

# Rio Dell-Scotia News

## Scotia gym opens, see page 4

### Rio Dell Schools celebrate new playground equipment

New playground equipment was in the offing at both Rio Dell schools this year, but the earthquakes a year ago put some of the plans on hold until a county's worth of Rotarians stepped in to finish the job.

New equipment purchased with funds the school district had on hand – about \$70,000 worth – was installed last November at the Middle School, adjacent to the basketball court, as described in last month's newsletter. But over at the elementary school, playground equipment was over 20 years old, and rusting out. "You can't repair it, you just have to replace it," Superintendent Angela Johnson said of the need. She had secured the funds but in the aftermath of the earthquake the money was needed for repairs.

Enter the Rotarians. Sal Chinnici of Fortuna, director of Forest Sciences at both Humboldt and Mendocino Redwood companies, was at the time president-elect of that city's Sunrise Rotary Club, in which Johnson is a member and past president. Chinnici was at training held in San Jose for the incoming presidents of the various clubs for the coming year. Each district was to propose a project, and upon learning there appeared to be no others up for discussion in his district, #51, Chinnici said, "Let's do something for Rio Dell."



Angela Johnson & Sal Chinnici

Seven Rotaries – Noon and Sunrise in Fortuna, as well as two clubs in Arcata and three in Eureka – held events to raise funds for the project, and Chinnici wrote up the grant proposal to get partially matched funding from the Rotary's district grant project. The various clubs raised funds through a variety of means. One Arcata club had a "Kick-a-palooza" kickball event. The Sunrise Fortuna club hosted a boiled seafood dinner at River Lodge last month. With funds still coming in from events not yet held, \$42,000 had been brought in as of last November.

The playground equipment was selected and ordered. "We will probably put in some workdays," Chinnici said of the Rotary Club members.

### Earthquake damage gives rise to candy business

The earthquakes just over a year ago broke a lot of stuff in many homes, but in one case resulted in the creation of a home-based business, Crunchy Sweet Creations.

Amanda Merriman of Rio Dell notes she does a lot of canning, preserving the results of her garden each year. The earthquake caused her shelves to fall, destroying hundreds of canning jars and their contents. "I realized I needed a new way to preserve food," she says, and was intrigued by the concept of freeze-drying. "It doesn't change the appearance of fresh food the way dehydrating does," she said, and food preserved through a dehydrating process still retains moisture and needs to be preserved in an additional way, which freeze-drying does not.



Thinking the \$3,900 price for a breadmaking-sized piece of equipment was out of her range, she and husband Jeremiah nonetheless splurged when they found the earthquake repairs to their home came in under the amount allocated. Out of the blue, grown daughter Trinity, who lives in Eureka, called to say she wanted freeze-dried candy in her Easter basket, a request Merriman recalls with a "Huh?" expression. (Apparently, it is a thing, as other vendors for this product can be found online.) But she pulled it off and a local, home-based business was born.

Why freeze-dry candy? It lasts forever, Merriman says. Additionally, it tastes better – more enhanced, more vibrant. Fruit flavors are more distinctive and fruit-like. The colors are brighter and the appearance, shinier. Some consistencies change – for the better. The taffy melts in your mouth instead of sticking to your teeth, she explains. It is more like cotton candy in that way. **(Continued on Pg 3, top of Pg.)**

# *Notes and News*

## **Chamber board slates monthly meeting**

The chamber board meets each month on the first Friday, at noon. Meetings are open to the public and a great opportunity to suggest ideas, offer help, or learn about upcoming events and plans. In-person meetings are at 440 Wildwood Avenue, Rio Dell, two doors north of the chamber and resource center. Call-in can be done at 605.313.4802, access code 860467.

## **Firefighters hold pinning ceremony**

A badge pinning ceremony was held January 25 to introduce new firefighters and recognize promotions within the four battalions of the local volunteer fire department. Chief Shane Wilson reported in advance of the ceremony he has been re-elected fire chief, and Ryan Heussler remains first assistant chief. Nate McKnight was elected as second assistant chief, Sarah Purvis as secretary, and Lisa Wilson as treasurer.

In the Rio Dell Battalion, Curt Rumley was promoted to Battalion Chief; Thomas Norris to Captain; and Bryce Sancho and Zac Shafer to Lieutenant. Chris Purvis, Kevin Gregorio and Cory Johnson were promoted to engineers in training.

Checka Bauldry, David Clark, Kiley Johnson, Rachel McAlister, Cheyenne Olander, Sarah Purvis, and Kaine Ruiz are new firefighters.

In the Scotia Battalion, Josh Overson was promoted to Captain, Brendon Harralson to Lieutenant, and Rigoberto Salamanca to engineer in training. Andrea Vaughn and Johnathan Mahan are new firefighters joining the battalion.

In the Redcrest Battalion, Ed Lewis was promoted to Captain and Romello Kress, Donovan Pogue and Mike O'Donnell are new firefighters.

The Shively Battalion saw Jessie Bugbee promoted to Captain and Gage Barsanti as a new firefighter.

## **New historical kiosk located in Scotia**

A historical kiosk has been erected in Scotia near the former site of the steam-powered logging equipment. It displays local information and photos provided by the Old Photo Guy, Greg Rumney, and the county historical society.

It was one of four kiosks initially built by the High Rock Conservation Camp in Weott at the request of the Eagle Prairie Arts District for use displaying local art but put in storage and later gifted to the chamber of commerce when the arts district ceased operations in 2020. Additional materials were needed such as Plexiglas panels for both sides, concrete and anchoring devices and the gathering and preparation of the materials for posting. Framing and mounting were done by How's It Hanging Picture Framing in Fortuna. Humboldt Redwood Company sponsored this work, totaling \$300. Pictured, Sal Chinnici, director of forest sciences at HRC, with the kiosk.



## **Resource center hosts earthquake recovery marker**

The Rio Dell Community Resource Center was the site January 13 of a program commemorating the year of recovery from the December 20, 2022 and January 1, 2023 earthquakes. Partners in the event included Pay It Forward, Humboldt; Providence; Humboldt Area and Wild Rivers foundations; the local volunteer fire department, and Habitat for Humanity. The event included a barbeque dinner, information and opportunities to learn about building a go-bag and getting emergency alerts, and more.

**HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY**

## **(Candy Business Continued from Page 1 )**

How does freeze-drying work? The metal unit has a glass front through which one can see the trays of product – in this case, candies. A dial lets one adjust settings. A pre-Christmas batch being readied for a vendor fair saw the interior heat set at 150 degrees, while ice also was visible around the edges of the machine’s interior. Weird, huh? It’s a slow process, taking from three to 12 hours, depending on the type of candy being processed.

Merriman says she began producing freeze-dried candies commercially in July and became too busy with it to freeze-dry her garden’s summer produce. She has spent hours of trial and error perfecting the time each type of candy requires in the freeze-dryer and when she gets it just right, writes the formula down on a whiteboard that hangs on a wall. Her supplies have overtaken what used to be a guest room, with metal shelves lined with candy and with a variety of containers in which to package the completed product.

Merriman buys candy in bulk from stores like Cash and Carry and Winco, purchasing 30 pounds of Skittles alone in an average week. She is not allowed to make candy from scratch, according to her county health department licensing requirements. Packages of her freeze-dried product can be bought at DJ’s Burger Bar; Sport & Cycle and Miranda’s Rescue Thrift Store in Fortuna; and The Home Store in Ferndale, as well as on her website, Crunchysweetcreations.com, and promoted on the business’ Facebook page. She has a booth at events as well, and a goal is getting into more stores. She is considering getting a larger machine and moving the business to a larger room in her home.

It’s important to Merriman to give back to the community, she says, noting donations that she makes to food banks, Miranda’s Rescue, and fire department fundraisers. The Merrimans have opened their home to two developmentally challenged adults who, as she says in her website, “glove up to assist in the candy business.” The couple recently adopted a seven-month-old baby, who smiles from a play pen while two dogs slumber in their beds.

“Our parents were best friends before we were born,” Merriman says of herself, a Rio Dell native, and Jeremiah, raised in Scotia. They drifted apart and later reconnected, both divorced, with a total of nine children between them, creating a blended family. A prominently hung photo commemorates their roots, showing the pair in the middle of the Eagle Prairie Bridge in wedding attire. “We had family members stopping traffic for the photo,” she recalls. No one minded.

## **Funds available for earthquake protection**

Eligible Humboldt County homeowners can once again apply for grants of up to \$3,000 to safeguard their homes against future earthquake damage. The registration period for the Earthquake Brace + Bolt (EBB) program runs through Wednesday, Feb. 21.

These funds cannot be used to pay for repairs to homes damaged in the Dec. 20, 2022 earthquake but can be used to protect eligible residences against similar damages resulting from future earthquakes. An EBB retrofit includes bracing the cripple walls of older houses, when present, and bolting houses to their foundation, making them less vulnerable to earthquake damage. Your house may qualify for an EBB grant if it is:

- Built before 1980
- Owner-occupied
- On a raised foundation
- In an EBB ZIP code

Income-eligible homeowners may also qualify for supplemental grants. These grants are available for households with an income at or below \$87,360 and may be able to provide up to 100% of the funds needed to cover a seismic retrofit as funding permits.

Apply for retrofit funding at [EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](https://EarthquakeBraceBolt.com) where you can see if your home is in an EBB eligible ZIP code, review detailed program information and begin searching for a FEMA-trained, California-licensed general contractor. For customer service assistance, call 877-232-4300. Once registration closes, participating homeowners will be selected through a random drawing and notified via email if they have been chosen or if they have been placed on the waitlist. (Continued on Page 4)

# Scotia gym opens

The new gym in Scotia held its grand opening last month, capping off a decade of study, work and wait. School superintendent Amy Gossien shared her thoughts about the experience in advance of the ceremony, noting, “The district has been working towards this for over 10 years, and we are beyond proud of the beautiful gymnasium that our students will be able to enjoy for years to come.”

We teach our students that they need to persevere when a task is difficult, and to never be afraid to ask for help... with persistence, and the help of many, we have been able to see what once seemed like a slight possibility become a reality, she added.

Among those to whom she extended her thanks were architect Guy Fryer and the Siskiyou Design Group; the general contractor, Dinsmore Construction, and its owner Dirk Dinsmore and site superintendent Joey Kovaly; and Brian LaPask, chief of program services at the state Office of Public School Construction, for his guidance over years of working towards this goal.

Gossien also thanked school board members Debbie Reback, Neil Bartlett, Ed Lewis and Nicholas Lyvers, three of whom have served on the board for the entire decade in which the options for the gym were studied, and in which it was built, as well as students, families and staff for their patience in the process.

“The gym will be used for PE, athletics, and school events. Besides the full-size basketball court, the building also has a large stage that we will use for programs, graduation, and assemblies. The building means so much to our students - they finally have a home court, a place to practice without driving into Fortuna at night, and a place to play that they can be proud of,” Gossien noted, adding, “The whole project has been unbelievable, to be honest. Every time I walk in the building, I am in awe that everything we worked toward and waited for is here! It's a great time to be a Bear!”



Front Entrance Jan 2024



Front Entrance Jan 2024



Side view Jan 2024

## Funds available for earthquake protection (Continued from Page 3)

This program is administered by the California Residential Mitigation Program (CRMP) which is a joint powers agreement between the California Earthquake Authority (CEA) and the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

According to the CEA, more than 1.2 million houses in high-hazard ZIP codes are particularly vulnerable to earthquakes because of the way they were constructed. To date, EBB grants have helped more than 23,000 homeowners strengthen their homes against earthquake damage.



### Rio Dell-Scotia News

Is free of charge, published monthly by the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce and the Rio Dell Community Resource Center. Funded by local businesses and the St. Joseph Health System. 650 copies distributed in Rio Dell, Scotia, and Fortuna. **Deadline for March newsletter is February 12**

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