

# THE COTTAGE GROVE Sentinel

Oregon's  
Population  
Sustainer  
See page 4



CGHS  
Sports  
See page 8



Cottage  
Grove

Wednesday,  
February 18, 2026  
Showers



Wednesday February 18, 2026 | 137 years

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\$2.00

## City secures \$800K federal grant as budget recovery plan takes shape



Cindy Weeldreyer / Cottage Grove Sentinel  
The Cottage Grove City Council.

CINDY WEELDREYER  
Cottage Grove Sentinel

The Cottage Grove City Council received a budget update Monday night, Feb. 9, the first since last month's revelation that bookkeeping errors had gone unnoticed for two years and left the City facing a \$4.5 million deficit.

Councilors have anticipated this latest update since their Jan. 26 meeting, when they first learned from Interim Finance Director Eric Kytola that the

errors would require mid year budget reductions to stabilize the current fiscal year.

City Manager Mike Sauerwein opened with a direct assessment. "Let's be honest," he told councilors. "We've identified what the problem is and the obvious question is, 'Where do we go from here and what are we going to do about it?'"

He outlined steps already underway, including hiring independent CPA Eric Kytola as Interim Finance Director and

bringing on a second CPA to help catch up on overdue annual audits. Sauerwein said the City expects to be fully caught up by the end of next year.

He also previewed changes to the upcoming budget cycle. The City plans to present a balanced budget in April, one month earlier than usual, and will host a Town Hall forum to give residents an opportunity to weigh in on the proposed 2026-27 budget. The earlier start gives the Council a full month between the Budget Committee's

recommendation and the legally required adoption deadline in June.

Sauerwein acknowledged the seriousness of the situation. "I don't want to sugar coat this — the numbers are what they are and we have some tough decisions ahead of us," he said. Staff are meeting "almost on a daily basis" to work through options for mid year reductions. "Our attitude is there are no bad ideas — everything is being put on the table — and we will present you

with a balanced budget that will right the ship by July 1."

He emphasized that the Budget Committee will have the opportunity to reshape whatever proposal staff brings forward. "You may not agree with the decisions the city staff makes to balance the budget, and that's great — that's why we present it to the budget committee to offer your own ideas," he said.

See GRANTS Page 6

### WHO WE ARE

## Groovin' in The Grove Cottage Grove's new Community Hub

CINDY WEELDREYER  
Cottage Grove Sentinel

When Austin Hall created a small Facebook group last February, he wasn't trying to build a movement. He simply wanted to offer Cottage Grove residents a more positive online space — a place where neighbors could talk to each other without the arguments and negativity that often dominate social media.

"Most people weren't looking for another place to argue online," Hall said. "They just wanted a space that felt neighborly again."

That simple idea has since grown into Groovin' in The Grove, a fast growing online community hub. What began as a modest Facebook group has become a digital gathering place for recommendations, local business support, event sharing, and everyday neighbor to neighbor connection.

#### A SUDDEN SURGE OF COMMUNITY ENERGY

Hall said the shift from "small Facebook group" to "local institution" happened almost overnight.

"The first week of December was when it hit me," he said. "All of a sudden I was getting messages from business owners and people I look up to. The insights went from a couple thousand views a month to a couple thousand a day."

Over a 60 day stretch, the group logged roughly 53,000 views. Even Hall's personal

page suddenly reached an audience more than twelve times the population of Cottage Grove.

"It stopped feeling like a Facebook group I made," he said. "It started feeling like something the town adopted."

#### A DIFFERENT KIND OF ONLINE SPACE

What sets the group apart is something rare on social media: a consistently positive tone. Hall is quick to clarify that the group isn't about avoiding real issues — it's about handling them with respect.

"The biggest boundary is simple: we don't attack people," he said. "Disagreement is fine. Tough conversations are fine. But it has to stay respectful."

He moderates with a steady hand, stepping in early when a thread starts to slide.

"Negativity is contagious online," he said. "But so is kindness. Most people just want a space that feels like small town community again."

That approach has helped the group become a place where people feel safe asking questions, sharing recommendations, and showing up for each other — even when they don't agree.

#### COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RECOGNITION

Two of the group's most popular features — Business of the Month and Local Legends — were designed with one principle in mind: the community decides.

Hall said if a page administrator picks winners, it can feel biased. When the community

votes, it's fair, transparent, and meaningful. The results have been powerful. Businesses report new customers. Locals discover shops they didn't know existed. Comment sections fill with genuine stories of good service and good people.

"It's neighbors saying, 'We see you. We appreciate you. You matter here.' That hits different in a small town."

Business of the Month winners so far are Bittle Brew Coffee (Dec), Cone Heads Ice Cream (Jan), and Gold Rush Espresso (Feb).

Bittle Brew co owners Heather Rae Bittle and Amber Jean Dill said the recognition made a noticeable difference.

"We were lucky to have some new faces come by because they were excited to try us out after reading about us," Dill said.

January's winner, Cone Heads Ice Cream, located inside the Cottage Grove Public Market, appreciated the positivity the group brings. Owner Tim Eide said, "It's a group for positive vibes and not negative reviews and it's a much needed change."

The Local Legends Award invites "Groovers" to nominate someone who has made valuable community contributions — teachers, volunteers, coaches, business owners, quiet helpers, and longtime locals who make Cottage Grove better just by being here.

The first Legend winner in January was Mindy Joy, co founder of the Pay It Forward Facebook page. The February winner is

See GROOVIN' Page 6



Cindy Weeldreyer / Cottage Grove Sentinel

**Groovin' in The Grove Facebook Page founder Austin Hall is delightfully surprised with the positive responses he has received to the newest social media page that only posts positive comments and promotes local businesses.**

## The experts who keep South Lane Schools open



Courtesy photos from South Lane School District Facilities Director Matt Allen  
The two original boilers at Lincoln Middle School were designed to last 25 years and District Maintenance Staff have kept them running for 63 years.



Courtesy from South Lane School District Facilities Director Matt Allen  
It was all hands-on deck for the district facilities team to clean flooded hallways at Cottage Grove High School after several junctions in the fire suppression system failed during multiple days of single digit temperatures in 2013.

CINDY WEELDREYER  
Cottage Grove Sentinel

When South Lane School District's Facilities and Maintenance Supervisor Matt Allen stepped up to present at the Feb. 2 school board meeting, he didn't bring a list of complaints or a plea for help. Instead, he offered a look inside the skilled, dedicated team that keeps more than half a million square feet of district buildings running safely, efficiently, and far beyond their expected lifespan.

"Our custodial teams are the first line of defense against germs, viruses and all of the other things nobody wants to touch every day," Allen told board members. "They clean and sterilize our 555,637 square feet of buildings to keep us safe and healthy."

It's a massive responsibility.

Across Cottage Grove High School, Lincoln Middle School, Harrison and Bohemia Elementary Schools, Dorena and London rural schools, Kennedy High School, and the District Office, by the numbers, each of the 17 custodians would be covering around 32,000 square feet — a level Matt said no one can realistically maintain — and he's proud of how well his custodial staff works to keep pace with the demands.

Behind them is the district's seven member maintenance team — licensed electricians, plumbers, HVAC technicians, locksmiths, carpenters, mechanics, boiler technicians, and tree fallers who rotate 24/7 on call duty every six weeks.

Their work ranges from emergency break ins and roof leaks to electrical issues, vandalism, malfunctioning



door hardware, and even wildlife removal. One recent call involved

See SCHOOLS Page 6

Latest news can be found online at:

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



### INDEX

Police Blotter  
Calendar of Events  
Opinion  
Classifieds  
Sports

2  
3  
5  
7  
8

Phone Number: 503-444-7924 • Email: [cgsentinelofficemanager@countrymedia.net](mailto:cgsentinelofficemanager@countrymedia.net)

We're always interested in hearing about news in our community. Send us your news, photos, and videos and let us know what's going on! Email us your submission!



www.cgsentinel.com



Courtesy from the LCSO  
Searchers located the hiker in good health, but out of water.  
He was guided back to his vehicle at a nearby snow park.

## Hiker rescued north of Diamond Peak

STAFF REPORT  
*Cottage Grove Sentinel*

Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) Search & Rescue volunteers responded to the area of Mt. Yoran, north of Diamond Peak, Sunday Feb. 8, to search for an overdue hiker who had been in the back country for three days.

Searchers located the hiker in good health, but out of water. He was guided back to his vehicle at a nearby snow park.

The identity of the hiker and where he is from was not immediately available.

"Please plan accordingly if you choose to enjoy the snow off of maintained roads," the LCSO states in a release. The LCSO encourages anyone heading to the high country to follow these tips to stay safe.

• Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return.

- Know conditions before you leave - rain in the valley can mean ice up high!
- Be prepared to stay out overnight - even if you don't plan to get out of your car.
- Bring maps for offline navigation - cell service can be spotty!
- If you go on the water, ALWAYS wear a life jacket!

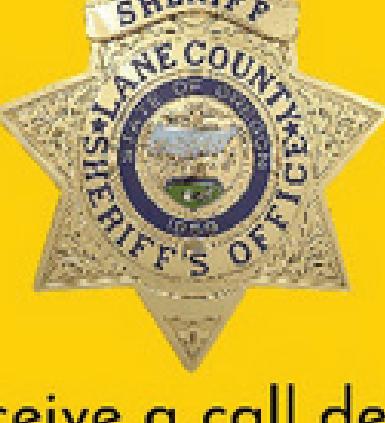
• If you become lost, STAY PUT! Find a way to signal or make your location visible. Always carry a whistle and flashlight in the outdoors - it just might save your life.

Nearly every week, Lane County Sheriff's Search & Rescue deputies and volunteers assist our residents and visitors in all types of environments.

*Learn more about the LCSO Search & Rescue program or donate to their work at: [http://www.lanecounty.org/.../volunteers/search\\_and\\_rescue](http://www.lanecounty.org/.../volunteers/search_and_rescue)*

## LCSO issues scam warning

# SCAM ALERT!



We NEVER  
request  
money by  
phone.

We DO  
NOT accept  
BitCoin as  
payment.

If you receive a call demanding  
money to avoid arrest,  
**Hang Up!**

File a report at [ic3.gov](http://ic3.gov)

or call the Lane County Sheriff's Office at 541-682-4141

### LANE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Our community continues to be targeted by phone scammers identifying themselves as employees of the Lane County Sheriff's Office, typically claiming to be sergeants.

Scammers have in the past also used text and email.

Scammers claim there are warrants, missed jury duty, or

unsettled legal issues. They may also offer to take bail money so family members in our jail may be released. Scammers then ask for payment or personal information, often threatening arrest.

In some instances, the scammers appear to call from official phone numbers or provide fraudulent callback numbers with official-sounding voicemail inboxes.

They often already have some personal information based on the phone number they called.

If you are contacted by someone claiming to be a Lane County Sheriff's Office employee and you think you are being scammed, HANG UP.

Then contact our dispatch center at 541-682-4150 opt. 1.

## POLICE BLOTTER

*The police blotter relates to the public record of incidents as reported by law enforcement agencies.*

*All individuals arrested or charged with a crime are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Information printed is preliminary and subject to change.*

*For specific details about cases listed, contact the appropriate law enforcement agency.*

### COTTAGE GROVE POLICE

#### FEBRUARY 02

- 09:55: Nuisance, 200 block N. 12th St.
- 10:14: Theft, 900 block Row River Rd.
- 10:22: Juvenile trouble, 1300 block S. River Rd.
- 11:05: Disturbance, 1100 block Hwy 99
- 14:40: Suspicious vehicle, 3200 block Row River Rd.
- 15:26: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 19:14: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 20:04: Harassment, Row River Rd/Sharps Creek Rd
- 20:21: Agency assist, 79000 block N. River Rd.
- 20:28: Suicidal subject, 400 block E. Main St.
- 21:24: DUII, 1200 block Hwy 99

#### 4th/Fillmore

- 08:48: Hit and run, 700 block Row River Rd.
- 12:02: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.

#### FEBRUARY 05

- 00:57: Suspicious condition, 75000 block Wicks Rd.
- 15:09: Criminal mischief, 100 block S. 10th St.
- 15:33: Motor vehicle theft, 300 block E. Main St.
- 16:26: Mental subject, 800 block Gateway Blvd.
- 17:48: Juvenile trouble, 1700 block Curry Ave.
- 17:59: Motor vehicle crash, 10th/Monroe
- 20:08: Trespass, 900 block Row River Rd.
- 22:50: Suspicious vehicle, 100 block Gateway
- 22:54: Order violation, 600 block Wood Ave.

#### FEBRUARY 04

- 03:07: Trespass, 700 block E. Main St.
- 05:09: Warrant service, 200 block N. 12th St.
- 07:00: Dog at large, 1700 block Hwy 99
- 08:11: Dog at large, 1700 block Hwy 99
- 08:55: Abandoned vehicle, 400 block E. Main St.
- 11:59: Theft, 900 block Row River Rd.
- 13:45: Suspicious vehicle, 3200 block Row River Rd.
- 14:33: Found dog, 200 block S. 11th St.
- 14:56: Disturbance, 100 block Taylor
- 16:26: Hit and run, 100 block Hwy 99
- 16:28: Trespass, 1100 block E. Chamberlain Ave.
- 16:54: Motor vehicle crash, 800 block Gateway Blvd.
- 17:16: Harassment, 500 block S. 16th St.
- 20:14: Disturbance, 200 block N. 12th St.

#### FEBRUARY 06

- 07:22: Motor vehicle crash, Row River/Dorena Mtn.
- 09:03: Disturbance, 36000 block Shoreview Dr.
- 17:17: Hit and run, Gateway/Main
- 20:36: Suspicious subject, 1300 block S. River Rd.
- 22:22: Barking dog, 1000 block Ash Ave.
- 22:50: Suspicious condition, 1000 block Taylor Ave.



Jeremy C. Ruark / Cottage Grove Sentinel

#### Coop Ct.

- 11:36: Abandoned vehicle, 13th/Van Buren
- 12:06: Illegal camping, North P St/Birch Ave.
- 13:06: Disturbance, 34000 block Meyer Rd.
- 13:31: Disturbance, 600 block N. 9th St.
- 14:00: Disturbance, 700 block Chestnut Ave.
- 14:16: Assault, 500 block Boardwalk Pl.
- 16:04: Suspicious subject, 900 block Row River Rd.
- 16:17: Motor vehicle theft recovery, 16th/Main
- 16:33: Warrant service, Main/11th
- 11:00 block W. Main St.
- 10:28: Mental subject, 700 block South R St.
- 10:43: Found dog, River Rd/Hwy 99
- 11:06: Disturbance, 1800 block Harvey Rd.
- 13:15: Criminal mischief, 1100 block E. Main St.
- 13:38: Mental subject, 1100 block E. Chamberlain Ave.
- 14:28: Suspicious condition, 800 block S. 3rd St.
- 15:25: Agency assist, 99/Withycombe
- 17:09: Found dog, Sweet Ln/99
- 18:11: Dog release, 400 block E. Main St.
- 20:21: Motor vehicle crash, 1200 block Gateway Blvd.
- 21:06: Hit and run, 400 block Adams Ave.
- 02:14: Criminal mischief, 200 block S. 6th St.
- 02:46: Warrant service, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 03:24: Suspicious Condition, 900 block S. 6th St.
- 07:49: Warrant service, 200 block N. 12th St.
- 08:18: Warrant service, 100 block N. 9th St.
- 09:03: Fraud, 1100 block S. 2nd St.
- 11:20: Found drugs, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 11:58: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 13:05: Agency assist, Taylor Butte/Hillside
- 13:39: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 15:11: Disturbance, Pennoyer/Douglas St.
- 19:56: Motor vehicle crash, Shoreview/Baker Bay
- 23:03: Business check, All American Mkt.

#### FEBRUARY 07

- 00:47: Suicidal subject, 1100 block W. Main St.
- 02:38: Disturbance, 200 block S. 11th St.
- 09:17: Welfare check, 400 block N. 14th St.
- 11:20: Motor vehicle crash, 9th/Woodson
- 11:34: Trespass, 300 block
- 11:00 block W. Main St.
- 10:28: Mental subject, 700 block South R St.
- 10:43: Found dog, River Rd/Hwy 99
- 11:06: Disturbance, 1800 block Harvey Rd.
- 13:15: Criminal mischief, 1100 block E. Main St.
- 13:38: Mental subject, 1100 block E. Chamberlain Ave.
- 14:28: Suspicious condition, 800 block S. 3rd St.
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- 02:46: Warrant service, 1300 block E. Main St.
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- 07:49: Warrant service, 200 block N. 12th St.
- 08:18: Warrant service, 100 block N. 9th St.
- 09:03: Fraud, 1100 block S. 2nd St.
- 11:20: Found drugs, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 11:58: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 13:05: Agency assist, Taylor Butte/Hillside
- 13:39: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 15:11: Disturbance, Pennoyer/Douglas St.
- 19:56: Motor vehicle crash, Shoreview/Baker Bay
- 23:03: Business check, All American Mkt.

#### FEBRUARY 08

- 10:04: Criminal mischief, 11:00 block W. Main St.
- 10:28: Mental subject, 700 block South R St.
- 10:43: Found dog, River Rd/Hwy 99
- 11:06: Disturbance, 1800 block Harvey Rd.
- 13:15: Criminal mischief, 1100 block E. Main St.
- 13:38: Mental subject, 1100 block E. Chamberlain Ave.
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- 08:18: Warrant service, 100 block N. 9th St.
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- 11:20: Found drugs, 1300 block E. Main St.
- 11:58: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 13:05: Agency assist, Taylor Butte/Hillside
- 13:39: Warrant service, 400 block E. Main St.
- 15:11: Disturbance, Pennoyer/Douglas St.
- 19:56: Motor vehicle crash, Shoreview/Baker Bay
- 23:03: Business check, All American Mkt.

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# Oregon housing bill tries to reduce rental barriers for older adults

ROBIN LINARES  
Oregon Capital Chronicle

A clerical error on an online rent payment portal nearly led to one Milwaukie renter losing her home — and that's just one example of housing advocates' increasing concerns as online portals become more standard for finding housing and paying rent.

Mistyping one piece of personal information on her apartment's online portal meant Beth Walker didn't realize her rent payment hadn't gone through until after her landlord applied a late fee and prepared to start an eviction filing.

"It ultimately took hours of frantic communication and a forced day off work just to ensure the process wasn't initiated the following morning," Walker wrote in legislative testimony. "The digital divide isn't just about internet access — it's about making sure that people who lack access to or familiarity with technology like smartphones and electronic portals can still meet their fundamental needs, including housing."

Walker is one of dozens of Oregon tenants, landlords and housing advocates who urged lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 1523, which would require landlords to accommodate renters by giving the option to use a paper application, pay by check or other non-digital



Oregon lawmakers are considering a bill to force landlords to provide renters options to apply or pay rent by paper.

**Fast Fact**  
If the bill passes, renters could have the option of paper housing applications and payment methods.

Barbara Barrett / Stateline

methods and have non-digital keys to access rental spaces. The Senate Housing Committee advanced the bill Tuesday.

Advocates say it's a way to stop technological advancements from limiting housing access for older adults, low-income renters, renters with disabilities and those otherwise technology adverse.

While smartphone ownership has drastically increased over the past decade, data from the nonpartisan Pew Research Center shows roughly 1 in 10 adults — and approximately 1 in 4 for seniors 65 and older — don't own one.

Sybil Hebb, director of legislative advocacy at the Oregon Law Center, told lawmakers that some of her clients have nearly lost their housing because of technological mishaps from tenant portals that made rent payments appear late or even missing.

These concerns are exacerbated among low-income seniors, especially those at risk of homelessness, according to advocates at the Northwest Pilot Project. Often rental applications require multiple devices, like a computer and a phone, which some low-income residents cannot afford.

"The client is basically stuck with moving forward with an application, and these are not minor inconveniences. They directly prevent people from applying for housing, and some of these clients simply give up and they don't apply at all," said Jason Colthurst, housing access manager at Northwest Pilot Project. "Access to housing should not depend on a person's ability to afford or use technology."

Most opposition to the bill came from landlords and housing providers, who noted that the lack of standardization of where applications come from could make the process less

efficient, delaying housing approvals. Others mentioned that they felt many accommodation requests for renters were already covered through the Oregon Fair Housing Act.

"We are concerned about risk in not having equal opportunity for those needing housing due to delays in delivering paper applications and having too many paper applications that need to be processed," wrote Jonathan Clay, government and public affairs manager with Multifamily NW. "You would simply be moving the workload from one group to another. Either the housing advocate inputs the information into the portal or the housing provider has to do it."

Existing protections under the Fair Housing Act require legal accommodations for those with disabilities. However, the act does not cover accommodations for age or income status, which housing advocates contend creates a dangerous loophole.

Judy Annon, a board member at the Oregon State Tenants Association, said that many members paid dues by check and rely on neighbors for technological support.

"And so we're going to ask you to please take into consideration the human element here of seniors who don't have disabilities that need you to support this bill," she said to the committee.

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2026/02/10/oregon-housing-bill-tries-to-reduce-rental-barriers-for-older-adults/>

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Cindy Weeldreyer / Cottage Grove Sentinel  
Yellow daffodils signal spring is on its way.

### FEBRUARY 18

- Oregon Aviation History Museum. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. 2475 Jim Wright Way (donation).
- CG 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.
- Senior Center Pinochle Games. 1 p.m. Senior Center. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Lego Club for Kids. 2:30 p.m. Cottage Grove Public Library. 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](http://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.
- Rotary Club of Cottage Grove. Social at 5 p.m. Meeting at 5:30 p.m. El Tapatio Restaurant. 725 E. Gibbs Ave.
- 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 mid-week 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).

### FEBRUARY 19

- CG Public Library Hours Today. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541.942.3828.
- Baby Laptime (birth to 2 yrs). 11:30 a.m. Cottage Grove Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- Community Center Table 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 and 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: alignyourlife-coach@gmail.com Fee: Five class passes \$60
- Cottage Theatre Play: A Piece of My Heart. 7:30 p.m. 700 Village Dr. More info: [www.cottageatre.org](http://www.cottageatre.org) A drama about six women who served in Vietnam, tracing their experiences before, during, and after the war. Runs weekends through Feb 22 (Thu-Sat at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2:30 p.m.)
- Karaoke Night. 9 p.m. to Midnight. Bohemian Tavern. 48 N. 9th St.

### FEBRUARY 20

- CG Public Library. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 700 E. Gibbs Ave. For information call: 541.942.3828
- Baby Laptime (birth to 2 yrs). 11:30 a.m. Cottage Grove Library. 700 E. Gibbs Ave.
- 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: alignyourlife-coach@gmail.com Fee: Five class passes \$60
- Richie G and MA Beat. (Island Contemporary) 6-9 p.m. Coast Fork Brewery. 106 S. 6th St.
- Spirit of BMD Wooden Nickel Society Launch Party. 6-8 p.m. CG Public Market. 926 E. Main St. New fundraiser to support the nonprofit's year-round mission as a heritage hub celebrating Cottage Grove's unique history. The community is invited to come learn about the new SBMD Wooden Nickel Society that strengthens the connection between local businesses, residents, and our town's shared legacy.
- Weekly Pool Tournament 7 p.m. Bohemian Tavern. 48 N. 9th St. (Entry Fee: \$5 & BCA Rules).
- Opal Center Play: The Swan. Friday and Saturday 7:30 p.m. Sunday 2 p.m. Tickets: \$20. Runs two weekends

### FEBRUARY 21

- 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 [eventsbyananda@gmail.com](mailto:eventsbyananda@gmail.com)

### FEBRUARY 22

- The Regulars (Americana). 1-3 p.m. Coast Fork Brewery. 106 S. 6th St.
- Wine Club Members receive 10% off. Tickets must be purchased in advance and are non-refundable. For reservations call 541-942-1364.
- 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.

### FEBRUARY 23

- CG Public Library Hours: Now closed on Mondays For information call: 541.942.3828.

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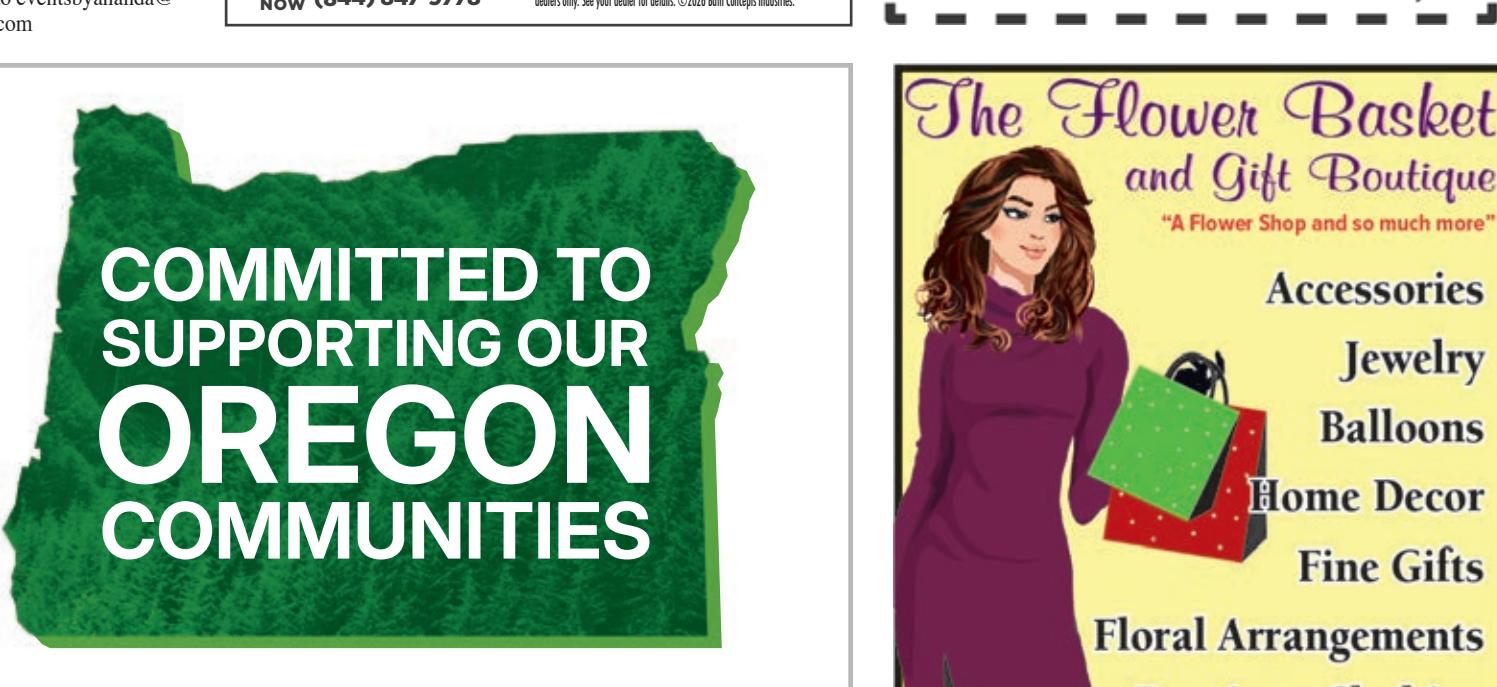
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## Layoffs or redirecting funding: Oregon lawmakers grapple with ODOT budget gap again



Courtesy photo from the Department of Transportation

**Oregon lawmakers are once again discussing ways to fill a massive shortfall within the Oregon Department of Transportation's budget — except this time they can't raise taxes or fees.**

**MIA MALDONADO  
ROBIN LINARES**  
*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

Oregon lawmakers are once again discussing ways to fill a massive shortfall within the Oregon Department of Transportation's budget — except this time they can't raise taxes or fees.

Lawmakers have two options if they want to fill the \$242 million gap in the Oregon Department of Transportation's 2025-27 budget, according to transportation agency leaders. They can let the department lay off up to 400 workers, or they can redirect revenue the

department already has from programs and projects toward transportation maintenance.

Even though lawmakers passed a bill in the fall meant to fill the gap the department faced a year ago, the Republican-led No Tax Oregon campaign paused the revenue the agency anticipated for the current budget cycle until a statewide vote in November. Democrats are trying to move that vote to May.

Without any new revenue sources, the agency has limited options to fill that budget hole.

The best-case scenario is that the agency partners with the Legislature to find a revenue option and doesn't have to lay off any

workers but still leave 138 vacancies open to keep \$70 million.

The second-best case scenario would mean leaving 279 vacancies open and laying off 71 workers to save \$140 million.

The worst-case scenario would mean leaving 151 vacancies open and laying off 400 workers to save the \$242 million.

There are already 700 vacant positions within the agency, and workers have had to take on the roles of two to three people, Interim Director Lisa Sumption told lawmakers.

Option two: Redirecting funds from existing ODOT programs toward maintenance

Aside from cutting down the agency's workforce, ODOT leaders suggested repealing sections of a major 2017 transportation law and redirecting funding designated in that law toward maintenance including \$194 million for bridge and seismic projects, \$30 million for the Rose Quarter, Abernethy Bridge and Boone Bridge projects in the Portland area and \$15 million for the Safe Routes to School program — a grant program that funds road safety projects near schools.

Another suggestion leaders gave was shifting \$20 million worth of ODOT's privilege tax share — a tax paid by automobile dealers when selling new vehicles — away from the Connect Oregon program and the Oregon Community Paths Fund, which provide grants for marine, aviation and rail projects as well as pedestrian paths.

Agency leaders suggested also redirecting funding from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund, which receives revenue through a 0.1% tax on every Oregonian's pay check and pays for public transit. This option would provide \$137 million in revenue.

Lawmakers could also redirect \$20 million from the Transportation Operating Fund, or the "lawnmower" fund, which is funded by non-road gas tax funds.

None of the options would take away funding counties and cities receive from the state's highway fund, Sumption said.

Union presses lawmakers for solution

Frustrated union leaders urged legislators to provide short and long-term budget relief at a press conference prior to Tuesday's hearing.

"The cuts that are being proposed right now would be draconian in some parts of the state, we would see some offices closed. We'd see over 400 people lose their jobs," said Melissa Unger, executive director of Service Employees International Union Local 503, which represents ODOT employees.

Staff shortages have hit coastal and rural communities the hardest. Mike Atwood, an ODOT employee and union member in the Astoria area said funding uncertainty cut his crew in half over the past year.

"Now we have a total of eight people trying to take care of 304 shoulder miles," Atwood said, which means fewer people clearing falling trees, car wrecks, mudslides and potholes. "It all has to be taken care of, and it's getting harder and harder with less and less people."

Transportation budget conversations are far from over, Unger said.

"We know that this hearing is just one of a conversation this Legislature is going to have, and our message is to figure this out and save jobs and keep our roads safe, so that we have a plan moving forward," Unger said.

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2026/02/11/layoffs-or-redirecting-funding-oregon-lawmakers-grapple-with-odot-budget-gap-again/>

*Oregon Capital Chronicle is part of States Newsroom, a network of news bureaus supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity. Oregon Capital Chronicle maintains editorial independence. Contact Editor Lynne Terry for questions: info@oregoncapitalchronicle.com.*

## Oregon population growth sustained by international immigration



Metro Creative Connection

**Between July 2024 and July 2025, around 9,600 more people moved into Oregon from other countries than moved out.**

**LUKE COURY**  
*Leader Guest Article*

Most of Oregon's population growth between 2024 and 2025 came through international immigration according to new estimates from the U.S.

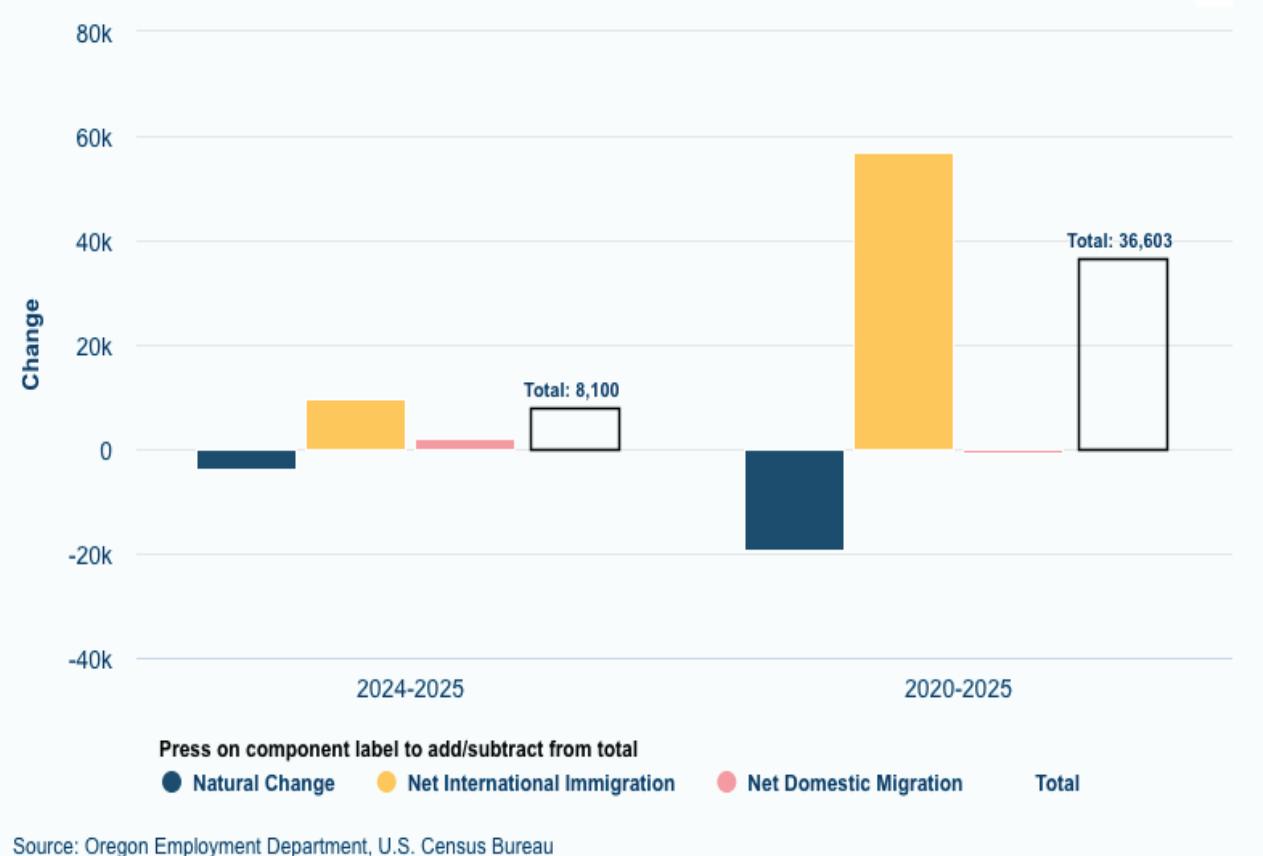
Census Bureau. This dynamic was even more pronounced over the longer period between 2020 and 2025, when immigration was the only positive component of population change.

Between July 2024 and July 2025, around 9,600 more people moved into Oregon from other countries than moved out (net international migration). That was more

than four times the net number of people who moved into Oregon from other states (net domestic migration) which was 2,200.

Oregon continued to have around 0.9 births for every death, resulting in a natural population decline of 3,800. Since 2020, net international immigration added 56,700 to Oregon's population, net domestic migration resulted in a drop of 670, and natural population change reduced the population by 19,500.

Luke Coury is an Oregon Employment Department economist. He may be reached at 541-224-4154 or at luke.coury@employ.oregon.gov



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## COMMENTARY

## A Once-in-a-Generation Moment for Cottage Grove

CANDACE SOLESBEE  
Sentinel Guest Column

Some moments don't come around twice.

In the coming years, Cottage Grove is preparing to welcome something truly special — a rare blend of art, history, celebration, and community pride that will place our town on a national stage while staying true to who we are.

The internationally respected WallDogs mural artists are coming to Cottage Grove, bringing with them nearly 300 volunteer artists who will spend four days transforming our downtown walls into a living storybook of our heritage. What makes this even more remarkable is how rare this opportunity is. In almost 40 years of mural festivals, the WallDogs have come west only a few times.

Cottage Grove will be just the third West Coast town they've chosen — and that's something worth being proud of. Along with the City of the Dalles, Oregon — who was also fortunate enough to have the WallDogs paint their town — we hope Cottage Grove will be the first of many communities in the future to join an Oregon Mural Trail, celebrating public art, boosting tourism, and helping sustain local economies.

At the same time, we are preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the filming of Animal House in Cottage Grove — a milestone that will draw visitors from across the country back to the place where a small town became part of cinematic history.

Together, these moments give us a once-in-a-generation

opportunity: not just to be seen, but to come together and create something that lasts.

## Murals, Meaning, and Community

The WallDogs are known not only for their talent, but for how they work. They don't arrive with a script. They listen first. They work shoulder-to-shoulder with local volunteers, historians, students, and neighbors. Ladders are held by locals. Stories are shared on sidewalks. By the end of the week, strangers feel more like friends.

Over four days, 15 murals will be painted, each one rooted in Cottage Grove's real history — our working past, our people, our downtown, and the moments that shaped us. These murals will be permanent. Long after the scaffolding comes down, they'll still be here, quietly telling our story every single day.

## Nourishing Creativity

Artists work best when their bodies are fueled as well as their minds. We'll be providing breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day for the visiting WallDogs team of artists — and we hope to make each meal special and unique, a reflection of our town's hospitality and creativity.

To make this happen, we'll need the help of local churches, service groups, individual volunteers, restaurants, food trucks, and organizations willing to lend a hand with meal preparation, hosting, or logistics. This is a tangible, fun way to get involved and make the artists feel welcome while building community in the process.

## Inspiring Our Youth

One of the most meaningful parts of this project is the impact it will have on our young people.

Students will have opportunities to meet artists from all over the country, learn local history, and see what it looks like when a community honors its own story.

When kids grow up watching their town come together to create something beautiful and lasting, it sends a powerful message: you belong here, and your community believes in itself. Murals become everyday teachers — sparking curiosity, pride, and connection for generations to come.

## A Celebration That Will Draw Attention Far Beyond Cottage Grove

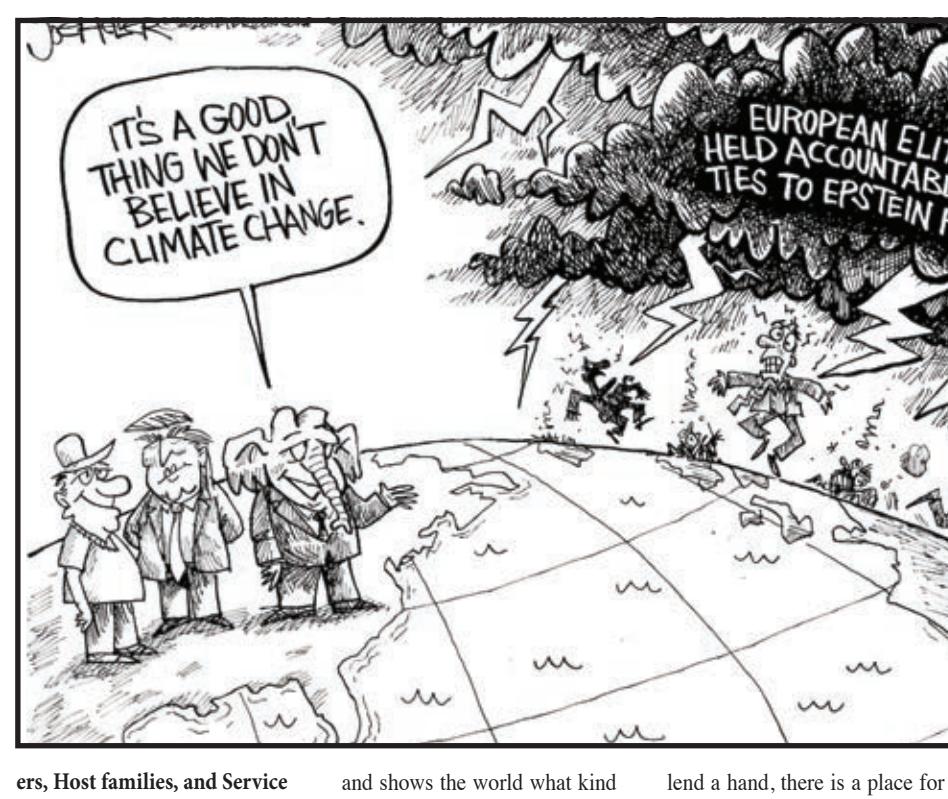
As we look toward the 50th anniversary of the filming of Animal House, we are planning a celebration that leans into fun, creativity, and community spirit that made the movie memorable — while keeping it unmistakably Cottage Grove.

## Plans include:

- A hometown parade inspired by the iconic parade scene, complete with marching bands, floats, and local flair
- A toga party celebration, with residents and visitors encouraged to dress the part.
- Themed events happening all over town, hosted by local businesses, organizations, and community groups.

This celebration is expected to attract visitors from across the region — bringing national attention, tourism, and energy to our community. And while the festivities will be joyful and unforgettable, the camaraderie of neighbors, and the murals will be the part of this moment that stay with us long after the music fades and the visitors head home.

## An Invitation to Business Owners



## ers, Host families, and Service Groups

With hundreds of artists coming to our town, we will need our community's help.

## We are looking for:

- Host families willing to open their homes to visiting artists
- Airbnb and short-term rental owners

Interested in donating or discounting stays in support of the project

- Business owners who want to participate by hosting events, or being part of themed celebrations
- Churches, Service groups, and community organizations willing to assist with meals, hospitality, or volunteer coordination

This is a chance to help shape something that strengthens our town, supports local businesses,

and shows the world what kind of town Cottage Grove truly is — while contributing to a larger vision of an Oregon Mural Trail that would celebrate public art across our state for years to come.

## How To Get involved

## To kick off planning

and volunteer coordination, we invite the community to attend a Volunteer Information and committee Sign-Up Meeting:

- 6 p.m. March 16 at the Community Center

This meeting will offer information about the WallDogs MuralFest, the Animal House Anniversary events, and the many committees forming to help bring this vision to life.

Whether you want to donate money, volunteer, host, help plan events, support artists, or simply

lend a hand, there is a place for you.

## A Love Letter Written on Our Walls

This moment is bigger than any one event. It's about what happens when a town chooses to show up for itself — to tell its own story in paint, in celebration, and in shared effort.

Years from now, when people walk our streets, the walls will still be speaking. They'll tell a story of a town that welcomed the world, together, and left something beautiful behind.

This is our invitation — to participate, to support, and to help paint our grandparent's history and those that came before them — that will be remembered for generations to come.

Candace Solesbee is the Mayor of Cottage Grove.

## COMMENTARY

## Spirit of Bohemia Mining Days: Carrying a Cottage Grove Tradition into a New Era

MATTHEW HEWLETT  
LINDA OXLEY  
Sentinel Guest Column

If you've lived in Cottage Grove for any length of time, you've probably held a wooden nickel.

Maybe it came from a Bohemia Mining Days parade. Maybe you found one tucked in a drawer years later, a small reminder of the magical three day appearance of "Bohemia City" on the third weekend of July and how it fills Coiner Park with music, laughter, and the unmistakable spirit of this community. Wooden nickels have been part of our local story for generations, passed from hand to hand as tokens of goodwill, celebration, and shared heritage.

This year's Bohemia Mining Days festival celebrates its 67th anniversary and will take place July 16-18 with the theme "Rivers, Rails, and Reels," highlighting the importance of Buster Keaton's The General on its 100th anniversary.

As Spirit of Bohemia Mining Days (SBMD) has grown from a festival committee into a year round heritage organization, we've been thinking about how to keep that spirit alive beyond the festival weekend. Cottage Grove is a place where history isn't just something we preserve in museums — it's something we live with, learn from, and carry forward. Our mining, timber, railroad, and pioneer stories are woven into the identity of this town, and they continue to shape who we are today.

One of the most visible ways we share those stories is through Legends of Cottage Grove, our weekly short form video series created by Executive Director Matthew Hewlett. Each week, he produces new episodes

highlighting local history, community stories, and the people who make Cottage Grove unique. These videos consistently reach more than 5,000 viewers across SBMD's social media platforms, making Legends of Cottage Grove one of the most widely viewed local history projects in the region.

Our website is also being redesigned to reflect the full scope of SBMD's year round work. The updated site will offer a clearer picture of our programs, partnerships, and the many ways the community can get involved.

Alongside our digital storytelling, SBMD continues to expand hands on programming through The Bohemia Academy, which offers heritage activities for kids, families, and residents in Cottage Grove's two assisted living centers. These programs bring history to life through storytelling, creative workshops, and intergenerational engagement.

Looking ahead, our Bohemia Mountain Rangers Camp will give local youth a 2.5 day outdoor learning experience, introducing them to pioneer skills, mining history, and hands on activities through immersive, story driven programming. We also produce The Mining Vault podcast as a companion project that deepens our commitment to preserving local stories.

As we expand this work, we've been looking for ways to strengthen community involvement and create sustainable support for our mission. That's why we're introducing something new that honors our past while building for the future: the Bohemia Wooden Nickel Society (BWNS).

The Society was created by SBMD Board Members Amber Henline and Nick Johnson, whose

creativity and dedication shaped this new year round fundraiser. Their work reflects the spirit of innovation and community service that drives our organization forward.

The Bohemia Wooden Nickel Society is a year round membership program rooted in one of Cottage Grove's most recognizable traditions. Each year, members receive a limited edition collectible wooden nickel engraved with the year's theme — a keepsake that feels familiar, nostalgic, and uniquely ours. Members can show their nickel at participating local businesses to receive small perks or "Spirit Specials," creating a simple, joyful way to support the local economy while celebrating our shared heritage. We invite business owners to contact us and be among the first Spirit Partners in the Society.

This program also helps sustain SBMD's year round work. As our organization grows, so does the need for stable funding that supports our storytelling, educational programs, and community events.

The Wooden Nickel Society offers a meaningful way for residents to contribute to that work while receiving something special in return.

We're launching the Bohemia Wooden Nickel Society with a community celebration on Friday, Feb. 20, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Cottage Grove Public Market.

This event is open to everyone, whether you're a longtime festival supporter or someone just learning about SBMD's year round activities.

Attendees will get a first look at the 2026 collectible wooden nickel, meet SBMD volunteers, and learn how to become a Pioneer, Prospector, or Patron member of the Society.

Cottage Grove has always been a place where tradition and community go hand in hand. The BWNS is one more way to celebrate who we are, honor the people who came before us, and invest in the future we're building together. We hope you'll join us on Feb. 20 to help launch this new chapter and keep the "Spirit of Bohemia" alive all year long.

For more information or to become a Spirit Partner:

spiritofbmd@gmail.com

• www.spiritofbmd.com

• 541 999 9833

Matthew Hewlett is the Executive Director, and Linda Oxley, is the Board President of the Spirit of Bohemia Mining Days.

## Worship Guide

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Mondays: 5:30p (6th-12th grades)

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## Weekly Online Poll

Do you agree with Gov. Kotek's call to stop all federal immigration enforcement in Oregon until recent violent incidents in Minneapolis, Portland and elsewhere are fully investigated?

Yes  No

## Previous Poll Results

Are you ready for winter, or do you want the warm spring-like conditions to continue this month?

100% Ready for winter

0% Want more spring-like weather

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**SCHOOLS**

From Page 1

safely removing skunks from beneath Dorena School and sealing the foundation openings to keep them out.

The scale of what they maintain is staggering. The district's buildings range from 8 to 103 years old, including boilers designed to last 25 years but still running at 63 years old thanks to meticulous in-house care.

**The team services:**

Four steam boilers, 6 high efficiency hydronic boilers, 119 air handling units, 649 automated actuators, 26 mechanical heat pumps, 34 gas furnaces, and 24 air conditioners.

They also maintain 246 toilets, 118 urinals, 450 sinks, 46 water heaters, 141 circulation pumps, and the district's water treatment systems at London School and Kennedy High School.

Three members are licensed Oregon Small Water System Operators. They also manage the district's access control systems — controlling who can enter, when, and where — along with cameras used to monitor and record activity across campuses.

Electrical responsibilities are equally extensive: 158 electrical panels, 3,175 interior light fixtures, 242 exterior fixtures, and 95 parking lot lights — all maintained by three licensed electricians.

Outside, the team manages 255 acres of district property, mowing 81 acres of lawn

and athletic fields most of the year. During fire season, they add another 60 acres of tall grass, typically mowed twice before July 1. Much of this work is done by staff whose primary jobs are plumbing and mechanical repair.

Even the district's aging service vehicles — some with more than 300,000 miles — are kept running through in-house maintenance. The oldest, a 2001 F250 with 320,000 miles, is still in daily use.

The team also handles tree trimming and removal, athletic field preparation, locksmithing for 750 sets of door hardware, and major project management, including roof replacements at Bohemia and Lincoln, Harrison Elementary construction, Kennedy High School greenhouse work, and the new swimming pool renovations.

Winter storms such as "Snowmageddon" in 2017 and the more recent ice storm in January 2024 caused extensive damage to district property and required significant clean up and repairs so students and staff could return to school.

Allen ended his presentation by emphasizing the team's focus on keeping district facilities safe, reliable, and supportive of student learning.

"We are a competent, skilled team that understand the importance of maintaining our equipment and facilities," he said. "We truly value providing a safe environment with proper lighting, clean water, comfortable temperatures and excellent indoor air quality because they have a direct and positive impact in our students' success and well being. My team

and I work here at South Lane School District to be a value to our community and to be a positive influence in kids learning and thriving."

Superintendent Todd Miller noted how blessed South Lane was with so many in-house licensed professionals.

"Coming from a small school district it was expensive to call an expert and then wait for them to be available to help, especially in community emergencies. There is a considerable cost savings to the general fund with our facilities and maintenance team of professionals."

**IN OTHER BOARD BUSINESS****2025-26 BUDGET UPDATE**

Miller said district administrators are working with both unions to finalize plans for the proposed cut days ahead of the Feb. 11 vote. He and Assistant Superintendent Brian McCasline have been visiting schools in person to answer questions. The proposed cut day schedule has shifted: Jan. 5: Staff only day (already approved and completed); April 10: Staff only day (½ day) and March 30: Adds one no school day to the end of Spring Break.

**BULLYING:**

Miller briefed the board on the district's work around bullying prevention, emphasizing positive school climate, strong relationships, supervision, and Social Emotional Learning as the foundation for reducing harm before it occurs. He noted that many incidents now originate on social media but

affect student safety during the school day, and stressed that reporting concerns to school staff as soon as possible helps resolve situations more quickly.

**EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM PRESENTATION**

The board also heard a presentation from the district's Early Learning and Family Resource Center Programs. They are a community-supported program that receives no funding from the district's general fund. The center is widely recognized across Oregon as a best practice model for rural districts.

**ACE CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT RENEWAL**

Miller said ACE Charter School's expiring five year contract will be renegotiated this spring. The board approved the second year of the Local Service Plan with Lane Education Service District. He also outlined proposed calendar adjustments for 2025-26, including modified staff only days and one added no school day at the end of Spring Break.

**LANE EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT PRESENTATION**

After receiving an overview of the district's relationship with Lane ESD the Board unanimously approved the second year of the Local Service Plan between the two agencies.

**BUDGET COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

At its January 20 work session, the board appointed Duane Taddei, former school board member, and Tom Perkins, executive director of South Valley Athletics to its budget committee.

*Follow the developments online at [cg sentinel.com](http://cg sentinel.com) and in the Wednesday print editions of The Sentinel.*

**DEATH NOTICE**

**Nancy Clark**, age 62, of Cottage Grove, Oregon, passed away January 21, 2026. Arrangements are in the care of Smith-Lund-Mills Funeral Chapel and Crematorium.

**OBITUARIES****Maralyn Ann Coop**

April 21, 1941 - January 30, 2026



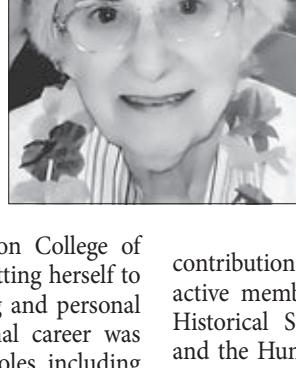
Maralyn Ann Coop passed away on January 30, 2026, in Creswell, Oregon, after a courageous battle with cancer. Born on April 21, 1941, in Olympia, Washington, to proud parents Clyde and Wanlyn "Billie" (Lennon) Curtis, Maralyn's life was one of devotion to her family, her faith, and her community.

Maralyn is survived by her beloved husband, Dale; her sons, Robert D. Coop of Creswell, OR, Gerald A. Coop of Las Vegas, NV, and Andrew D. Coop of Creswell, OR; her daughter, Beverly A. Burk of Creswell, OR; her sister, Joyce Andreassen of Eugene, OR; her adored 12 grandchildren; and her cherished 19 great-grandchildren, all of whom will miss her deeply.

A memorial service to celebrate Maralyn's life will be held on Sunday, February 15, 2026, at 2:00 PM at Smith-Lund-Mills Funeral Chapel in Cottage Grove, Oregon. It will be an occasion for friends and family to gather, share memories, and honor the remarkable woman that Maralyn was. Her spirit will continue to guide and comfort us, as we hold her memory dear. Maralyn's presence will be profoundly missed, yet her legacy of love and faith endures.

**Joan Alice Mattoon (Metcalf) Peniston**

August 13, 1930 - February 1, 2026



Joan Alice Mattoon (Metcalf) Peniston, passed away in Cottage Grove, Oregon, on February 1, 2026, at the age of 95. Born on August 13, 1930, in Eugene, Oregon, to parents Harry K. and Grace Lilly Metcalf, Joan's spirit and kindness touched the hearts of all who knew her.

Joan graduated from Cottage Grove High School in 1948 and attended Oregon College of Education until 1950, committing herself to a lifelong journey of learning and personal development. Her professional career was marked by her prominent roles including being a secretary at 1st National Bank of Portland, Cottage Grove Branch, and serving as a secretary/receptionist and special education instructional assistant at South Lane School District in Cottage Grove.

The year 1955 marked the beginning of Joan's enduring partnership with Harold H. Mattoon when they wed in Cottage Grove. The newlyweds initially settled in Eugene before heading south to California in 1956, where they lived in various cities, including La Puente, San Rafael, and Hacienda Heights, before finally returning to Cottage Grove in 1975. While managing an ever-growing household, Joan found time to contribute to the community's educational needs. Working from 1976 to 1980, she nurtured young minds as a special education instructional assistant at Lincoln Jr. High. Sadly, Harold passed away in 1997. Finding love once more, Joan married D. Hugh Peniston in 1998, who preceded her in death in 2012. Her family circle widened with this union, embracing stepchildren and their families.

Known for her passionate, spirited, and faith-filled personality, Joan's passion for family history, her love for travel, her artistic flair and love for music, and her affinity for

cats and flowers were known to all. She dedicated her time to family activities and was deeply involved in PTA and Little League during their years in California. Joan's commitment to her faith was evident through her life-long friendship with the First Presbyterian Church in Cottage Grove. She was a natural archivist, saving, labeling and organizing all sorts of family items.

Her contributions to her community included active memberships in the Cottage Grove Historical Society, Genealogical Societies, and the Humane Society of Cottage Grove. She also supported a myriad of charities throughout her life.

Joan showed deep compassion caring for Harold during his final days. She faithfully visited and helped Hugh each evening during his eight years in the care center. Joan's modesty, humility and selflessness defined her character.

Joan's legacy is carried on by her loving sons John (Jennifer) Mattoon, Gregory (Diane) Mattoon, and Charles Mattoon; her stepchildren Pamela Chambers, Gary, Brian, David, William, and Sarah Peniston; along with two grandchildren, three step-grandchildren, and many great-grandchildren. In addition to Harold, she was sadly preceded in death by her stepson, Richard Mattoon, on January 11, 2011.

We bid farewell to a woman who upheld the values of family, faith, and community throughout her life. A memorial service to celebrate her life will be held at 3:00pm on March 7, 2026, at the Presbyterian Church in Cottage Grove, OR. Joan's legacy is one of love, dedication, and service, and she will be profoundly missed by all who were fortunate enough to know her. Arrangements are in the care of Smith-Lund-Mills Funeral Chapel.

**GROOVIN'**

From Page 1

**Tim Schweitzer**, owner of Schweitzer's Work and Western Wear.

**A LIVING LOCAL BUSINESS DIRECTORY**

One of Hall's most successful ideas — the Local Business List — has become a community built directory. It's simple, but it's had real impact.

"Sometimes all it takes is seeing them in one place for someone to think, 'Wait... we have that here?'" he said.

Business owners have reached out to tell him they've gained customers directly from the group's visibility. Hall said the moments that stand out are when a small business gets a rush of support simply because the community decided to show up for them.

**BUILDING SOMETHING THAT LASTS**

In late 2025, Hall formed an LLC and began building a

website — a step he describes as "making it legit."

"Facebook has been incredible, but I don't want everything to live inside one platform forever," he said. "Making it legit means creating something that can last."

The website [www.GroovinInTheGrove.com](http://GroovinInTheGrove.com) will serve as a home base for business spotlights, community resources, and local updates. It also opens the door to expanding beyond Facebook so people can stay connected whether they use social media or not. Long term, Hall hopes the model can help other towns as well.

"If what we're doing here can be a blueprint for bringing back that small town community feeling online, I'd love to help other communities build something similar."

**A MISSION ROOTED IN SMALL-BUSINESS LIFE**

Hall's passion for supporting local businesses comes from personal experience. He grew up watching his stepdad run a small construction business and carry the weight of every role.

Executive Director Mike Fleck asked the City to donate the trailer to his agency so it could continue operating the program. Fleck told councilors the nonprofit had already invested \$29,575 in site improvements — including utilities, fencing, underground water lines, and volunteer facilities — to support the service. Instead, the Council voted 5-2 to send the trailer to auction.

During public comment Monday night, South Lane Mental Health (SLMH) Board Member Bruce Kelsh explained why SLMH chose to give SLMH a one-time \$35,000 donation so the nonprofit could purchase the trailer and continue operating the program.

Kelsh said the SLMH board believes "access to safe and reliable hygiene is essential to a person's mental well being," and noted the service is widely used — from clients displaced during the 2024 ice storm to people fleeing domestic violence, families couch surfing, veterans preparing for job interviews, and clients needing ADA accessible facilities.

On January 12, the City received a formal offer from Community Sharing to purchase the trailer for \$25,000. A revised full price offer of \$35,000 was submitted on January 21. On Monday night, the Council voted unanimously to accept the full price offer and directed the City Manager to sign all necessary documents to complete the sale. The proceeds will be unrestricted

revenue placed in the General Fund.

**DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES**

To keep Council apprised of ongoing projects, goals, and accomplishments, City staff provide biannual reports from their respective departments. At this meeting, councilors heard updates from Community Development and Public Works, including current projects, workload highlights, and areas of focus for the coming months.

**RIGHT OF WAY PRESENTATION**

The meeting also included a presentation on right of way procedures to help councilors make an informed decision about how to manage the often unused alleyways in the city's historic neighborhoods.

**CITY MANAGER REPORT**

During his report, Sauerwein asked councilors and the public to save the date for Saturday, May 16, for a grand re-opening celebration of Main Street.

**NEXT STEPS**

The meeting concluded with routine updates from the City Manager and City Attorney. The next regular City Council meeting is scheduled for February 23 at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

*Follow city developments online at [cg sentinel.com](http://cg sentinel.com) and in the Wednesday print editions of The Sentinel.*

**GRANTS**

From Page 1

**FEDERAL COMMUNITY POLICING GRANT AWARDED**

Sauerwein and Police Chief Cory Chase announced what they described as long awaited good news: the City has been awarded a federal Community Policing grant totaling \$800,000 to replace the Police Department's aging fleet vehicles.

Chase said the award caps a two year effort to secure federal funding for the project and that he received a personal call from Congresswoman Val Hoyle notifying him the City's full request had been funded.

"The project is meant to completely overhaul and modernize our police fleet and purchase state of the art vehicles to put out on the street for the next 4-5 years," Chase said. "This is a significant cost savings and boost to the general fund. I'm really excited to start making those purchases."

**CITY WEIGHS OFFER TO SELL SHOWER TRAILER**

Councilors also considered a proposal to approve a purchase offer for the City owned shower trailer — the latest step in a months long discussion about the trailer's future and its role in local homelessness and emergency response efforts.

At the Nov. 24 Council meeting, Community Sharing

and athletic fields most of the year. During fire season, they add another 60 acres of tall grass, typically mowed twice before July 1. Much of this work is done by staff whose primary jobs are plumbing and mechanical repair.

Even the district's aging service vehicles — some with more than 300,000 miles — are kept running through in-house maintenance. The oldest, a 2001 F250 with 320,000 miles, is still in daily use.

The team also handles tree trimming and removal, athletic field preparation, locksmithing for 750 sets of door hardware, and major project management, including roof replacements at Bohemia and Lincoln, Harrison Elementary construction, Kennedy High School greenhouse work, and the new swimming pool renovations.

Winter storms such as "Snowmageddon" in 2017 and the more recent ice storm in January 2024 caused extensive damage to district property and required significant clean up and repairs so students and staff could return to school.

Allen ended his presentation by emphasizing the team's focus on keeping district facilities safe, reliable, and supportive of student learning.

"We are a competent, skilled team that understand the importance of maintaining our equipment and facilities," he said. "We truly value providing a safe environment with proper lighting, clean water, comfortable temperatures and excellent indoor air quality because they have a direct and positive impact in our students' success and well being. My team

and I work here at South Lane School District to be a value to our community and to be a positive influence in kids learning and thriving."

Superintendent Todd Miller noted how blessed South Lane was with so many in-house licensed professionals.

"Coming from a small school district it was expensive to call an expert and then wait for them to be available to help, especially in community emergencies. There is a considerable cost savings to the general fund with our facilities and maintenance team of professionals."

**IN OTHER BOARD BUSINESS****2025-26 BUDGET UPDATE**

Miller said district administrators are working with both unions to finalize plans for the proposed cut days ahead of the Feb. 11 vote. He and Assistant Superintendent Brian McCasline have been visiting schools in person to answer questions. The proposed cut day schedule has shifted: Jan. 5: Staff only day (already approved and completed); April 10: Staff only day (½ day) and March 30: Adds one no school day to the end of Spring Break.

**BULLYING:**

Miller briefed the board on the district's work around bullying prevention, emphasizing positive school climate, strong relationships, supervision, and Social Emotional Learning as the foundation for reducing harm before it occurs. He noted that many incidents now originate on social media but

affect student safety during the school day, and stressed that reporting concerns to school staff as soon as possible helps resolve situations more quickly.

**EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM PRESENTATION**

The board also heard a presentation from the district's Early Learning and Family Resource Center Programs. They are a community-supported program that receives no funding from the district's general fund. The center is widely recognized across Oregon as a best practice model for rural districts.

# Classified Marketplace

The COTTAGE GROVE 

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1. FOOD &amp; DRINK: What is a bunch of bananas called?

2. MOVIES: Who is Neo's nemesis in "The Matrix"?

3. MUSIC: The Broadway show "Jersey Boys" is about which music group?

4. TELEVISION: In which U.S. city is the sitcom "New Girl" set?

5. U.S. PRESIDENTS: What is the name of the helicopter that transports U.S. presidents?

6. GEOGRAPHY: The Lake of the Ozarks is in which U.S. state?

7. HISTORY: When did construction begin on the Berlin Wall?

8. PSYCHOLOGY: What fear is represented in the condition called mageirocophobia?

9. ASTRONOMY: Which planet in our solar system has the Great Red Spot?

10. LITERATURE: Which country is the setting for the novel "The French Lieutenant's Woman"?

## Answers

1. A hand, and each banana is a finger.

2. Agent Smith.

3. The Four Seasons.

4. Los Angeles.

5. Marine One.

6. Missouri.

7. 1961.

8. A fear of cooking.

9. Jupiter.

10. England.

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1. Name the artist who wrote and released "Jump into the Fire."
2. Who wrote and released "Games People Play"?
3. Name Aerosmith's first song to reach the charts.
4. Which singer wrote and released "Go Crazy"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "All the leaves have gone green and the clouds are so low, You can touch them and so, Come out to the meadow."

## Answers

1. Harry Nilsson, in 1972. The song has been used in several films, including "Goodfellas" (1990) and "A Bigger Splash" (2015).

2. Joe South, in 1968. Even though the only place the song topped the charts was in South Africa, it won both the Grammy Award for Song of the Year (1970) and the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Song (1970).

3. "Dream On," in 1973.

4. Paul Davis, in 1977. The song went to No. 7 on the Hot 100 chart and has been covered by several others, including Lee Greenwood and Barry Manilow.

5. "Jean," by Oliver in 1969. The song was used in the film "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" starring Maggie Smith as a teacher at a school in Scotland. The film was nominated for Best Original Song.

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## Planning your growing space

• Consider a container garden if you have a small space or a patio. Compact veggies like peppers like to grow in pots.

• For smaller properties, a raised garden bed gives more space and control than containers, but less permanent than in-ground beds. They're great for root crops, onions, garlic, cabbage, zucchini and squash.

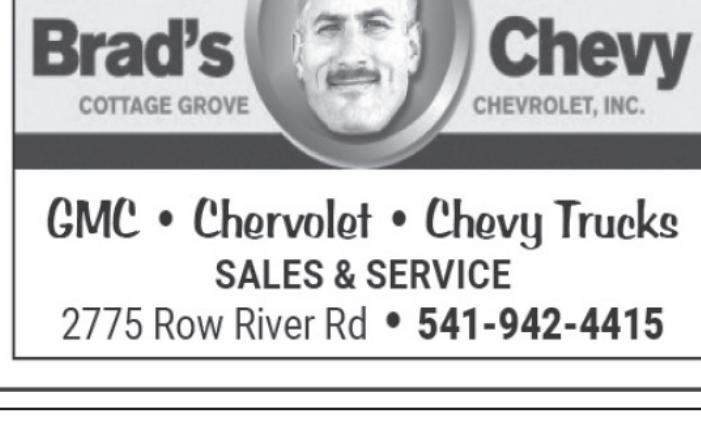
• An in-ground garden works if there is full sun, good soil and space for what you'll grow. This requires the most time and effort. Corn, tomatoes, winter squash and perennial herbs like more space to grow. - Brenda Weaver

Source: thehomesteadchallenge.com

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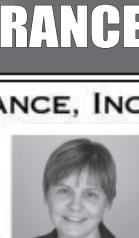
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## SPORTS

## Cottage Grove hosts wrestling season finale



Courtesy photo from the Cottage Grove Wrestling Facebook page  
Cottage Grove's Jeffery Conklin atop the podium once again for the Lions.



Courtesy photo from the Cottage Grove Wrestling Facebook page  
Boston Kent on the podium after placing third at 135 pounds.

WILL LOHRE  
*Cottage Grove Sentinel*

The final stop of the wrestling regular season was Cottage Grove High School, and it was a packed house with hundreds of athletes looking to put their stamp on the mats before the district championships.

The Lions played host to 53 teams across the boys, girls, and JV boys divisions, with more than 750 wrestlers taking part in 1,423 matches over two days Feb. 6-7, according to CGHS Wrestling's website.

A big thanks was extended to all the folks who made the tournament possible on the Cottage Grove Wrestling Facebook page.

"We were proud to host our home high school wrestling tournament, the Cottage Grove Invitational, and what an amazing two days it was! We welcomed 53 schools and 777 wrestlers who brought outstanding competition, sportsmanship, and energy to Cottage Grove," the post

stated. "Thank you to all the CGHS Lions for putting in the extra work while wrestling, all the teams, coaches, parents, volunteers, support staff, and fans for your continued support and for helping make this tournament possible."

Cottage Grove had 32 wrestlers competing across the three divisions. The girls finished 8th, the boys took 12th, and the Lions' JV squad also placed 12th. To achieve those results, there were plenty of highlight performances, headlined by another first-place finish from Jeffery Conklin, who also received the Hammer Award as the tournament's Outstanding Boys Wrestler.

Wrestling at 132 pounds, Conklin added to his medal count in a season that has been flawless thus far. With a 5-0 record at the tournament, Conklin improved his season total to an eye-popping 45-0. Once again, Conklin entered as the #1 seed, and once again, he showed why.

In the first round, Conklin registered a 21-6 win by technical fall over Douglas' Wyatt Robertson. In the second round, Conklin pinned his opponent, earning him a spot in the quarterfinals, where he bested his next foe by technical fall. In the semifinal, it was another pin, with Conklin taking down Dallas' Jonny Talmage. In the last match of his weekend, Conklin faced off with the #2 seed John Henderson of Harrisburg. It was the only match that wasn't decided by fall or technical fall for Conklin, but he still left little doubt, beating Henderson by a 6-0 decision.

With a gold medal in the final home tournament of his senior year, it's hard to imagine a better ending to a fantastic high school wrestling career for Conklin.

Also placing for Cottage Grove's boys was senior Jayden Davis, taking third at 150 pounds. Competing in a 30-wrestler field, Davis wrestled seven matches, winning six. His lone defeat came

against St. Helens' Greg Hall in the quarterfinals after he notched two wins to get to that point. Scrapping through the consolation bracket, Davis put together a strong four-match stretch, winning two bouts by fall and two by major decision to get bronze.

The girls had three athletes find themselves in podium places when the dust settled.

Weighing in at 135 pounds, Boston Kent put up another stellar display, following up her silver in Harrisburg with a bronze on the home mat. Kent pinned her first opponent to advance to the quarterfinals, but was beaten by McMinnville's Grace Andrew to end her bid for the gold medal. Out for revenge, Kent pinned her way through the consolation bracket. She won each of her final four matches by fall, including an emphatic win in the third-place match, pinning Henley's Macie Riley in 41 seconds. Despite a speed bump early on, Kent kept her foot on the gas to earn bronze.

Cottage Grove's next highest finish was Aliyah Urenda, who took fourth at 110 pounds. In the first round, Urenda took down Coquille's Natalie Stewart, advancing to the quarterfinals. The quarterfinal against Ellie Walters was a challenge, and Walters came out on top, pinning Urenda. Coming off the loss, Urenda pinned back-to-back opponents and then progressed to the third-place match after Grants Pass' Lilly Loghry forfeited in the consolation semifinals. In the battle for bronze, Urenda once again locked horns with Walters, with similar results. Urenda ended up taking fourth after losing by pin against the Oakridge freshman.

The final Lion to take the podium for the girls was Alexis Woody. Woody had a packed schedule in a 32-person field, wrestling seven matches. She finished with a 4-3 record. After winning two matches to reach the quarterfinals, Woody lost to Brookings' Lexie

Newman. She rebounded with consecutive wins against McMinnville's Tayah Curry and Philomath's Makinsey Harrington, but couldn't quite get the advantage in her final two matches, ending the tournament with a fifth-place finish.

In the JV division, Atlas Daves finished 4th at 126, and Ramon Munoz-Gonzales took 3rd at 285. Daves had a 4-2 record in six matches, and Munoz-Gonzales went 4-1, with his lone loss coming in the semifinals.

The final competitions for the Lions are the Boys Regionals tournament in Newport on Feb. 14, and the girls' Special District 2 Championships hosted at Cottage Grove High School on Feb. 20-21.

*See results from the Feb. 14 regional tournament at osaa.org and follow CGHS sports features online at cgsentinel.com and in the Wednesday print editions of The Sentinel.*

## Oregon anti-hunger advocates push for food bank funding, school meals

JULIA SHUMWAY  
*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

After failing in recent years to convince the Oregon Legislature to extend food benefits to tens of thousands of immigrants, an anti-hunger coalition is narrowing its scope this year to addressing coming cuts to federal food aid.

Oregonians made more than 2.9 million visits to food pantries last year, a 50% increase from 2023, according to the Oregon Food Bank. The statewide food pantry network is already stretched to its limit, advocates said at a Thursday, Feb. 5, rally on the Capitol steps, and they're anticipating more demand because congressional Republicans' 2025 tax and spending megalaw limited eligibility for food aid and shifted costs to states.

The state Department of Human Services estimated more than 310,000 of the more than 750,000 Oregonians who receive food benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program could be at risk of losing them under new requirements that adults without young children prove they're working, and that at least 3,000 refugees, asylees and trafficking survivors previously eligible for SNAP will lose benefits.

Meanwhile, the department says it needs at least \$114 million in the current two-year budget that ends in June 2027 to implement the federal law's new requirements that states pay more administrative costs and reduce payment error rates.



Oregon Food Bank President Andrea Williams, center, and advocates gathered on the steps of the Oregon Capitol on Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026, to urge lawmakers to support anti-hunger initiatives.

Members of an anti-hunger coalition including the Oregon Food Bank visited the Capitol to urge lawmakers to support the department's budget request, and to consider allocating \$3.5 million to pay for benefits for the immigrants who lost SNAP eligibility and up to \$25 million for food pantries. They're also supporting Senate Bill 1581, which would require schools to offer free lunch and breakfast to all students, as most already do.

"This is not about charity," Oregon Food Bank President

Andrea Williams said. "It's about responsibility. Food is not a privilege, it's not political leverage, it's a basic human right, and Oregon is stronger when everyone eats."

In prior sessions, the coalition has sought unsuccessfully to extend food benefits to more than 60,000 Oregon residents who meet income thresholds but don't qualify for SNAP because they're not U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Last year, they tried a scaled-down bill that would have extended benefits to

people 25 and younger and 55 and older.

Matt Newell-Ching, senior public policy manager at the Oregon Food Bank, said advocates were "heartbroken" to give up on the goal of food aid for all, regardless of immigration status, during this legislative session.

"Given all the circumstances, it was going to be too big of a hill to climb this session," he said. "It still remains our North Star that everyone deserves food."

Adrienne Sampson, a member of the Oregon Food

Bank's policy leadership council and of the Bitter Water Clan of the Navajo Nation, described how she used local food banks, SNAP, the Women, Infants and Children nutrition program and occasionally cash assistance through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to care for herself and her children while escaping domestic violence.

Sampson, who now lives on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation with her children

and spouse, a member of the Cayuse tribe, said she couldn't imagine life without the assistance she received when she needed it.

"In indigenous teachings, good food is medicine, water is medicine, laughter is medicine," she said. "In order for our communities to be happy and productive, we need access to nourishing food, clean water and less financial stress."

Changes to SNAP eligibility for refugees and asylum seekers are hitting African refugees in Oregon hard, said Yonas Kassie, executive director of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural and Resource Center. Families he works with are losing an average of \$400 per month in food benefits and many are forced to choose between rent and groceries.

"These are families who escaped war, trauma and persecution, came to Oregon for safety and are now facing different kinds of crisis, hunger," Kassie said. "This crisis is not because they are not trying. It's because the system is failing them."

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2026/02/05/oregon-anti-hunger-advocates-push-for-food-bank-funding-school-meals/>

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