

NOT JUST HORSEING AROUND

Ballston breeder boasts purebred Iberian equines / B1

Yamhill Valley News-Register

SATURDAY January 21, 2012 • \$1 Keeping you connected since 1866 McMinnville, Oregon 147th year, No. 6

Rivers of rain wash through valley



The Yamhill River threatened residences in Sheridan on Thursday afternoon, collecting some yard debris along the way.

Widespread flooding closes local schools, streets and parks

By STARLA POINTER
Of the News-Register

Seagulls splashed down on the half-flooded Baker Field track Thursday afternoon, thinking perhaps that they were paddling in the Pacific Ocean surf. Many of the area's human residents felt like they were being cast adrift, as well, as pouring rain, melting snow and rising rivers brought flooding to the Yamhill Valley.

Highway 18 over the coast range was shut down

for several hours Thursday by its perennial winter storm nemesis, fallen trees. Logging crews got one lane cleared Thursday and the other cleared Friday afternoon.

The Wheatland Ferry shut down Wednesday evening. It won't resume service until water levels drop substantially in the raging Willamette River.

Several roads around the county were closed at times Thursday due to flooding, mudslides and other storm-related problems. Highway 153 west of Amity remained closed by high water Friday afternoon.

By Friday, all other county roads had reopened, although traffic was still being flagged around slides on Buck Hollow Road near Willamina. Crews were working hard to repair damage and stabilize the area, said John Phelan, the county's public works chief.

Roadways and other infrastructure stood up to the extreme weather, he said, but difficulties arose because culverts and ditches got more water than they could handle.

"Our crews did an awesome job responding to problems," Phelan said. "They've been running 24

hours a day these last five days."

With rain expected to continue falling steadily through the weekend and most of next week, he said crews will be watching for more problems.

"The ground is so saturated, any additional rain will just complicate things more," he said. "We could use a few days to dry out."

High water caused the Sheridan School District to let out early Thursday and cancel classes Friday. Day-today also remained closed Friday, as did Chemeketa.

See RAIN, A7

Neighbors mount risky llama rescue

By OSSIE BLADINE
Of the News-Register

Tom Hildahl came home Friday morning from a graveyard shift to see the pasture between his house on Riverside Loop and the Yamhill River completely flooded. Several hundred yards out, he spotted three of his llamas, which had become stranded.

"Last night, it was all dry out there," Hildahl said. "This morning, the water was up to the ankles of the llamas."

By the time Hildahl and neighbor Jared Anderson managed to get out to them in a rowboat, the water had risen up past their bellies. A channel about 50 yards wide had been carved into the flood plain, making it far from an easy rescue.

Anderson rowed Hildahl out to the llamas, fighting another current com-

VIDEO ONLINE

The harrowing rescue of the three local llamas, trapped by rising floodwaters, was caught on video by News-Register reporter Ossie Bladine. View the dramatic footage at www.newsregister.com.

ing through a grove of trees near the high ground where they had sought refuge, and Hildahl roped each of them. Then he handed the other ends of the ropes to Anderson and began rowing back in a rowboat with the trio of animals in tow.

"He was paddling for all he was worth," Anderson said, but the llamas, notoriously reluctant swimmers, didn't make it easy.

See LLAMA, A7



Jared Anderson finishes a rescue mission of three llamas that were stranded Friday morning in land flooded by the Yamhill River off Riverside Loop. The llamas belonged to Tom Hildahl, who was with Anderson in the rowboat that navigated the animals through a strong current created by the flooding.

Ossie Bladine/News-Register

Craigslist abuser guilty on all counts

Verdict delivered by judge after two-week bench trial

By PAUL DAQUILANTE
Of the News-Register

Judge Ronald Stone took less than 45 minutes Friday afternoon to find Craigslist child sex case defendant Robert Thompson guilty of 21 counts at the conclusion of a two-week bench trial.

Thompson, a 36-year-old Portland resident, faced two separate Yamhill County Grand Jury indictments.

The first listed 13 counts

associated with the 2009 Craigslist case, developed in Newberg. The roster included seven counts of second-degree sexual abuse and three each of third-degree rape and using a child in a display of sexually explicit conduct.

Last year, either more charges were brought after he plotted from his jail cell to murder one of the principal witnesses against him — the 14-year-old girl serving as the primary focus



Thompson

of the abuse. In the new case, he faced charges of solicitation to commit murder, and one count each of solicitation to commit first-degree arson, solicitation to tamper with physical evidence, tampering with physical evidence and tampering with a witness.

The Newberg Dundee Police Department was so concerned about the safety of the girl and her family that it moved them

into a motel for a time.

The other defendants all settled their cases by negotiating plea agreements. Only Thompson chose to take his case to trial, and he opted to put his fate in the hands of a judge rather than a jury.

The trial wrapped up Friday afternoon, with prosecutor Lisl Miller and defense attorney Ted Coran presenting closing arguments. After retiring to deliberate for less than an hour, Stone returned to deliver his verdict.

He read the guilty verdicts

See GUILTY, A5

Linfield students are targeted again

By NICOLE MONTESANO
Of the News-Register

A Linfield student was robbed about 1 a.m. Wednesday at the intersection of Davis and College streets, near Potter Hall.

According to Capt. Dennis Marks of the McMinnville police:

A van pulled up beside the student. A man got out, pushed him to the ground and demanded his wallet. The man then took off in the van with the wallet.

The student said the man appeared to be Latino.

There was some money in the wallet, but not a large amount. No weapon was displayed.

In a separate but potentially related incident occurring last Saturday, Jan. 14, a female student was reportedly dragged into a minivan near the intersection of Naomi and Rummel streets by a Latino man who subsequently released her unharmed.

The case was being treated as a kidnapping.

It was the second rash of worrisome incidents occurring on or near campus in recent months.

In October, campus security reported students had been threatened by a group of Latino youths

See LINFIELD, A6

Space above Happy Hut catches fire

Downtown Mac 3-alarm fire blamed on space heater

By PAUL DAQUILANTE
Of the News-Register

A space heater and tangle of extension cords combined to ignite a three-alarm fire above the Happy Hut head shop Wednesday in downtown McMinnville.

The shop, site of a recent police raid over its alleged sale of synthetic forms of marijuana, is located on the ground floor of an older, two-story brick structure.

McMinnville Fire Marshal Eric McMullen said the blaze, reported about 3 p.m., erupted in upstairs space where Happy Hut owner Russell Gatewood spent the night when he didn't feel



Flames shoot out of an upstairs window Wednesday above Happy Hut in downtown McMinnville.

Marissa Larson/News-Register

like driving back home to Portland.

"There was a room up there with a couch, a television and some counter tops, but no sink and no kitchen,"

the fire marshal said. "He was having some electrical work done."

"There were extension cords running everywhere and piggybacking on top of

each other. It was like spaghetti, one cord plugged into the next and the next."

McMullen said the extension cords were undersized for the amount of power the heater was drawing, and there were combustible items lying about.

"He was downstairs working," McMullen said. "A UPS driver came in and told him there was smoke coming out of the upstairs windows. He ran upstairs and tried to put the fire out with an extinguisher."

The fire marshal said, "That didn't work, so he came back and went to the church next door. I think to get another extinguisher. He gave it a shot, but was ineffective."

See FIRE, A5

COMMUNITY EVENTS

EARLY BIRD BREAKFAST, Sunday, January 22nd 8:00-12:00 Noon at Carlton American Legion Post 173, 158 E. Main Street, Carlton.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUP, 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm at Hillside Traditions, 440 Hillside Parkway, McMinnville. FMI 472-1035.

GRIEFSHARE, a weekly grief support group, meets at 1:30 pm each Friday in the McMinnville United Methodist Church. Ongoing group is free and open to public. FMI call 472-5622.

MUSICIANS NEEDED, Second Winds Band. Now meeting on Mondays at 7:00 pm in MHS band room (17th Street entrance). All instruments welcome. FMI 435-2205.

CITY OUTREACH MINISTRIES, needs your donations of household goods and furniture. All donations given free to local families in need. Bring your tax-deductible donations to 1300 SE Brooks Street (lower level of First Christian Church) Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 10:00 to 12:00 Noon.

Magyerson Funeral Directors
A service of
Serving Since 1903
MEMBER NFDA & OPA
www.magyerson.com
135 N.E. Davis McMinnville • (503) 472-6131
www.magyerson.com