

What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from our readers

Thank you

To the Editor:

Sometime in November the north side of our church [Willits United Methodist Church] was tagged with graffiti. We're not sure how long it had been there. After we noticed it, someone came in and cleaned up or painted over most of it.

We have not been able to find out who did this good deed for our church.

Though it seems like there is so much trouble in our world today, it is small acts of kindness such as this that makes us smile and be grateful. It reminds us to look for more of these moments to focus on.

Thank you to whoever painted over or cleaned up the graffiti. Your kindness is appreciated.

Rosemary Landry, pastor,
Willits United Methodist Church

Thank you

To the Editor:

As always, I'd like to thank everyone in the Willits community who came out to support our annual Crab Sale. The Crab Sale is the only fundraiser that our club puts on that directly benefits the Willits Rotary Club. All of our other fundraisers directly benefit other organizations in our area.

Here are some of the organizations that our club has supported this past year: the Willits Community Scholarship program, the Willits Educational Foundation, the Willits Senior Center, the Seabiscuit Therapeutic Riding Center, just to name a few.

The Willits Rotary Club also buys a quality children's dictionary for every third-grade student in Willits, Laytonville and Covelo. The amount of support that we receive from the community for our Crab Sale allows us to support all of these organizations and more.

This year's crab sale had some unique challenges; most notably a significant increase in our cost for the locally sourced Dungeness crab. To supplement our increase in cost, we decided to implement our first Crab Sale Raffle featuring various items from local businesses. The Willits business community is always so generous to all of the local fundraisers.

On behalf of the Willits Rotary Club I would like to thank the following donors for supporting our event: Willits Power Equipment, Stan Cooley & Family, Les Schwab, 101 Trailer & RV Supply, Northern Aggregates, Inc., Reza's Breadery, and Holly Madrigal. Also, a huge shout-out to Pete Swanton and Steve Marston for hosting us on Friday and Savings Bank of Mendocino County for hosting us on Saturday.

Lastly, a special thank you to Sparetime Supply, Inc. This event would not be

possible without their support. Not only does Sparetime clean and store all of our equipment after each crab sale, they also donate use of equipment and employees to get us set up and torn down.

Tim King, Willits Rotary Club

Honoring the journey

To the Editor:

Many in our community came together to celebrate the life of Jacqueline Morninglight. This gathering highlighted all the key events in a person's life. It was a lovely gift to our community and gave us a ritual space for mourning.

We could build on this as a tradition for our town. In honoring a person on their journey, it allows a gift for ourselves. Our lost traditional sense of ritual can be restored as a rite of passage, a soul-honoring awakening for us all.

Bill White, Willits

WHS music program needs support

To the Editor:

Rotary Club of Willits has, once again been awarded a Rotary 5130 District Grant to help our community. This year we are focusing on the Willits High School music program to purchase musical instruments for the program.

Many of the schools' instruments were purchased in the 1960s and can no longer be repaired. We have purchased a concert drum set, a trombone, a few accessories, and that used the entire grant.

While what we purchased will help greatly, it came to our attention that the need is great for more instruments. The music department does not have enough instruments for each student who wants to play. While some students could afford to rent or purchase instruments, many of the families could not afford this expense.

It is well-documented that the benefits of music education are immense and highly beneficial to students. Music positively impacts a student's academic performance, assists in developing social skills, and provides an outlet for creativity that is crucial to a young adult's development. It is our club's hope to offer an outlet to students in order to improve their lives, and as such, help our community promote healthy activities for young people.

We realize that the need is great, and the instruments are expensive! We are hoping our community understands this need and can help us make music accessible to every student who wants to learn to play and instrument. No donation is too small!

If you have questions, please contact Willits Rotarian Jenny Senter at 707-888-7834 or jsenter@celticheritageldestinations.com.

Checks can be mailed to: Willits Rotary Club, P.O. Box 787, Willits, CA 95490. Please note "WHS Music Project" on your check.

Thank you for your part in making Willits so special.

Jenny Senter, Willits Rotary Club

Senior Center drive-through, walk-up lunches

Willits Senior Center's indoor dining room is closed, but the center is still serving drive-through and walk-up lunches, Monday through Friday, starting at 12 pm and now closing at 12:45 pm, outside the Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road. Price is \$5 through December. Senior Center will be closed on Christmas Eve, December 24.

Thursday, December 16: Chicken & Dumplings, Green Salad

Friday, December 17: Lamb Stew, Roll, Fruit

Monday, December 20: Carnitas Burrito wet w/Green Sauce, Rice, Beans

Tuesday, December 21: White Chicken Lasagna, Veggie, Garlic Bread, Green Salad

Wednesday, December 22: Sausage and Mushroom Frittata, Hash Browns, Biscuit

Thursday, December 23: Ham Dinner, Sweet Potatoes, Veggie, Roll, Green Salad

Friday, December 24: Center closed for Christmas Eve

Monday, December 27: Beer Battered Cod, Rice Pilaf, Veggie, Biscuit

Tuesday, December 28: Meat Loaf, Mashed Potatoes, Veggie, Roll, Green Salad

Wednesday, December 29: Turkey / Bacon Melt, Mac & Cheese, Vinaigrette Slaw

COLUMN | AT THE MOVIES

'The Grinch'

The Story: Animated retelling of the Dr. Seuss tale of a green-furred creature who hates Christmas. Mr. Grinch (voiced by Benedict Cumberbatch) is a sad sour fellow. He develops a plan to steal all the presents and colored Christmas decorations of Whoville and thus ruin the holiday for everyone. His loyal dog Max, a true minion, and a goofy reindeer help. Also, the flick depicts Mister Grinch's miserable, lonely childhood at the orphanage. Thus, he has credibly deep emotional issues around happy families, and some serious resentment. Poor Mister Grinch....

Dan Essman *Columnist*

My Thoughts: So this is the soap opera Grinch story. Poor lonely Mister Grinch, such sentiment. Well, at last we can understand what motivates him. Bad childhoods aside, this flick is silly and

funny. The pacing is not frantic, the sight gags and tiny disasters are logical. Every frame has life and color. I liked the flick. Kindness, forgiveness and generosity are celebrated. I laughed. I forgave. Three cheers for Christmas and for a funny, solid, silly slapstick script.

Parents: This is a fine Dr. Seuss movie for children. It rewards human kindness. Children will understand.

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

Editor's Note: The Noyo Theatre is offering three \$5 Christmas movies for kids from December 17 through December 2:

"Elf" (2003) PG; Fri-Tues: 4 and 8:15 pm

"The Polar Express" (2004) G; Fri: 6:30 pm; Sat-Tues: 2:15 and 6:30 pm

"The Grinch" (2018) PG; Fri: 4:30, 6:15 and 8:45 pm; Sat-Tues: 2, 4:30, 6:15 and 8:45 pm

Audience praises 'It's A Wonderful Life' at WCT

By Steve Hellman

First-time actors or people without a lot of stage experience ... give them a chance to get involved in live theater, and a passion can explode inside them. Folks praised the passionate good fun at a recent matinee performance of "It's A Wonderful Life" showing at Willits Community Theatre through December 19.

Mary Esberg of Kelseyville exited the feel-good show all smiles. "The actors are excellent," said Esberg. "I enjoyed it all the way through." Her daughter Elizabeth agreed. "A really good show. Definitely worth it."

In the script by Joe Landry, a live radio broadcast replicates the story made famous by the beloved Frank Capra film of the same name. In his portrayal of the hero George Bailey, Rick Williams, president of the Brooktrails Township board of directors, makes his first appearance on the WCT stage. Through the first act, Williams holds steady in his depiction of the well-meaning everyman George Bailey, and then brings his performance to a fervent pitch through the turmoil the desperate man faces in the second act.

Director Phaedra Swearengin says she especially likes having first-timers in her cast because

Read the rest of WCT Over on Page 15

Willits Weekly

Willits Weekly is a locally owned independent newspaper, founded in 2013, covering the greater Willits area.

Volume 9, Number 433

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

Jennifer Poole, publisher and editor / willitsweekly@gmail.com / 707-459-2633

Maureen (Moore) Jennison, art director and photographer / maureen@willitsweekly.com / 707-972-7047

Mathew Caine, photographer / calendar editor / features writer / mathew@willitsweekly.com

Forrest Glycer, reporter / forrest@willitsweekly.com

Joanne Moore, reporter / features writer / joanne@willitsweekly.com

Barbara O'Reardon, Brooktrails reporter / willitsweekly@gmail.com

B.B. Kamoroff, reporter / bb@willitsweekly.com

Ree Slocum, features writer / ree@willitsweekly.com

Danya Davis, features writer / police log / danya@willitsweekly.com

April Tweedell, ad sales / 707-972-2475 / april@willitsweekly.com

Jackie Cobbs, features editor

Ad inquiries: call 707-972-7047 or email advertising@willitsweekly.com

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Online & Print

EST. 2013

A Nostalgic & Modern Record of Community and Life in Willits

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Above, from left: Helena Thornton of Fort Bragg smiles with her brightly colored kids clothing. Tamara Wilder of Paleotechnics offers several books on survival, preparing animal carcasses, and other DIY publications. Stan Salah of Hudson River Inlay hangs out in his booth of intricately crafted wooden inlays.

At left: Gregg Lindsley shows his finely crafted pottery from Earth and Fire Pottery at the annual Holiday Craft Fair.

Below, left: Michelle Shaddock brought her beeswax food wraps. Below, right: Small but intricate and lovely mosaic pendants are sold by Allyson Brooker.



Handmade Treasures

Creative gifts sell quickly at annual Holiday Craft Fair inside Willits Community Center

Tis the season ... for craft fairs and great ideas for handmade, mostly local items to buy and gift to family and friends. By most measures, and the sentiments of the 21 vendors at the two-day annual Holiday Crafts Fair at the Willits Community Center, this year's market was a great success. The pandemic did little to keep people away from this much-loved yearly exhibition of handicrafts at the safely operated event. All vendors were required to be vaccinated and masked, as were the shoppers.

"This has been a great show. It was very busy early yesterday. I had sales pretty much throughout the day. I've had to replenish my stock. I've been able to introduce my gallery to people," said Morgan Rex, well-known metal sculptor and owner of the Art in the Plaza Gallery behind Cafe 77. "The gallery is going well and I totally enjoy being there. I'm now supporting up to 25 artists besides myself in there. It's a beautiful spot to be in, in town. I enjoy being part of the downtown Willits community."

Ceramic-sculptor Bonnie Belt has organized the event in years past, quite successfully. "This is my seventh year of putting on the fair. The art-center people have jumped in to help out. I didn't have enough applications from artists to also open the upstairs at the art center. A lot of artists are not doing fairs anymore. Since 2020 a lot of people have dropped out of the fair circuit. It could be a little bit that we are requiring our vendors to be vaccinated. Things are changing in the art-fair business because of the pandemic.

"I was so happy," continued Belt, "that people are showing up, and we do have some really good artists. People

Read the rest of Handmade Over on Page 6

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THE POLAR EXPRESS (2004) (G) 2 hrs 4 mins
Fri.: 6:30pm, Sat.-Tues.: 2:15 & 6:30pm

THE GRINCH (2018) (PG) 1 hr 25 mins
Fri.: 4:30, 6:15 & 8:45pm
Sat.-Tues.: 2:00, 4:30, 6:15 & 8:45pm

SING2

(Starts Wed., Dec 22) (PG) 1 hr 52 mins

Wed./Thurs.: 2:45, 5:15, 7:45pm

MATRIX RESURRECTIONS

(Starts Wed., Dec 22) (R) 2 hrs 28 mins

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Above: A photo of St. John Lutheran Church decorated for Christmas 2021.

Christmas services in Willits

With Christmas approaching, local churches are getting ready for Christmas services – on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Sunday, December 26. Here's a listing of some of the Yuletide services offered at Willits churches. For more information about other churches in town, check the "Spiritual Pathways" listing on Page 12.

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, 61 West San Francisco Avenue, offers a Christmas Eve service, Friday, December 24, at 5:30 pm. On Saturday, Christmas Day, St. Anthony's will be ringing the bells for services at 9 am in English, and at 10:30 am in Spanish.

St. Francis in the Redwoods Episcopal Church, at the intersection of Commercial and Main, is having all its services in a hybrid format, with people present in the church and also joining from home via Zoom through computers, cell phones or land lines. For a message about how to join online, phone the church at 707-272-0177. Our service on Christmas Eve is at 4 pm, and on Sunday, December 26, it is at 10 am. There will be carols, led by Greg Schindel, readings, prayers, and Communion at both services. Everyone gathering at the church is required to wear masks and respect social distancing. Masks will be available.

St. John Lutheran Church, 24 Mill Creek Drive, will be having a traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Friday, December 24, at 7 pm. Pastor Karl Bliese will be officiating. The community is invited. The church may be called if there are questions at 459-2988.

Willits United Methodist Church, 286 School Street (at Pine), hosts an in-person Christmas Eve service on Friday, December 24 at 6 pm. Masks are required. The service will also be on our Facebook page live at 6 pm.

Willits Seventh Day Adventist Church, 399 West Mendocino Avenue, announces a special Christmas Service beginning at 10:45 am, Saturday, December 25. The program will present music, readings, videos, audience singing, and special numbers. All are welcome! See you there!

The rest of Handmade

are still supporting us. People are coming and pulling out their money. People are just glad to be out. "Oh, we can have Christmas again this year?" she joked. "Yesterday, when we opened up at noon, until about 3 pm, it was quite well attended."

Because there were a few less booths this year, they were able to be spaced out a little more, which works well in these pandemic years. A center aisle was also created so people would not have to walk around the entire room to find their way to the other parallel booths.

In addition to the artists, a hearty choice of meals and snacks were provided by the Willits Charter School, selling quiche, salads, lasagna, chili, soup and turkey sandwiches as well as assorted beverages, enabling shoppers the opportunity to remain in the warm building and continue perusing the variety of crafts available.

For most of the vendors, their arts were more a passion than a business, some making a living with their passion and some augmenting their retirement. Wolfgang Ronnefeldt sold herbs, tinctures, and pain-relieving salves through his Mendocino Medicinal business while his significant other sold handcrafted pot holders and more. Ronnefeldt was showing "a wonderful compound. If you have any kind of joint pain like gout – I made it because I have gout. It alleviates all that pain and misery."

Stan Salah of Hudson River Inlay showed some extremely intricate laminated assemblies, for which he utilizes a choice of up to 80 different woods. Garry Colson is a painter with an eclectic choice of surfaces upon which he uses his talents. He offered paintings on such tools as circular saw blades and cast-iron pans, as well as more conventional canvases. "The show has been going very nice for me. I think people are starving for art," quipped Colson.

Being basically a gifting show, there had to be some clothing for the kids. A couple of the vendors provided colorful choices. Helena Thornton of Fort Bragg has been making her gaily colored dresses and other

clothing for the little ones for over 28 years. Kathryn Green of Mariposa Tie-Dye was showing an art that was very popular in the '70s but still persists. "It started out as a hobby," she said, echoing the experience of many of the artisans. In addition to T-shirts and other apparel, she tie-dyes bamboo-cotton-blend socks which she says keeps feet dry and are anti-bacterial.

Allison Brooker brought a colorful array of small mosaic pendants made of glass and 24-karat gold. Alfredo R. Vionnet thought he would retire from his work in economic science but his passion for wooden bowls and other useful items keeps him quite busy and purchasing better and better lathes. Erwin Ludwig, a regular at many of the local craft fairs, showed his array of magnetic wood knife blocks.

Well-respected master potter Gregg Lindsley, as usual, could be found selling his fine group of kimchi jars and other pottery of various sizes and functions. "I really like doing this show in Willits," said Lindsley. "The community comes out of the woods to support us. They buy a lot of things. The town is cuter than a button. I really enjoy the vibe here. This show is on the top of my list of shows to do."

Not all the goods shown at the Holiday Craft Fair were for viewing or wearing. Shannon Furr's Odin's Organics was back with her ever-growing group of organic, healthy pet treats, toothpaste, doggie towels, and gift cards. Her goods can be purchased at J.D. Redhouse and Mendo Mill as well as at the show. She buys all her meats locally from organic providers.

Bonnie Belt is planning on slowing down on wholesale commissions and concentrating more on creative endeavors with her pottery. She has had a steady business over the pandemic, providing cremation urns, a business she wishes there would be less of a need for.

This year's Holiday Craft Fair, according to the crafts people in attendance, was a great success, providing Willits with a chance to find the perfect non-corporate, local gifts for their friends and family.

State renews indoor mask mandate

By Ana B. Ibarra, for CalMatters

As COVID-19 infections rise, the Newsom administration renewed its mask mandate for indoor public places in California — exactly six months after lifting the last one.

As of Wednesday, Californians are once again required to wear masks indoors in public places regardless of vaccination status, state health officials announced Tuesday.

The renewed masking requirement follows a 47 percent increase in COVID-19 case rates since the Thanksgiving holiday and the arrival of a new variant, said Dr. Mark Ghaly, the state's health secretary.

The mask mandate will run through January 15 and is specific to public settings, not private gatherings. Nevertheless, health officials recommend people get tested ahead of holiday gatherings and consider better ventilation by opening windows or convening outdoors when possible.

The mandate will mainly affect about 50 percent of the state population that lives in counties that currently don't have their own mask mandate, Ghaly said. Los Angeles and several Bay Area counties already have mask mandates for public settings in place.

Along with renewed mask rules, the state will also require that attendees at mega events — those of 1,000 people or more — who are unvaccinated show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within one day, if an antigen test, or two days for PCR tests. The state is also recommending that travelers get tested before and after trips.

The first statewide mandate was imposed in 2020 and lifted last June.

After the state's June 15 reopening, vaccinated people were allowed to return to grocery stores, retail, and other public settings without a mask — at least under state rules. People who were not vaccinated still had to adhere to indoor masking. Telling the difference, however, was tricky: Ghaly acknowledged Tuesday that throughout the pandemic, enforcement of these rules has been a challenge.

The rest of Deaths

Health announced three more Mendocino County deaths.

Death #101 was a 77-year-old woman from the Fort Bragg area, who was fully vaccinated.

Death #102 was a 53-year-old man from the Willits area, who was unvaccinated.

Death #103 was a 79-year-old man from the Ukiah area, who was unvaccinated.

Public Health asks all Mendocino County residents to think about the ways they are protecting themselves and their families from COVID-19. When in doubt,

The rest of Grooming

offer services to current customers and look forward to meeting more new faces – human and pooch.

Dubow noted their clientele is already expanding to include dogs from Fort Bragg and Ukiah areas, too. Keep your eyes out for new grooming packages, too!

"We look forward to seeing you for a 2021 cleanse, or in the new year to keep those paws clean then, too!" said Dubow.

Dog Star Grooming is located at 1762 South Main Street across from Brown's Corner and can be reached by calling 707-841-3003 or check them out online at <https://www.facebook.com/DogStarGrooming13>.

Ghaly said state officials are not considering any further restrictions or capacity limits on businesses at this time. "Is this the first step along the course we're familiar with ... including closures? Absolutely not."

That's because, he said, despite concerns about the new Omicron variant and rising case rates, the state has effective tools at hand: vaccines and masks.

And while it can be discouraging to be talking about a universal mask mandate once again, Shira Shafir, an epidemiology professor at UCLA, said people must continue relying on masking, good ventilation and testing.

The type of mask makes a difference, Shafir said. With an improving supply chain, people should opt for surgical and N95 masks, and ensure they fit well over the nose and under the chin.

She described California's current situation as a tale of two states: On one hand, some counties have relaxed masking and low vaccine uptake, and on the other, there are counties with stronger vaccination rates where people have been masking continuously indoors, even after the state lifted its own requirements. In those counties "you have a slower increase of new cases. Not none, but there is less," Shafir said.

The state's seven-day average case rate as of Tuesday stood at 14.1 new cases per 100,000 people. On the high end, Riverside and San Diego counties reported rates of 19.8, San Bernardino County is at 22.7, Inyo County 29.4 and Mono County 50.1, according to state data.

On the lower end, Los Angeles reported 13.3 new cases per 100,000 and San Francisco and Alameda counties reported rates of 8.5 and 7.6, respectively.

To date, 74,685 Californians have died from COVID-19.

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Read the rest of Breakfast

consult with and follow all CDC and CDPH guidance. Vaccination, masking, and social distancing remain the best tools for combating COVID-19.

Fully vaccinated people over age 16 should strongly consider getting a COVID-19 vaccine booster to improve immunity. If you have questions about boosters or vaccines in general, speak with your doctor, or call Public Health at 707-472-2759. To find the nearest vaccine clinic in your area, please visit the Public Health website at: www.mendocinocounty.org/covid19

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Breakfast with Santa

Willits Lions Club hosts annual fundraiser, grilling up pancakes and bringing smiles to young believers

"It was a very cold trip down here from the North Pole," said Santa Claus, at the Lions Club "Breakfast with Santa" event on Saturday, December 11. "I have to get a windscreen for the old sled. I love to come to Willits because it's always warmer than the North Pole."

Santa, or Kevin Tahir on any other day, greeted the kids, listened to their wishes for Christmas presents, handed out candy canes, laughed out loud with his booming "ho, ho, hos," and generally entertained those who ventured into the Scout Hut, situated in Recreation Grove Park.

"Mrs. Claus is doing well," Santa assured the kids, "but she had to skip this party because she is still wrapping presents with the elves. We're keeping the reindeer in the shed so they don't get out and cause havoc. Rudolph is very, very disobedient. After 150 years they've learned to get out of their pens. Santa is good at many things but training reindeer is not one of them. I'm good at driving the sled and wrapping presents."

Starting the breakfast at 8 am might have been a bit early for most families. After all, it takes time to get the kids out of bed and get them dressed and on the road, so the event started slowly, but as the morning wore on, a bunch of the little ones made their way up to Santa to tell him their hearts' desires, to have breakfast, to see some seasonally appropriate Muppet movies, write letters to the jolly fellow, and to generally have some early morning fun.

Although they were ready for more, approximately 60 healthy breakfasts of scrambled eggs, ham, and pancakes were served to families. But the event was about the kids having a chance to see Santa and to raise a bit of money to support the great work of the Willits Lions Club, including

supporting a family that the club adopted for the season.

"Some of the money we get will go into the general fund and some will go to a family that we sponsored for Christmas," explained Barbara Holmes, Lions member and event organizer. "We've given them \$300 or \$400. It's a family in need that has three or four kids who would like a Christmas. We are providing them with a Christmas dinner. Everything goes back into the community with the Lions Club. Other parts of the money go to scholarships."

Although the Lions Club shares the Scout Hut with Troop 42, they were not able to be in attendance on this day. "We wanted to do this event in conjunction with our Scout Troop but they're doing their one big fundraiser for the year today," said Skip Lucier. "They pick up Christmas trees after the season. What they do on this day is when they go out and hand out flyers to all the homes and let them know that they'll be coming around on a certain date after Christmas to pick up their old Christmas trees and dispose of them."

"Hopefully, as in the past, people give them a donation for their service," added Skip Lucier. "It's been a good fundraiser for the Scouts over the years. That's why the Scouts are not here with us today. They would have loved to be here but this was their day to pass out the flyers. People are very much appreciative of the service."

Although the pandemic has thrown a monkey wrench in many of the fundraising efforts of the Willits Lions Club, they are still grinding away with their efforts to provide scholarships to Willits High School seniors and several other worthy causes.

"The Willits Lions Club was established

Read the rest of Breakfast

Over on Page 11



At left: Breakfast is served buffet-style at the Lions Club Breakfast with Santa event. Below, left: Sharon Baumann and Barbara Holmes try and talk Santa Claus into bringing them their wishes for Christmas. Below, right: The tasty breakfast consists of pancakes, scrambled eggs, and ham.



Above, left: Jimmy Holmes and Tony Madrigal brave the cold morning to cook ham for the Lions Club Breakfast with Santa event. Above, right: The pancakes are measured automatically to make them perfect. At right: Santa (Kevin Tahir) says hello to the first family to visit: Elena, Teresa and Teresa. Photos by Mathew Caine



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Homes in Haehl Creek, at left and above, had a variety of blowups, lights and colors. At right: Santa greets folks driving down Locust Street.



Photos by Maureen and Matthew Jennison

Sweet Annie

Annie, sweet Annie, why haven't you found your forever home yet? Annie came to us as a transfer from our friends over at Bones Rescue. Annie is currently living in a foster home where she is learning all about being in a home. Annie's foster home states she is a very good girl, learns quickly, and just loves to cuddle. Annie can also live with cats, dog-friendly dogs, and just loves everyone she meets! Apply today to love our sweetheart, Annie.

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



Photo courtesy of Michael Surman Photography

Lovable Crunchy

Crunchy, a 4-year-old black Labrador mixed-breed dog, is now at the Milo Sanctuary having been returned from his adopters who took him home as a puppy. He is housed with other dogs and does great! He is a gentleman and a sweetheart of a dog. He knows lots of tricks, heels on walks, and loves to cuddle.

Crunchy likes cuddling, practicing his tricks, and going for long walks to the park. He has a heart of gold, is generally very well-behaved, and is so lovable! Crunchy just had a full checkup and found to be in excellent health! He is house-trained as well.

He needs experienced dog adopters only, who can work with him on his training. He needs training to work through his fear issues. He needs to be in a home that does not have children. He is making progress with reactions to cats, mailmen, and large dogs. But he does not do well in large groups of people and he has some mild separation-anxiety.



Crunchy needs to go to a home in a mellow, low-key area with experienced dog owners and no children due to his fear. Since arriving to the Milo Foundation Sanctuary, he has come to enjoy lots of socializing with other dogs. He is sweet with the staff as he gets more and more comfortable with them. If you think you are ready for some Crunchy in your life, contact Milo!

To learn more about Crunchy or view other adoptable animals, visit www.milofoundation.org or the Milo Foundation Sanctuary Facebook page. The sanctuary is currently doing pet adoptions by appointment only due to COVID-19. Please complete a pet-adoption application before requesting an appointment. You can reach the Milo Foundation at 510-900-2275.

Adorable Theodore

Theodore is a sweet, young boy who is a tad shy at first but warms up fairly quickly. He is wary of new people but is very sweet with people he knows. He gets along well with other cats and likes to snuggle with his siblings. Theodore is a seal-point Siamese cat and is 4 months old.

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



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Elves hold stockings ready give to kids, including, front row, from left: Brian Spackman, Ella and Alissa Randrup, and Aria Sizemore, and Danielle Barry, behind.

Stockings for Kids

The Willits Frontier Days Juniors club members raise money every year to be able to give every kid who is included in the Willits Christmas Kids Program a stocking.

"They started doing this four years ago," said WFD's Marcy Barry. "This year, there were 180 kids on the list. Club members work in a room dedicated to the stockings and all the supplies they need to fill them full with treats and necessities. This year, Danielle Barry wrote all the kids' names in glitter on the stockings to make them sparkle."

— Submitted by the Willits Frontier Days Juniors

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Twinkle Bright

Homes around Willits decorated for the holiday season

Above, left: Santa's in the tow truck on the west side of town! Above right: Blue tones lined this Mill Creek home. At left: Charlie Brown and the Grinch were spotted glowing bright. Below, left: Lots of creatures gathered in the yard at this Mill Creek home. Easy Street's nativity scene is always a favorite.



CalFresh

Is a food assistance program. You can be on Social Security, have money in the bank, own cars and still receive CalFresh benefits.

Call the Senior Center to schedule an appointment to see if you qualify.

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DECEMBER 17, 2021
5 PM-6:00 PM

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Tickets can be bought at the Thrift Store or at the Center.

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January 19, 20 & 21, 2022

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December 14th - 24th

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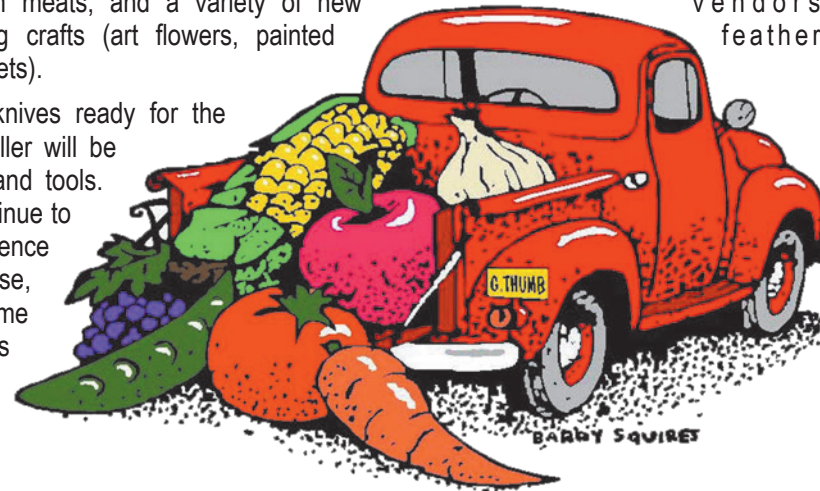
Above: The Willits Farmers Market has moved indoors in the Little Lake Grange for the winter.

Willits Farmers Market now at Little Lake Grange

The Willits Farmers Market can now be found indoors for the winter at the Little Lake Grange, 291 School Street, 3 to 5:30 pm on Thursdays. There are still fresh, locally grown vegetables and mushrooms, herbs and herbal products, micro-greens, homemade fresh sourdough bread, jams, jellies, soups, sweets, chocolates, beeswax wraps, organically grown meats, and a variety of new selling crafts (art flowers, painted vendors feather art, scents, bath-pack gift sets).

To get the household knives ready for the upcoming feasts, Scott Miller will be there to sharpen blades and tools. Various musicians will continue to keep the shopping experience light and fun. And of course, the latest edition (and some back issues) of Willits Weekly will be available.

No dogs allowed. Masks are required.





Above: Michiel Rueb of Mulligan Farms is at the Holiday Maker's Market to offer his salves and tinctures and other natural remedies. At right: The morning was cold but the vendors were undaunted and showed up to greet shoppers. Below, left: Tina Tedeschi of the Mendocino County Herb Guild is in charge of the market and offers raffle tickets to win prizes donated by the vendors. Below, right: Baby doesn't seem to mind working with Mom at the booth. At bottom: Shoppers begin to come out to the Herb Guild's Holiday Maker's Market as the day warms up.



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Photos by Mathew Caine

Holiday Maker's Market

Vendors at Mendocino County Herb Guild's annual fair sell handmade salves, tinctures and gifts just before the rains begin

"Amazing we did not get rained on," quipped Michiel Rueb of Mulligan Farms. "It got a little chilly later on but it was a perfect fall day for a holiday market." Set up in the old Rexall parking lot, the vendors at the Holiday Maker's Market were in high spirits as they bundled up against the cold morning air.

Mathew Caine
Features Writer
mathew@willitsweekly.com

Approximately 20 sellers of handmade tinctures, salves, remedies, T-shirts, native-Columbian beaded jewelry, candles, in addition to succulent plants, garlic-powder gift sets, herbs, fermented foods, and others filled the lot as they waited on the customers who showed up on the gelid morning of Saturday, December 11. Even though there was a much larger annual craft fair going on at the Willits Community Center, people still found their way to the Maker's Market, put on by the Mendocino County Herb Guild.

The Herb Guild produces several of these Maker's Markets during the year which are well-attended and provide a low-cost opportunity for artisans and natural-remedy creators to show their wares. Each vendor was required to donate one item from their inventory to be raffled by the Herb Guild to raise funds for their organization's operating costs.

"It felt like a steady stream of people throughout the whole day," Rueb continued. "Great bunch of creative and talented vendors. The Herb Guild put up a great event. Everything ran super smooth."

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in 1926 and is nearing 100 years of service to our community," explained member Robin Lucier. "We are part of Lions International, the largest service organization in the world. Whether it's scholarships for local youth, supporting Scouting, or donating to our different groups or charities, know that the monies raised by the Willits Lions Club are always put right back into our community."

"If you are someone who wants to give back, help out, or take a vigorous part in helping your community," Robin Lucier continued, "the Willits Lions Club is always looking for new, energetic members. The Lions Club motto is 'we serve' and we have fun doing it. Join us, take an active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of our community."

In addition to their altruistic ventures, the club also sets up bars for events with their liquor license, brings in their mobile grill, and rents out the well-equipped and newly remodeled Scout Hut.

The day's joyous event was an antidote to an aura of sadness within the club. One of its longtime members and a well-known leader of the community, Wayne Bashore, had passed away just a couple of days prior. "We're still a little choked up about it. He did a lot for our community," stated Skip Lucier as he attempted to hold back tears at the loss of his good friend.

Life goes on despite our sad losses, and the Breakfast with Santa was a great success for the Lions Club members and for the community.

LEGAL NOTICES

WW367

**CITY OF WILLITS
SUMMARY OF ADOPTED ORDINANCE
ORDINANCE NO. 2021-02**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on December 8, 2021, at a regular, noticed meeting the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2021-02:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILLITS, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING TITLE 2, CHAPTER 2.08.10 OF THE WILLITS MUNICIPAL CODE ENTITLED "AUTHORITY LIMITED," AND TITLE 3, CHAPTERS 3.08 "PURCHASE OF SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT, AND SERVICES" AND 3.09 "AWARDING PUBLIC PROJECTS".

Ordinance No. 2021-02 amends the city's existing purchasing and award of public contract codes Ch. 2.08.10, 3.08, & 3.09 of the Willits Municipal Code. Ordinance No. 2021-02, among other things, allows for greater efficiencies by increasing the City Manager's authority to approve purchases of up to \$25,000, and updates other purchasing thresholds and procedures to adjust for inflation, provide clearer guidance, and to be in conformance with state regulations governing award of public projects. Ordinance No. 2021-02 provides an up-to-date, efficient purchasing code and an award of public projects code that is compliant with state regulations set forth in the Uniform Public Construction Cost Accounting Act. A certified copy of the full text of Ordinance No. 2021-02 is posted and may be read at the City Clerk's office, 111 E. Commercial Street, Willits, CA.

The foregoing ordinance was adopted at a regular meeting, held on the 8th day of December, 2021, by the following vote:

AYES: Strong, Gonzalez, Stranske, Kanne, and Rodriguez.
NOES: None.
ABSENT: None.

s/Cathy Moorhead
Deputy City Manager/City Clerk, City of Willits
Publication Date: December 16, 2021

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WW345

**CITY OF WILLITS
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NOTICE TO BIDDERS**

Annual Invitation for Inclusion on the 2022 City of Willits List of Qualified Bidders

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that:

The City of Willits is soliciting applicants for its 2022 List of Qualified Bidders. Interested parties should complete the City of Willits Informal Bidding Annual Pre-Qualification Application for 2022 and submit to:

Brandy Sanderson
City of Willits
111 E. Commercial St.
Willits, CA 95490

Re: 2022 Qualified Bidders List

Bidders are hereby advised that the previous bidders list will be replaced with the new list and no contractors will be carried over from the previous list.

REQUESTS SHOULD BE RECEIVED BY December 31, 2021

Questions concerning this notice should be directed to Brandy Sanderson at bsanderson@cityofwillits.org. The application can also be found on the City's website on the Engineering page; <http://www.cityofwillits.org/147/Engineering>.

CITY OF WILLITS: s/Cathy Moorhead,
Deputy City Manager/City Clerk
DATED: 11/24/2021
Publication Dates: December 2, 9, 16, 2021

Current Job Openings:

- Account Specialist I/II
- Chief Planner – Cannabis
- Chief Planner – Fort Bragg
- Corrections Deputy
- Deputy Sheriff-Coroner I/II
- Equipment Superintendent
- Heavy Equipment Mechanic
- Human Resources Director
- Human Resources Manager
- Office Services Supervisor – Cannabis
- Public Health Nurse
- Planner I/II – Cannabis
- Planner Technician – Cannabis
- Program Specialist I/II
- Program Administrator
- Registered Nurse
- Senior Planner- Cannabis
- Senior Public Health Nurse
- Staff Assistant II/III
- Supervising Public Health Nurse
- Veterans Services Representative

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

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

Willits Weekly on winter break!
REMINDER! Willits Weekly will be taking our annual three-week break and will not be publishing a paper on December 23, December 30 or January 6. We'll see you back in the news on January 13!

Ads are just \$10 for 30 words for 2 weeks!

willitsweekly@gmail.com

WILLITS WEEKLY

MOVIE SALE

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2	7	3	5	8	6	1	4	9
9	8	5	7	1	4	3	6	2
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December 24

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<https://deadline.com/2021/09/fox-corp-will-require-daily-covid-tests-unvaccinated-workers-90-percent-1234833438/>

Date/Time	Location	Vaccine Availability	Other Information
Mondays & Wednesdays 12:30pm – 4:15pm	Public Health 474 East Valley St, Willits	All adult vaccines available	Sign up at Myturn.ca.gov Or Walk-ups welcome 472-2759
M-F 9am -11:30am 1:30pm-4:30 pm Sat 9am-3pm	Baechtel Creek Medical Clinic 1245 S. Main Street, Willits	Adult & Child Pfizer and Moderna	Best to make an appointment. Do not need to be a patient. 459-6861
M-F 9am -11:45am 12:45pm-3 pm	Little Lake Health Center 45 Hazel Street, Willits	Adult & Child Pfizer and Moderna	Best to make an appointment. Do not need to be a patient. 459-9600
M & F 2 pm – 4:30 pm	Adventist Health Redwood Medical Clinic 3 Marcela Drive Suite C, Willits	All Adult vaccines and Child Pfizer available	Appointments required. 1 st and 2 nd doses do not need to be patients. Boosters are for patients only. 459-6115
M-F 10am -12:45 pm 2 pm - 7 pm Sat 9 am -1 pm 2- 5pm Sun 10 am – 1pm 2-5 pm	Safeway Pharmacy 845 S. Main Street Willits	Adult Pfizer & Moderna	Walk ups welcome on weekdays for 1 st & 2 nd doses. Appointments required for boosters and on weekends. 456-1790
M-F 9am -8 pm Weekend 10 am – 6pm	Rite Aid Pharmacy 1730 S. Main Street, Willits	Adult Pfizer & Moderna	Appointments Preferred. 459-0554

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Prepared by Baechtel Creek Medical Clinic
Translated by Nuestra Alianza 11/12/2021

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10:30 a.m. Spanish
Saturday Mass: 5:30 p.m.
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St. John Lutheran Church
Karl Bliese, Pastor
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707-459-5714
Saturdays: Meeting place at church located at 399 W. Mendocino Avenue
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Worship Service - 11:00 a.m.
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District Supervisor Ted Williams held up the vote last month asking for more information about the health care being provided there.

Williams was concerned about several issues at the jail, including reports he had been hearing from local residents about a lack of adequate mental health services for their family members there.

At the meeting Tuesday, Williams asked the county's Behavioral Health Services Director Jenine Miller if she supported extending the NaphCare contract, but she said she wouldn't without getting some assurance that the jail facility would add some type of licensed clinician to help with the mental health care there.

"Do you feel confident today in approving this contract that we're doing everything we need to do to protect both the patients in our jail and public money?" asked Williams. "Are we completely in compliance providing a level of care that meets standards?"

"Without a mental health clinician and expanding mental health services in the jail, no we're not," Miller responded. "So if we are going to approve this contract with adding the clinician, we'll be closer to where we need to be mental health-wise. And I'm only speaking from the mental health side because I really didn't evaluate their medical side. That isn't my expertise. We need the mental health clinician."

A chart presented by NaphCare showed that about two-thirds of their work at the jail is for "medical" care, while the other third is mental health-related.

Williams and First District Supervisor Glenn McGourty both described some of the claims from family members of inmates they'd heard who said they weren't getting treated properly for their mental health needs.

"So a number of family members have called me over the time I've been on the board," said Williams. "And I've asked that they write it up and submit it, and let's find the problem and see who can resolve it. [In] almost every instance there's been hesitancy, a worry of retribution, about if they complain what will happen to their loved one. What is the answer aside from an independent audit that wouldn't single anybody out? And again, it may be without merit – I have no way to evaluate it."

"I think that audits is the only way," responded Miller. "We do get grievances on the mental health system of care throughout the county ... and we do have to investigate them. We have a grievance and complaint process in behavioral health, and there are times we have to do them confidentially, which actually is us reaching out to the individual getting the information and asking the provider for information without knowing who the client was, because that happens in all systems of care. Some people are just nervous about not wanting their provider to be upset with them or feeling like it will impact them."

NaphCare's Chief Psychologist Amber Simpler also responded to the allegations of inadequate mental health services at the jail.

"So there are a lot of different treatment options, and one of the things that we have to balance is the veracity of that report," she said. "Often times, it is not uncommon for some of our patients to deliberately seek medications to alter their mental state. For example we know that there are combinations of medications that will induce a high, if you will – a euphoric feeling. And so we have to be mindful when a patient comes in and requests that they be prescribed a certain combination of medications, that they dictate their treatment in that way."

"There are some medications that are highly addictive and that are contra-indicated for use in a detention facility," she continued. "They are prone to abuse, they can be toxic if they are diverted and hoarded, and so we have to be mindful of all of those. And that is one of the ways that mental health care deviates from the care that you may receive in the community is that we also have safety and security issues to balance with that. But we're not going to outright deny someone treatment or services."

Throughout their presentation on Tuesday Simpler and other NaphCare representatives gave many statistics regarding their work at the jail since they started in 2016.

Simpler said that out of the 305 inmates currently booked into the jail, 120 are currently on some "antidepressant medication".

"So almost half of them are receiving some kind of pharmacotherapy," she said. "111 of those individuals had a mental health evaluation outside of the intake process.... And we know that about 58 individuals in that facility were on antipsychotic medication, which I know you have some strong feelings about. But we do recognize that that is the first course of treatment for schizophrenia spectrum disorders. So you're looking at about one-sixth of your population who are taking antipsychotic medication."

"In terms of those who are in segregated housing who presented with mental health concerns, the data shows that about 46% of the individuals over the history of our contract who had been in isolated housing also had some kind of mental health issue," she added.

The "strong feelings" about antipsychotic medication may have been a reference to a letter Williams had linked to the agenda with some strongly worded questions about the mental health treatment at the jail.

"We need data on how many mentally ill are put in isolation cells, for how long, and what treatment they are getting while in there," Williams wrote. "Recidivism rates are high among this population, especially the impoverished and homeless mentally ill."

"I didn't hear a word spoken about counseling services for mentally ill inmates, or for that matter, any

other treatment than medication offerings," he said of NaphCare's presentation at the November 16 board meeting. "Depression is understandably a common response to incarceration, and the research on antidepressant medications shows them to be largely ineffective, have adverse side effects, and be inferior to counseling. This is definitely not the best practice. Psychotic delusions are also often best treated with counseling than antipsychotics (which in turn more effectively handle hallucinations)."

Board Chair Dan Gjerde asked what the best protocol was for family members to voice their complaints to those operating the jail.

County Sheriff Matt Kendall said that he spoke every day with family members and others concerned about inmates at the jail, as did others on his staff.

"I know that our jail commander and our jail lieutenants deal with that on a daily basis as well," said Kendall. "We have these conversations, people are not ignored. At times we hear some pretty outlandish things that simply aren't happening, and we weed through those as well."

NaphCare CEO Brad McLane also responded to the issue.

"Certainly we take very seriously any concerns that are raised about our patients and we investigate those," he said. "And then in order for us to have a two-way exchange of information, a patient in the jail does have to issue a release of information, otherwise we can't speak to the care that's being provided because of the privacy laws.... But certainly if information comes to us about our patients and potential health issues they have, then we receive that information and take it seriously."

During the presentation the NaphCare representatives showed statistics that since they started working at the jail in 2016, the numbers of health care interactions for both physical and mental health issues has increased significantly, despite the jail population decreasing overall.

Though for 2020 and 2021 several of the health care visit stats did decrease a bit, possibly due to that reduction in jail population.

Many jail and prison populations have declined throughout California in the last couple years due to statewide tactics of attempting to reduce overcrowding at facilities to lessen the spread of COVID-19.

Williams has repeatedly brought up issues about the overuse of solitary confinement with mentally ill patients and, as he did at the November 16 meeting, asked for more statistics on the matter.

"The reason I bring it up is that I get family member after family member saying their loved one was in our jail and they waited months to get out of solitary," said Williams. "They were out every other day, [only] in the middle of the night, didn't see light. When it's a one-off story, I don't know if it's true, but I've heard it enough, I believe it's a pattern."

County Corrections Lieutenant John Bednar provided some numbers for Williams regarding solitary confinement, or "administrative separation" as it is technically called.

"From January 2018 to current – we've had 1,572 persons cycle through administrative separation, that's what you're referring to as isolation," said Bednar. "Of that population, about 53% were found to have some degree of mental health issue. Of that 53%, 42% went on to other housing within the facility. Only 11% remained on administrative separation."

"Of those that are mentally ill, about 19% of those are considered to be seriously mentally ill, 65% of those go on to other housing within the jail, with only 35% remaining on administrative separation. That equates to about 55 people over that January 2018 to current time period."

Bednar added that weekly reviews are done to assess anyone who is placed on administrative separation, which he said "includes our classification deputies, our classification sergeant, jail administration, NaphCare, mental health, and RNs."

And, he continued, "the purpose of that meeting is to go through each of the administrative separation inmates, talk about how they're doing, discuss their housing options, whether they're choosing to come out for recreation and showers, and their cooperation with medical and mental health staff. We also try to identify their needs and address how we can best satisfy those needs."

"It's also important to note that no one's placed on administrative separation for being mentally ill," added Bednar. "Persons remain on administrative separation based on their outward behavior, things such as being violent, threats towards others including staff or other inmates, or they may be placed [there] because they have been or potentially could be victimized in the general population setting. Basically our overall goal though is to provide a safe environment for staff and for those incarcerated in our facility."

In the end the contract extension was approved unanimously by the board, but with some language added by Williams during his motion to "direct Dr. Miller to coordinate an amendment to provide mental health services at an appropriate level of care, and review mental health patient statistics and report back to the board within 60 days."

In their presentation, NaphCare said they were supportive of "collaboration with Mendocino County Behavioral Health for quarterly audits of services rendered" for their company.

The additional \$3.5 million will bring the total amount paid by the county to NaphCare since 2016 to around \$19.1 million by the end of next year.

obtaining these funds," Duley said at the December 8 meeting. "They can be used to fund payroll, buy equipment, upgrade your building – a wide variety of items you can use these funds for."

Although the money will be a loan to businesses, Duley said that if a business maintains its employees or hires additional employees during a three-month reporting period, the loan becomes forgivable. "We anticipate that most or all of the businesses that get these funds will not have to repay them," Dooley said that an application form is being developed, and the city will be holding meetings with local business owners to explain the program.

Brother, can you spare some water? To paraphrase an old song from the Depression, with water as scarce today as a dime was in 1930, the city council heard a proposal from Matthew Clifford and Benjamin Cook of Trout Unlimited, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of freshwater streams and rivers based in Arlington, Virginia. Trout Unlimited is not limited to trout, and is working to protect the coho salmon as well as the steelhead in Northern California including Outlet Creek in Willits, which is an important habitat for the salmon. According to Clifford, Outlet Creek is the longest run of coho salmon in the entire Eel River watershed.

Outlet Creek, and the salmon that swim it, have suffered from the drought. Clifford and Cook pointed out that it only requires a small flow of water in the creek to protect the salmon – "a small amount of water will go a long way" – and are asking Willits to consider selling some of its overflow water from Centennial Dam (part of the city's water supply) to be directed into Outlet Creek.

"There is a lot of money out there for water infrastructure," Clifford stated, and that if the city is willing to sell water, Trout Unlimited would proceed with arranging funding for the project. The city's water manager Scott Herman told Clifford that being able to sell water to Trout Unlimited depends on the water supply: "It really depends on late rains."

The council made no decision or recommendation, but seemed agreeable to getting their feet wet and waded into this project.

"Sir, you just ran that stop sign. Need to see your license, registration, proof of insurance. And need to note your age, race, language, disabilities, gender, and sexual orientation. Sir."

If you thought getting pulled over by the police was an ordeal for you, starting 2022 it is going to be an ordeal for the Willits Police as well. At the city council meeting, Police Chief Fabian Lizarraga informed the council that starting January 1, a new California law, the Racial Identity and Profiling Act, will require that every police stop, whether a citation is written or not, be reported to the California Department of Justice, and include 18 new pieces of information: the six mentioned above, which the officer is not to ask about but is to determine by "perception"; where, when, and why the motorist was stopped; the outcome; the officer's identification and number of years' experience.

Chief Lizarraga informed the council that his department is fully ready to handle this state-mandated scopic snooping, thanks to an app that will process this questionnaire quickly. "This app is effective and efficient, so that we won't be spending an extra 10 or 15 minutes every time we stop somebody." Willits police officers have been testing the app for a few weeks. "Everything's in place, looking good. We are ready to go live."

Now you see it, now you don't. Houdini could make an elephant disappear (at least he could before PETA came along). At Wednesday's meeting, the Houdinis on the city council made the budget surplus disappear, most of it anyway. The sizeable 2021-2022 surplus reported at last month's city council meeting evaporated in a puff of smoke – actually an unbudgeted salary increase – unanimously approved by the council at Wednesday's meeting.

Closed session negotiations between representatives of the city and of the management staff had been ongoing, including a session before the November 10 meeting when the budget was approved.

The pay raise, that gives department heads a 10% pay increase as well as other benefits, is necessary, according to Councilmember Larry Stranske. The city's previous pay structure has failed to attract applicants for city jobs. "We still don't have a finance director. We have not been able to find anyone who will come to work for the city for the pay we were offering."

The cost of the raise will be \$153,000, which does not completely wipe out the short-lived surplus, but brings it down to a much tighter budget that will need to be watched carefully. And emphasizes even more Stranske's repeated urging to find a permanent finance director.

A lawsuit against the City of Willits by former Willits police chief Alexis Blaylock was on the council's closed session agenda at the December 8 meeting. Blaylock was hired as police chief on August 26, 2020 and resigned October 8, 44 days later. The lawsuit accuses the city and unidentified individuals ("does 1 through 10") of gender and race discrimination. The lawsuit was filed on May 11, but very little has been reported since then. The last agendized discussion of the lawsuit on the city council agenda was a closed session item on June 9.

According to Mendocino County Superior Court records, Judge Jeanine Nadel has scheduled a pretrial conference on February 8, 2023, and a "Trial: Jury" date of February 14, 2023 in the "Blaylock, Alexis vs. City of Willits" case – well over a year away.

Willits has a new mayor for 2022, Saprina Rodriguez, and a new vice mayor, Greta Kanne. Kanne, co-owner of The Book Juggler bookstore on Main Street, has been on the council for three years. She continues a family tradition: Her father Greg Kanne served on the city council in the early 2000s. Rodriguez, a Willits native, has been on the council for five years. She owns the Imagination Station preschool on the corner of Marin and East Commercial, the Toy Depot educational toy store adjacent to the school, and with her husband, Martin, Ace Copy and Shipping in the Safeway shopping center.

And with holiday cheer in the air – and water in our reservoirs – new Mayor Rodriguez wrapped up the last council meeting of 2021: "Wishing each of you a Merry Christmas."



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

This month though, "after ... a number of people ... at last month's meeting ... came forward and wanted to have this item agendized," it was on the agenda for discussion and possible action.

There was general agreement that outdoor masking was presently not, as board president Alex Bowlds said, "contributing to keeping people safe."

Superintendent Joe Aldridge concurred, saying that "data from surrounding districts suggests that there is roughly the same case rate regardless of [outdoor masking]."

However, he explained, "the origins of the masking outside came from when ... school started, [and] we were dealing with the Delta variant. It is, at this point, a remnant of the agreement [with the Willits Teachers Association] that was made at that time."

The WTA did recently approve a modification to that agreement, moving the outdoor unmasking date from the end of the school year to February 1.

The board's approval of that modification was on the meeting's agenda, and the contract change was approved unanimously by school board members.

Similar to the board's November meeting, some of those in attendance were not pleased.

WTA President Tessa Ford addressed the issue early in the meeting, remarking on the aftermath of the November meeting for the teachers.

"Regarding the issue of wearing masks outdoors right now," she began. "Erroneous information regarding district policies has been dispersed and an inaccurate picture of how COVID policies were developed has been allowed to spread after the last board meeting.

"Pictures were taken and posted on social media in a manner intended to malign Willits teachers to advance the cause of ... the people who expressed concerns at the last board meeting about students ... wearing masks while walking on campus or playing on the playground.

"I cannot emphasize enough how cruel and mean this was," she continued. "And many people were hurt. It is counterproductive to attack the people who care more than anybody for your children, and I hope in the future you will seek to work with the association that is working harder than ever before to keep our schools safe and open, rather than against us.

"Teaching has never been harder than it is now, so we thank you for your kindness and grace as we navigate the ever-changing conditions of a COVID world."

The meeting continued. People were still not pleased.

Dan Green, president of the California School Employees Association, was among them.

"The CSEA requests ... that the WUSD ... update the COVID plan to follow the state and local health guidelines to reflect that the CSEA classified personnel be released from outdoor masking," he said.

Public comments, with more than a few being voiced outside of their allotted time on the agenda, ranged from respectful disagreement to angry accusation, accompanied at times by audible audience agreement and clapping.

Some examples out of many:

"I ask you to do the research on masking.... Masks are not working.... Do the right things by our kids."

"I don't think February 1 is soon enough, and I would hope the WTA can amend that, and remove the outdoor masking."

"What doesn't seem to be making sense right now for our children is having them have to wear masks outdoors.... Multiple sources are saying they don't need to.... I do not understand why we are waiting until February 1 to change the mask policy...."

"You guys are bullies.... You bully our children when you make them wear masks."

"This is mRNA.... It's got a patent on it.... You're no longer human. You are transhuman.... That's the agenda here.... COVID's a joke. Let's do what Florida's doing.... I'm standing up to you guys.... We're standing up."

"You guys aren't concerned about safety. You guys are concerned about money.... You don't care about the parents. You don't care about the children...."

"There's a cult of safety which the bureaucrats and the technocrats keep pushing that's gaslighting our culture.... It's not fair to the kids that are healthy to do this to them.... Stand up. Get a backbone."

"Does WTA and the school board realize that there's a group of us working right now to create our own school? ... It's not a threat. I'm just bringing it to your attention. I am a founder of Willits Elementary Charter School...."

A few teachers chimed in.

Blosser Lane fourth-grade teacher and parent Amy Grooms hoped "that we can have students not have masks outside.

"As a teacher I can enforce ... [indoor masking]," she said. "When they walk in my room, they follow my directions. I can put my finger up to my nose,

and they know to put that mask over their nose."

Baechtel Grove Middle School teacher Catherine McKay had some practical advice.

"I would like to voice a concern about the poor mask practices students are practicing, and hope the parents will listen," she began. "Today, again in my classroom, I reiterated to my students that their fabric masks ... must be washed at high temperature and dried on high heat daily.

"And also only wearing their disposable masks for the recommended eight hours and then disposing of them. They are not reusable," she said. "I need people to reflect upon what their hygiene practices are with regard to the masks."

High school teacher and parent Kenneth Mansfield was "really pleased with how our board has handled the return from distance learning.

"We were able to come back because of masking.... I understand it does present difficulties.... Most students I have choose to wear them indoors, and outdoors when they're not eating."

Board member response to the often emotion-laden public opposition was measured and sincere, with an eye to explaining the rationale for keeping the mandate in place until February 1.

"It would be nice if the board could just make changes unilaterally, but we can't just do that," said trustee Jeanne King. "If there's language in the contract with respect to the change you want to make, you have to work it out with the union."

Noting that she knew there were "some teachers that feel differently from their union reps ... [she] urged teachers to talk to their union representative to voice ... their own concerns and viewpoints."

And she had some heartfelt feedback for the public.

"I make a point of treating parents in my path and my community with dignity and respect," she said. "And something that's really hurt me deeply tonight is people who are making assumptions about what I think, and how I think, and what my motivations are, and where my heart is at, when none of the people who have spoken have talked to me about what my understanding is," she said.

Bowlds felt similarly bound by the agreement with the teachers union.

Even though he personally didn't "see that the outdoor masking is contributing to keeping people safe ... I have to turn around to the other side of the coin," he said.

"When the contract was entered into with the district and the WTA, we were trying to get our teachers and our staff back on campus," he began.

"At the time, the information that we had indicated that outdoor masking and indoor masking was not a bad idea," he continued. "Now, several months later, we are asking to get rid of outdoor masks.

"Normally [by the terms of the contract, outdoor masking] ... would go to the end of the school year, but [WTA has] agreed to move it up to February 1," he said. "I commend the WTA for doing at least that.

"Would I like more? Yes, I would," he said, adding that he wasn't "telling the WTA that they're wrong in their position.

"I know the logic behind choosing February 1," he explained. "There is typically a spike in cases after the holidays.... The idea is that, hopefully ... we'll have an opportunity to identify ... whatever spike there is, and it will have run its course by the time we reach February 1."

"We as a board are faced with two choices. Do we keep it the way it is, and run it out until February 1 ... only about five more weeks of school?" he asked. "Or do we take a contract that we have entered into in good faith with the WTA and tell them no, we no longer value this contract?"

"We'd be sending a really, really bad message to the WTA if we did that," he said. "It would have implications on contractual negotiations between us and both labor groups for a long period of time to come."

Trustee Robert Chavez thought there might be a better way.

"Personally, I lean towards the position we don't have to wear masks," he said. "However, we are in contract.

"I really exhort our superintendent to talk with our WTA and see if we can bring back the date sooner," he suggested. "We have a lot of passionate parents here. They need to be heard."

"We have to consider that ... it's not so black and white ... contract breakers or pro not-wearing-masks outside," he said. "We don't have to close this door.

"I will vote for this because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. But we really need to look at this.

"Let's see if we can work together and make this earlier. I don't see why we could not," he concluded. "We're a great community. We can get things done. We can work together, find a middle ground."

The vote was unanimous to amend the agreement with the WTA to eliminate outdoor masking on February 1.



Above: The full cast of "It's A Wonderful Life" at WCT.

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

it helps people get hooked on "the drug of theater" – the excitement and spirit that come with participating in a stage show.

Also starring in the WCT show are veterans Patrick Nunes as the mean-spirited money man Mr. Potter, Kevin Moore as the guardian angel 2nd Class Clarence Oddbody, and Liz Dellett as Mary Bailey. A full cast of 15 rounds out the dramatic radio broadcast.

Kenyon Ochs of Willits echoes praise for the recent show. "There aren't any gray spots, the parts where I wasn't into the story. Every

character has an important role."

With live sound effects on stage, songs sung by the full cast, and the holiday strains of "Silent Night" warming the playhouse, performances continue through December 19 on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 pm and Sunday matinees at 2 pm.

Tickets are \$15 to \$20 and available online at www.wctperformingartscenter.org or at the door. Patrons are required to show proof of vaccination and mask while inside the theater.



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

will be using their money for a "replacement squad vehicle," while Little Lake plans on using their money on upgrading their radios and pumps on a couple different fire protection vehicles.

The \$1 million investment item was co-sponsored by Fifth District Supervisor Ted Williams and Second District Supervisor Maureen Mulheren, who praised the work of the local fire districts in helping to come up with the agreement.

"I'm really proud of the work that the fire departments, their districts, and their chiefs were able to do to come up with an agreement on the plan that they've proposed for us," said Mulheren.

"And all the items really go towards supporting fire service and bolstering fire service in Mendocino County. And there really and truly are never enough dollars for what we need, but I think that this is a pretty good start and gets us headed in the right direction."

"We think this is a fair way to distribute the money," added Williams, "and with a lot of this equipment, it doesn't really matter where it is, because if there's a major incident, it's all being pooled. Departments across the county are bringing what they have to help each other. So I see this as a net win for the entire county that we're bolstering our level of preparation.

"And as Supervisor Mulheren pointed out, this is still a band-aid – everything we're doing with fire and [Emergency Medical Services] is a band-aid – but it's a pretty good band-aid."

The supervisors had previously approved how to disperse around \$20 million of PG&E money at earlier meetings, with much aimed at fire protection and recovery efforts, and some of those expenditures were given final approval from the consent calendar on Tuesday.

The additional \$1 million means that there won't be much left of the \$22 million from PG&E that the county was awarded – something

that was concerning to Third District Supervisor John Haschak.

"While I'm supportive of this and I think that the fire districts certainly need the funding, I do think that we need to figure out how we're going to replace this money into the PG&E fund," he said. "Because it would be great to have a couple million dollars set aside for emergencies – the disaster emergencies that we're going to face in the upcoming years. And that was the intention of putting this money aside. But I do support this item. I would just like to figure out how to replace that money."

First District Supervisor Glenn McGourty was in agreement that the county should set aside money for disaster relief, but also was supportive of funding the fire services.

"When we had issues this summer in my district, they were there so fast it was really amazing, and they saved property and lives," he said of the local fire departments. "It was extraordinary. So I totally support them. I think though that we should have a discussion about keeping a contingency on hand for emergencies."

This prompted Williams to respond about what he saw as inadequate access to emergency services that many in the county face.

"I'm terrified that there's a great part of Mendocino County where you get in a traffic collision and look at the resources," he said. "You have some very well-intentioned volunteers, you might have career firefighters driving a great distance with rusty trucks, hand-me-down equipment, hand-me-down turnouts."

"Not only are we asking the firefighters in this county to largely go unpaid, we're not even providing the adequate training or equipment," he continued. "So I think it would be difficult to have a large pot of money, millions of dollars, and not address the problems at hand. And the hard reality is we don't have enough to do both.... We're not prioritizing the core services and mandated functions of government."

Willits Weekly on winter break!

REMINDER! Willits Weekly will be taking our annual winter break and will not be publishing a paper on December 23, December 30 or January 6. We'll see you back in the news on January 13!

SEPT 3 – FEB 13

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