

Willits Weekly

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A Nostalgic & Modern Record of Community and Life in Willits

Online & Print



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By donation

Harris wins seat on WUSD board

Zack Cinek
Reporter
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Laurie Harris garnered a strong victory for one of three seats on the Willits Unified School District Board on Tuesday.

Initial results for the school board contest show challenger Harris grabbing 808 votes, the most of any candidate. A second seat available on the board looks to belong to incumbent Cynthia Carni, with 767 votes. The election for a third seat is close, with incumbent Bob Harper showing 675 votes in the initial results, and appointed incumbent Chris Neary following closely with 672 votes.

"The kids need a voice, and I hope to be a voice for them," Harris said Wednesday morning. Her phone had already been ringing with congratulatory calls since 6:30 am, she said.

Harris said the school board needs to get on a more financially sound track. Harris was headed to a third-grade classroom where she volunteers later that day.

"I am very grateful to all the voters," she said.

Willits residents voted 57 times for write-in candidates on the school board.

Pinches goes one for three against political reality

Mike A'Dair
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Outgoing Third District Supervisor John Pinches struggled to affect the outcome of three important issues Tuesday at the board of supervisors meeting, succeeding once and going down to defeat twice.

Pinches succeeded in increasing the affected area of the county's pending "right-to-industry" ordinance, but struck out when he tried to halt the county's effort to apply for funds to build a new jail. He also whiffed when he asked the board to form an ad hoc committee to deal with water flow releases from Lake Mendocino.

The right-to-industry ordinance, currently in draft form, will prohibit landowners with property lying within 1,000 feet of industrially zoned land from filing a nuisance complaint

Read the rest of **Pinches**
Over on Page 11



Action was slow at election day polling places in Willits and Brooktrails on Tuesday, reflecting slim turnouts across Mendocino County.

Nancy Powers, an election inspector for the five precincts set up at Willits City Hall, summarized the day at the polls in five words: "Not what we hoped for."

Powers said the first 50 or so ballots went early in the day. Area polling places were empty of voters Tuesday afternoon and evening. Poll workers tending tables at City Hall and the Brooktrails Community Center reported low turnouts, too.

Barbara Norton, an elections clerk at the City Hall polls, described herself as a lifelong voter. "I was really excited they picked me," Norton said

Poll workers blamed the low turnout on the fact that Tuesday's election was not a big one for the area. Across the nation, Americans took to the polls to elect governors and mayors, and Coloradans decided to tax recreational marijuana to fund new schools in their state. But for voters in Willits and Brooktrails, it was a small ballot of local issues, such as funding for construction of a new Little Lake Fire Protection District firehouse and seats on the Willits Unified School District board of trustees, and three members of the Brooktrails Township board of directors.

Late Wednesday afternoon, Ranochak's office announced there were approximately 883 ballots left to count in the 3rd District.

On election day, her office had received only 25 percent of the county's vote-by-mail ballots that were sent out, Ranochak added.

Over the next 28 business days the final canvass of the votes will be completed and official results released. — Zack Cinek

Tuesday election turnout slim across county



Above: Volunteers helped voters throughout the day at the Willits City Hall polling station. From left, back row: Gracie Parker, Nancy Powers, Pam Goins, Cathy Vaughan, Annette Gamble, Dona Fridae Mitcham, April Tweddell and Ida Pittman. Front row: Doreen Orme, Vera Williams, Sue Sawyers, Melody Hopkins, Shirley Cronk and Helen Bartow.

Center left: Sue Sawyers explains the voting process.

Below left: a ballot is dropped in the receptacle.

Far left: Bill and Barbara Nobles of Willits cast their votes.

At left: Willits City Manager Adrienne Moore holds an absentee ballot.

Photos by Maureen Moore



Our Daily Bread

With holidays celebrating abundance, food and family approaching, this is a hard time of the year for the Willits Daily Bread soup kitchen and meal program.

"We always have a hard time this time of year, every year," director Cindy Savage said, mainly because annual grant money for the program runs out in November. Government funding is always behind, too:

"I just got the paperwork this month to apply for 2013's money," Savage said. Willits Daily Bread's major fundraiser, "Sip Some Soup," is in February every year.

And with new cuts to food stamp allotments that started on November 1, the need this year will be greater than ever. The average cut to the monthly benefit for a family of four is \$36.

Willits Daily Bread serves an average of 60 people night, including children, elderly people and those with disabilities. But that average fluctuates: "We never know how many people we're going to feed; it's different each night," Savage said. Monday night, Willits Daily Bread served about 40 people. But by the end of each month, as those on fixed incomes run out of cash, Savage usually feeds 75 to 80 people each night.

Read the rest of **Daily Bread** Over on Page 11



Left top: A tray with a common meal at Willits Daily Bread: soup, sandwich, salad, fruit and a dessert.



Left bottom: Cindy Savage, director of Willits Daily Bread.

Right: Cindy Savage and her son Mark work on making a pot of soup for the night's meal.



Photos by Maureen Moore

Early results show firehouse parcel tax measure failing

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Early election results show support for a parcel tax that would fund a new \$3.2 million Willits firehouse fell just short of the two-thirds "supermajority" vote needed for approval.

In the county's election night tally of votes, "yes" votes on Measure I outnumbered "no" votes 642 to 407 – still short of the support needed to pass the measure.

If passed, the \$14 per unit tax, with an estimated average of \$28 per household, would have sunset after a loan for construction of a new firehouse was paid off, according to the Little Lake Fire Protection District.

The fire department had hoped to borrow construction money from the USDA Rural Development Fund at a fixed interest rate of 3.75 percent.

Supporters of the fire tax measure argued the district needed a new firehouse that was earthquake safe and large enough to house modern equipment, including the district's ladder truck, currently kept at the Baechtel Road substation.

Fire Chief Carl Magann said the department would wait to comment until final election results were released.

Brooktrails voters return incumbents

Zack Cinek
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All three incumbents in the Brooktrails community election held onto their seats, the initial results of Tuesday's election show.

Rick Williams, Tony Orth and George Skezas seem likely return to Brooktrails governing body, the Township Board of Directors, for another term.

Of the three, Orth leads the Brooktrails ballot with 194 votes; Skezas and Williams both garnered 170 votes.

Challenger Gino Zalunardo received 96 votes; challenger David Paland received 151 votes. Ginger Pohlson ran as a write-in candidate.

Brooktrails precincts have reported 60 write-in votes so far.

A note from the the editor ...

Willits Weekly is now starting our seventh month of publication. We would like to thank everybody who has helped make our locally owned and truly "hometown" newspaper a success.

Thank you to supporters who sent us donations before we even started publishing; to our wonderful subscribers who pay to get Willits Weekly in the mail, even though they could pick it up for free in town; to those who put tips into our tip jars at local businesses and at the Farmers Market each week; to the volunteers who've helped us with distribution, writing thank you letters for those early donations, and preparing newspapers for mailing; and to the businesses and organizations that let us drop off papers for their staffs and customers to enjoy.

And thank you to all our contributors: not only our reporters and community columnists, but everybody who sends in a

... I'd guess I've seen thousands of newspapers in my life. I simply must tell you how much I love Willits Weekly. It is fresh, beautifully laid out, well written with fantastic photos of local people. Hyper local is the winning strategy today for community newspapers and you NAILED IT. Keep up the great work."

– Steve Jackson, president, Western Web

calendar listing, a letter, a classified ad, a tip about a new business or news story, or an item for our Congratulations or Obituary columns (which we are happy to print for free).

But most especially: thank you to all our local advertisers, who are the foundation on which Willits Weekly is built, and who will help us continue to be part of the Willits community and to grow.

We hope all our supporters tell all our advertisers: "I saw it in Willits Weekly!"

We've heard from local people over the last six months that they love our focus on Willits content: "It's just the kind of news I want to read"; "It's so informative!"; and "I read it cover to cover" are comments we hear often.

We also hear many compliments about the look of Willits Weekly: the beautiful color printing, Maureen Moore's

gorgeous layout and photos, and the lovely color ads. One compliment we particularly appreciated was an email we received this summer from Steve Jackson, president of Western Web, Inc., the state-of-the-art color press that prints Willits Weekly, with the subject line: "You do local right!"

Here's what Steve had to say:

"Jennifer and Maureen: I look through everything we print. I pick up every printed paper I find wherever go. I'd guess I've seen thousands of newspapers in my life. I simply must tell you how much I love Willits Weekly. It is fresh, beautifully laid out, well written with fantastic photos of local people. Hyper local is the winning strategy today for community newspapers and you NAILED IT. Keep up the great work."

With the help of Willits community members, organizations and businesses – and those in the surrounding areas who also enjoy and support our local newspaper – we look forward to publishing and growing Willits Weekly for years to come. Thank you.

– Jennifer Poole

What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from readers

Editor's Note: In Keith Rutledge's October 24 letter to Willits Weekly, he described the PACE clean energy program that was coming before the board of supervisors, at 501 Low Gap Road in Ukiah, on November 5. Rutledge asked supporters of having PACE financing available for all Mendocino County property owners to implement energy and water conservation improvements to attend that meeting. Rutledge would like supporters to know that the PACE item was moved to the Tuesday, November 12 agenda at 3 pm.

More pressing news?

To the Editor:

I'm writing in response to a recent local article about my son's arrest for stealing a dog from an animal shelter; which occurred in another county.

Having lived and worked in Willits for 25 years, I suppose it's a relief that there isn't more pressing news.

Being parents to an adopted child with mental health issues has been no easy task, but thankfully with the support of all his teachers here in the Willits School District and the recently retired Vice Principal Linda Jacobs, we were able to get him through school, as a graduate. I can't thank them enough for their help and understanding.

It's unfortunate that there are a lot of young and old people with mental illness that have no support or resources here in this county.

Maybe this is a topic that is worthy to accurately research and report on.

Sonia Sciuccchetti, Willits

Adopt A Family

To the Editor:

Again this year, generous, community-spirited local organizations and individuals will come together with the Willits Kids Christmas Tree Program to help needy Willits children receive essentials (coats, rain wear, shoes, pajamas, blankets, etc.) and gifts to make the holiday season brighter.

Individuals who wish to assist individual children select cards from display trees located with local merchants. These cards present the age, gender and various needs of each child. While this method works for most program supporters, some have voiced an interest in adopting an entire family. Those who wish to do so are asked to follow a different path.

If you are fortunate enough to be able to help an entire family, please contact the program coordinator, Sandy Turner, at 459-5827 (home) or 490-8872 (cell). If I'm unavailable, leave a message with your contact information. I will call you as soon as possible to discuss a suitable family.

In order to be efficient, we need to identify family adoptions before our usual referral process begins in late November. Please call before November 22 if you want to discuss adopting a family.

Thanks to each of you who have made the Willits Kids Christmas Tree Program a success for 25 years. In the past, citizens of Willits have responded with great

compassion. Again this year the program presents an opportunity to show that Willits is truly a big-hearted, generous, and caring community.

Sandy Turner, Willits



Chamberlain Creek Crew works at the airport

Photo by Dan Ramsey

Thanks to CalFire

CalFire Chamberlain Creek Crew #4 recently spent two days at the Willits Municipal Airport on safety cleanup projects.

The 14-man crew, headed by Captains Dave Sentak and Rusty McCulley, cleared brush around the runway and the taxiway and painted the segmented circle. The "seg-circle" is a safety structure that visually indicates to incoming pilots the preferred direction of landing and takeoff. Three new windsocks, recently replaced at the airport, indicate current wind direction.

Willits Airport is owned by the City of Willits and is located northwest of the city and northeast of Brooktrails.

CalFire crews typically help with fire-fighting during the fire season and clearing public properties in the off-season. Thanks to the CalFire crews for their help with this and future projects at the Willits Airport

Dan Ramsey, Willits Airport Manager

Where are the WW boxes?

1. Old Mission Pizza
2. Brewed Awakening
3. Ace Copy and Shipping
4. Willits Post Office
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6. Scoops
7. J.D. Redhouse
8. The Country Skillet

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J.D. Redhouse & Company logo with menu items: Pumpkin Cheesecake, Dark Chocolate Orange, Pumpkin Praline, Peppermint Bark. Seasonal Fudge Flavors advertisement.



The 2013 Mushroom, Wine and Beer Train – a benefit for the Mendocino County Museum in Willits this year – was sold out for the first time, said event coordinator Paloma Patterson.

Saturday's ride through the redwoods on the Skunk Train attracted about 375 ticket-buyers, Patterson said, boarding from both the Willits and the Fort Bragg depots. Most of the train riders were from outside of Mendocino County, she said, and most of them boarded from the Willits end of the line.

Mushroom, Wine and Beer Train: a sold-out success

in Camp Mendocino.

"People loved riding the historic train through the redwoods, and they enjoyed walking around Camp Mendocino, exploring the woods and sipping wine and beer," Patterson said.

One highlight was a talk by author Heidi Cusick Dickerson and photographer Tom Liden on their book, "Mendocino Roots & Ridges: Wine Notes from America's Greenest Wine Region." Another was a cooking demonstration by Chef Nicholas Petti of Mendo Bistro and his students from Mendocino College's Culinary Arts Program.

People's choice awards for the day went to Camp Mendocino (for food), Ray's Station (for wine) and the Ukiah Brewing Company (for beer). The celebrity media judges gave their awards to The Ledford House (for food), Alder Springs Vineyard (for wine) and the Anderson Valley Brewing Company (for beer).

– Jennifer Poole



Far left: The Willits Arch as seen crossing Main Street from the train car.

At left: Attendees group together to taste wine and more.

Bottom left: Greg Schindel, train singer for the Skunk Train.

An old Willits landmark is gone



The insurance companies can breathe a little easier now: an old Willits barn that stood watch to the decades was taken down last week.

Cars and trucks rushing by on the highway slowed to watch the action as lumber from the old barn just west of Blosser Lane on Highway 20 was sorted and stacked.

There was not much left of the landmark barn by last Thursday except for the weathered old wood, and that was before a crew from Ukiah-based wood reclaiming outfit North Cal started work.

"The wood will not be forgotten, that is for sure," North Cal's Brett Kelly said as he sat on the back of a company truck while eating his lunch. "All of this lumber is going to be recycled," he said.

After owner Harvey Brown died, Brandyn Simpson and her brother were faced with re-writing the insurance policy when they inherited the property. The house on the property and the barn are believed to be the work of area architect and builder Garavanti.

Simpson phoned all the insurance companies she could find; some replied quicker than others, but the answer was always "no." "According everybody in the world, the barn was going to fall down," Simpson said. It did not.

The nails in the wood were tough to pull, Kelly said. He said the barn stayed upright through the removal of one side and fell only after the other side was partially taken down.

Chris Iversen, a fisherman by trade, noted some of the often-photographed barn's history. He said cars coming into Willits used to be parked at the barn to not scare horses in town.

"When I was a kid it was full of hay," Iversen said. He reminisced about times spent building forts in the barn when he played there as a child.

The wood that was stacking up in piles last week will be planned and resurfaced by North Cal.

Simpson said that she was happy to have found the services of North Cal, a business that will be able to recycle the wood.

Some Highway 20 drivers may have gotten the wrong idea when they passed the site of the old barn.

"They think that we are here to demolish it – to stick it in a trash can," Kelly said.

Kelly figured that a massive barn door

Read the rest of Old Barn | Over on Page 11



The cabinet donated by Randy Coburn of Coburn's Construction and Cabinetry

Have something to say? Send us a Letter to the Editor!

The Rules: LETTERS

Letters & Commentaries: Email letters to willitsweekly@gmail.com. Letters from area residents, focusing on Willits issues, activities, events and people, have priority. Typed letters can be sent to Willits Weekly, P.O. Box 1698, Willits, CA 95490, but email is preferred.

Letters & Commentaries must have a name, address and phone number, although only the author's name and city of residence will be published. No anonymous letters will be published.

Willits Weekly logo and contact information. Includes address, phone numbers, and email addresses for Jennifer Poole, Maureen Moore, Mike A'Dair, Zack Cinek, and Justin Stephens.

Community News

Heartwarming stories & local tidbits



Bryan Arnold honored as Arts Champion

Little Lake Valley resident Bryan Arnold was named one of four "Arts Champions of Mendocino County" during the board of supervisors' meeting on Tuesday.

Arnold was praised for being "an integral part of the Mendocino County theatrical scene, through his work teaching and directing theatre arts at Mendocino College, The Willits Shakespeare Company, Ukiah Players Theatre and his theatre company, Fractured Femur Productions."

Recently Arnold acted in "The Complete History of America, Abridged" for the Ukiah Players Theatre.

A few years ago he directed William Shakespeare's "Hamlet," which ran at Mendocino College and which starred Billy Hetherington as the troubled Danish prince.

Arnold was given the award in the "artist" category. Receiving awards along with Arnold were Jill Schmuckley (arts patron), Tom Johnsen (arts educator) and John Chan Plumbing, a company which has provided free plumbing services to the Ukiah Players Theatre.

- Mike Adair

Above: Billy Hetherington, left, and Bryan Arnold performing "The Complete History of America, Abridged" at the Little Lake Grange.

Right: Bryan Arnold made up for "Day of the Dead" 2013.

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Sale ends November 15, 2013



It's almost time for this year's Santa Photos with
Maureen Moore

m•pho•tog•ra•phress
[fuh-tog-ruh-friss]

At ER Energy and JD Redhouse in December!



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