



## Chamber names new board member

Wally Coppini of Rio Dell was named to the board of directors of the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce at its March business meeting, taking the seat formerly held by Sarah Reback, Community Resource Center coordinator, who stepped away in December.

Coppini, 68, is retired from a life working in forestry and ranching, noting he often did both careers simultaneously, making him well acclimated to "long hours and hard work." An outdoors enthusiast, he keeps a large vegetable garden at his home, which he rebuilt recently. An avid bike rider, he has logged 91,000 miles in the past decade, including a five-day, 350 mile ride last year from Reno to the ocean at Fort Bragg.

Another interest is competitive barbecuing. Coppini has won prizes each of the last three years in the Wildwood Days cookoff, and at other events such as the two-day, four-meat competition in Hayfork this past year.

His interest in events of this type, and in promoting the area, led him to join the chamber and become active in many community-centered efforts. One was to bring the Tour of the Unknown Coast, for many years a stand-alone event for long-distance bike riders, to be part of Wildwood Days. This year, he says, the organization that put the ride on has dissolved, but he hopes to continue a similar bike ride as part of Wildwood Days.

He has been meeting with the City of Rio Dell about putting a large billboard on a piece of its land adjacent to Highway 101 urging travelers to visit the city. And he is working on a two-day event to be held in mid-June of this year that he hopes will include live music, a carnival, a parade, vendors and teams competing in a handball game popular in the Hispanic community, among other activities. Those plans are emerging as he works with several groups in the community, including the chamber.



### 5th annual Bingo Blast April 24

River Lodge, Fortuna  
Social Hour and Dinner  
at 5. Bingo at 6:30

\$40 in advance \$50 at door

10 games of bingo,  
nacho bar, dessert,  
& complimentary beverage

Tickets at Greens Pharmacy  
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SATURDAY,  
APRIL 4TH  
11:00AM  
RIO DELL  
FIREMAN'S PARK

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Deadline for May newsletter is April 10th.  
Call the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce at 707-506-5081 to advertise.

# Firefighter of the year

Cory Johnson was honored as Firefighter of the Year at the annual fire department dinner held in February. He's an engineer with the Rio Dell battalion and the newly appointed Wildwood Days committee chair, taking over as Chief Shane Wilson nears retirement in June. A Humboldt County native and a six-year resident of Rio Dell, Johnson joined the fire department three years ago for a few different reasons.

He says, "I have some friends who are on the department who I grew up around, but I also have a long history of multiple different family members being with the Rio Dell and Scotia departments, including my grandfather, Robert Hatten, who was an assistant chief in Rio Dell many years ago. Being a part of the fire department has opened the doors for me to learn a lot of new things and build great relationships with other members and people of the community."

Wife Kiley is also a firefighter, and the couple has a four-year-old daughter, Marleigh, and a newborn son, Everett.



## Also honored at the annual Fire Department meeting

Rio Dell Battalion Honorary of the Year - George Whitchurch

Scotia Battalion Honorary of the Year - Susan Pryor

Citizen of the Year - Mike Turner

Citizen of the Year - Brian Davis

### Fire Chiefs Awards

Lisa Wilson

Linda Barsanti

### Years of Service

Susan Pryor - 30 years

Shane Wilson - 30 years

Ryan Heussler - 20 years

Nate McKnight - 20 years

Josh Overson - 10 years



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## Fire runs for February, 2026:

Medical aid - 30

Mutual aid medical - 1

Traffic collisions - 4

Medical aid OOD - 1 \*

False alarm commercial - 12  
(Billable)

Hazardous conditions - 2

Public assists - 1

Vehicle fires OOD - 1 \*

Meetings - 2

Drills - 1

Special events/work details - 2

Total - 57

\*OOD - Out of district

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## Resource Center volunteer happy to be giving back

*The first of a series highlighting those who help at the Community Resource Center.*

Donna McQueen is the helpful force on Thursday mornings at the Community Resource Center In Rio Dell, assisting with the monthly Senior Luncheon and with the monthly Food 4 People distribution. A retired nurse, she began volunteering about the time the coordinator, Sarah Reback, began, and just before the earthquakes struck.

"I've given educational talks to the seniors at the monthly luncheon," she says of her tasks, and put together lunch bags for children in the Rio Dell and Scotia schools at risk for food scarcity at home, to use over the weekends. She's given blood pressure readings and performed health checks on at-risk populations that request it.

She also volunteers for the Humboldt Health Association, where she helps distribute small funds to those needing assistance with dental and medical bills. Gas money to get to another city for health care is a common request, she notes. The organization also has a scholarship fund that she works with. "I love to give money away," she smiles.

Volunteering and being of service to others is important to McQueen, who says she is "dogged about being consistent" in her commitments at the jobs she does. She lives between Rio Dell and Ferndale and when not volunteering, likes to be outdoors, going to the river, gardening, and walking with friends.



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**Kiosks to get facelift**

Kiosks featuring the early days of Rio Dell were set up at Triangle Park and near the library in Rio Dell several years ago. Donated to the chamber by another group, the goal was always to have varied information of interest to the local community and visitors as well, but challenges got in the way of earlier attempts, including some design issues that made the display area difficult to access. Sarah Reback, coordinator of the Community Resource Center, and Amanda Carter, vice mayor of the city council, are teaming up to manage the kiosk in Triangle Park with the goal of varied and changing materials.



The dispensary operating on the site of the former Element 7 has completed its branding and will be rolling out new signage and events geared to celebrate 4/20.



CC Market got an upgrade last month with owner Bashir Khan showing off the all new shelves, a two-week project that replaced the 30-year-old units.



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**Holidays**

**Passover begins April 1**  
**Easter April 5**  
**Earth Day April 22**

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