

# DRY PARTY



photo by Matt Emrich

a moment of mirth courtesy of a Barack Obama presidential campaign event in the Village Green and featured a different television broad-

# IV City Council victory

pressed with the attention Cottage Grove paid to this election season.

"I learned that some people do listen," he said, "especially at that last debate. That really surprised me."

For his part, Fleck expressed admiration for his opponent.

"It was a very enjoyable campaign," he said. "Kim is a very nice guy, and I encouraged him to stay involved with this community."

Despite his interest, Anthony said he's not planning another campaign any time soon.

"I kept saying I'm not a politician," he said. "And that's not a slogan. But at least I gave them a choice."

Fleck has promised to vacate seats he currently holds on the Cottage Grove Planning Commission and South Lane County Fire & Rescue Board of Direc-

tors. He cites zoning issues related to the City's new development code as an area that will draw his interest in the near future, in addition to Cottage Grove's precarious situation regarding treating its stormwater. Fleck said he is excited about the makeup of the new City Council.

"It's a good Council to sit with," he said. "My goal is to reach out to everybody on the Council, to bring diplomacy and build consensus a little more often."

Mayor Williams praised Fleck's skills.

"He's got a great budget sense and is very good at making planning decisions," Williams said. "It's essential for an elected official to have that planning background."

# SLSD Board talks Blue Mountain, ACE, 403B

BY TINA OREM  
For the Sentinel

The South Lane School District inched closer in its Monday board meeting to shutting down Blue Mountain School, indicating that it expects to issue a Dec. 19 official closure date to the school soon.

Superintendent Krista Parent noted during the meeting that she expects the Oregon Department of Education to issue a final order by Nov. 14 revoking the school's charter. She also noted that the Oregon Department of Education, Blue Mountain, and SLSD need to work out the details of the closure together.

"We're pretty limited in terms of process and procedure because it hasn't been done before," Parent said.

Parent added that she anticipates that the board will draft a letter to families and will make follow-up phone calls to them in order to ease the transition.

The expected closure date represents the end of a 16-month dispute over Blue Mountain's charter, which was initially revoked by the SLSD board on July 9, 2007, after a series of conflicts involving the school's safety measures, record keeping, supervision of younger students, student performance and student behavior.

In one example, according to an ODE Proposed Final Order, a district psychologist filed a complaint on April 23, 2007, against the school after she says she witnessed eight students age 9 to 16 playing a "very violent" medieval war game that involved vulgar language and killing opponents with weapons. The students were unsupervised for 40 minutes, according to the psychologist, and were being observed by a much younger student during that time.

Additionally, on May 4, 2007, a SLSD audit discovered that several BMS computers contained games rated M (for mature audiences) or T (for teen). According to the order, the games were installed by a community group that had rented the school for a weekend and BMS had not removed the software.

Six days later, an eighth-grade

BMS student was seriously injured while riding his dirt bike during school hours after being allowed to leave campus with five other students.

Blue Mountain opened in September 1998 as an alternative school before seeking charter status in 2003. The school adheres to a democratic model, whereby students choose what, when, and where they will learn, according to the BMS website.

# ACE Charter School gets high marks

Academy for Character Education leader Starr Sahnaw received encouraging words from the South Lane School District after presenting the new charter school's annual report at a Nov. 3 board meeting.

The academy, which is geared primarily toward home-schoolers, provides three to seven hours of in-person classes one day a week, as well as one to two hours of in-home tutoring to about 40 students. According to its website, the Academy for Character Education (ACE) focuses on "prioritizing the development of good character" through a language- and history-intensive classical curriculum.

"Keep at it," said board member Tom McVey after Sahnaw finished her presentation. "Don't give up!" added Chairman Jim Goes.

Sahnaw, who is one of the original 14 people involved in the chartering process that began in 2005, included a video presentation showing students listening to a lecture about the value of punctuality, then attending Latin classes, presenting science projects, and going to physical education classes.

The school's first year has been a challenge for Sahnaw. Aside from the expected tumult associated with starting and running a new school, Sahnaw reported that ACE's online grading tool stopped working, leading students to think they were failing certain classes. Some students

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# spective

years ago

perience to the clinic. "These people are thrilled to be able to come back and use their nursing skills," Allen says. They are supported by receptionists Joan Condon and Nita Monce.

All the volunteers also attended an in-service training session with Dr. Fitzgibbons and will receive continued on-the-job training from the specialists.

The new program is tied to the concept of a "satellite clinics," offering, at least on a part-time basis, services that have not been available in the community. Over the past few years, the hospital has offered the specialty of gastroenterology, urology and ophthalmology through physicians who visit on a regular basis.

Though new, the clinic has already received enthusiastic support from patients, Allen says. "It's really growing; it's just getting off the ground," she says. "Each time, I can see it grow as people find out about it."

The clinic complements the hospital's ongoing cancer support group, which provides an information and discussion forum for cancer patients, their family and friends. That group, founded in April, meets at the hospital every Wednesday afternoon.

## SLSD

Continued from page 3A

decided they weren't a good fit and left the program, she said. "I'm having to learn to be flexible; it's not easy," Sahnaw said during the meeting. Because so few schools in the United States have similar models, Sahnaw had few options when she needed guidance.

But Sue Wickizer, the South Lane School District Special Services Consultant, reported that Sahnaw and her staff have diligently addressed every problem.

"I have to give them high marks for things like a problem-solving attitude," she said. "In your first year, it's kind of like being in the middle of a meteor storm," Wickizer added.

### Board elects to administer 403(b) program

The South Lane School District may soon find itself acting as the middleman between district employees and a bad economy after the school board elected on Nov. 3 to be the plan administrator for its 403(b) program in 2009.

The 403(b) program, also known as a tax-sheltered annuity plan, is a retirement plan for employees of public schools, certain tax-exempt organizations, and some types of ministers. Employees can invest their contributions in annuity contracts or mutual funds, and employees generally do not pay taxes on the income used for those contribu-

tions until it is withdrawn.

Typically, employees can't make those withdrawals until they are at least 59 1/2 without paying big penalties. But there are exceptions, particularly for layoffs, being called to active duty as a military reservist and financial hardship.

Though situations concerning eviction or foreclosure fall into the hardship category, according to SLSD Business Department Supervisor Connie Rounsaville, circumstances involving medical expenses, house down payments, funeral expenses and some types of home damage not covered by insurance may also qualify.

As the plan administrator, SLSD will have to approve or deny those hardship requests, in addition to handling paycheck deductions, tax issues, money transfers to fund providers, cash disbursements, and employee questions.

Though 403(b) sponsors are allowed to hire third-party administrators, Rounsaville says the district elected to keep it in-house in order to save over \$3,000 in annual fees.

"You don't want to take on a cost like that if it isn't absolutely necessary," she said.

The board vote was part of an effort to comply with new IRS rules that require 403(b) plan sponsors to have written plans in place by Jan. 1, 2009. As a result, most area school districts are facing similar decisions about whether to allow loans and hardship withdrawals in their 403(b) plans, noted Rounsaville.

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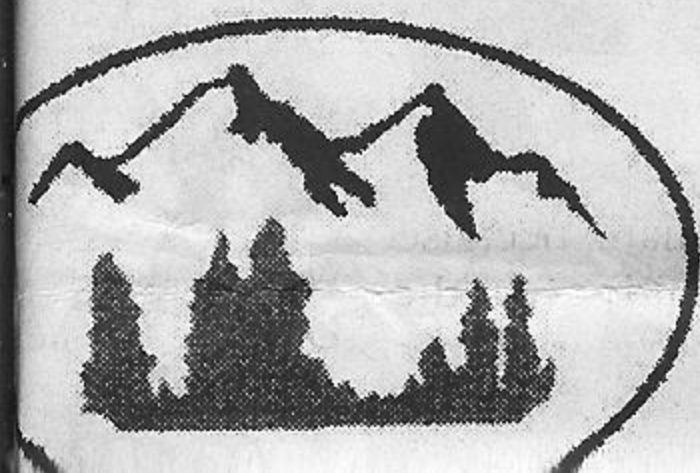
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