

Rio Dell-Scotia News

Quake recovery continues

Work continues on several fronts in what is being called a long-term recovery effort following the earthquakes that struck the area Dec. 20 and Jan. 1. “This will take time,” speakers said in a two-hour virtual town hall held online January 12 addressing the recovery, the first of several such events planned. While the scope of this disaster does not meet the threshold for FEMA funds, speakers said, other resources are available. Among the points made were that the state is supplying \$3 million, and Humboldt County \$1 million, in recovery aid to address long-term housing needs, and that \$12 million is being set aside through a partnership with the state water board to repair the city’s water and sewer systems as a result of the quake damage.

Speakers included Leila Roberts of the Small Business Development Center in Eureka who encouraged homeowners, renters, business owners and non-profits to look into low-interest loans available for repairs. “Even if you don’t want to take on a loan, take the time to see what is available,” she encouraged, adding that one could talk to the specialists staffing a pop-up office in Rohner Park, Fortuna during January, to have that financial tool available if needed. Loan applications can be accepted until March 6.

Look to Humboldt Foundation, she advised in response to an emailed question about funding sources for church repairs. Look into property tax relief for businesses damaged by the quake, she reminded business owners. Contact the Rotary service organization which is offering \$2,000 grants for business recovery. Another source for small business loans is Vocality, a credit union in Garberville. More information on all these resources is available at tinyurl.com/Humboldtbusinessrecovery2023.

Advice was given to those planning to hire contractors to do repairs, including ensuring those people are licensed and insured. You need permits to do the work, John Ford of the county building office and Kyle Knopp, city manager, told viewers, but those are being expedited for earthquake recovery. A one-stop phone number at the county was given to handle just about anything one would need, including help cleaning up: 707.441.5000.

While much work remains, much has been done. Over 1300 homes were inspected, with more than a dozen state inspectors requested by the city and supplied by the state’s Office of Emergency Services, coming to town from outside the area just before Christmas to work during the holidays, then returning after the second quake Jan. 1.

Brandon Miller and David Romero were two such inspectors who posted on local Facebook pages to keep residents aware of their work and able to communicate their needs. More than 250 homes were yellow tagged and more than 60 red-tagged, representing degrees of repair needed. The Red Cross opened a shelter but all 70 families who eventually needed housing due to damage to their homes were subsequently moved to nine area hotels, using vouchers supplied by the county, which will be reimbursed by the state.

A \$10,000 grant was received from the Humboldt Area Foundation and is being administered by the Community Resource Center. An anonymous donor from outside the community contributed \$5,000 to help businesses that suffered losses. Organizations that help in disaster clean-up such as the veteran group, Team Rubicon, and a faith-based organization, UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), were among many individuals helping others shovel out the damaged materials from their homes and deliver them to dumpsters set up outside city hall, free of charge, by Recology. Continued Page 3.



Quake recovery information:

One-stop phone (Humboldt County): 707.441.5000

Place to go: Community Resource Center, 406 Wildwood, at Columbus

Business help – multiple sources: tiny.url/humboldtbusinessrecovery

NEWS & NOTES

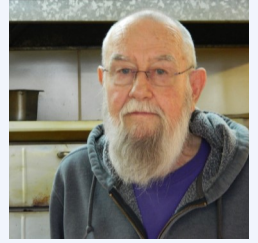
Pizza Factory to close

“I’m being forced to retire,” Jim Rich says as the news spread that The Pizza Factory he has owned for 34 years on Wildwood is closing this month. He shared the challenges of small business ownership in an April, 2022 article in this publication, noting that while things were good when there was a lot of pandemic-related cash around, the picture changed “when money stopped falling from the sky.”

Add to that the supply-chain issues, and increases in cost of supplies and ingredients, and he says he has not made enough to cover the bare cost of opening his door most of the past 15 months. Add to that a new law that raises the minimum wage by one dollar per hour starting this month, which would add \$1,000 per month to his expenses, to make payroll.

Bills have piled up, the landlord wants rent he can no longer afford to pay, and health issues keep him from putting in the additional hours that would otherwise be needed to manage the business with fewer workers. He turns 80 on his next birthday and the building he is vacating has also been his home. Rich will run the business with only two employees during the last month, while he tries to sell off equipment.

Rich has been a staple of the Rio Dell business community for decades, donating generously to fund raisers and other civic efforts, and serving in leadership roles in the former Scotia Service Club and the chamber of commerce. For years he refurbished old bicycles to donate to needy families and he helped launch the local Little League together with former resident Eric Johansen. He served on the Rio Dell school board for 24 years.



Community Resource Center coordinator joins chamber board

Sarah Reback, coordinator of the Rio Dell Community Resource Center, has joined the board of the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce. She began work at the resource center in November as it was preparing to open in its new location, sharing space with the chamber of commerce.

Reback, a fifth-generation resident of the Eel River Valley, has volunteered with many organizations including Big Brothers Big Sisters, Ethan and Teyler Totes, and the Hydesville Education Foundation. A decade ago she founded the community group, Project Kindness.



Scotia school plans events, sees gym progress

Walls are going up at the new gym in Scotia. Amy Gossien, principal of the school district, notes, “the part of the building that is framed up is the back portion - it includes a raised platform that will be used as a stage, as well as a storage room and team room. The large horizontal beam is the opening to the platform area. The project continues to move forward on schedule, through all that nature has thrown at us in the past weeks!”



Gossien says, “Our thoughts are with our neighbors and friends at Eagle Prairie Elementary and Monument Middle School, as well as the Rio Dell community.”

Describing upcoming events, she notes, “The Eel River Valley Spelling Bee is set for Monday, Feb. 13, at Fortuna High's theater. Each school in the Eel River Valley is invited to send its top two spellers in each grade division.

“Our PTO is hosting a family trivia night on Friday, Feb. 17, and our annual PTO carnival is set for April 21. Presidents Week break is February 20 to 24. We have a 5/6 boys basketball team, a 7/8 boys basketball team, and for the first time in many years, a cheer team!”

Work underway on Scotia museum

A new heating, ventilating and air-conditioning system and modifications to the entry-way, staircase and restrooms are being installed at the Scotia Museum. The effort will make the building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and better preserve the documents and artifacts on display at the museum which mostly address the history of Pacific Lumber Company.

Built in 1920, the structure formerly housed the First National Bank of Scotia, became a museum in the 1950s and has been closed for several years because of the need to conform to ADA requirements. (Continued on Page 3)



(Quake recovery continues from Page 1) Maggie Kraft, executive director of Area One Agency on Aging, looked after the needs of seniors and sent helpers to assist them in cleaning up. Simone Mellor, co-owner of Proper Wellness Center in Eureka and Rio Dell, recalls feeling the need to help when she drove to town at 4 a.m. on Dec. 20 because the earthquake had set off the store alarm. “There were so many people out in the street, I felt this sense of community,” she recalls. It led her to check in with Pay It Forward Humboldt to see how she could assist, which led her to Kraft and Area One. “I helped some seniors clean up the messes in their homes and do laundry that had gotten wet in the quake,” she recalled. “I imagined it could be my grandmother this was happening to.” Hearing how many people had their dishes shattered, she expanded the annual Christmas dinner Proper Wellness has for its employees to be an outdoor chili and cornbread meal, that served 40 or more people in the community on Christmas Day, she recalled.

While food, water, clean-up supplies and more were being distributed at various centers including, variously, the fire hall, the school, and the community resource center, one source of hot meals was provided initially by World Central Kitchen, the international aid group which brought in food trucks such as A Taste of Bim, which is based in Eureka.

Nick Bowen-Crawford, executive director of Humboldt Made, a non-profit that promotes county businesses, brought his passion for disaster relief work, honed in Atlanta during the Covid outbreak, to the fore and took over the hot meals program. Funded by Humboldt Area Foundation, that effort pays restaurants to supply food, helping keep the economy strong and people employed. Bowen-Crawford additionally drew on local restaurants including The Pizza Factory, Patron Kitchen and DJ’s Burger Bar to supply meals to other area that were hard-hit in storms.

In the midst of the efforts to help in Rio Dell, several other organizations were also tasked with responding to disasters outside the area, where high winds and rain led to flooding, power outages and trees down. Bowen-Crawford and his team provided hundreds of meals each day, delivering some door-to-door to other places affected by disaster. Food for People also made food distributions in Orick and Petrolia at the same time its volunteers were bringing food to Rio Dell.

A look at local Facebook pages into the second week of the new year saw many postings from people afraid to fall asleep, or afraid to be alone, as a result of the trauma they had endured. Lori Dengler, local earthquake authority, wrote in the *Times-Standard* that the Dec. 20 quake was the third highest-shaking in the state’s history, reaching a force called 1G of acceleration, “enough to make you momentarily weightless.” Acceleration rather than magnitude is the culprit when it comes to damage, she wrote, concluding “you are unlikely to ever experience this force again” even if another earthquake were to strike with a larger magnitude.

Rio Dell City Manager Kyle Knopp, interviewed by the *North Coast Journal*, said, “The lived experience in Rio Dell is that it is the aftershocks that are the most dangerous and the most impactful. In '92, it was the second aftershock, I believe, that actually broke the gas line in Scotia that burned down part of the town. In this community, that's a lived experience, just the knowledge that the initial event is just the beginning.”

Amanda Carter, the city’s mayor pro-tem, penned an essay addressing her feelings in the wake of the quakes and in the midst of the ongoing recovery, which is printed in this issue.

Scotia museum Continued from Page 2. The Eureka-based firm ACGC, Inc. is doing the work. Whitchurch Engineering and DJ Cleek Company designed the remodeling plans. Work is expected to be complete in April and to cost \$275,000 according to a Jan. 7 article in the *Times-Standard*. After the museum is completed, bids will be let for needed work on the Winema Theater, which is also owned by the Scotia Community Services District.

City Council re-elects mayor, seats new member

The Rio Dell City Council re-elected Debra Garnes mayor at its organizational meeting, and voted Amanda Carter mayor pro-tem. She replaces Gordon Johnson who held that position in the past, and did not run for re-election. Robert Orr, shown at right, newly elected member of the council, was seated, replacing Johnson.



Join the chamber monthly board meeting

Join in at noon on the first Friday of the month to be part of the discussion about how to make our communities even better. You can ask questions, make suggestions and be among the first to know new plans. Feb. 3 will be the next monthly meeting. Call in at 605.313.4802 and use access code 860467 or come to 440 Wildwood, two doors north of the chamber office at noon to participate.

Amanda Carter, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Rio Dell January 14, 2023

As I write this, there's a break in the storm clouds over Rio Dell. I've moved my laptop so I can sit next to the biggest window in my house because I'd hate to miss a rainbow. They've been all over today! And I realize that's something I tell people about Rio Dell pretty often: we get lots of rainbows here. I don't know if it's the shape of the river valley or what, but it doesn't really matter why or how at the moment. I've seen plenty of rainbows over the course of my life but they never seem to lose their magic. Each one is different; each one is special. And since I know those storm clouds and rain will be back very soon, I want to make sure I see every rainbow I can while they last!

Things have been pretty tough in Rio Dell for the last little while. I don't have to tell you facts about the earthquakes, the storms, the flooding—we all lived it; we know what happened. Everywhere I go in town, I can feel that collective sense of fear, of anxiety, and of loss. It's palpable. People are suffering. Personally, I feel like I've aged a year for every week that has passed since 2:34 a.m. on December 20. At times, I've felt discouraged, down trodden, and depressed. Every unexpected noise makes me jump and I'm constantly waiting for the ground to start shaking violently. Living in that state of heightened anxiety is exhausting. I know we all feel this way because we have suffered through the last few weeks together.

This is a time in my life I won't ever forget, and I'm sure that's true for all of us. I know that, years from now, when I look back on this experience, those feelings of sadness and fear will fade. What I will remember most down the road are the acts of compassion and selflessness that I've witnessed in Rio Dell as we all struggled to respond to a devastating emergency. Years from now, the stories I tell will be about the resilience of this community; the way we stuck together and checked on our neighbors; the smiles and gratitude I saw from people who had lost so much; the many people who put the needs of their community ahead of their personal lives.

The way we respond during hard times defines us, as individuals and as a community. And I can say with utmost confidence that I have never been so proud to say I'm from Rio Dell! Not one single person in this city is in this thing alone. We survived together; we struggled together; we are rebuilding together. Whatever the future holds for us, we will take it on together, as a team. And there's no other team I want to be on!

No matter how intense the storm is, the clouds always break at some point. And when the light peeks through those clouds, we get rainbows; and maybe we appreciate those rainbows more when the storm is especially dark and scary. My greatest hope is that we all get a chance to appreciate the rainbows, both literal and figurative, that have presented themselves all over town during this difficult time.

The list of thank you's would be endless if I attempted to write out every single one. So for now, I'm going to stick with the most important one. I extend my deepest and most gracious thanks to the citizens of the City of Rio Dell. Each and every one of you is special and a necessary part of our community. Each and every one of you has contributed in your own way to making things right again. As we move out of response and into recovery, I hold each and every one of you close to my heart. You have taught me so much about what huge obstacles a small town can conquer when we stick together. You truly are the rainbows during the storm.

HWMA is Extending the Free Tire Recycling Program until 2023!

The Hawthorne Street Transfer Station in Eureka will accept up to nine auto or light truck tires per day at no extra charge. It's ok if they're on rims. No business-generated tires please. This program is only for household generated tires.

Call or email us for details:

268-8680 or programs@hwma.net



Humboldt Waste Management Authority
1059 W. Hawthorne St., Eureka, CA 95501
www.hwma.net

This message is funded by CalRecycle.


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 copy is February 10**
Call the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce at 506-5081 to advertise.



Copyright 2023