

THE COTTAGE GROVE S sentinel

SNAP
Risk
See page 4



CGHS
Sports
See page 8



Cottage
Grove
Wednesday,
January 21, 2026
Mostly Cloudy

52
37

Wednesday January 21, 2026 | 137 years

www.cgsentinel.com

\$2.00

State of the City highlights a year of 'Quiet, Steady Progress'

"Balance isn't always easy. Progress takes patience. It takes compromise. It takes the willingness to listen, What I've seen this year is a community willing to do the work, not just talk about it."
Candace Solesbee, Cottage Grove Mayor

CINDY WEELDREYER
Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove Mayor Candace Solesbee's State of the City address describes 2025 as a year defined less by headlines and more by

"steady, quiet progress" achieved through collaboration, planning, and followthrough on longpromised projects.

Solesbee said last year's commitments to growth and revitalization have now materialized into visible improvements across the city.

"Those were not just ideas. They were project promises that are now realities," she told the audience during the Jan. 12 Cottage Grove City Council meeting.

Major Investments in Public Spaces

Solesbee highlighted several projects completed or advanced in 2024, beginning with the Bohemia Park splash pad and entry plaza, funded by a \$1.7 million federal Economic

Development Administration (EDA) grant.

"The new amenities, she said, have already become gathering places for families and a reminder of "why public spaces are so important."

Bohemia Park also saw the installation of its first mural, "The Goose," depicting the beloved steam locomotive No. 19. Between 1971-1988 it pulled an excursion train along the north side of Dorena Lake through the Row River Valley. The colorful mural, designed by local artist Heather Endicott, was created on the wall of the bathroom building next to the splash pad. Volunteers on the city's mural committee raised private donations for the project. Solesbee said the mural



City Weeldreyer / Cottage Grove Sentinel

City councilors and staff listen to Mayor Candace Solesbee's State of the City address during the Jan. 12 meeting.

reflects the community's ability to rally around shared goals.

That same spirit, Solesbee noted, is driving the upcoming WallDogs

mural festival, which will bring artists from around the world to Cottage Grove in the summer of

See **PROGRESS** Page 8

WHO WE ARE

Local man goes back in telephone time



Jeremy C. Ruark / Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cameron Reiten makes a call on one of his old-style telephones.

JEREMY C. RUARK
Cottage Grove Sentinel

Telephones been his love and passion since early childhood.

Cameron Reiten has been collecting old telephones since he was a teenager.

"I have built up a pretty good collection. I had Western Electric 500, those were the classic 60s and 70s rotary phones, he said. "I got a number of them fixed up. I've always been

interested and enjoyed working on and learning how anything electronic functions and fixing anything like that that is broken."

Reiten briefly stopped his collection in his twenties and then got back into it when he discovered a store in Newport, called the Old Telephone Company.

"it was operated by a fellow like me who had a fascination about old telephones," Reiten said. "He actually had set up this wonderful shop, and I was like a kid in a candy



Jeremy C. Ruark / Cottage Grove Sentinel
The old telephone switchboard Cameron Reiten purchased for his collection on display at the radio station.

store. He had a lot of the old ones that went back to the 1880s. the styles that I had heard about or read about but certainly never had a chance to see and experience up close. I encountered a kindred spirit at that store."

Over the last eight years, Reiten said he's built up a collection with many different phones.

"Like the candle stick and a bunch of the old-style dial phones, the crank-box styles," he said. "I think I have right around 100

right now and that collection includes a small switchboard. That was actually from a local business here in town that Flying Monkeys acquired some time ago and I managed to get that as well. It was originally used at a Eugene hospital. Sadly, it will take a lot of work to get that switchboard functioning again."

Several of the collected phones and the switchboard are on display in the front of

See **TELEPHONE** Page 6

SLSD confronts budget shortfall ~ Reports progress on key district goals

CINDY WEELDREYER
Cottage Grove Sentinel

South Lane School District leaders spent their January meeting confronting financial pressures, reviewing midyear progress on district goals, and outlining longterm plans to stabilize operations. Budget corrections, instructional improvements, and technology needs dominated the discussion as the district worked to protect classrooms while navigating declining enrollment and rising costs.

2025-26 BUDGET UPDATE

Superintendent Todd Miller noted that a midyear budget reconciliation showed the district was headed toward a negative ending fund balance, driven by a sharply reduced carryover, higherthanexpected charter school passthrough costs, and rising special education expenses. Declining enrollment and charter school obligations are approximately \$955,000 higher than budgeted. The district costs for funding its two charter schools is \$5-million based on their enrollments.

District leaders outlined a stabilization plan focused on correcting overbudget grants, finishing the year with a positive ending fund balance, and reducing General



Courtesy photo
The South Lane School Board is moving forward to embrace district challenges.

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A CLOSER LOOK

CGPD Weekly Update

The FOLLOWING IS INFORMATION FROM THE COTTAGE GROVE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S FACEBOOK.

-Officers assisted South Lane Fire and Rescue on a medical call at Middlefield Oaks Memory Care. When the officers arrived at the facility, the male fled the facility through a courtyard gate, breaking the lock, but officers were able to catch up to him quickly.

Officers assisted medics in placing him into a wheelchair allowing medics and officers to walk him to the hospital emergency room for evaluation.

- Officers assisted Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) with a suspect

contact. LCSO had probable cause for Assault IV (APA) as well as our agency had probable cause for Harassment. The suspect was contacted and subsequently arrested on both charges without incident.

- Multiple accidents were reported, with minor injuries, due to icy roads.

- Officers located a male subject, who provided a false name initially, but later determined the subject had a confirmed and valid felony warrant out of Fort Collins, Colorado for Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle (UUU). With the use of photographs from Josephine County Sheriff's Office, including identifying tattoos, the

officers were able to determine the man's identity.

He was arrested and lodged at Lane County Jail for Fugitive of Justice (ORS 133.747) and Providing False Information to a Police Officer (ORS 162.385).

- A routine traffic stop was performed due to the female driver coming to an abrupt stop with her vehicle completely past the stop bar and partially obstructing traffic. When the officer made contact, the driver stated she did not have a driver's license, registration, or proof of insurance on her. Dispatch advised that the driver's Oregon and California driver's licenses were suspended.

Additionally, the officers observed signs of impairment and conducted an investigation for DUII. The driver was transported to the police department for processing, where she was issued a citation in lieu of custody for DUII Intoxicants (ORS 813.010), Driving While Suspended Misdemeanor (ORS 811.182), Failure to Obey Traffic Control Device (ORS 811.265), Driving Uninsured (ORS 806.010), and Failure to Renew Registration (ORS 803.455).

- During a foot patrol of Silk Creek Park, officers contacted a male subject who advised the officers of the location of a suspect who had an active Lane County Parole

and Probation Violation Warrant.

The officers responded to the location under the bridge and found a tent with trash scattered around the surrounding area. The subject was contacted and advised he was under arrest for his warrant. The male subject was taken into custody and transported to the Lane County Jail to be lodged.

- Officers responded to the area of East Main Street and North River Road for reports of an illegal camp underneath the bridge. When the officers arrived they found two people in the illegal camp.

The male subject was contacted and dispatch advised officers he had two



Courtesy photo

valid arrest warrants for Probation Violation out of the Lane County and a warrant for Failure to Appear on a DUII charge out of Douglas County. The male subject was transported to the Lane County Jail to be lodged on his listed warrants.

POLICE BLOTTER



Jeremy C. Ruark / Cottage Grove Sentinel

JANUARY 5

- 01:50: Nuisance, 200 block N. 12th St.
- 07:49: Trespass, 1000 block Hwy 99
- 08:05: Motor vehicle theft, 1700 block S. 6th St.
- 09:22: Abandoned vehicle, 700 block Lincoln Ave.
- 11:33: Hit and run, 900 block Row River Rd.

- 14:25: Fraud, 2100 block Ash Ave.
- 14:47: Theft, 1200 block S. 8th St.
- 15:22: Hit and run, 2200 block E. Whiteaker Ave.
- 16:45: Welfare check, 1300 block E. Jefferson Ave.
- 16:48: Disorderly subject, 1500 block E. Main St.
- 20:06: Disturbance, 600 block S. 7th St.

JANUARY 6

- 00:19: Nuisance, 100 block S. 11th St.
- 00:41: Disturbance, 900 block S. 6th St.
- 01:04: Nuisance, 100 block S. 11th St.
- 05:20: Reckless driving, 33000 block Row River Rd.
- 05:28: Agency assist, Row River Rd/Sears Rd.

- 06:36: Suspicious vehicle, Row River Rd/Palmer Ave.
- 08:37: Abandoned vehicle, Harvey/19th
- 09:39: Unlawful entry into a motor vehicle, 800 block Benjamin Ave.
- 10:22: Repo, 100 block North O St.
- 10:57: Fire, 78000 block Row River Rd.

- 13:57: Disturbance, 800 block S. 6th St.
- 16:10: Animal info, 1400 block S. 4th St.
- 17:33: Theft, M/Dogwood
- 18:50: Suspicious condition, 150 block E. Main St.
- 20:41: Suspicious condition, 30000 block CG Lorane Hwy

- 11:24: Agency assist, 100 block Blair Ct.
- 13:39: Disturbance, 900 block S. 6th St.
- 14:00: Disturbance, 900 block S. 6th St.
- 14:00: Disturbance, 100 block Gateway Blvd.
- 14:06: Fraud, 1500 block Edison Ave.
- 17:03: Motor vehicle crash, Main/99

JANUARY 7

- 02:51: Trespass, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 08:51: Warrant service, River Rd/Main
- 09:28: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 10:26: Mental subject, 100 block N. 14th St.

JANUARY 7

- 11:27: Illegal camping, Taylor/Gateway
- 11:43: Disturbance, 78000 block Cedar Park Rd.
- 13:39: Agency assist, 1100 block W. Main St.

- 11:24: Agency assist, 100 block Blair Ct.
- 13:39: Disturbance, 900 block S. 6th St.
- 14:00: Disturbance, 900 block S. 6th St.
- 14:00: Disturbance, 100 block Gateway Blvd.
- 14:06: Fraud, 1500 block Edison Ave.
- 17:03: Motor vehicle crash, Main/99
- 23:16: Suspicious subject, 1700 block E. Main St.
- 23:59: Warrant service, Main/ River Rd.

JANUARY 8

- 04:23: Trespass, 700 block E. Main St.
- 06:16: Disturbance, 75000 block Wicks Rd.
- 06:35: Trespass, 900 block E. Main St.
- 06:51: Agency assist, 100 block Blair Ct.
- 07:47: Agency assist, 1700 block E. Washington Ave.
- 08:27: Repo, 1800 block E. Main St.
- 09:08: Illegal camping, 1500 block Hwy 99
- 10:23: Warrant service,

JANUARY 8

- 02:51: Trespass, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 08:51: Warrant service, River Rd/Main
- 09:28: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 10:26: Mental subject, 100 block N. 14th St.

JANUARY 9

- 00:30: Assault, 2400 block S. 8th St.
- 07:00: Motor vehicle crash, 6th/Main
- 12:07: Disturbance, 100 block S. 3rd St.
- 13:32: Agency assist, 200 block S. 6th St.

JANUARY 9

- 16:33: Motor vehicle crash, 16th/Gateway
- 17:26: Criminal mischief, 600 block N. 9th St.
- 19:27: Disorderly subject, 100 block N. 6th St.
- 20:42: Mental subject, 1000 block Hwy 99

JANUARY 10

- 00:22: Trespass, 900 block Row River Rd.
- 08:03: Warrant service, 200 block N. 12th St.
- 10:06: Warrant service, M/ Birch
- 14:14: Agency assist, 400 block Taylor Ave.
- 14:21: Vicious dog, 1100 block E. Main St.
- 15:14: Suicidal subject, 200 block Gateway Blvd.
- 15:48: Warrant service, 2700 block Row River Rd.
- 16:13: Missing person, 100 block N. 6th St.
- 17:26: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 19:04: Nuisance, 2300 block Washington Pl.
- 19:38: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 21:22: Dog at large, 100 block North M St.

JANUARY 10

- 02:51: Trespass, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 08:51: Warrant service, River Rd/Main
- 09:28: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 10:26: Mental subject, 100 block N. 14th St.

JANUARY 11

- 10:15: Missing person, 500 block Grant Ave.
- 10:33: Abandoned vehicle, Harvey/19th
- 10:37: Dog at large, 800 block Row River Rd.
- 14:00: Theft, 700 block Hwy 99

JANUARY 11

- 02:51: Trespass, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 08:51: Warrant service, River Rd/Main
- 09:28: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 10:26: Mental subject, 100 block N. 14th St.

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Linda Louise Russell

September 3, 1948 - November 26, 2025

Linda Louise Russell passed away on November 26, 2025, at the age of 77, in Creswell, Oregon. Born on September 3, 1948, in Vernon, Missouri to parents William and Ona (Moore) Gilmore.

After completing her high school education, Linda embarked on a career working part-time in retail at various locations in Lane County, where her sociable nature found a home. She worked with numerous people throughout her career and fostered relationships that went far beyond mere transactions. Her work allowed her to meet a diverse array of individuals, laying the groundwork for friendships that she treasured.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Linda was a woman of many interests. She had an insatiable love for literature, often found with a book in hand. Day trips to the coast were one of her favorite things to do. Linda's

happiest moments were those spent with her beloved husband, Marvin "Bud" Russell. They married on December 5, 1981 in Reno, Nevada and spent 28 years together until his passing in 2010.

Linda also had a penchant for the simple joys in life, such as bingo nights with her sister and friends. These gatherings were not just about the game but the community and companionship.

Linda is survived by her nieces Kimberly Kester, Kristy Work and nephew Kevin Kester. She is preceded in death by her husband "Bud" and her only sister Carla S. Kester who passed in 2024. Her life was testament to fostering connections and a life well-lived.

There will be no services at this time. Arrangements are in the care of Smith-Lund-Mills Funeral Chapel and Crematorium.

Cottage Grove Online

For information about
Cottage Grove 24/7
catch us Online
cg sentinel.com

Workshop to help older adults living with chronic conditions

Living with a chronic condition can be challenging, especially as people age. But learning some practical

skills can help older adults better navigate life's "ups and downs."

Senior & Disability Services (S&DS) will work to help seniors embrace their age and increase their health

knowledge at a free workshop the agency is returning to Cottage Grove starting this month, as part of its Living

Well Self-Management Programs.

The next "Living Well with Chronic Conditions" workshop will take place for six weeks on Thursdays, starting on January 22, from 1-3:30 p.m. at the Cottage Grove Community Center, located at 700 East Gibbs Avenue in Cottage Grove.

Adults age 60 and over who are living with a chronic condition are encouraged to sign up for "Living Well with Chronic Conditions" to learn how to manage stress and set goals in a supportive group setting.

Participants will learn methods to help themselves live well while experiencing conditions such as arthritis, high blood pressure, depression, COPD, and even cancer. Some of those lessons include learning relaxation and other strategies to deal with pain, fatigue, and frustration. The workshop was developed by the Stanford University Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.

Dallas Abraham, the Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Coordinator at S&DS, is the workshop leader in Lane County. She helps participants discover how healthy eating can improve their condition. She also helps them explore how to talk with their doctor and family about their health. At the workshop in Cottage Grove, she will be joined by two other class leaders who are being trained to lead more workshops like this.

The workshop, which has been held throughout Lane County for the past decade, has helped many older adults receive support from people like them who are living with various ongoing health challenges. S&DS is proud to announce that this will be the first time it has been able to host this Living Well workshop in Cottage Grove since 2019.

There is no cost to attend the workshop. Spaces are still available, but pre-registration is required. Sign-ups will be taken a week into the class.

For more information and to sign up, call 541-768-6811 or email LivingWell@lcog-or.gov.

The Living Well with Chronic Conditions Workshop will be held at the Cottage Grove Community Center, 700 East Gibbs Ave

COURTESY PHOTO FROM LAURA CAMPBELL

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

JANUARY 21

- Oregon Aviation Museum Open. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. 2475 Jim Wright Way. Donations accepted.
- Cottage Grove Public Library Hours Today. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- Coast Fork Kiwanis Club. Noon. Sol Azteca Mexican Restaurant, 3015 Row River Rd.
- Senior Center Pinochle Games. 1 p.m. Senior Center. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Open Bowling. 3-5:30 p.m. Cottage Bowl. 740 Row River Road. Info: 541-767-2695 or www.thecottagebowl.com
- Rotary Club. Social at 5 p.m. and Meeting at 5:30 p.m. El Tapatio Restaurant. 725 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Elks Bingo. 5 p.m. Elks Lodge. 775 N. River Rd. Doors and lounge open at 5 p.m. Early Bird Bingo begins at 6:30 p.m.
- Regular games begin at 7 p.m. Food and beverages available for purchase.
- Acoustic Jam with Gregg Biller. 6-7:30 p.m. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.
- AWANA. 6:30-8 p.m. Cottage Grove Bible Church. 1200 E. Quincy Ave. A midweek discipleship ministry for youth from Age 3 thru 8th grade that meets during the school year.
- Axe and Fiddle Game Night w/Ayla. 6:30 – 10 p.m.

JANUARY 22

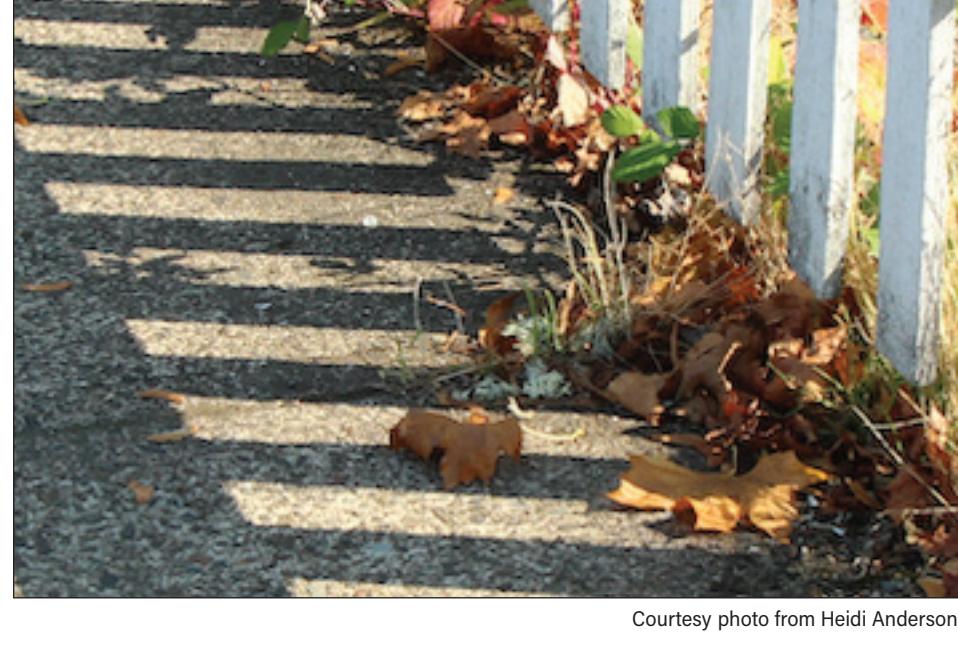
- Cottage Grove Public Library Hours Today. 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- Oregon Aviation Museum Open. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. 2475 Jim Wright Way. Donations accepted.
- Pilates/Yoga Class. 5:30-6:30 p.m. Row River Grange, 34360 Row River Rd. Build strength, improve flexibility and balance in warm & welcoming class taught by Courtney. To register before the first class: alignyourlifecoach@gmail.com Fee: Five class passes \$60
- Spencer Kilpatrick & The Sand Gators (R&B/Americana). 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. Axe and Fiddle. 657 E. Main St. Cover \$10.
- Baby Laptime. 11:30 a.m. Cottage Grove Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. Birth to 2 yrs.
- Bohemia Gold Mining MuseumOpen. 1-4 p.m. 308 South 10th St. Across from Bohemia Park.
- Community Center Table Tennis. 4-6 p.m. Reception Hall. 700 E. Gibbs Avenue. Tables, paddles, and balls provided.
- Book Club. 4:30 p.m. Cottage Grove Public Library. 700 E. Gibbs St. Call 541-942-3828 for featured book.
- Celebrate Recovery. Soup dinner 5:15 p.m. Meeting 6 p.m. Calvary Chapel. 1447 Hwy 99N. CR is a Christian-based recovery program for any hurt,

JANUARY 23

- Cottage Grove Public Library Hours Today. 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- Storytime (all ages welcome). 11:30 a.m. Cottage Grove Public Library, 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Bohemia Gold Mining MuseumOpen. 1-4 p.m. 308 South 10th St. Across from Bohemia Park.
- Cottage Grove Museum Open. 1-4 p.m. Corner Birch Avenue and H St.
- AlAnon Meeting. 7 p.m. Sinclair Room. Cottage Grove City Hall. 400 East Main St. A 12-step group for family members and friends of alcoholics/ addicts offering mutual support and a design for living in spite of what the alcoholic may or may not do. For more information call Saunders at 541-255-7648.
- Sycho Billy (String Band, Bluegrass). 6-9 p.m. Coast Fork Brewery. 106 S. 6th St.
- Friday Night Live. 6-9 p.m. Saginaw Vineyard. 80247 Delight Valley School Rd. Call 541-942-1364 for performer info.
- Mule On Fire. (Bluesy Americana). 6-9 p.m. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.

JANUARY 24

- Share Fair USA 9 a.m. 1133 E. Main St. (covered parking area next to Urban Kitchen) Reserve a space and share from your abundance with neighbors who are in need. Load up your unwanted items to give away for free (no bartering). Details about the weekly event is on Share



COURTESY PHOTO FROM HEIDI ANDERSON

JANUARY 26

- CG Public Library Hours Today. 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- CG Senior Center Bingo. 12:30 p.m. Community Center, 700 E. Gibbs Ave. Senior center members only.

- Gardeners Meeting. 5:30-7 p.m. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.

JANUARY 27

- Cottage Grove Public Library Hours Today. 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- AlAnon Meeting. 7 p.m. Sinclair Room. Cottage Grove City Hall. 400 East Main St. A 12-step group for family members and friends of alcoholics/ addicts offering mutual support and a design for living in spite of what the alcoholic may or may not do. For more information call Saunders at 541-255-7648.
- Crunk Witch presents HXNCLB (electronic pop artist from Presque Isle, Maine). 7:30-9:30 p.m. Axe & Fiddle. 657 E. Main St. Free; donations accepted.

- Bilingual Story Time. 5 p.m. Cottage Grove Public Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.

- Dementia Support Group. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Magnolia Gardens Senior Living. 1425 Daugherty Ave.

- Provides assistance to navigate through the dementia process with your loved one and connect you with other caregivers and spouses supporting their loved ones.

- Coast Fork Brewery Robert Burns Birthday Celebration. (Music, Food in Honor of Robert Burns). 3-6 p.m. 106 S. 6th St.

- Folk Element Trio (jazz/ folk). 8 p.m. Axe and Fiddle. 657 E. Main St. Free.

- Trivia, Chess and Games with Gerald. 6-8 p.m. Up

to 7 trivia players on a team. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.

Royal Rangers, 6:30-8 p.m., Living Faith Assembly, 467 S. 10th Ave. A scouting-style Bible-based youth development program for K-12 students.

JANUARY 28

- Cottage Grove Public Library Hours Today. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828
- Cottage Grove Lions Club. Noon. Axe & Fiddle, 657 E. Main St.

- Senior Center Pinochle Games. 1 p.m. Senior Center. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Craft Tutor. 2:30 p.m. Cottage Grove Public Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. Make a fun craft to take home.

- Open Bowling. 3-5:30 p.m. Cottage Bowl. 740 Row River Road. Info: 541-767-2695 or www.thecottagebowl.com
- Elks Bingo. 5 p.m. Elks Lodge. 775 N. River Rd. Doors and lounge open at 5 p.m. Early Bird Bingo begins at 6:30 p.m.

- Regular games begin at 7 p.m. Food and beverages available for purchase.

- Acoustic Jam with Gregg Biller. 6-7:30 p.m. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.

- AWANA. 6:30-8 p.m. Cottage Grove Bible Church. 1200 E. Quincy Ave. A midweek discipleship ministry for youth from Age 3 thru 8th grade that meets during the school year.

- Axe and Fiddle Game Night w/Ayla. 6:30 – 10 p.m. Axe and Fiddle. 657 E. Main St. (Free)

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JANUARY 25

- Cottage Grove Museum Open. 1-4 p.m. Corner Birch Avenue and H St.
- VFW Bingo. 2-4 p.m. VFW Post 3473, 3160 Hillside Dr. Cards: 50-cents. Free coffee & popcorn. Payout is 75% per game. Proceeds supports veterans in our community.
- Coast Fork Brewery Robert Burns Birthday Celebration. (Music, Food in Honor of Robert Burns). 3-6 p.m. 106 S. 6th St.
- Folk Element Trio (jazz/ folk). 8 p.m. Axe and Fiddle. 657 E. Main St. Free.
- Trivia, Chess and Games with Gerald. 6-8 p.m. Up

See more **CALENDAR**, Page 4

Trump's tax law to cost Oregon \$114 million in SNAP investments

MIA MALDONADO
Oregon Capital Chronicle

The Oregon Department of Human Services says it needs \$114.6 million from the state's general fund to fill gaps in its 2025-27 budget because of cuts and other changes to federal food assistance.

The long-awaited funding request comes after Oregon lawmakers in 2025 set a two-year budget days before President Donald Trump signed a major tax and spending law in July that drastically changed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, by adding work requirements, limiting benefits for noncitizens, creating more eligibility checks for people enrolled in the program and increasing the administrative cost burden for states.

The timing left lawmakers scrambling to respond to unforeseen budget changes affecting the one in six Oregonians who rely on SNAP.

The department's funding request has support from Gov. Tina Kotek, who on Tuesday reflected on the results of her 60-day food emergency during the government shutdown that left thousands of Oregonians without access to their SNAP benefits. She directed \$5 million to Oregon's statewide food bank network and \$1 million to the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. The state received a \$6 million match from Oregon Disaster Funders Network.

"We acted quickly to help get emergency food to families, restore SNAP benefits as soon as the courts allowed, and support the community organizations that step up every day to feed people," Kotek said in a statement. "That leadership saved lives — and it sets the standard for how Oregon will continue to respond."

Despite the state's quick response to the disruption of benefits, Oregonians are already seeing the impacts of the new federal law.

"We have households who saw reduced benefits because of changes in utility cost calculations, legal asylees and certain refugee populations lost SNAP eligibility entirely and work requirements expanded from

six counties to all 36 counties across the state — increasing verification compliance demands on both clients and the state," said Nate Singer, the agency's eligibility program director.

Singer, alongside other Oregon Department of Human Services staff, gave lawmakers a breakdown of what federal SNAP changes may cost Oregon ahead of the 2026 legislative short session.

Agency says work requirements will increase staff demand

The agency is requesting \$13.8 million to address the work requirement changes under the law.

The federal law tightens restrictions on who qualifies for exemptions from the SNAP work requirements. For example, it removed exemptions for former foster youth, unhoused individuals and veterans and adults ages 50 to 65. It also narrowed benefits for noncitizens.

The requested amount would support IT system upgrades, outreach and staff resources to manage an increased workload for staff who process applications and determine household benefit levels.

Oregon now has to split SNAP benefit costs with feds

The agency is requesting \$39 million for the 2025-27 budget cycle to invest in improving the state's SNAP payment error rate.

SNAP benefits previously were 100% federally funded, but the new law requires any state with a SNAP payment error rate above 6% to pay between 5% and 15% of benefit costs beginning October 2027. Oregon's error rate in 2024 was 14%, and it's mostly because of people not reporting their incomes on time and receiving either too much or too little in benefits, Singer said.

The agency has consulted with states with low error rates and experts to make a plan to lower its own and minimize its financial liability, Oregon Department of Human Services Deputy Director Dana Hittle told lawmakers.

"The resulting plan focuses on the operational basics, such as call center performance



Mia Maldonado / Oregon Capital Chronicle

The Oregon Office of Resilience and Emergency Management prepares food boxes to send out to Oregonians in need.

management of teams, improving training for staff and communications to clients, as well as integration of artificial intelligence and other technology solutions to streamline and improve processes," Hittle said.

It would need an estimated \$450 million in the 2027-29 budget if the state's error rate doesn't improve.

Administrative cost sharing

The agency is requesting \$54 million to cover the increase in SNAP administrative costs the state must pay from 50% to 75% beginning October 2026. This amount is meant to cover the change in the 2025-27 budget cycle.

The agency is requesting \$142 million for the 2027-29 budget cycle.

"This means a significant increase in general fund obligations just to maintain core operations for us," Singer said. "These are your eligibility, workers that process and do hearings, call centers, customer supports, our vendor contracts, system maintenance — all these areas shift the cost from the federal government to the states significantly

Investing in SNAP card security

To address increasing reports in electronic benefit transfer SNAP cards, the state will seek \$7.1 million from the general fund to support transitioning SNAP cards to chip-enabled cards to strengthen security against skimming and fraud.

There's been more than 10,600 instances of validated theft of benefits worth \$4.1 million since 2023, according to the agency.

"At its core, this budget request is about helping Oregonians meet their basic needs, food on the table and access to health care and services," Hittle said.

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2026/01/13/implementing-trumps-tax-law-to-cost-oregon-114-million-in-snap-investments/>

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Task force to develop new Land Banking Program for housing production



Metro Creative Connection

This program is a key action identified in the Lane County 2019 Affordable Housing Action Plan and represents a major investment in the county's long-term housing strategy.

LANE COUNTY

A new seven-member task force will be responsible for creating the priorities and goals, measures of success, reporting standards, and other requirements for Lane County's new housing land banking program.

"We desperately need housing in Lane County," Lane County Housing Production Manager Eric Mongan said. "While Lane County Government doesn't directly develop real estate, we can and should have a role in identifying buildable land that can be purchased and incentivized for housing development."

This program is a key action identified in the Lane County 2019 Affordable Housing Action Plan and represents a

major investment in the county's long-term housing strategy.

The land banking program was established in 2025 by the Board of County Commissioners as part of its ongoing work to support affordable housing development. Ultimately, it will identify properties with housing development potential, work through the land use process, and then sell shovel-ready properties to affordable housing developers to increase housing density and availability.

Offering ready-to-build properties that have cleared the land use process reduces the risk of delays for affordable housing developers — making building more attractive — and allows for a more efficient construction timeline.

The task force will create the framework for the program, which will then be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. The program is funded with \$2 million in Oregon Video Lottery funding.

Letters of interest must be submitted by February 9, 2026. The Board of County Commissioners will appoint five of the task force members in early March with the County Administrator selecting the remaining two members. The task force will begin meeting in March and is expected to hold between six and eight one-hour meetings over the course of several months.

More information and application materials are available at www.LaneCountyOR.gov/HousingTaskForce.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR CONT.

JANUARY 29

- Cottage Grove Public Library Hours Today 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- Oregon Aviation Museum Open. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. 2475 Jim Wright Way Donations accepted.
- Pilates/Yoga Class. 5:30-6:30 p.m. Row River Grange, 34360 Row River Rd. Build strength, improve flexibility and balance in warm and welcoming class taught by Courtney. To register before the first class: alignyourlifecoach@gmail.com Fee: Five class passes \$60
- Baby Laptime. 11:30 a.m. Cottage Grove Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. Birth to 2 yrs.
- Chamber of Commerce Annual Luncheon. Noon-1:30pm. Elks Lodge. 755 N. River Rd. Program: Outgoing President Cameron Reiten highlights of 2025 Chamber events. Mayor Candace Solesbee installs new board members. Introduction of Chamber Health Plan. Fee: \$25/person.
- Bohemia Gold Mining MuseumOpen. 1-4 p.m. 308 South 10th St. Across from Bohemia Park.
- Community Center Table

JANUARY 30

- CG Public Library Hours Today 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- Tennis. 4-6 p.m. Reception Hall. 700 E. Gibbs Avenue. Tables, paddles, and balls provided.
- Celebrate Recovery. Soup dinner 5:15 p.m. Meeting 6 p.m. Calvary Chapel. 1447 Hwy 99N. CR is a Christian-based recovery program for any hurt, habit, or hang up that is based on 8 Principles & 12 Steps for more information call 541-554-8135.
- Pilates/Yoga Class, 5:30-6:30 p.m. Row River Grange. 34360 Row River Rd. Build strength, improve flexibility and balance in warm and welcoming class taught by Courtney. To register before the first class: alignyourlifecoach@gmail.com Fee: Five class passes \$60

JANUARY 31

FEBRUARY 1

- Share Fair USA 9 a.m. 1133 E. Main St. (covered parking area next to Urban Kitchen) Reserve a space and share from your abundance with neighbors who are in need. Load up your unwanted items to give away for free (no bartering). Details about the weekly event is on Share Fair USA Facebook page or send email to eventsby-ananda@gmail.com
- Cottage Grove Public Library Hours Today 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541-942-3828.
- Storytime (all ages welcome). 11:30 a.m. Cottage Grove Public Library, 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Bohemia Gold Mining MuseumOpen. 1-4 p.m. 308 South 10th St. Across from Bohemia Park.
- Cottage Grove Museum Open. 1-4 p.m. Corner Birch Avenue and H Street
- AlAnon Meeting. 7 p.m. Sinclair Room. Cottage Grove City Hall. 400 East Main St. A 12-step group for family members and friends of alcoholics/addicts offering mutual support and a design for living in spite of what the alcoholic may or may not do. For more information call Saunders at 541-255-7648.
- Bilingual Story Time. 5 p.m. Cottage Grove Public Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Trivia, Chess and Games with Gerald. 6-8 p.m. Up to 7 trivia players on a team. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.

JANUARY 31

- American Legion Post 32 Bingo. 5-7 p.m. 826 W. Main St. Cards: 50-cents. Payout is 75% per game. Proceeds support veterans in our community.
- Last Friday Art Walk. 6-8 p.m. Historic Downtown District
- The Huckleberrys. (Americana) 6-9 p.m. Coast Fork Brewery. 106 S. 6th St.
- Leo Moon (Indie Folk). 8 p.m. Axe and Fiddle. 657 E. Main St. \$10.8 p.m. \$10 Cover.
- Rachel Cunningham, Jeanne Hinojosa, Glenda Wiffler and Dalin blown glass will be showing at Blackstone Realty office (old bank bldg. located at 609 E. Main from Jan 30 – Feb. 25. It will be open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For further information contact Glenda Wiffler at 458 275 9119.

FEBRUARY 2

- Storytime (all ages welcome). 11:30 a.m. Cottage Grove Public Library, 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Bohemia Gold Mining MuseumOpen. 1-4 p.m. 308 South 10th St. Across from Bohemia Park.
- Cottage Grove Museum Open. 1-4 p.m. Corner Birch Avenue and H Street
- AlAnon Meeting. 7 p.m. Sinclair Room. Cottage Grove City Hall. 400 East Main St. A 12-step group for family members and friends of alcoholics/addicts offering mutual support and a design for living in spite of what the alcoholic may or may not do. For more information call Saunders at 541-255-7648.
- Trivia, Chess and Games with Gerald. 6-8 p.m. Up to 7 trivia players on a team. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.

FEBRUARY 3

- Axe and Fiddle. 657 E. Main St. \$10.8 p.m. \$5 Cover
- VFW Bingo. 2-4 p.m. VFW Post 3473.3160 Hillside Dr. Cards: 50-cents. Free coffee & popcorn. Payout is 75% per game. Proceeds supports veterans in our community.
- CG Senior Center Bingo. 12:30 p.m. Community Center, 700 E. Gibbs Ave. Senior center members only.
- Bilingual Story Time. 5 p.m. Cottage Grove Public Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Trivia, Chess and Games with Gerald. 6-8 p.m. Up to 7 trivia players on a team. Coast Fork Brewing. 106 S. 6th St.

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Kotek extends homelessness emergency order, this time with a mental health focus



Gov. Tina Kotek is extending the state of emergency on unsheltered homelessness she announced on her first day in office for a third year, this time focusing on mental health and addiction, her office said Friday.

"We have helped thousands of people move from the streets into shelter, from shelter into homes, and prevented thousands more from experiencing homelessness in the first place," Kotek said in a statement. "But we must maintain the momentum and

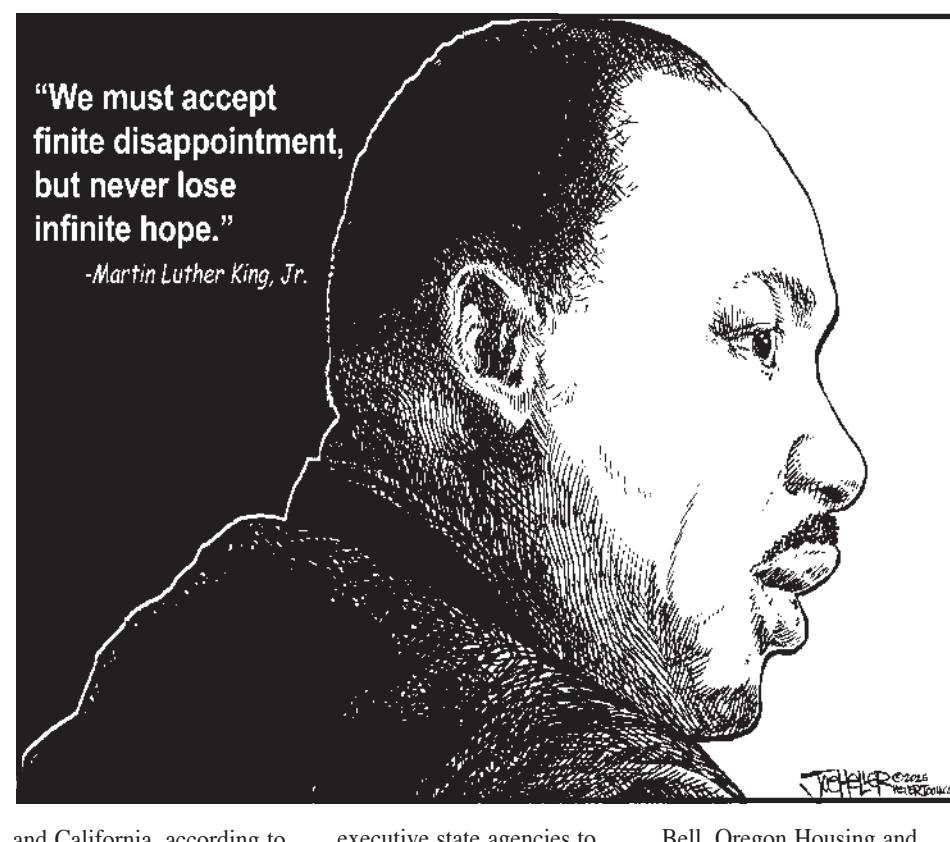
strengthen our focus on the intersection of homelessness, mental health and addiction."

The emergency order builds off Kotek's first homelessness state of emergency she declared upon taking office in January 2023. It applies to regions that experienced an increase in homelessness of 50% or more between 2017 and 2022, including the Portland area, central Oregon, and Clatsop, Jackson, Lane, Linn, Malheur, Marion and Polk counties.

From January 2023 to September 2025, Kotek's office reported successfully providing nearly 6,300 new and maintained shelter beds for people experiencing homelessness, rehoused 5,500 Oregonians and provided eviction prevention assistance for almost 26,000 households.

However, Oregon still has unmet homelessness needs. In 2024, Oregon had the third-most unsheltered unaccompanied youth on a single night in January, behind Arkansas

EDITORIAL CARTOON



and California, according to a 2024 report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Oregon is also one of five states where more than half of all veterans experiencing homelessness were sleeping in places not meant for human habitation.

Kotek's new executive order specifically addresses that larger share of people experiencing chronic homelessness have serious mental illness, substance use disorders, traumatic brain injuries or other behavioral health conditions.

The declaration orders the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, Oregon Housing and Community Services, Oregon Health Authority and

executive state agencies to rehouse 1,400 more people using funds the legislature adopted for 2025-27, prevent homelessness for more than 8,000 households and invest \$20 million to support permanent supportive housing, expanding behavioral health capacity and improving coordination between housing and health care systems.

The extended order also releases \$19 million to help people experiencing homelessness in their defense in the justice system.

"Through local and state partnerships, we remain vigorously committed to materially making everyday life better and improving the trajectories of families, neighborhoods and entire generations," said Andrea

Bell, Oregon Housing and Community Services executive director.

The extension takes effect immediately and remains in place until Jan. 10, 2027, unless modified or terminated.

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2026/01/09/oregon-gov-kotek-extends-homelessness-emergency-order-this-time-with-a-mental-health-focus/>

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Losing immigrant workers will cripple our entire economy

JOSEPH YOUREN
Sentinel Guest Column

In communities like ours, where hospitality is the economic engine, immigrant workers are not just helpful — they are indispensable.

They keep hotels running, restaurants open, and essential services staffed. Without them, the first businesses to suffer are the small, locally owned shops and eateries that already operate on razor thin margins. But the damage doesn't stop there. It climbs the economic ladder quickly.

When small businesses lose workers, they shorten hours, cut services, and lose customers. That lost revenue doesn't vanish in isolation. It ripples upward. Fewer guests in local restaurants means fewer bookings at larger hotels. Reduced hotel occupancy means fewer contracts for linen services, food distributors, maintenance

companies, and regional suppliers. When those suppliers lose volume, they cut back too — and the losses cascade to trucking firms, wholesalers, and even national brands that rely on steady demand from coastal tourism.

This situation is staring us in the face. Proposals for an ICE detention facility may be getting less attention but they are not going away. This creates a climate of fear where workers no longer feel safe living or working here. A detention facility doesn't just affect the people inside; it destabilizes the workforce our hospitality economy relies on.

When people who make our economy function no longer feel safe living or working here, they leave, initiating and sustaining the very trickleup economic damage that threatens our economy. Make no mistake, ICE is widely unpopular and a permanent presence would likely result

in boycotts further accelerating the economic impact to our communities.

This is what trickleup economic harm looks like: a single unfilled dishwashing job becomes a closed restaurant section, which becomes

fewer visitors in town, which becomes declining revenue for corporations hundreds of miles away. And all of it begins with the disappearance of the immigrant labor force that keeps our hospitality economy functioning.

If we want a thriving

coastal economy, we must

recognize immigrant workers

for what they are: essential

contributors whose labor

supports not just small busi-

nesses, but the entire eco-

nomic ecosystem. Removing

them is not a path to pros-

perity. It is a direct route to

economic collapse.

Joseph Youren is a Lincoln

City resident.

Weekly Online Poll

Are you changing your eating habits because of the increasing cost of food?

Yes No

Previous Poll Results

Do you believe your personal freedoms are threatened by the actions of the Trump administration?

80% - Yes 40% - No

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Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

1. LITERATURE: Who was the first Canadian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature?

2. MYTHOLOGY: What is the home of the Greek gods?

3. LANGUAGE: Which language is the second most spoken in Canada?

4. HISTORY: Which explorer sailed around Africa to discover a trade route between Europe and India?

5. MOVIES: What is the name of Elle Woods' Chihuahua in "Legally Blonde"?

6. GAMES: In what year was the original Pac-Man video game released?

7. TELEVISION: What is the name of the town where "Hart of Dixie" is set?

8. FOOD & DRINK: Which popular fruit has seeds on the outside?

9. MEDICAL TERMS: What is the common name for alopecia?

10. GEOGRAPHY: In which country are the Cliffs of Moher located?

Answers

1. Short story author Alice Munro, 2013.

2. Mount Olympus.

3. French.

4. Vasco da Gama.

5. Bruiser.

6. 1980.

7. Bluebell, Alabama.

8. Strawberries.

9. Hair loss.

10. Ireland.

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Resolve to reach out to the community more using your gardening skills. Perhaps you could donate your own flower arrangements to local senior activity centers, or donate your canned produce to a food pantry.

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Source: www.almanac.com

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- Brenda Weaver

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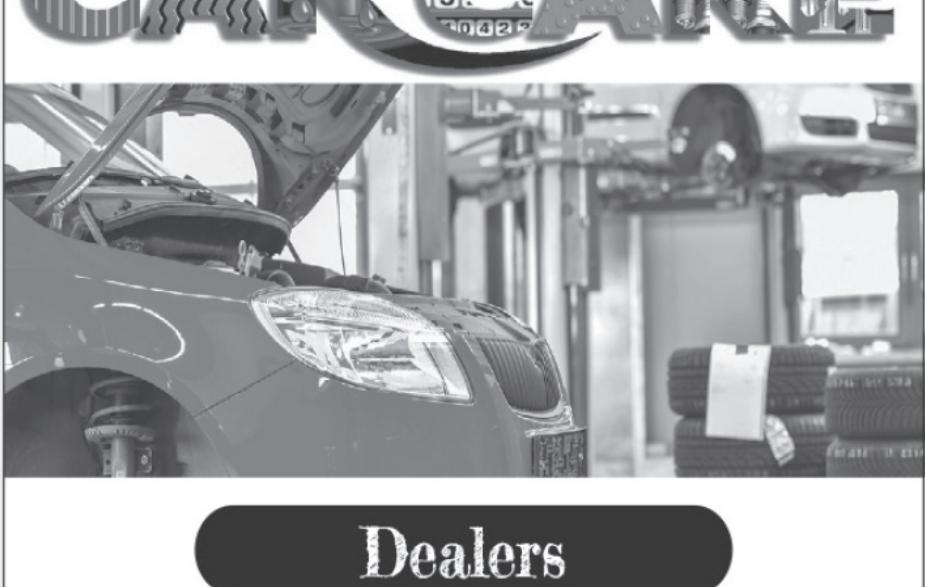
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SPORTS

League tips off for the Lions

WILL LOHRE
Cottage Grove Sentinel

It's time for the Lions to dig their claws into the Sky Em League, and it hasn't taken long for Cottage Grove's boys and girls to snare their first wins.

The boys grabbed their first win in a heroic comeback against Junction City, while the girls have been enjoying a resurgent season under Head Coach Kim Beer.

Cottage Grove's boys were in desperate need of a win when they faced off with Junction City on Jan. 13. Playing in front of a fired-up home crowd, the Lions willed their way to a 15-point lead, eager to secure that crucial first league victory. Junction City didn't make it easy, though.

The Tigers refused to throw in the towel and mounted a furious comeback

in the second half. The Lions saw their double-digit lead trimmed to just a single possession and hung on for the white-knuckle 47-49 win. It's the Lions' third win in a row against Junction City, having beaten the Tigers twice last year. It was also the perfect response for a Cottage Grove team that lost 52-76 in its opening league game against Marshfield on Jan. 9.

Recent weeks have brought an uptick in Cottage Grove's win percentage. After starting the season 1-9 in the preseason, the win against Junction City marked the second win in four games. The Lions also beat Springfield at the SCTC Holiday Tournament in Stayton on Dec. 31.

The Lions played a league game against North Bend on Jan. 16, but the result is unknown at the time of press. Cottage Grove will be back

on the court against Marist Catholic on Jan. 23.

For the girls, the first season under Head Coach Kim Beer has been phenomenal. Cottage Grove ended the 2025 campaign with a 7-17 record and did not win a single game against a league opponent, going 0-12. This year, the Lions have flipped the script. At time of writing, the Lions have won 10 of their first 14 games, and they began league play with two consecutive triumphs.

The Lions opened league play against Marshfield on Jan. 9, and the 47-11 blowout was the first Sky Em win for Cottage Grove since Jan. 31 of 2024. Coincidentally, that 2024 win was also against Marshfield. After beating the Pirates, Cottage Grove harnessed the momentum to secure a second win against Junction City on Jan. 13.

Yet again, the Lions overwhelmed their opponent, beating the Tigers by 20 points, 54-34. Through two games, Cottage Grove matched the number of league wins they had in the 2023-2024 season, when the Lions qualified for the state tournament through the league playoffs. No doubt the Lions will be feeling confident, having won games in a variety of ways already.

The Lions have showcased their ability to keep their foot on the gas. Eight of Cottage Grove's 10 wins have been by double digits. Conversely, the other two wins against Klamath Union and Brookings-Harbor were hotly contested two-point wins. Cottage Grove has shown that they can do it both ways.

In the fledgling stage of the league season, Cottage Grove has been the highest



Courtesy photo

Follow game results at osaa.org and see CGHS sports features online at the cg sentinel.com and in the Wednesday print editions of the Sentinel.

scoring Sky Em team. In their 14 games, the Lions have scored 662 points, averaging 47.2 points per game.

Zooming out, Cottage Grove has scored the fifth most total points in all of 4A basketball this season. It's hard to imagine things could have started much better for the Lions this season, and they will have a chance to keep the fun going

against Marist Catholic on Jan. 23.

The result of the Jan. 16 game against North Bend is unknown at the time of press.

Follow game results at osaa.org and see CGHS sports features online at the cg sentinel.com and in the Wednesday print editions of the Sentinel.

Nominations open for the 2026-27 Oregon Teacher of the Year

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE), in partnership with Oregon Lottery, is pleased to announce the Oregon Teacher of the Year program is once again honoring exemplary educators in every region of the state!

Nominations are open statewide through 5 p.m. on February 11, 2026.

The Oregon Teacher of the Year program recognizes and honors teacher excellence, with the state Teacher of the Year serving as the face and voice of exemplary educators across the state. Candidates for Oregon Teacher of the Year are exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled licensed public school educators in grades preK-12.

Do you know a teacher who should be considered for this distinction? Nominate them now!

What happens after nominations close in February?

All eligible teachers* who have been nominated will be invited to submit an application. Candidates who apply will then be in the running to be selected as a Regional Teacher of the Year in one of the 19 Education Service Districts statewide. Every Regional Teacher of the Year will be awarded \$1,000 and will be celebrated across the state in September.

Finalists for the 2026-27 Oregon Teacher of the Year will be selected from amongst the regional winners by a blue ribbon panel. Following

additional application questions and interviews, the panel will then select the state honoree. Thanks to ODE's partnership with the Oregon Lottery, the Oregon Teacher of the Year receives an award of \$10,000, as well as a special fund to cover all travel costs for the year.

"My experience thus far as Oregon Teacher of the Year has been nothing short of humbling, exhilarating, heartwarming, and amazing, and my time has only just begun," said Sally Golden, Oregon's 2025-26 Teacher of the Year.

"This honor is for every student, parent, educational assistant, specialist, support staff, teacher, administrator, and community partner who has contributed and taken part

in the beauty and magic that is the Springfield Community Transition Program. I am beyond excited to represent my program, my district, and my state and hope to make everyone proud!"

The Oregon Teacher of the Year will also submit an application to be considered for the honor of National Teacher of the Year.

If you have questions about the program, please reach out to the Oregon Teacher of the Year Program Coordinator Michelle Goodness.

*Prior to nominating, we encourage you to review the Oregon Teacher of the Year eligibility requirements - please see the "About" section on the Oregon Teacher of the Year website.



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Courtesy photo

The Oregon Teacher of the Year program recognizes and honors teacher excellence, with the state Teacher of the Year serving as the face and voice of exemplary educators across the state.

PROGRESS

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2027 to create 15 murals in four days.

The event will celebrate local history and culture and place Cottage Grove among a small number of communities nationwide to host the large-scale public art project. It will be done in conjunction with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the local filming of National Lampoon's Animal House movie.

Downtown Revitalization Takes Shape

Solesbee devoted significant attention to the city's projected \$6.25 million downtown revitalization project, also funded through an EDA grant. After months of construction, Main Street reopened to two-way traffic on December 12, a milestone she described as "a gift to the whole community."

There is no final cost yet, because there are some remaining elements to be completed, such as installing directional signs and landscaping, staff reports the project is currently under budget and ahead of schedule. A community celebration is planned for this spring.

The mayor thanked Cottage Grove Public Works Director Faye Stewart, project manager Shauna Neigh, and the Wildish Construction crew for their work throughout the project. The mayor also credited city staff for the holiday garlands and wreaths that lit up downtown during construction.

"Every evening when the lights came on, it felt like a Hallmark movie," she said.

Emergency Preparedness and Accessibility

The city followed through on its commitment to emergency preparedness by purchasing a generator for the Community Center, ensuring it can serve residents during power outages or severe weather, according to Solesbee. Accessibility improvements were also completed at the Community Center and Library building, by installing automatic door openers.

Solesbee listed a long roster of community events the city supported in 2024, including Bohemia Mining Days, the Cascade Home Center Community CookOff, the Eugene Symphony at Bohemia Park, Halloween TrickorTreat, the Christmas Kickoff, and the Chamber's Concerts in the Park. She

also highlighted the Guinness World Record goldpanning event, thanking volunteers, goldpanning experts,

Cottage Grove Chamber CEO Georgia Haskell, and the Ervin family for helping bring an official judge to Cottage Grove to certify the achievement.

Growth in Community Development

The mayor praised the Community Development Department for what she called a year of "growth, leadership, and service." The department saw several staffing changes, including the promotion of Leni Crow to Senior Planner and the hiring

of Associate Planner Jeremy Means. Melany Klemperer stepped into the role of city's Community Development Manager.

Solesbee said the team processed more than 100 planning cases, resolved over 100 tallgrass and code-violation complaints, and addressed numerous nuisance and safety issues. Cottage Grove earned its 32nd Tree City USA recognition, and Crow was named the 2025 Floodplain Manager of the Year for her work during March's atmospheric river event, which caused flooding in Drain and minor impacts

in Drain and minor impacts

The department also hosted the ninth annual Emergency Preparedness Fair in conjunction with the August Party in the Park event at Coiner Park that drew more than 2,000 attendees. The city's planning staff issued more than 600 building permits, including new singlefamily homes.

Police and Public Works Recognized

Solesbee commended the Cottage Grove Police Department for filling key leadership positions and launching a new training program for its three sergeants. She also highlighted a new community policing partnership with Starfish Assignment, a nonprofit that supports the Books and Badges program. Through the initiative, officers distribute donated books to local children to help build trust and encourage reading.

To our officers—thank you for mentoring, guiding,

and investing in the next generation," Solesbee said.

The Cottage Grove Public Works staff were also recognized for their contributions, including building 20 railroadstyle benches for Bohemia Park, cleaning 36 illegal campsites, installing the new generator at the Community Center, and constructing 40 panning tables for the Guinness event.

City Staff and Council Appreciation

The mayor thanked employees in the city's Finance and Human Resources Department for their daily work supporting residents and staff. She also acknowledged the City Manager, City Recorder, and Deputy City Recorder for their "dedication and steady support."

Solesbee praised the City Councilors for the many hours they volunteer on boards and committees, often at the expense of personal time.

"Your willingness to step up and serve matters deeply," she said, extending gratitude to their families as well.

Solesbee became emotional when she offered a personal thank you to her husband, calling him her "rock."

Looking Ahead

She closed her address by acknowledging that Cottage Grove, like any community, is not perfect. But she emphasized that the city's progress reflects a shared commitment to collaboration and perseverance.

"Balance isn't always easy. Progress takes patience. It



Cindy Weeldreyer / Cottage Grove Sentinel
Cottage Grove Mayor Candace Solesbee's State of the City address highlighted a year of notable accomplishments and offered her sincere appreciation to her colleagues, city staff, community volunteers and citizens who worked together and collaboratively to make it all happen last year.

takes compromise. It takes the willingness to listen," she said. "What I've seen this year is a community willing to do the work, not just talk about it."

The mayor ended the Jan. 12 address with a toast to the

year ahead: "Thank you, and cheers to 2026."

Follow City of Cottage Grove developments online at cg sentinel.com and in the Wednesday print editions of The Sentinel.