, bake sale items and so much more. Mo Mulheren will be our Emcee. Everything will be by donation and all proceeds will go to the Cancer Resource Center and be specifically used for people with breast cancer.

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