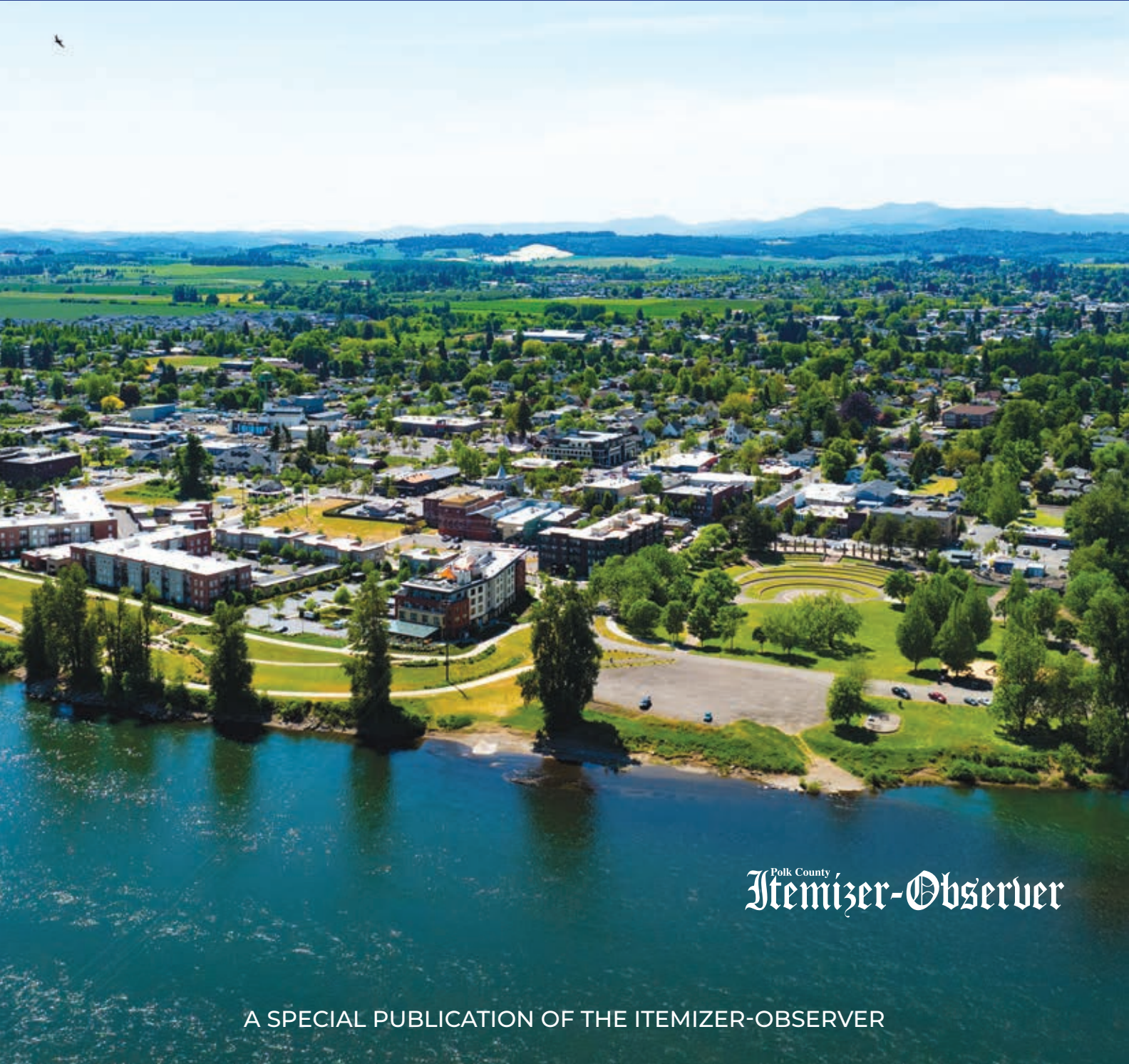


EXPLORE

POLK COUNTY 2025



Polk County
Itemizer-Observer

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ITEMIZER-OBSERVER

Join Us For Willamina's Old Fashioned 4th of July Celebrations!

CITY OF Willamina
INCORPORATED 1903
TIMBERTOWN U.S.A.



Willamina Museum



4th of July Car Show



Coastal Hill Art Tour



Willamina Falls

Welcomes you

To Our 76th Year of Celebrating the Best Fireworks Display in the Valley!

Willamina Historical Museum

Located on NE 'D' St. Open Sat. & Sun. 1-4 p.m.

Fishing Pond

Seven City Parks

Variety of Shops & Restaurants

Miles of Off-Road Trails

for Hiking, Dirt Bikes & Quads

SUMMER

Kiwanis Fishing Derby on June 7th

Mud Drags June 28th

Old-Fashioned 4th of July Celebration (Since 1903)

Includes The Best Fireworks in the Valley! Car Show, Venders,

Logging Show & Parade

National Night out August 5th

Citywide Garage Sale July 18th & 19th

Fall

Trunk or Treat October 31st

Coastal Hills Art tour November 7th & 8th

Winter

Christmas Light Parade December 6th
With a Visit From Santa!



Huddelston Pond



Off-Road Recreation



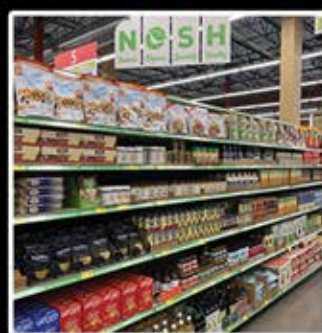
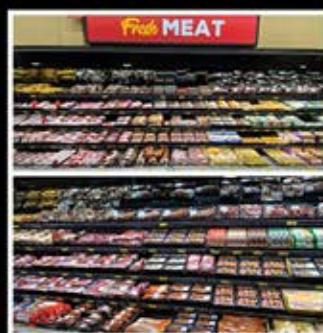
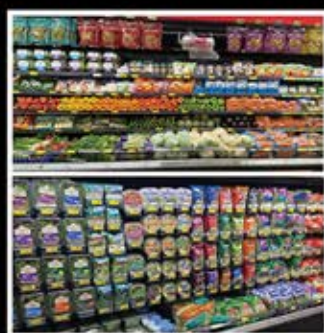
Willamina Light Parade



Willamina Creek



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From the Editor

Polk County has many events and locations that become must see destinations

When setting out to create a magazine aptly titled “Explore,” the top priority is filling its pages with destinations. Each tale within is worthy of getting off the beaten path and discovering for the first time or anew for longtime residents of Polk County.

Each year, we reach out to the county’s biggest cities to enlist their mayors to continue you why their municipality is a destination location, including Dallas, Independence, Monmouth, Falls City and Willamina. Each community boasts activities that swell the population during the summer months. Be sure to make time for each city’s celebrations revolving around Independence Day.

The culinary circuit is in replete with destinations to tantalize the taste buds. We took a look at a new stop getting more and more attention, Luna’s Cafe in Independence. Also, we revisit a former owner who returned to bring Independence’s Melting Pot back to its former glory.

In Dallas, a cottage industry has converged to catering to the collectors’ market. We visited three up and rising businesses offering up pop culture curios - Everything Blaine Likes, Mythic Finds and Kujo’s Collectibles.

If it’s a bit of fun involving a time warp, then the destination is the Shrewsbury Renaissance Fair featuring jousting knights, jesters and giant turkey legs, to name a few attractions.

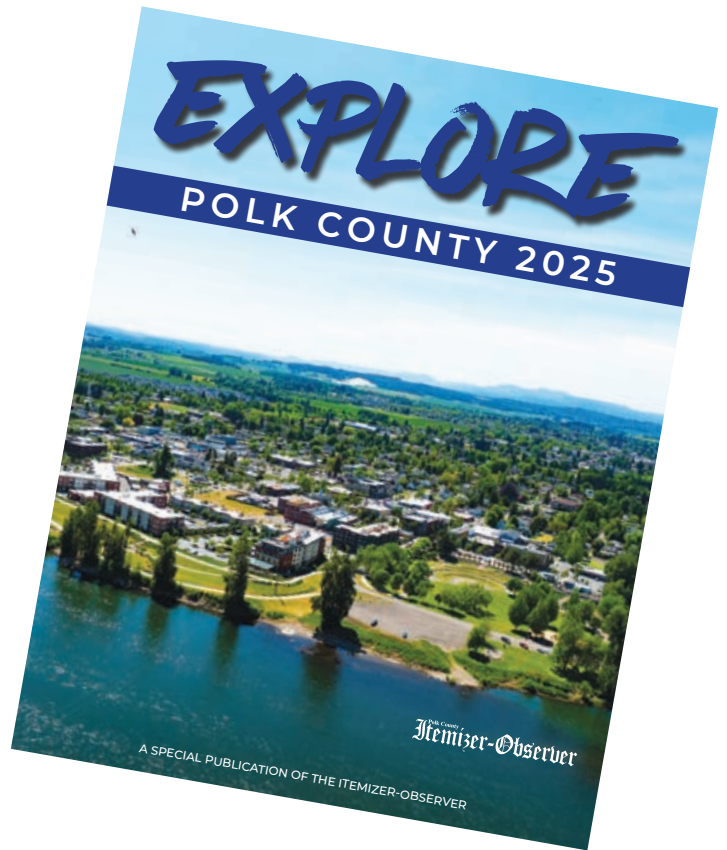
Each of the three big cities in Polk County become destination central when they host their annual festivals. We take a closer look at what Dallas Days, the 4th of July and the Hops & Heritage Festival have to offer.

If you need help getting between destinations, be sure to hop aboard the locals’ favorite mode of transportation, the MI Trolley. Discover what thousands of regular riders have embraced in paying homage to a bygone era of railroad travel.

Lastly, but most likely most importantly, Independence has become the only destination in 2025 to host the traveling Wall That Heals, a replica Vietnam Memorial sure to bring in veterans and the patriotic from around the region.

Polk County has plenty of destinations, whether enjoyed with the family and friends or absorbed solo in nature’s majesty. Let us help you map out which destinations you may want to Explore in 2025.

David Hayes
Editor



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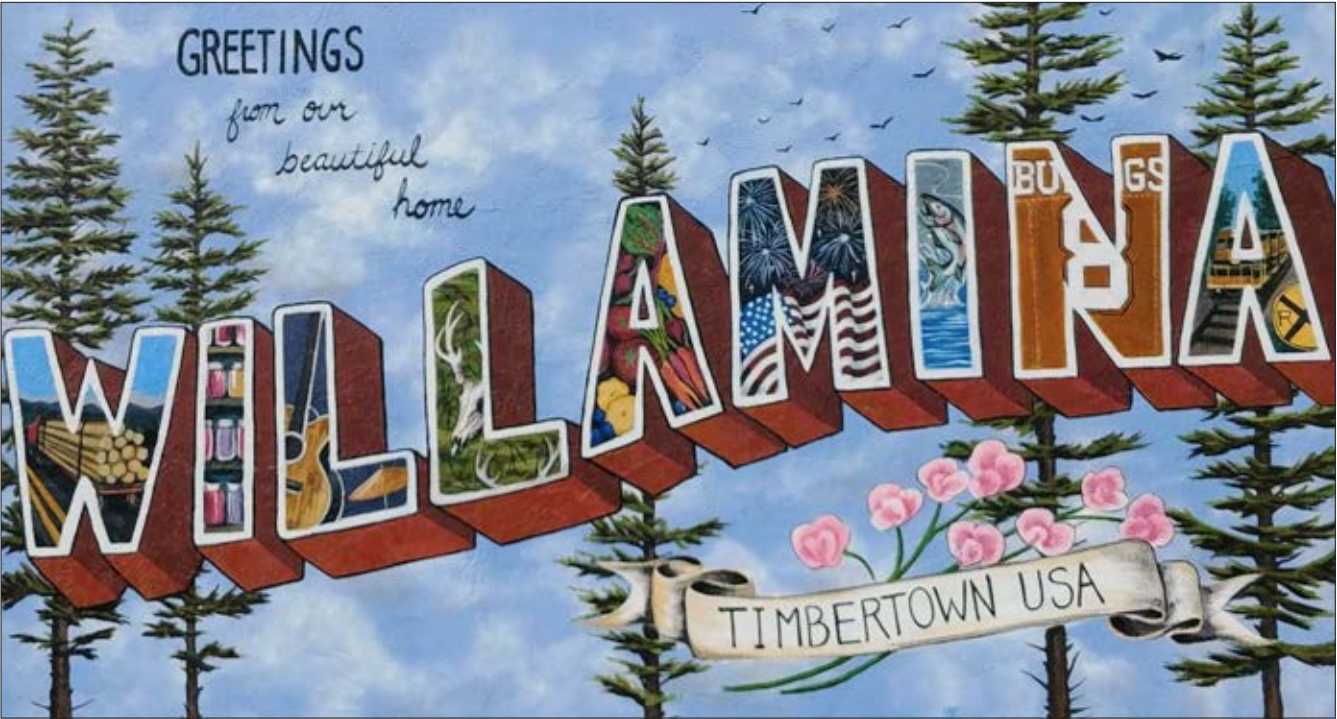
COMMUNITIES





Willamina

'Be sure to add Timber Town to your tourism activities'



MURAL WAS PAINTED BY LOCAL ARTIST NATALIE FLETCHER

VICKIE HERNANDEZ

Mayor of Willamina

As summer approaches, I wish to extend greetings from the city of Willamina, Timber Town USA, and invite you to stop by on your way to the beautiful Oregon coast or Spirit Mountain Casino.

We extend an invitation to you for Willamina's 76th Fourth of July celebration. Begin the day with a pancake breakfast, then attend a car show, downhill races, a logging show, and a parade. Food and craft vendors will also be in town to add to the festivities. As night approaches, the best fireworks in the valley begin. Come to town, bring your family, and make some memories with us.

Willamina continues to grow with over 24 new homes built in the past year. Summer will mark the completion of our pump track that is a

project partnership with the city and Hampton Lumber. The Hampton Lumber Mill has completed their new Super Mill on the outskirts of town. As for our schools, the Willamina Middle School remodel is complete and the Career Technical Education Program continues to soar.

Watch for music venues throughout the summer. The new Swan Hall will offer multi-talented musical groups, as well as, Dillions Bar & Grill and The Wildwood. Also, keep your eye on Navarra Gardens for special events, such as weddings and parties, both private and corporate.

There's always something good to eat at Coyote Joe's, Dillions Bar & Grill, Odd Fellows Pizza, and The Wildwood. Drop by our newest coffee shop & bakery, Skyhorse Coffee, you won't be disappointed.

Stop by and see us, we'd love to meet you!

Info.

Incorporated in 1903
Population: 2,425 people
Elevation: 225 feet
Land area: 0.86 square miles
Population density: 2,609 people per square mile

- Hampton Park*
- Blackwell County Park*
- Lamson Park*
- Garden Spot Park*
- Triangle Park*
- Playground Park at City Hall*
- Oaken Hills Memorial Park*
- Tina Miller Park*

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Dallas

Thrives in 2025

RICH SLACK

Mayor City of Dallas

When living in or visiting Dallas, no matter the season, there is always something happening. Whether it is a holiday event in the winter, a spring stroll through downtown, or a fall bike ride along the Rickreall Creek trail, our community shines all year long.

Sounds of Summer

Each Thursday evening from July 10 through Aug. 14, the Sounds of Summer concert series brings live music to the Rotary Amphitheater at 7 p.m. Bring a blanket, gather the family, and enjoy a relaxing evening of free entertainment.

Another highlight of the summer season is Dallas Days. A weekend full of music, vendors, food, and fun in our historic downtown. It is a great chance to support local businesses, and soak in the small-town charm that makes Dallas so special. The event includes a parade and wraps up on Sunday in Dallas City Park with Art in the Park and Breakfast in the Park hosted by the Rotary Club of Dallas.

Cool Off and Play at the Aquatic Center & Roger Jordan Park

Looking for a way to beat the heat or make a splash? The Dallas Aquatic Center offers indoor swimming and a party room available for birthdays and celebrations. It is a wonderful place for kids and adults alike to enjoy some fun in the water.

Right next door is Roger Jordan Community Park, and the Rickreall Creek Trail. Within the park you can find tennis courts and just across the street, you will find pickleball courts for players of all levels. It is an ideal area to enjoy nature, get active, and spend quality time with family and friends.

Explore Dallas City Park & Its Hidden Gems

Spanning 35 acres, Dallas City Park is the heart of our community—hosting events, gatherings, and everyday outdoor fun. Whether you are enjoying a family BBQ, a game of basketball or horseshoes, or a friendly round on the 18-hole disc golf course, there is something here for everyone.

The Delbert Hunter Arboretum at the south end of the park showcases native Oregon flora, peaceful walking paths and educational signage.

And do not miss the newly restored Japanese Garden! The Japanese Garden is a serene spot accessible via a bridge from the Brandvold section of the city park. With winding paths, a waterfall, pond, and traditional plantings, it is a wonderful escape right in our own backyard.

Historic Downtown & the Farmers Market

Our downtown was recently designated as a National Historic District by the National Parks Service, an honor that reflects the rich history and character of our city. You can pick up a walking tour brochure at City Hall, the Aquatic Center, or the Visitors Center to explore our storied streets on foot.

On the first and third Saturdays from May through October, do not miss the Dallas Farmers Market on the Courthouse Square. It is the perfect way to enjoy fresh, local produce, handmade goods, and the welcoming spirit of our downtown.

There is so much to enjoy in Dallas. Whether you are dancing at a concert, cooling off at the pool, or strolling through downtown, I hope you will take time to explore all our community has to offer.

i.nfo.

Population: 17,573

Elevation: 325 feet above sea level.

City Hall: 187 SE Court St.,

Dallas City Park — Dallas City Park is the largest park in the city at 35 acres. The “new” entrance is located on Levens Street near Lyle Elementary. The “old” entrance near the Delbert Hunter Arboretum is on Academy Street. The park has facilities for gatherings large and small, including two shelters, two fireplaces, numerous barbecue pits, horseshoe pits, basketball hoops, a disc golf course and paved trails.

Roger Jordan Community Park — Located next to the Dallas Aquatic Center on Southeast LaCreole Drive. It consists of soccer fields, a baseball field, a skate park, two tennis courts and a picnic area.

Birch Park — Intersection of Birch and Stump streets. New playground equipment recently was added, and the park also has two basketball hoops.

Gala Park — Intersection of Uglow Avenue and Hankel Street. It features a basketball court, playground and a grassy area with a gazebo.

Kingsborough Park — 101 SW Wyatt St. It features lots of wide-open spaces as well as two basketball hoops, walking paths and a playground. Restrooms are open during the summer.

Rotary Park — 300 NE Fern Ave. The city has joined forces with the Dallas Rotary Club to upgrade the park with new playground equipment, walking paths and a basketball court.

Walnut Park — 501 SE Walnut Ave. It is a small wooded area with a shaded creek and a bench.

Central Bark — 920 SE Juniper St. behind the aquatic center. It is the city’s newest park and the only off-leash park for dogs. It has an enclosed area with a picnic table, water and mutt-mitt stations.

Rickreall Creek Trail — The Rickreall Creek Trail will eventually run the length of the city east to west following the course of its namesake creek

PARK RESERVATIONS

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SCAN TO LEARN
MORE





Grand Ronde

Grand Ronde offers entertainment, cultural experiences

While traveling Highway 18 on your way to the Oregon Coast, it's hard to miss the Spirit Mountain Casino and be lured by its myriad entertaining opportunities. However, the casino is but one attraction the Grand Ronde tribe would like visitors seek out while in the region.

Grand Ronde has a long and storied history. Tribal ancestors lived throughout the Willamette Valley, southern Oregon and the Oregon coast since time immemorial. They were moved to the Grand Ronde Reservation beginning in the 1850s after ceding most of what is now western Oregon to the federal government in seven ratified treaties. Remnants of the U.S. Army post that controlled access to and from the Grand Ronde Reservation now overlook the Tribe's picturesque Uyxat Powwow Grounds off Highway 22 (Hebo Road) at Fort Yam-

hill State Park.

Federal recognition was stripped from the Tribe and it was terminated in 1954, but the Grand Ronde Tribe, through the hard work of Tribal members, friends and community allies, saw the Tribe restored to federal recognition on Nov. 22, 1983.

Today, the tribe's reservation and land holdings total more than 12,000 acres and range from Rattlesnake Butte near Junction City to Kilchis Point on Tillamook Bay. However, the main reservation is situated in forestland just north of the Grand Ronde area.

The tribe's story is on display in the Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center, 8720 Grand Ronde Road, which opened in 2014. The center features an exhibit detailing the Tribe's history and created a place to archive cultural artifacts.

A second phase of construction created

a large, permanent exhibition display space, work rooms for curating public exhibits, artifact processing, long-term storage for cultural archives and work rooms for Tribal research.

The name Chachalu means "the place of burnt timber," in honor of what members of the Tualatin-Kalapuya Tribe named part of the Grand Ronde area that had been destroyed by a wildfire.

The museum's logo features a camas lily, a plant known for regenerating after forest fires — a symbol for the Tribe's restoration after being "burnt" through placement on the reservation and termination.

The Tribe also hosts a number of unforgettable cultural events that are open to the public. Those include the annual powwows, arts and crafts fairs at the casino and more.

In addition, more than 18 miles of



public hiking trails open to the public on the Grand Ronde Reservation and the popular Big Buck campground make the area perfect for those looking for an outdoor adventure. To use the campground, members of the public must obtain a pass at (503) 879-2424.

Grand Ronde is also where you can find the aforementioned 108-acre Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area, operated by Oregon State Parks. Fort Yamhill was a military outpost that was in operation from 1856-66 and established to protect and control Native Americans on the Grand Ronde Reservation.

Nearby is achaf-hammi, a traditional Pacific Northwest plankhouse built by the tribe in 2010. It hosts numerous cultural events throughout the year.

Also located in Grand Ronde is the stunning West Valley Veterans Memorial

dedicated to those from the West Valley area who have served their country in the military. The four black granite pillars represent the major branches of the U.S. armed forces and have more than 2,360 names etched into them. The tribe holds an annual ceremony to honor West Valley veterans every Memorial Day.

Whether you're looking for a Las Vegas-style gaming experience, a trip to learn more about the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Native American history in Oregon, or to check out one of the many colorful cultural events, Grand Ronde offers a compelling mix of history and fun.

And when you're done, you're only 25 miles from the Pacific Ocean or Willamette Valley wine country, depending on which way you head.

Info.

Population: 2,000 (estimated).

Elevation: 344 feet above sea level.

Government Center:

9615 Grand Ronde Rd

Visitor Services: Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, 1-800-422-0232. Hiking trail maps are available at the Tribe's Natural Resources Office, 47010 SW Hebo Road. Camping is permitted, but permits are required. Call 1-503-879-2424 for more information.

For more information about the area:

Visit www.grandronde.org

Must-do activities

1 — Spirit Mountain Casino: Make a trip to Spirit Mountain for the evening or an overnight stay.

2 — Competition Powwow: Check out some of the best dancers from the Pacific Northwest and across North America in this three-day event hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

3 — Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center: Explore the history the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde at the museum's historical exhibit.

Independence

Experience independence!

KATE SCHWARZLER

Mayor of Independence

Stroll through a vibrant historic downtown and enjoy artisan chocolate, craft beer and wine, an art gallery, a relaxing walk along the majestic Willamette River, and more with the friendly folks in the city of Independence. Nestled on the West bank of the Willamette River, just 12 miles southwest of Salem, our quaint river city was known as the “Hop Capital of the World” from the late 1890s to the 1940s. With family-friendly events and programs happening all year round like summer concerts and heritage festivals, downtown trick-or-treating, and the best 4th of July celebration in Oregon, Independence has a distinct sense of place that is grounded in its history, connected to nature, and filled with community spirit.

With amazing amenities like our beautiful Riverview Park, high-speed fiber network, new museum location, and many more, Independence has its sights set on the future without losing sight of its past.

See the Independence Heritage Museum in downtown

In addition to traditional local history, the Independence Heritage Museum incorporates individuals and areas of our city's history that often go overlooked.



Intentional sections include feature stories on our large Latino population and our history with Chinese laborers.

Enjoy the Beauty of the Willamette River

Our riverfront is the centerpiece of our city that houses multi-unit apartments, outdoor movies and concerts in the park, as well as a beautiful hotel. The region, known for its award-winning wineries and historic hopyard and located on the ancestral lands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community, is ideally suited as a hub to explore wineries, community events, and classic rural communities.

Among Independence's greatest accomplishments is its trust and support of its local businesses. Every year, a Love Local campaign is held to promote local spending in the downtown area. This helps generate financial, cultural, and community support in our city.

Take a Ride on the MI Trolley

A fare-free trolley running every 20 minutes links the excitement of Independence with the amenities of downtown Monmouth. Explore both cities without worrying about where to park or how

to get to places. The trolley is also ADA-accessible.

Come and enjoy a classic Oregon small town - Big enough to have horsepower, yet small enough to be nimble, welcoming, and personable.





Info.

Population: 10,272

Elevation: 180 feet above sea level.

City Hall: 555 S. Main St., 503-838-1212,
www.ci.independence.or.us.

Visitor Services: Monmouth-Independence
Chamber of Commerce
355 Pacific Ave. N., Monmouth
503-838-4268.

Library: 175 Monmouth St.,
503-838-1811.

Riverview Park — Riverview Park is located downtown between B and C streets alongside the Willamette River. It is the city's largest park and features the Riverview Park Amphitheater, which hosts a summer movie and concert series. It also has a boat ramp, fountain and a large playground.

John Pfaff Park — John Pfaff Park originally was known as Northgate Park and is located at the intersection of Hoffman and Gun Club roads. It has a playground, basketball court and picnic tables.

Mountain Fir Park — Mountain Fir Park is located off F Street between Seventh and Ninth streets. The land was formerly part of the Mountain Fir Lumber Mill but was donated to the city when the mill downsized in the early 1990s. It has picnic tables and lots of open spaces. The city has partnered with the Luckiamute Watershed Council to restore the South Fork of Ash Creek, home to salmon and trout. Polk County OSU Master Gardeners maintain a demonstration garden here, called Inspiration Garden.

Pioneer Park — Pioneer Park is located at the corner of Seventh and C streets. It has picnic tables, a playground and lots of tall, mature trees.

Dog Park — Located on Grand Street, east of Highway 51, about a quarter mile north of downtown. It is the only off-leash park in Independence, and was built through volunteer efforts.

Bicycle Boater Campground — This basic camping area has five sites, each with a picnic table and bike rack.

To learn more about the city of Independence, visit our website:
www.ci.independence.or.us

Monmouth

Small town charm, world class opportunity!

CECELIA KOONTZ

Mayor of Monmouth

The city of Monmouth has a storied history as the home of the oldest public university in the state. Monmouth University was founded in 1853 by Christian missionaries from Monmouth, Illinois, six years before Oregon was granted statehood. Today's Western Oregon University, growing the leaders of tomorrow, is still the city's largest employer and center of much of the cultural vibrancy of the community. But, oh, how things have changed! What would the forefathers and foremothers think if they walked away from campus down Main Street?

Growing Local Entrepreneurs - Monmouth's other claim to fame - as Oregon's last town to allow the sale of alcohol - is a distant memory. In a winking nod to the history, Dry Town Tap Station is a former gas station turned pub with fun food trucks and an outdoor entertainment stage. The Sippery is THE gathering spot. For treats, Maui Melts creates gourmet caramels along with delicious Hawaiian food! Hazel's on Main offers cocktails and local and regional wines to complement its tasty bistro menu. For a personal tour of the wineries located in the Eola/Amity Hills, or VanDuzer Corridor AVAs, all within 15 miles of Monmouth, parties can even rent the Crush Wine Limo!

Growing Community - From banners and city-wide events celebrating diverse peoples, histories and accomplishments, Monmouth engages its residents, visitors, students, and businesses in recognizing its rich culture. As part of the AARP Age Friendly Cities initiative, Monmouth's Senior Community Center is a hub of activity (and home to the best \$10 breakfast on the first Saturday of each month). To get to the center, meander from Main

Street through Monmouth Alley - a former driveway, turned game spot/picnic stop/exercise yard/people watching perch. Fall brings college football (WOU offers the only NCCA Division II program in the state), and History and Mystery where characters from Monmouth's past tell of its amazing past.

Growing Great Volunteers - Residents of Monmouth support the city in so many ways. From the hard work of reviewing the municipal budget and planning efforts, to the fun of helping kids learn bicycle safety, volunteers step up. As a Tree City USA, Monmouth has a Tree Advisory Board, which has planted hundreds of trees in parks, beauty strips and even front yards. The Parks and Rec Board is seeing the fruits of its plans for a world-class skate park and brand new pickleball courts.

Growing Arts & Culture - WOU is also the home of the Smith Fine Arts Series, presenting regionally, nationally and internationally recognized performers right here. One of those acts is Rainbow Dance Theatre, an innovative company that tours the world, but calls Monmouth home! The music fun continues throughout the summer in the Main Street Park amphitheater. The kick off is a world-class hometown 4th of July festival, which includes food, vendors, an art show, and a kid's parade and a mini-marathon where runners lead the Rotary Club's annual parade through Monmouth and Independence.

Monmouth is a welcoming town with something for everyone - a storied past, a vibrant present and an amazing future!

i.nfo.

Population: 11,110.

Elevation: 214 feet above sea level.

City Hall: 151 Main St. W., 503-838-0722, www.ci.monmouth.or.us.

Visitor Services: Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce,

355 Pacific Ave. N.

503-838-4268.

Library: 168 Ecols St. S., 503-838-1932.

Cherry Lane Park — Cherry Lane Park is at Cherry Lane, Ackerman Street and Whiteman Street. It has a playground with benches.

Gentle Woods Park — Gentle Woods Park is at the intersection of Myrtle Drive, Olive Way and High Street. It is mostly wooded with a large picnic shelter, horseshoe pits, playground equipment and restrooms.

Madrona Park — Madrona Park is located along Madrona Street and Edwards Road. A half-mile paved walking trail was built in 2015, along with a network of graveled trails in the interior. The park has been the recipient of many new trees to create a young arboretum. It has a picnic shelter, basketball court, playground equipment and a large paved gathering area.

Main Street Park — Main Street Park is located in downtown Monmouth. It is one full city block and features a permanent amphitheater, gazebo, playground, picnic tables, pathways and a water fountain.

Monmouth Recreational Park — Monmouth Recreational Park is located off Hogan Road and west of the City Public Works Department headquarters. It has fields for softball and baseball, two tennis courts and restrooms.

Winegar Park — Winegar Park is located at Ecols Street and Suzanna Avenue. It has a basketball court, playground, benches and pathways.

"Pocket Parks" — Monmouth has four mini parks that are .67 acres or smaller. Southgate Park at Southgate Drive and Josephine Street has a basketball court, benches and a playground. La Mesa Park is east of Heffley Street and south of Bentley Street. It has a basketball court, benches and a playground. Whitesell Park is at the western end of Catherine Court. It has a basketball court, benches and a playground. Marr Park is at Jackson Street and Marr Court. It has a playground, horseshoe pits and a small, landscaped garden.

Monmouth

OREGON

WHERE GREAT THINGS GROW



JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL EVENTS

MAY - SEPT	Cultural Harvest Collective Market
JULY	4th of July Celebration
JULY - AUG	Music in the Park
SEPTEMBER	WOU Welcome Celebration
OCTOBER	History & Mystery
OCTOBER	MI Town Halloween
DECEMBER	Making Spirits Bright



Falls City

"A destination for hidden adventures"

TJ BAILY

Mayor of Falls City

Hidden away in the Coast Range forest, Falls City provides many opportunities to those seeking a new adventure.

Falls City is famous for its namesake falls on the Little Luckiamute River that provides an opportunity for people to cool off during the hot summer months. People from around the state come to the falls to swim, relax, and even jump off the cliffs into the awaiting chilling, yet refreshing, water below.

Falls City is also the gateway to Valley of the Giants, an old growth forest preserve with multiple hiking paths through towering 450-year-old Douglas fir trees. It is easy to lose track of time admiring this hidden gem, so be sure to bring a hearty supply of food and water and check to be sure it's open as times vary.

Just a few miles to the west of Falls City is Black Rock Mountain Bike Area. Local mountain bikers have created this world-class network of free-ride trails for beginners to experienced mountain riders using the natural landscape and timber from fallen fir trees. Black Rock Mountain Bike Area provides hand-built berms, gap jumps and other features for those looking for adventure. For the non-mountain bike riders, the logging road loops around the mountain, providing a well-groomed steady uphill hike in the majestic forest. Those who make it to

the top will be treated to a breathtaking view of the valley below.

For those looking to extend the July 4th holiday, Falls City residents and owners of The Boondocks - Lori Sickles and Laura Britton - sponsor the Fourth of July Summer Celebration.

Watch our community social media pages for the date, which changes year to year. You will not want to miss the festivities, which have included a local parade, concerts in the local park, free barbecue lunch, and fun fair treats like face painting and cotton candy. There is nothing like the 4th of July party in a small, historic town like Falls City.

August is Pride month in Falls City. Local volunteers work with the city to host an all-inclusive, community weekend event celebrating all members of the LGBTQ+ community, advocates and friends. Falls City Pride is celebrated during the month of August, in part to extend celebrations throughout the summer.

After you have completed your adventures, Falls City provides has one establishment for nourishment. The Boondocks is a small town bar and grill with a rustic atmosphere. Their extensive menu includes award winning steaks and nightly specials. The Boondocks is family friendly providing delicious food for all ages.

Falls City welcomes all Polk County residents and families to enjoy the many amenities in our amazing town.

Info.

Population: 1,065.

Elevation: 370 feet above sea level.

City Hall: 299 Mill St.,

503-787-3631,

www.fallscityoregon.gov.

Michael Harding Memorial

Park — Michael Harding Memorial Park is on the south side of the Little Luckiamute River falls. It is named for a city clerk who was killed in an accident in 1976.

George Kitchen Memorial

Park — George Kitchen Memorial Park, also known as Upper Park, is located just off Park Street. It has a large gazebo and access to electricity.

Fay Wilson Memorial

Park — Fay Wilson Memorial Park runs alongside the Little Luckiamute River opposite City Hall. It is also known as Riverside Park and Lower Park.

Did you know Falls City puts out a monthly newsletter every month? It is packed with a lot of information regarding the community, events, and all sorts of stuff. Visit <https://www.fallscityoregon.gov/newsletters>.





Western Oregon University

A legacy of higher education excellence lives on in the heart of Polk County

The largest institute of higher education between Portland State University and Oregon State University can be found in Polk County. Western Oregon University in Monmouth had a total enrollment of 3,951 according to the latest figures.

WOU has made great gains since the early 1980s, when it avoided being closed. During a period of rough financial times then, some leaders believed discontinuing the state's regional colleges would help the state financially recover.

However, the regional colleges (they were not designated as universities then) and the state legislators representing them turned doubters' 180 (degrees), getting them to believe the institutions were a necessary investment for Oregon.

Western is the state's oldest public

institution of higher learning. It began as Monmouth University in 1856, soon was acquired by the state, and went through several other names before becoming Western Oregon University.

WOU originally was primarily a teachers' college, and it remains strong in education. As a university, it now has the College of Education and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, as well as a satellite campus for the nursing program of Oregon Health and Science University.

The College of Education consists of the Division of Education and Leadership, the Division of Deaf Studies, and the Division of Health and Exercise Science.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences offers 60 majors in seven academic divisions: behavioral sciences, business and economics,

computer science, creative arts, humanities, natural sciences and mathematics, and social science.

It offers Bachelor of Arts, Science and Music, through the College of Education and the College of Liberal Arts, as well as master of science in education and master of arts in teaching degrees.

For those interested in lifelong learning, WOU offers speaker series in a variety of subjects.

Besides academics, Western plays a variety of sports in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference, which is in Division II of the NCAA.

Not to be forgotten are study abroad programs, health and wellness programs, financial aid possibilities, and student clubs.

THINGS TO DO





WELCOME!

to the Cities of Monmouth & Independence!



Both communities are special, and we welcome all visitors and residents to enjoy the place we love. We are very fortunate to have the Willamette River at one end and Western Oregon University at the other. While in the area, please take advantage of all the outdoor activities, WOU performances, strolling through the shops, taking a MI Trolley ride, and eating at one of the many restaurants or food trucks in the area.

Independence is well known for its 4th of July festivities at Riverview Park with Monmouth celebrating as well at their Main Street Park. Also on the 4th, both towns come together with the Rotary organized parade starting at WOU and making its way down to the end of Main Street in Independence.

Summer brings more entertainment with the MBA organized Music in the Park on Wednesdays and the very popular River's Edge Music series at the park on Fridays.

The MI Visitor's Center will be finishing the Minet Utility Box Project, the first public art project in both towns, by mid-summer and will be a fun outing for individuals and families to go view.

Our communities take pride in the youth in the area and have celebrated great accomplishments in sports, computer programming, art, and growing CTE programs at Central High School. We are caring communities where we support each other, and families can grow. We are committed to the preservation of parks, riverfront, farmland, and we support our small businesses.

Please enjoy your stay whether it is short term, or you plan on making this area your permanent home.

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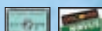


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Owner Rachel Greco produces a Scrapbasket Newsletter and Grandma Gazette each month, in addition to writing for the Country Register newspaper. She has produced many different books and patterns filled with quilt blocks and quilt patterns and continues to e-mail "gab sheets" to over 18,000 world-wide customers each week.

We survived the pandemic by giving away elastic to anyone who was making face masks and by adding curbside service to our mail order and in-store shopping. Today, twenty-eight years after opening, Grandma's Attic is a traditional quilt shop with a reputation for high quality fabrics, informative history classes, and tons of fun and laughter.

Chamber and Visitors center have a new location to serve our community



Reunited and it feels so good! In 2023, with the support of the city of Dallas, the Dallas area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center reunited to promote and celebrate the amenities of our local community! Your Chamber of Commerce is here to spark growth in our businesses and community.

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Your Visitors Center is thrilled to open our new location at 184 SE Oak St late spring/early summer 2025. You will also see us at the Farmer's Market on the first and third Saturdays of each month May through October and are excited to bring a new event, Bigfoot, BBQ & Brews to our community this fall!

We are working closely with partners



TARA TOWNLEY

Executive Director & Program Manager

like the Dallas Downtown Association, the Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce, Travel Salem, Travel Oregon and similar organizations, to share the many activities and opportunities offered in the Dallas and Polk area(s).



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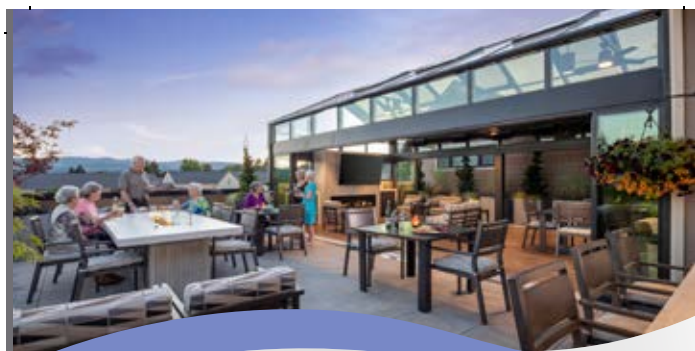
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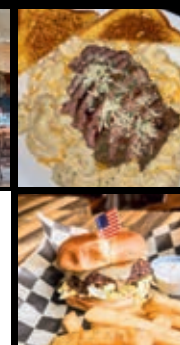
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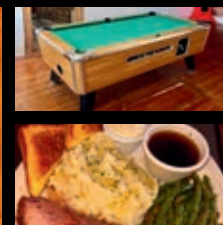
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Take a guided walk

Through history at reopened Brunk House

By **DAVID HAYES**
Itemizer-Observer

As commuters busily go about their day driving along Highway 22, little do they know the bit of history that awaits them just east of Oak Knoll Golf Course.

The centerpiece of the Brunk Farmstead, once a sprawling 1,100 acres now whittled down to 1.12 acres, sits on one of Polk County's oldest remaining two-story wooden homes. The Brunk House, now owned by the Polk County Historical Society, was once home to three generations of the Brunk family.

The Brunks had originally journeyed west in 1849 to take up a Donation Land Claim in an area that would eventually become the Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge. Proving too marshy for farming, Harrison sold the land and purchased the land claim of A.C.R. Shaw. Their growing family lived in a log cabin until the main home was

finished Nov. 7, 1861. Daughter Leora Frances Brunk was the only one of 12 children actually born in the home.

The Brunks raised wheat and other grains, flowers, apples, cherries and peaches. The orchard of filbert trees that still stands behind the Brunk House is owned today by the Walker family.

The upstairs can be viewed by tourists, or tour guides will lead visitors through the small spaces by today's standards, which contain a sewing room, guest and master bedrooms and a nursery, before ending in the since expanded kitchen. Throughout, the home is stocked with some original items from the Brunks, like their sizable kitchen tables, and re-creations, like the rope frame bed shipped out from Missouri.

The Brunk Farm was named a Century Farm in 1958. In addition, in 1978, it was designated as a National Historic Site and recognized as a Polk County landmark.

The granary and outhouse are original structures of the farm. The orchard house was relocated nearer the main house and is now used as the visitor center and souvenir shop. The garage was originally a carriage house. And the machine shed, built only to look old, houses the blacksmith shop, which is home to monthly classes to create your own railroad spike knife.

Located at 5705 Highway 22 W. Brunk House farmstead tours are Fridays and Saturdays, on the hour from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, go to www.polkcountyhistoricalsociety.org/brunk-house.

For more info:

Visit www.polkcountyhistoricalsociety.org/brunk-house.



Polk County Historical Society



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Crush your wine tour in Polk County



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

A choice of three luxurious rides await those who sign up with Crush Wine Tours. Owner John Bracken said bringing wine and wine lovers together for memorable experiences is a passion of his.

By LANCE MASTERSON
For the Itemizer-Observer

With more than 30 vineyards in Polk County and a mind blowing 800 throughout the Willamette Valley, an oenophile would need someone to guide them to local hot spots. That's where John Bracken comes in.

Bracken no longer owns Crush Wine Bar & Tasting Room, which has only allowed him to amp up his efforts to bring wine and wine lovers together for more moving experiences.

Bracken sold Crush Wine Bar & Tasting Room last year thus freeing him to focus on Wine Crush Tours.

"Whatever it is that you got to do, that you want to do on your own,

make sure that you love it, that you're passionate about it. Because you're going to go through some tough times that will test you to your core," he said. "And if you don't love what you're doing, you won't get through the tough times."

Bracken knows about tough times, especially as it relates to business, given the restaurant was purchased a year before COVID.

In that first year, "we turned (the restaurant) around and then we had COVID immediately after. So what I realized is that I didn't love the restaurant as much as I loved the tours," he said.

Bracken intends to grow the tours now that he has more time to do

so. He added a limocoach to a fleet that already included a 14-passenger limo-bus and 8-passenger limousine.

"The limo-bus is something we've had since 2019. We started the business with that. Later that same year we bought a stretch limo for smaller groups," Bracken said. "And then last year we added the big limocoach."

The limocoach is shorter than a Greyhound bus, but large enough to carry 25 passengers and their luggage.

The limocoach "has grown our capacity... yet is still small enough to get in and out of tight winery parking lots and driveways," Bracken said. "It's also large enough to transport large groups of people, and their luggage, to and from the Portland airport."

First-time guests quickly learn these aren't your usual clunky transport vehicles. Bracken describes the tours as "high on style."

According to the company's website, amenities in the rides include:

Stretch limousine: powerful stereo system, three access doors to prevent scooting across seats, and complimentary water bottles.

Limo-bus: Classy, tall ceilings, handrails, big screen TVs, powerful stereo system, and complimentary water bottles and ice.

Limocoach: Easy step up into vehicle, handrails, three flat screen TVs, powerful stereo system, underneath storage for luggage and coolers, and complimentary water bottles and ice.

Another plus is that parties don't need to appoint a designated driver. So everyone can join in the fun.

There are differences in the kinds of tours offered.

"One tour is the private kind. We come to pick you up wherever you want to get picked up, at home or at a restaurant. The place you want to wind up at the end of the tour, where you can eat, drink some water, and sober up," Bracken said.

The other option, the joinable-tour, offers the possibility of co-mingling. It's perfect for people who enjoy meeting new people.

"The join-able tour program is public. Anyone can sign up for seats. Three seats. Four seats. However many seats they need, for their tour group," Bracken said, noting vacant seats

are made available to other parties.

According to Bracken, the bus leaves whether there are two people on board for the join-able tour, or if it's at capacity with 14 people.

Each join-able tour generally stops at three wineries. Though with 24 wineries to choose from, rarely does a guest hit the same winery twice if they go on multiple tours.

Bracken decided to focus more on tours than a brick-and-mortar restaurant because it aligns with his idea of experiencing more of the region's offerings.

"Finding out that the tours were in line with my passion is one of the main drivers for me. I want to do well and be successful. I also want to experience as much as I can that this world has to offer," Bracken stated in an earlier interview.

Then there's the joy that comes with helping others pursue their own desires.

"It dawned on me one day that the tours are in line with that; they are an experience and something that will create memories," he added in that same interview. "For some people, it may be a once-in-a-lifetime event; for others, it may be something they start doing every birthday because they love it so much."

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Left to Right: Mark (owner) & Dusty



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Polk County hosts a plethora of farmers markets

If anything else, the spring and fall seasons in Polk County are best represented by the farmers markets. Wherever your destination, take some time to check out the wares from farm fresh produce to hand-made goods a market this season.

Independence

The Original Independence Farmers Market is a community farmers market that began in 1993. The market was first located near the Willamette River in Independence Oregon. When the city built the amphitheater, the market moved to the Sterling Bank parking lot at the corner of Highway 51 and Main Street where it has remained for the past 10 years. It has since become known as the Umpqua Bank parking lot, located at 302 South Main St.

The Independence Market runs from April through November, hosting a variety of vendors who offer a variety of fresh produce, plants, cut flowers, honey, jams, jellies, pickles, eggs, mushrooms, garden art, clothing items, popcorn, lamb, soap, tamales, jewelry, and handcrafted items. The market is open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

With the success of the Original Independence Farmers Market, a second one opened up, Independence Riverview Saturday Market. Set up along the boardwalk on Main Street in front of Riverview Park, the market regularly fills its space for 17 vendors, featuring fresh produce, handmade crafts, local delicacies, and “vibrant community spirit.”



The market runs May through September, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Dallas Farmers Market

The city of Dallas welcomed back its farmers market in 2024. Like many other ventures, Dallas's Farmers Market fell victim to the COVID pandemic and was cancelled in 2020. But after a growing buzz in the community for the need for farm fresh food, the city of Dallas, the Dallas Downtown Association and the Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce combined forces to bring back the market.

Now in its second year, Dallas Farmers Market will run every first and third Saturday of the month from May to October. It now boasts 17 vendors signed up. Overall, the Dallas Farmers Market will have 12 new vendors joining as the season progresses, including some local farms.

“Last year, people were really excited, they were just hoping to see some more veggies,” said Mikayla Slawosky, Dallas community development coordinator. “We heard that and today we have about five vendors selling produce.”

For those shoppers looking for alter-

native shopping methods, Slawosky said there are vendors who accept SNAP and Double Up Food Buck and accept Farm Direct Nutrition Food Vouchers.

Monmouth

West Salem micro-farmer Nikita Vincent combined the recreation and the feel of community, gathering after a Sunday church service with a gathering place for BIPOC vendors into one new event, the Cultural Harvest Collective, that debuted May 4 at City Park in Monmouth.

It's a vendor's market designed to attract underrepresented people of color a place to sell their wares.

"That's why I wanted to do a BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) vendor market because I really feel when I moved down here to the Mid Willamette Valley that there was really good opportunity to get people of color in the area we could all gather and all come together in a community on a Sunday," Vincent said.

She's tried to link up with other farmers and find space to run her own micro farm. Then she came upon the idea of a collective and found a gracious host in the city of Monmouth.

"There's all sorts of stuff happening down here in Willamette Valley. We just saw that Monmouth had a great opportunity with Western Oregon University there. And just the city in general.

The community loved the pop ups last year. That's why we decided to go full seasonal. We had nothing but welcoming arms and a lot of openness to the concept," she said.

The Cultural Harvest Collective will be every Sunday through Oct. 26 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at City Park. Vincent plans to add other activities throughout the season, including car meets and a skate parade. She said they're still looking for artists and fresh produce vendors. To apply for a vendor's table at the market, go to Cultural Harvest Collective's Instagram page and click on

the link for the application.

West Salem

Can't wait for the weekend for farm to table fresh offerings? Then the West Salem Thursday market is for you. Located at 1260 Edgewater St NW, the market features between 15-20 vendors (but can accommodate up to 30) providing handmade, handcrafted or homegrown products, sharing the fresh bounty and local products from the Mid-Willamette Valley.

Executive Director Kirsten Bachmeier said that while the West Salem Thursday Farmers Market doesn't have a specific theme, they do try to make it a one-shop stop for all your needs.

"We try to make the vendors as close as possible," she said. "So, you'll be out and about to get your fruits, your veggies, your body care, soaps and coffee, all at one time."

The market runs from May to September, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

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The autumn is especially beautiful, with the leaves changing into bright colors. However, any time of year you visit this quiet, tucked-away slice of nature is a delight. It can get muddy, so make sure to wear proper footwear.

As you meander through the winding trails, you'll be welcomed along your walk or run by native shrubs, flowers and trees. Most have been planted by

volunteers, working to repair the habitat to its natural state. Others, such as purple camas, have growth that predates the settlers who came after.

Birdwatchers come prepared - you'll spot hummingbirds, red-breasted sapsuckers, white-crown sparrows and redbird hawks, depending on the time of year. The eagle-eyed can also find the less common feathered friends - including nesting wood duck, ruffed grouse, Western screech-owl, five woodpecker species, as well as red-eyed vireos and band-tailed pigeon populations.

Several grassland species of birds can also be seen nesting within the Luckiamute natural area, such as the Oregon vesper sparrow and streaked horn larks, both of which are declining in number.

Another sensitive species here is the Western Pond Turtle, in decline due to habitat loss.

For those who enjoy outdoor activities, be sure to try geocaching — a kind of treasure hunt using a set of clues, a map and/or GPS coordinates. When you find the cache, of which there are a few planted in the Luckiamute State Natural Area, log your name in the cache book. If you take some of the loot, be sure to leave something too, for the next geocacher to find.

The loop from the northern trailhead is about two miles, but additional trails connect with it, taking hikers and joggers to the confluence of three rivers, where the Santiam and the Luckiamute meet the Willamette. Other trails have canoe access or give hikers a chance to explore the forest deeper.

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Uncovering the Legends and Ghosts

of Monmouth and Independence.

By **DEREK BRATTON**
Itemizer-Observer

The concept of ghosts may not be new, but the way they are portrayed in movies and popular culture often revolves around horror and fear. However, in Monmouth and Independence, the intertwined cities told a different tale. The Ghost Walk of Independence and the History and Mystery of Monmouth has taken an approach like no other.

Former Independence Mayor John McArdle writes in the book *Haunted Independence*: “Human history is about stories and tales of adventure, people and events told person to person over generations. In Independence, our history is wrapped up in the stories told - neighbor to friend, resident to visitor, parent to child, handed down from one generation to another.”

As the legends of Monmouth and the ghosts of Independence intertwined these two towns, it's no surprise that they play a significant role in bringing people together. The concept of the spiritual world is not meant to be frightening but rather a way to honor and remember those who have come before us and those who may still be around.

The Independence Ghost Walk started in 2002, according to Marilyn Morton, author of “Haunted Independence Oregon.”

“The first night was towards the end of September in 2002. I would have considered it a success if there had been 30 or 40 people. There were 310 guests with three stops. The stops were the Masonic Lodge, The hardware store underneath it and Maxine's which is right up on top of Archers,” said Morton. “I was amazed at how many people came; it has just grown since then. This year we printed 375 maps, and we were trying to hand them out one to every five people or so. So, that's about 2,000 people.”

Unlike traditional ghost walks that focus on scaring and shocking their audience, the Monmouth History and Mystery event was a different take on the traditional ghost walk.

Monmouth, with its quaint streets and friendly residents, may seem like any other small town in America. But beneath its charming façade lies a dark history that few know about.

Historical nonfiction writer Amy Lemco assembled the Monmouth History and Mystery tour and aims to shed light on

the town's hidden past. Lemco's extensive research and compelling storytelling brought visitors on a journey through Monmouth's rich history.

One of the most intriguing stories told on the tour is that of a spirit who is said to reside at Western Oregon University. However, instead of focusing solely on paranormal activity, Lemco's tour delves into other aspects of Monmouth's past that are equally fascinating.

The tour uncovers lesser-known facts and events, from the MI railroad - which once ran 2.5 miles from Monmouth to Independence - to soldiers who lied about their age to enlist in the military during World War II. But it doesn't shy away from darker tales either, such as stories of murder read by Storyteller Jon Ho, who shares a chilling legend of a Chinese detective who arrived in Monmouth after a series of gruesome murders in 1887. This haunting story adds an eerie touch to the overall experience, making it an unforgettable adventure going down the rabbit hole of time.

Lemco said she hopes this tradition keeps going and may draw interest in people to research their own family history.



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Wet and wild

Dallas Aquatic Center gets by with a little help from its Friends

BY DAVID HAYES

I-O editor

When the city of Dallas considered selling its aquatic center in 2018 to the YMCA during a round of budget belt tightening, a group of long-time residents banded together to prevent that from happening.

However, rather than just opposing the city's actions, they formed the nonprofit Friends of the Dallas Aquatic Center to work with the city to help keep it operating. Leading the charge is president Anne Hurd, who said since the group got involved, they've raised \$181,000 to help with the maintenance costs of operating the Dallas Aquatic Center.

"We've been very fortunate that people love the pool so much that they really help us," Hurd said.

But don't just take her word for it. Consider the testimonials of 18 community members in the Friends latest social media project, Patrons Speak, posted on their website, <https://fdacoregon.org> and their YouTube channel, Friends of the Dallas Oregon Aquatic Center.

For example, Donn, a senior citizen, said the Aquatic Center was one of the key factors he and his wife moved to Dallas to spend their retirement years. When he recently started exhibiting symptoms of neuropathy in his left foot, he utilized the center's therapy pool.

"I started doing a regular workout in the water for myself to mitigate those symptoms, three days a week," Donn shared in his video.

He was happy to say the symptoms completely reversed and have not returned at all after starting the water therapy.

"I just want you to know this aquatic center makes a difference in my quality of life every single day," Donn added. If you don't know it, the Dallas Aquatic Center is one of the jewels in the crown of Dallas, Oregon."

However, now in its 25th year of operation, the jewel is in constant need of repair.

The Friends of the Aquatic Center initially pledged to raise \$50,000 to offset the costs of upkeep. Hurd said while they have fallen short of that goal, their contributions have been substantial. She said several larger memorials totaling \$30,000 have filled the gaps, including \$10,000 to pay for a new therapy/ADA lift into the pool, \$14,000 to help install a new pump for the "lazy river" pool, and \$27,000 for a new computer to regulate all the pools' heating systems.

The list of maintenance projects keep popping up all the time, Hurd said, requiring a reshuffling of priorities. The need to replace sand filters was put on the back burner when a leaking pipe in the mechanical room and the second boiler needed attention, which it got with a fix rather than a replacement. And most recently, the heat exchangers also need replacing, so the kiddie pool will have cold water in it until that's accomplished.

"Things just crop up all the time that need money thrown at it all the time," Hurd said.

The Friends are required to keep \$10,000 in its account for operational costs. Any time that amount accrues above \$15,000, the group takes out \$5,000 to give to the city to deposit into a trust fund which it uses to help pay its end of repair costs.

David Morelli, Friends treasurer since the beginning, said Initially, the city raised franchise fees to pay for the pool's approximately \$1 million operational costs.

"That raised about 50 percent of the costs, which is more than most other pools, which usually muster only 25 percent. But the city still had to pick up the remaining 50 percent," Morelli explained. "But since the Friends have come in and picked up the



maintenance costs, that has helped prevent the city from dipping into its operating budget."

Jennifer Ward, city of Dallas administration services manager, said the contributions from the Friends of the Aquatic Center have been critical. She explained there have been many times where she just didn't know how they would have been able to stay open and operate all five pools without them.

"From my perspective, the maintenance that is required on any pool requires a lot of expenses, including chemicals, filters, pumps, and a lot of the infrastructure. We have five pools. All have their own pumps and filters idiosyncrasies that need to be addressed," Ward said.

She explained when the administration does capital planning for the aquatic center, they look at large projects of \$10,000 or more they can plan for or know need to be taken care of coming down the pipeline. But with five pools and something in constant need of attention, Ward said she doesn't have the budget or capital to be able to afford to keep up with these costs. And that's where these guys come in.

More info:

Pool hours and swimming times vary from the different seasons and are available at the DAC's website www.dallasor.gov/aquaticcenter or call (503) 623-9715. The Dallas Aquatic Center is located at 1005 SE LaCreole Dr.

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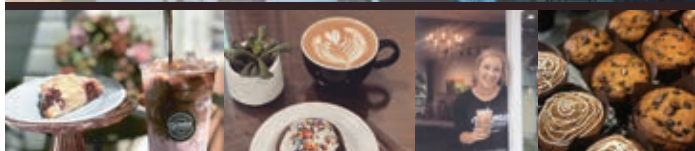


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Dallas is collectors paradise

The city of Dallas has become ground zero for collectors. Over the past year, three stores have opened, each offering items sought after by different segments of pop culture curios.

Here's a quick look at them and the people behind the collections.

Everything Blaine Likes And Nothing Else

362 Main St., Suite No. 4, Dallas
Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday.
(503) 420-4120

Filled to the brim with action figures, music memorabilia, vintage clothing, classic video games and consoles, CDs, toys and so much more, Everything Blaine Likes is one of those kinds of marketplaces where a customer walks in not knowing what they want until they see it.

Blaine Gorze runs the collectibles store with his wife Justine. Now in his 30s, Blaine has been into collecting since his middle school years when he inherited his love of collecting comics from his stepfather.

"That was when I switched from kid playing with toys to kid collecting toys," Blaine said, chatting from the comfy lounge chairs placed before vintage consoles hooked up to a TV in the center of his store. He invites any kid to try out a game there before, or after, purchase.

By the time he and Justine got married and had their daughter, they had a storage unit full of toys and were still hitting up the "OG" collection stores in Portland.

Armed with a big enough collection, they set up their own booths at their first toy show in Vancouver.

"My first show I sold a lot. It was crazy. I learned how much money you could make and learned how not to be impulsive and sell all your stuff right away," Blaine said. "There were a lot of experienced sellers and collectors."

What started as hobby was growing into a business.

"When I originally did Everything that Blaine Likes, the idea was to buy stuff that wasn't just



toys. We've got furniture in here, all that stuff (pointing towards a section of the store) is made by Justine's brother. I like cool lamps, guitars, amps, drum sets. I wanted something more than a toy store. Jewelry," he said.

But he's not a pawn shop. If a customer comes in with something, it's got to really pique his interest.

"Essentially, I won't buy everything that comes in, but I'm not against it either. If someone rolls in with a grand piano, if we have room for it, I might buy it," he said.

In their travels, Blaine said he witnessed a lot of youth in and around Dallas just walking places with really nowhere to go. He hopes Everything Blaine Likes gives them a destination.

"I was skateboarder growing up. We all hung out at the skate shop. Kids now have no shops to hang out at except Walmart," he said.

Justine added they hope to promote other local vendors and businesses they've met in their journeys to garage and estate sales.

"We do source out and try to support local, other businesses try to get their products in here, too," she said.

"Like, I knew nothing about Pokémon cards before. But we have a vendor who offers them, so hopefully people will be bringing theirs in for sale and hopefully I'll be buying them," Blaine

added.

Kujo's Collectables

289 E. Ellendale Ave., Suite 402
Hours: Tuesday – Thursday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tuesday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Friday and Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday
Facebook – Kujo's Collectables LLC

Krystle Sanchez has joined a growing fraternity of niche store owners in Dallas catering to the collectibles crowd with Kujo's Collectables.

Kujo's Collectables is an outgrowth of her own obsession with Pokémon. The thought of doing something with her growing collection had its seeds about four to five months ago, she said.

"I'm a pretty big Pokémon collector and there was nowhere in town, like, Walmart was always sold out. So, the next closest place you had to go to was Salem," Sanchez said. "I had a huge collection myself, duplicates and things like that. Oh, what can I do to sell them? Then just decided to start my own business selling them."

"I kind of said it as a joke. 'Maybe I should just open my own place. Cause there's nowhere in town to get them. Next thing I know, within an hour I was registering a business. It came to this," Sanchez said.

She started small, offering up her duplicates on a stand in her other business, Jungle Pet Sup-

ply. Then she expanded by offering up a little selection at Everything Blaine Likes. Then the suite next door to Jungle Pet came available and she decided to take a leap of faith.

By the turnout at the grand opening, Sanchez tapped into a hidden need within the collectables community.

"Pokémon is one of the biggest trading cards out there right now. So, it is more popular than some of the other trading cards. A lot of people are into UVO (UniVerse), One Piece, Garbage Pail Kids, they're still fun," Sanchez said. "A new one that just came out are the Elestrals. It's brand new to TCG (trading card games). A lot of people seem to like them. I'll definitely be expanding. Eventually I want to have all the trading cards in."

She filled out the rest of her shelf space with nostalgic candy (like candy cigarettes) and other items related to the trading card packs.

The feedback from her new customers was all positive.

"They liked my selection. Liked how my store was open. There's been a lot of card shops where everything is either very small or cramped. They loved that it's not just trading cards; I also have candy, key chains, toys, and sell stuff for your cards, sleeves and binders and playmats," Sanchez said.

"I kind of want to be the shop where everybody finds the things that I like," she added. "I love that Mythic Finds has the tables to go play on. Because a lot of people want a place to go learn to play games," Sanchez said.

Mythic Finds

643 SE Jefferson St.

Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-9 p.m.,

Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Closed Wednesdays and Fridays

David and Serenity Clay are the unlikely youthful proprietors of what they hope is Dallas's newest hot gathering spot, Mythic Finds.

"We knew Dallas really needed a spot for younger people, but older people, too, to come hang out, especially during winter when there's not a lot to do," said David, 22. "I remember I used to go to the park every summer. Then winter would hit, and I didn't really want to go to the park anymore. It's cold!"

David said their business has a little bit of everything to set itself apart from the others. Most of their inventory is newer collectibles from various vendors, as opposed to the older keepsakes that can be found at Everything Blaine Likes.

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"We work with Blaine's really closely. They're really great people," David said. "They're more geared toward older collectibles, like G.I. Joe's, stuff that's been out for a while. We specialize in newer things, generally. But we have some older things. It's sorta Ying-Yang, so it works out really well."

He added they bolster their inventory through Aliance, which supplies many of the card shops in the Pacific Northwest, to get all their own card game related things.

Of all the collectibles on their shelves, David admits he most covets their light saber collection.

"I love Star Wars. So, we have light sabers that range from beginner grade, full metal, durable, can bang them around and have fun," he explained. "Then we go all the way up to replica grade where you display them if you have a little more money to spend. Such as one-to-one recreation of Darth Vader's light saber from the movie."

In addition to their inventory, Mythic Finds has space to play the popular tabletop card and board games. They have about eight tables set up with space for more should demand call for it. They also have two TVs set up to plug in a video game or watch a movie, or tune the TV to a streaming network, from Disney + to Hulu.

The Clays also have regularly scheduled event nights, such as Lego Monday nights, where customers are urged to come in, take out a set of Legos and build something epic to place on the display shelf for the rest of the week. They also have nights for groups to play Magic, Pokémon, Hero Clicks and D&D.

"We're trying to attract anybody who has something they're interested in they like to collect, play around with, have a good time," David said.

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DISCOVER





Cross Creek designed with all golfers in mind

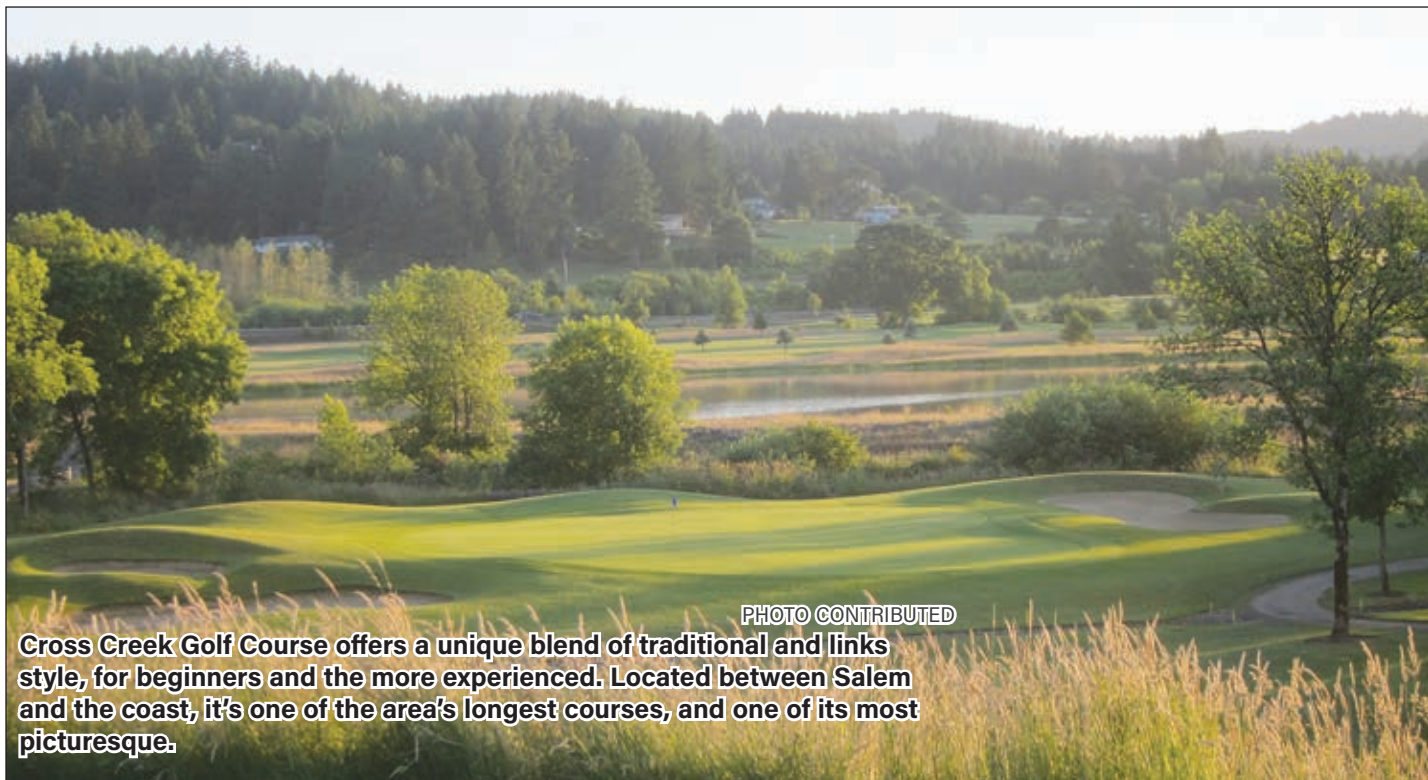


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Cross Creek Golf Course offers a unique blend of traditional and links style, for beginners and the more experienced. Located between Salem and the coast, it's one of the area's longest courses, and one of its most picturesque.

By LANCE MASTERSON
For The Itemizer-Observer

Turn's out, there's a downside to owning your own golf course.

Tim and Kathy Tarpley know this better than most. The Tarpleys own and manage Cross Creek Golf Course near Dallas, yet rarely are they able to enjoy the fruit of their labors.

"We're better at running golf courses than we are at golfing," Kathy said. "Besides, we don't have time for it."

That's too bad, because in Cross Creek they have a course that has it all: challenges, beauty and space. Plus, it's fun for experienced and beginning golfers alike.

Depending on tees, the 18-hole course varies in length from 4,827 to 6,884 yards. A par 72, the course combines traditional and links style golf, and sits on 210 acres.

"It's on almost too much land. There's a lot of space in-between the holes. So

we don't have that up and back with the (next hole over)," Tim said. "So, in a lot of ways, the course can be forgiving. In other ways, we've got the tall grass that can make it more challenging."

Water poses its own challenges.

"You cross the creek multiple times, and then there's four ponds out there," Tim said.

There's more elevation gains and steeper climbs on the back nine then there is on the front nine. But the ups-and-downs are manageable.

"We don't consider it a hilly course. But for the Salem area, some say it is," Kathy said.

Cross Creek is on Highway 22, halfway between Salem and Spirit Mountain Casino. It's become a destination, given its ideal location.

"We bring golfers in from everywhere. We're a good meeting point for people coming from north and south," Kathy

said.

Also from west to east.

"We'll get a lot of beach traffic when the weather's not great there," Tim added. "They'll come inland."

Tim played some golf while in high school, but then took a break from the sport. That changed when he started dating Kathy. Changed even more after they got married. They bought their first course in Waldport.

"We bought a course in '88, and that kind of ended the time we had to play," Tim said.

In purchasing their course, the Tarpleys continued a tradition. At one time, Kathy's family owned eight courses in Oregon. Now, the family owns six, she said.

The Tarpleys have owned the Cross Creek site since it was nothing more than bare land and an idea.

"We bought the land in '96 and

opened the front nine in '98," Tim said. "As for the back nine, it opened in 2005."

Bill Robinson was the course architect. He is well known in the industry, having designed courses throughout the United States and Canada. Sandpines Golf Links in Florence, OGA Golf Course in Woodburn, and Chehalem Glenn Golf Club in Newberg are among his many designs.

Despite Robinson's rep, the Tarpleys were bold enough to alter his original artistry.

"We've kind of done a bit of redesigning on our own to make it a little easier for new golfers," Tim said. "But it's still got the length and challenges for the better golfers."

Recent alterations also help bring families together.

"And that's the thing about golf that I

love. I took my 12-year-old granddaughter out, and we both had so much fun," Kathy said. "How many sporting events can do that? Golf is multigenerational."

Reservations for tee times are recommended.

Ryan Friedley is course superintendent; Ken Dankenbring is the golf instructor.

Cross Creek is one of three public courses in Polk County. The other two are Oak Knoll Golf Course near Independence and Dallas Golf Club in Dallas.

Here's more information on all three Polk County golf courses:

Cross Creek Golf Course

Address: 13935 Highway 22, Dallas

Holes: 18

Driving range: Yes

Phone: (503) 623-6666
Website: crosscreekgc.com

Dallas Golf Club

Address: 16845 Orrs Corner Road,
Dallas

Holes: 9

Driving range: Yes

Phone: (503) 623-6832

Website: dallasgolfclub.wixsite.com/dallasgolfclub/contact-us

Oak Knoll Golf Course and Driving Range

Address: 6335 Highway 22, Independence

Holes: 18

Driving range: Yes

Phone: (503) 378-0344

Website: oakknollgolfclub.com



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The places to play

Monmouth Parks

Richard Bunse, a Monmouth artist whose disability has put him in a wheelchair, sits in the shade at Marr Park at the west end of Jackson Street, a block from his house.

"This is my favorite park," he said. "It's so quiet."

He points at the accessible ramps and the swing set, which has one molded plastic seat with a safety harness for special needs children.

Bunse is not the only one to enjoy Monmouth's public parks, some of which are known only to the neighbors who live nearby. While the Main Street's splash pad and the dog park and the skate park on Monmouth Avenue get the most visits, according to Russ Cooper, Monmouth's Public Works Director, the paths, monkey bars and climbing structures in its ten neighborhood parks await visitors of all ages and abilities.

In addition to picnicking, playing and just relaxing, four of Monmouth's park facilities — The gazebos and shelters at Main Street Park, Madrona and Gentle Woods parks and the Main Street amphitheater — are also available to rent for weddings, family reunions, plays, concerts and other gatherings. While the rental doesn't allow exclusive access to the entire park, rentals allow folks to celebrate or perform in a facility maintained by Monmouth crews.

The continuing development of Monmouth's park space is no accident. Cooper said Monmouth's parks are guided by a citizen Parks and Recreation Committee and a plan developed with input from Monmouth

citizens. The Monmouth Parks Master Plan's 176 pages lay out future park properties to accommodate the city's growing population. Plans call for more than \$10 million to improve, purchase and maintain Monmouth parks through 2030, depending on resources. Half that amount is designated for new park purchases.

Who pays for the parks? In the past, developers were required to set aside a percentage of land on which the city created and maintained a park. Many of the city's neighborhood parks were created under this process. Today, the process is still supported by developers through System Development Fees, but the city's long-range plan now drives park creation, expansion and maintenance.

At Marr Park, Cooper spreads out the plan that includes fold out maps. One of these maps the distance Monmouth residents might have to walk to their nearest park. Based on data in that map, southwest and northeast Monmouth may be next in line for new parks, although no specific land has been purchased, Cooper said.

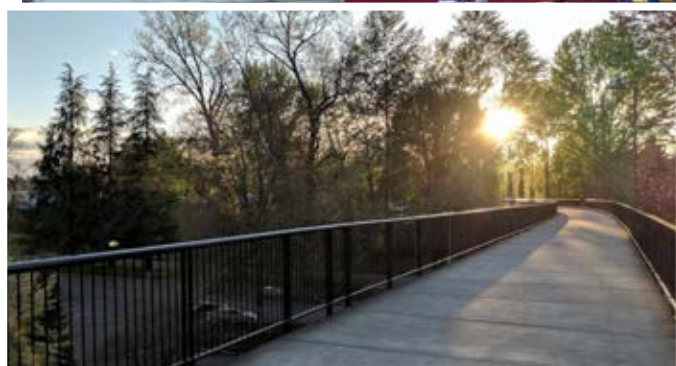
Long-range planning also allows the city to work with partners on park projects ranging from interpretive plaques planned for the wetland boardwalk north in the new Monmouth Recreational Park, to the potential pickleball courts nearby in the old skate park. With a clear plan, partners can join in support for those projects. Its most recent Monmouth Recreational Park project, for example, attracted local, state and federal funds to

support the improvements. In addition to the above-mentioned additions, improvements to that park within the next 18 months will include a gazebo, improved parking, pathways to the dog park, the ballfield, and to the adjacent neighborhood, new restrooms, and additional trees.

The plan has been based on wide citizen input collected since 2019. In the latest survey for the parks plan, 85 percent of the 269 respondents said they visit a Monmouth park at least once a month. Rising rentals of the park facilities reflect their popularity. Already in 2023, the number of rentals (158 as of August) promised to exceed last year's 160 rentals.

A few hours before Bunse wheeled over to Marr Park, Cooper pointed to the park's swing set with the accessible seat as a reminder that residents continue to help improving their city parks. The special seat was installed thanks to a donation from a resident, Cooper said. Recently, residents raised thousands of dollars for the new skate park, according to reports. Residents can also help by organizing park activities in 2024. Small grants are available for residents.

Call for information about rentals and grants at 503-838-0722, or visit the City Departments/Parks and Recreation tab on Monmouth's city website, www.ci.monmouth.or.us.



Wallace Marine Park

Offers getaway activities on outskirts of Salem

On the outskirts of downtown Salem, just over the Willamette River lies Wallace Marine Park, a secluded 114 acres that is home to a beautiful open space for myriad outdoor activities.

At the heart of the park, accessed at 200 Glen Creek Road, is the Wallace Marine Softball Complex, which hosts softball and kickball leagues, in addition to local, state, regional and national tournaments in the star complex on 5 natural grass softball fields.

Outside of the softball complex, five soccer fields of various sizes fill the middle of the park to accommodate different levels of play, and has a playground with picnic tables, and portable toilets.

The south end of the park features

restrooms, a boat ramp and floating dock enjoyed by motorboats, kayakers, fishing enthusiasts and the like. The website swimguide.org is happy to report the gravel beach at Wallace Marine Park is extremely popular with the locals and is quite child friendly with a slow-moving current and shallows for wading. This being said, it can be a VERY crowded place on the hot days of summer!

Walkers, runners, and bicyclists enjoy the developed and undeveloped trails circling the park and up the Union Street Railroad Bridge which crosses the Willamette River and leads the public into Riverfront Park.

According to OregonRuns.com, the majority of the trails at Wallace Marine

Park are soft surface trails. A fraction of the trail runs along the Willamette River through a forested area with ivy and blackberries. The trail then loops wide around the parking areas and the softball complex. The trail continues past two spacious green areas. The running here is relatively flat with a few tiny ups and downs.

Overall, OregonRuns.com's review finds Wallace Marine Park a great place to run especially when factoring in combining this run with Riverfront Park. Just run across the Union Street Bridge to get to Riverfront Park and this would add another two miles to your run.

Polk County is a destination for festivals



Throughout the summer months, several cities in Polk County break out the welcome mat and celebrate their history with an annual festival. Here's a look at what's planned for 2025.

July 4th Festival

The city of Monmouth sponsors a July 4th Festival for the entire family held in Main Street Park. The festival emphasizes the arts including music, dance and theater, with food, craft vendors, and live entertainment.

The city of Independence adds an extra day of fun July 3-4 at the Riverview Park. Event goers will be welcomed with upbeat live entertainment, wholesome family activities, and YMCA kid's zone, and a diverse selection of food trucks and downtown restaurants that have ALL your favorites.

Then the two combine forces to present the Rotary sponsored Grand Parade on July 4. Community members line the streets with chairs two days before. The parade itself runs from Monmouth Avenue to Main Street to Riverview Park in Independence.

Dallas Days

A festival of one sort or other has celebrated Dallas since it was incorporated as a town in 1874 and as a city in 1901. The city returned to simplicity, renaming its festival Dallas Days in 2024. It returns July with vendors and activities on Main Street and concerts at the Rotary Amphitheater at the corner of Main and Academy Streets.

And be sure to arrive early to get a front row seat to the parade that kicks off Dallas Days at 11 a.m.

Look forward to favorite activities as the pie eating contest, a bubble machine shower, a battle of fire fighting supremacy in the water ball competition and so much more.

Keep up to date as more is scheduled on their Facebook page www.facebook.com/dallasoregondays.

Hop & Heritage Festival

Independence is famous for being the historic hop capital of the world. The Hop & Heritage Festival continues to celebrate our community's hop history!

Concentrated in Downtown Independence, the Hop & Heritage Festival, Sept. 20-21, showcases Independence's unique

heritage and vibrant community.

The festival is a family friendly event, featuring something for everyone, including:

A Gratitude BBQ to kick off the festival to thank the volunteers and celebrate the spirit of Independence.

Hophead Hundred Bike Ride ride through the scenic backcountry roads and hop farms of Independence in this annual fundraiser for the Oregon MTB League.

Elk's Lodge Garage Sale at 289 S Main St. that benefits local charities and organizations supported by the Elk's.

Live Entertainment all day on the Main Stage and Heritage Stage, featuring local talent and tribute bands.

Vendor Marketplace featuring more than 70 vendors offering food, art, and hand-crafted goods.

A Historic and Modern Farm Equipment Exhibit with displays of vintage and modern farming equipment, highlighting the innovations that have shaped the industry.

Jeep Car Show featuring classic and custom models, showcasing rugged designs and adventurous spirit.

For more information, go to www.downtownindependence.com/hops.

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Baskett Slough

Teems with native and transitory wildlife ready to be discovered

The 2,492-acre Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge, sits along Highway 22 just north of Rickreall where more than 230 species of birds live, along with a variety of mammals, amphibians and plants.

The Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1965 as part of the Willamette Valley NWR Complex primarily to provide wintering habitat for dusky Canada geese.

The refuge also provides wetland and woodland sanctuary for migratory and resident wildlife which range from the prolific black-tailed deer to the rare endangered butterfly Fender's blue, thought to be extinct from 1940 to the late 1980s, when a few populations were found in the Willamette Valley,

Another endangered species is the Willamette daisy, a wildflower usually found on upland prairie and oak savanna

habitats with little or no shrub cover.

Threatened species on the refuge include:

- The streaked horned lark, whose favored habitat is open spaces.
- Kincaid's lupine, a wildflower found in upland prairies and oak savannas.
- Nelson's checkermallow, a wildflower found typically in wet prairies and floodplains of the Willamette Valley and the Coast Range.

Plants that are neither endangered nor threatened include the meadow checkermallow, showy milkweed, and gold paint brush.

For a partial listing of the animals neither threatened nor endangered, are you ready? Fox sparrow, lazuli bunting, band-tailed pigeon, American white pelican, double-crested cormorant, downy woodpecker, white-faced ibis, sora rail, avocet, rufous hummingbird, northern

spotted owl, yellow-headed blackbird, turkey vulture, peregrine falcon, golden eagle, wood duck, black-necked stilt, raven, belted kingfisher, western osprey, trumpeter swan, bat species, mule deer, sharp-tailed snake.

The refuge includes a three-mile trail system and does not allow running, biking, hunting, or fishing.

More than 42,000 people volunteer their time and ideas each year to US-FWS. They work on the land, in the visitor center, and with youth. There are more than 200 nonprofit Refuge Friends organizations.

Visitors are urged to keep their distance from the animal life and other visitors. Cameras, of course, are encouraged, as well as good walking shoes and a jacket for chilly weather.

Luna's Cafe offers bright bakery, coffee combo

By DAVID HAYES
I-O Editor

After 27 years with the Central School District as a reading specialist, Adela Ortiz retired, deciding she was ready to do something else.

With no background in the service industry, no experience as a waitress and having never run a cafe, or anything to do with food for that matter, naturally she opened Luna's Cafe in November.

"I went into this blindfolded, pretty much," Ortiz admitted.

She found the perfect location with the former Rick's Place on Main Street in Monmouth.

"I originally wanted to do a bakery/coffee shop," Ortiz said. "But then my friend said, 'You're not going to make ends meet with just muffins and coffee.'"

So, she offered daily specials of soups and sandwiches, breakfast burritos, and other light food, like biscuits and gravy and quiches. She relied upon all original recipes, some from friends, some from family.

"Ones that I like to eat are the ones I decided to go with. The ones that my kids enjoy, that my family enjoys," said Ortiz, who is originally from Zacatecas, Mexico, and has lived in the U.S. for 38 years. "That's what I narrowed it down to."

The cafe is named after her grandmother Luna, her dad's mom.

"One thing she did was gorditas. Stuffed tortillas. She made a lot of them. I ate a lot of them growing up," Ortiz said.

On her own menu, burritos, so far, are the most popular, as she can make them all day long.

"People will order them at 6 in the afternoon," Ortiz said. "And of course the cookies."

Another popular item diners are discovering is the spiced café de olla.

"It's something we grew up with when we were little. I remember being 5 or 6



PHOTO BY DAVID HAYES

Customers enjoy baked goods and coffee at Luna's Cafe.

years old and grandma making a pot. It literally means coffee from a pot," Ortiz explained. "She would boil some cinnamon, add sugar to it, and we'd eat it with a little sweet bread and that was a treat for us. When I lived in Mexico, you can drink coffee when you're six years old, just a little bit now and then."

The spiced version of the drink she heard about from her sister.

"She went down to southern Mexico. She said you need to try it and sell it. At first new customers are unsure. They look at me, not sure, it's brown. Then they taste it and are surprised. It is definitely something different. It's been a bestseller," Ortiz said.

So far, the Monmouth community has taken to Ortiz's revamped cafe. She has found it to be the perfect location with a great view of overthink that "goes on in the court."

However, one challenge remains - the parking.

"There's not a lot of places to park. Because we're in the middle of the block and there's only two or three spots in front. So

people will have to park further out, across the street or around the corner," Ortiz said.

After a slow January due to the cold weather, customers are discovering Luna's as the sun is making its spring return.

"It's picking up. And once people are out at the park activities, we'll get some more customers out here," Ortiz predicted. "We've gotten all positive comments.. They enjoy coming here. Some students come in, sit and do work. Small groups come in here and meet. It's been fun."

Ortiz is already planning to expand her offerings, including paletas ice cream dipped in chocolate and sprinkles and adding all natural energy drinks.

She's also got long-term plans. Ortiz attended her first Chamber Awards Feb. 27. She predicts the community will see her up on stage accepting an award for new business of the year.

"You will. Next year it will be mine," Ortiz said with a grin.

Luna's Cafe

123 Main Street E, Monmouth
Former Rick's Place location

Former Melting Pot owner returns



By **DAVID HAYES**
Itemizer-Observer

Bonnie Anders had thought she'd retired and left the candy business behind.

However, while visiting family on the East Coast, she learned she'd chosen poorly in finding a new owner for The Melting Pot Candy.

"The property manager got ahold of me in West Virginia to alert me the business was not working out, with unpaid bills and they were about to turn the water off," Anders said. "Oh my goodness, what am I going to do?"

She called her son, Spencer, who helped her get launch Melting Pot Candy the first time in 2018 to help

decide what to do next. She returned to the corner of C and Main streets in Independence to salvage what she could.

"I got back here and luckily all the equipment was still there," Anders said. "But he cleaned me out of all my candy. Everything was off the walls; my personality was gone."

After talking it over with her son, they decided to acquire the rights the business and give it another go until they can find the right buyer. On Nov. 5, with the help of the Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce, the Anders celebrated the Melting Pot Candy's grand re-opening.

"It feels like we've been reborn,

starting all over again. I sold the business. It didn't work out. Came back to complete emptiness, having to start all over again. It takes the wind out of your sails for a moment," she said.

Anders never received another payment from her buyer after the first. So, reacquiring the business set her back financially.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

She decided to bring in more inventory, starting with one-pound boxes of the toffee, then expanding to more things for walk-in customers to purchase other than chocolate.

"So, there'll be more confections. And we're keeping a lot of the favorites," Anders said.

Melting Pot Candy had the chance to build up a loyal clientele with her homemade toffees and truffles. It took some effort to rebound from the pandemic, never quite returning to the glory days of 2019.

"I have a lot of wholesale customers, a lot of wineries that I make chocolates for. That worked out for me. That was a more summertime thing. Like Willamette Valley Vineyards orders from me year-round. They're an awesome wholesale account," Anders explained. "Just like I use wholesale companies, they use me, too.

"A lot of my wholesale businesses were begging me not to leave because of the truffles I make," she added.

Her most popular walk-in sales include the smoked sea salt caramel truffles and the marionberry truffles.

"Truffles are a big hit. Someone wants a little treat, buy something that was handmade and tastes delicious. You know, the 'I'm not going to buy half a pound of candy, but I will buy a little truffle' type of customer," she said.

While restoring the candy store's reputation, Anders said she's still ready to retire. Being on your feet 6-8 hours a day will do that do someone her age (which she declined to share). So, she'll still be searching for another buyer, someone more serious this time.

"I want another chocolatier, somebody that has my passion for making good chocolate," Anders said. "This is a family-owned business. It's local. I support local. I do so much donating throughout the year, it's crazy. I've got

the high school. I've got the college, just constantly giving back to the community. So, I think that's why I get a lot of community support."

Next to making the candy, her son still pitches in with the toffee, she loves watching people's reaction when they first try her candy.

"The toffee is what we are known for. That was my mother-in-law's recipe. I've carried that on. It's just become something people know, that's Melting Pot's candy. They know it. That what makes it special," Anders added.

Melting Pot Candy

206 S. Main St., Independence

Hours: Monday – Saturday, 12-6 p.m.
(503) 930-3525

Indy to host Vietnam Memorial Wall That Heals

The Wall That Heals is a powerful traveling replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and it's coming to Independence this fall. This free event offers a chance to honor the sacrifices of Vietnam veterans, explore the Education Center, and participate in guided tours.

The memorial will be open 24/7 Sept. 18-21 (it will close at 2 p.m. on the last day), with a motorcycle escort kicking off the event on Sept. 16. The Wall That Heals will be on display at the Independence Sports Park accessible from Deann Drive.

The Wall That Heals is a program of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), the nonprofit behind the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. As the only traveling exhibit affiliated with The Wall, it features the largest replica to tour the country, honoring over three million Americans who served in the Vietnam War and bearing the names of the 58,281 who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Wall That Heals exhibit showcases a three-quarter-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

In 2023, The Wall That Heals traveled nearly 18,000 miles, visiting 32 communities across the country and escorted by nearly 3,000 vehicles. It shared its healing legacy with more than 222,000 visitors, providing guided tours to over 21,000.

THE WALL THAT HEALS
VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL REPLICA & MOBILE EDUCATION CENTER
★
A PROGRAM OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND
FOUNDERS OF THE WALL

★ Independence Sports Complex ★

24 HOURS A DAY
SEPTEMBER 18-21 2025

FOR MORE INFORMATION on how to donate, or to learn about volunteer opportunities
<https://www.ci.independence.or.us/the-wallthatheals2025/>

INDEPENDENCE, OREGON

Live music scene



Independence River's Edge Summer Concert Series

Enjoy live concerts on Friday nights. Opening bands at 6 p.m., Headliners begin at 8 p.m. Concert admission is \$5. Enjoy an evening of entertainment with the whole family. Kids 10 and under are free. Enjoy delicious food at the many food trucks on site or local downtown restaurants.

July 11
Opener - Head Over Feet (Alanis tribute)
Headliner - Stone in Love (Journey tribute)

July 18
Opener - Edge Band (Yacht rock)
Headliner - Petty Fever (Tom Petty tribute)

July 25
Opener - Idle Poets (pop jazz)
Headliner - Whos Bad (Michael Jackson tribute)

Aug. 1
Opener - SureFire (70 & 80s classic hits)
Headliner - Taken by the Sky (Fleetwood Mac tribute)

Aug. 8
Opener - Cool Change PDX (80s pop hits)

Headliner - Fighting Foes (Foes Fighters tribute)

Aug. 15
Opener - Groove Syndicate (90s R&B and pop hits)
Headliner- Shoot to Thrill (AC/DC tribute)

Dallas Sounds of Summer

All concerts will be performed at the Dallas Rotary Performing Arts Stage, at the corner of Main and Academy streets, starting at 7 p.m.

July 10 - Tuesday String Band (blue grass)

July 17 - The Shinkle Band (country)

July 24 - Possibly Irish (Irish/Celtic)

July 31 - Audioflex (powerhouse muscle rock - 80s to current)

Aug. 7 - Roundhouse Band (folk, blues and southern rock)

Aug. 14 - Johnny Limbo and the Lugnuts farewell tour (rock n' roll oldies)



Monmouth

Monmouth's Music in the Park series is an annual event that takes place at the Main Street Park Amphitheater. Join in Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. for an eclectic collection of concerts! Please leave your pets at home.

July 9 - Bon Vivant (American/Indie)

July 16 - River Divide (Country rock)

July 23 - Too Loose Cajun - (Zydeco)

July 30 - Pachanga (Musica Latina)

Aug. 6 - The Shinkle Band (Country)

Aug. 13 - DTW - Funk/Jazz/Rock

Aug. 20 - Remedy (Rock covers 70s, 80s, 90s)

Aug. 27 - Coming Up 3s (Celtic)

Trolley re-introduces popular mode of transportation



In 2022, the cities of Monmouth and Independence joined forces to revive a bit of transportation history between the two localities - trolley service.

The streetbound cars pay homage to Independence & Monmouth Railroad Company, touted as the nation's shortest railroad line. The railroad company was organized by 10 local businessmen in 1889 and made its initial run from Independence to Monmouth in 1890. The initial run featured a weak steam engine and a heavy passenger load. It stalled on Beeler Hill at the east edge of Monmouth and the passengers had to get out and push the train up to level ground. The I&M later maintained passenger service over the Southern Pacific tracks to Airlie and Dallas. It was abandoned in June 1917.

The trolley was resurrected in 2022, when the cities of Monmouth and Independence received \$3 million in American Rescue Plan (ARPA) grant funds through the state budget to support a local transit

service that links downtown Independence, downtown Monmouth, and the Western Oregon University campus.

The low-emission trolley, utilizing a hybrid gas-electric engine, is used for about 250-300 miles of travel each service day. The service is provided with trolley replica vehicles that can transport 14 seated passengers plus one wheelchair passenger, or a fold-down seat for two more passengers (if no wheelchair is present).

Three trolley vehicles were purchased from Hometown Trolley to operate the service. Two vehicles provide service each service day and the third vehicle serves as spare to allow for rotation of vehicles in and out of service and to allow preventative maintenance on all vehicles. Vehicles are equipped with a fold-out ramp to load wheelchairs and passengers with mobility aids, and tie-downs are available to secure the passenger's wheelchair.

The pilot trolley service, managed and operated by Cherriots, will operate for

two years to provide proof of concept to determine the long-term viability of the service, develop a long-term operating plan, and demonstrate the economic recovery benefits of the service. The project aims to determine the feasibility of and demand for intercity transit service, and the potential of such service to support and serve economic development, education, community events, and tourism in Monmouth and Independence.

Call it a success.

More than 35,000 people have enjoyed the MI Trolley in its first three months alone. Riders have jumped aboard to do their shopping, go dining, head to recreation, and meeting up with friends from town to town.

The location of the trolleys can be followed online at www.mitrolley.org/routes. To download the trolley tracking app go to <https://mitrolley.transloc.com/routes>.

EVENTS





HABEBAH
MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE



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COMING
SOON



Shrewsbury Renaissance Faire

By **LANCE MASTERSON**
For The Itemizer-Observer

There is something for everybody at the Shrewsbury Renaissance Fair. Provided one doesn't mind dialing the fun meter back to the 16th century.

The annual event, launched in 1996, was first held at the Philomath Frolic & Rodeo Grounds. Then, in 2002, it relocated to its current site, a large field near Grant Road and Highway 223 in south Polk County.

This year, the Shrewsbury Renaissance Faire runs the weekend of Sept. 13-14.

Jousting knights are its rock stars. But comedians and magicians, stage entertainers, craft vendors, and skilled tradesmen draw their own following.

Turkey legs, drink and other nourishment common to a good old-fashioned feast are crowd favorites as well.

One steps back into time as soon as one steps into the village square. Thanks to performers such as Harley LaQuinn.

Yearly, children want a solid

bubble, and the man who delivered them via sleight of hand was LaQuinn. He was a hard man to miss.

First, he positioned himself near the faire's entrance. Second, he blew bubbles, lots of them. Third, he costumed himself as a jester complete with a harlequin mask. And fourth, most importantly perhaps, he stood nine feet tall.

"I tell all the little ones that I'm so tall because I ate all my bean sprouts. I got them from a guy named Jack," LaQuinn said, dropping a name from the Fairy Tale Mount Rushmore.

Older kids are more skeptical of this claim. They want to know why LaQuinn's legs are so long and his arms are so short. He was quick with an answer for this question.

"I tell the older kids I had a run in with the law in Spain. Authorities put me on the rack and stretched me," he said. "My arms would have been just as long, but they only got me on half the charges."

LaQuinn would have killed them in the Catskills.

"I jokingly say that my mom

always told me not to talk to strangers, and there's no one much stranger than me. So when I'm alone, I can't talk to myself," he added.

LaQuinn underwent his sudden growth spurt when a friend and fellow performer outgrew his stilts. It was time, the friend added, for someone else to rise to the occasion.

"(My friend) wasn't going to be coming back to the area to do a gig. So I picked up his pair of stilts and started ... stilt walking," LaQuinn said.

He relied on the basics.

"Just like anything else," he said of mastering the technique. "Short steps, and one foot in front of the other."

Brett Baker isn't a performer in the traditional sense. He created his own buzz - thanks to his tailor's craftsmanship - just by walking around the village green. Or as one faire-goer said when he first saw Brett in costume: "Man, that's a dope dragon suit you're wearing. It's so awesome."

The suit is, indeed, 'awesome,' combining technology and art. The wings, for example, raise and lower. The suit is air-conditioned.



PHOTOS BY LANCE MASTERSON

transports you to another time

“(Brett) is pretty toasty right now. There’s actually a fan within the head to keep him cool when it gets too hot,” explained his wife, Lynx. “He can only do the costume for about an hour, hour-and-a-half, before we strip him down and put him in a different costume.”

It takes an entire village to make a good dragon suit.

“All of the pieces have been made by various artisans,” said Lynx, “and we collected them and put them together.”

They have been a faire fixture ever since. Such participation has strengthened their identity as a family.

“You know those things you do as a family that no one else may understand. It’s sort of one of those things,” said Rane. “It’s something that we share, something that connects us on a separate level, other than we are blood.”

Shrewsbury features numerous stalls. Some vendors specialize in bringing whimsy to life. Others were more grounded, more in the now. They chose to demonstrate trades from long ago that are still practiced

today.

Blacksmith Tymon Teichroeb is one of those who combines past and present.

“I’m a fabricator,” said Teichroeb. “But I also do this on the side with my fabrication. I have my own setup at home.”

Teichroeb was joined by fellow blacksmiths Isaac Morain and Hunter Oxley in bringing history to life. In this case, a sword.

“We’re just doing demonstrations, showing people how it would have been done back in the Renaissance,” said Teichroeb of their area. “Everything we’ve got out here, tools-wise, is accurate to that time frame.”

Even the bellows.

“We have our bellows here that one of our members custom-made for us,” Teichroeb said.

He noted the bellows is made from canvas and wood and operates under a two-part system that maintains constant air flow.

Some observers showed a casual interest. Others wanted information. For they, too, want to step back in time.

“We give visitors tips and pointers.

Where to go for equipment. What to get first,” said Teichroeb “It’s something you don’t see everyday. So it’s definitely something that piques people’s interest.”

Dance also has the power to pique interest.

“We come from many different cultures and dance is what brings us together,” said Sarah Matson of her troupe, Tribal Rising Dance. “Dance is the universal language of love.”

Most of the troupe’s belly dances are improvised. On this day, there were three dancers. The leader, with help from her backing musicians, was positioned front left on stage.

“It’s next generation, right. It’s what we do,” said Matson. “Dance is for everyone. Everybody and every age.”

Shrewsbury Renaissance Fair

- Sept. 13-14, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Grant Road near the Polk County/Benton County line
- shrewsburyrenaissancefair.rsvpify.com



Polk Flea Market

Attracting regional bargain hunters

Deb Thomas likes to slightly exaggerate that the Polk Flea Market for a while there was the only one open between Los Angeles and Canadian border.

As the manager since 2000, she's seen other venues close their doors for good and others that never reopened after the pandemic ended.

"Portland antique expo isn't running, it's shot, shut down, and won't be doing it for the foreseeable future," Thomas said. (The Rose City Vintage Market has since reopened.)

With closures of markets in Salem and Eugene, Thomas said the event at the Polk County Fairgrounds has become a regional destination.

Thomas said the Polk Flea Market has been up and running without fail through the pandemic since July 2020.

The flea market usually attracts up to plus vendors. Bargain hunters can expect to find jewelry, Avon products, dolls, glassware, hunting and fishing gear, gaming and technology tables, car stuff and guy stuff.

"Basically, everything under the sun," she added.

Thomas said the interesting fallout of the pandemic was the demographic of shoppers changed. Older, regular customers began staying home, while younger bargain hunters were attracted to Polk County's market. Since the end of the

pandemic, the regulars are returning.

Just like the big box stores, the flea market was able to remain open and was able to solidify a solid base of regulars. You'll see them every first Sunday of the month throughout the year, except for August when it gives way for the Polk County Fair.

Polk Flea Market

- Where: Polk County Fairgrounds, 520 South Pacific Highway West
- When: First Sunday of the month, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Admission: \$1; Early Admission \$5: 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and 6 to 9 a.m. Sunday



Willamina to rumble to Mud Drags Saturday June 28

By **DAVID HAYES**
Itemizer-Observer

On June 28, the small town of Willamina becomes the center of the racing universe when it hosts the annual Mud Drags and Side by Side competition.

The off-road event, held on a makeshift track on city property, challenges souped-up rigs designed to power their way through a muddy straightaway course. Organizer Sherry Dawkins said the event, going on now more than 20 years, draws competitors from as far away as Montana, Northern Washington and California.

Last year's event saw about 100 entries in several categories, including Drag, Side by Side (a specific type of four-wheel off-road vehicle), Powder Puff (for the ladies)

and the Bogg Race, where the track gets "sloppy wet," Dawkins said.

The prize pool has grown to more than \$2,600 this year to spread out among winners in 15 categories.

She said drivers can sign up to compete on the day of the race from 7-9 a.m. Registration is \$40 per driver in the Drags and Side by Side, \$30 for Powder Puff and \$25 for Bogs. A pit pass is \$20 extra.

General admission to watch the races is \$8, youth ages 6-12 get in for \$5 and children under 6 are free. Dawkins warns that the event attracts about 1,000 spectators, so she advises getting there early if you want to set up a canopy. And, as there are no bleachers, she recommends

definitely bringing your own lawn chair. However, no alcohol, dogs, open flames or bikes will be allowed, she added.

Dawkins said vendors will be on site selling wares and she added that she hopes food vendors will also be available.

Funds raised at the Mud Drags go toward paying for Willamina's 4th of July fireworks show.

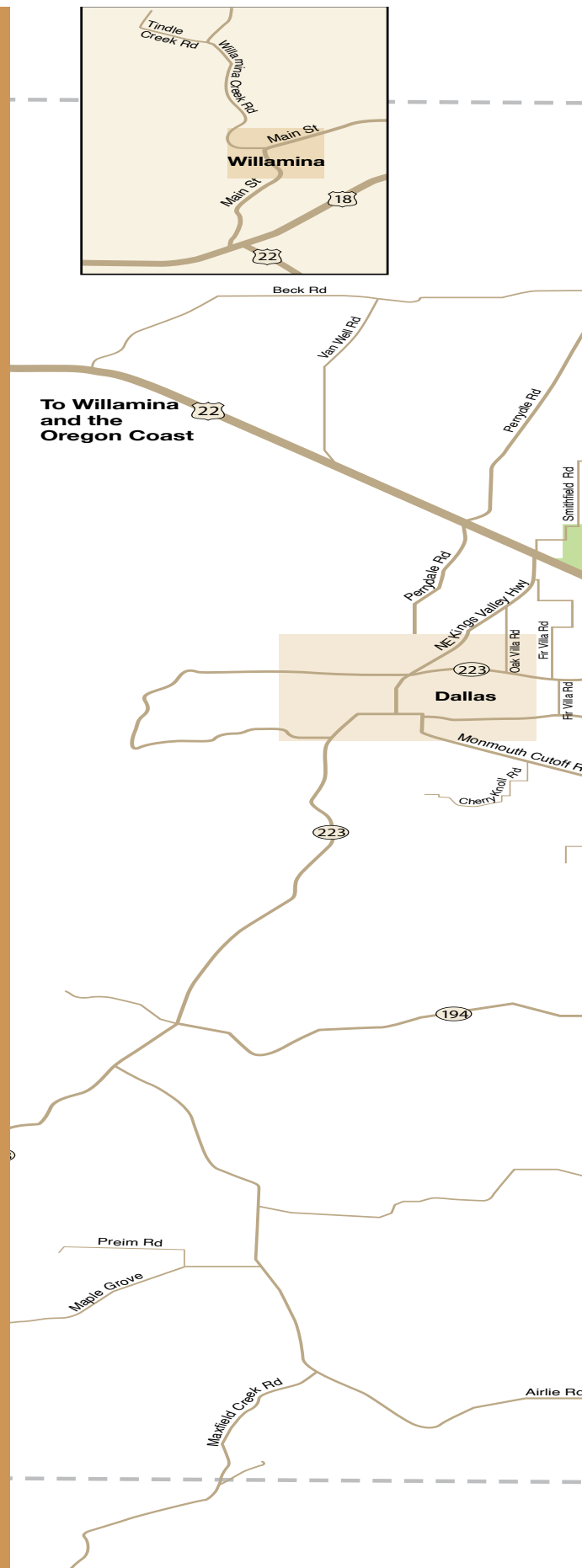
"It will be a full, fun-filled day," Dawkins predicted.

For more information

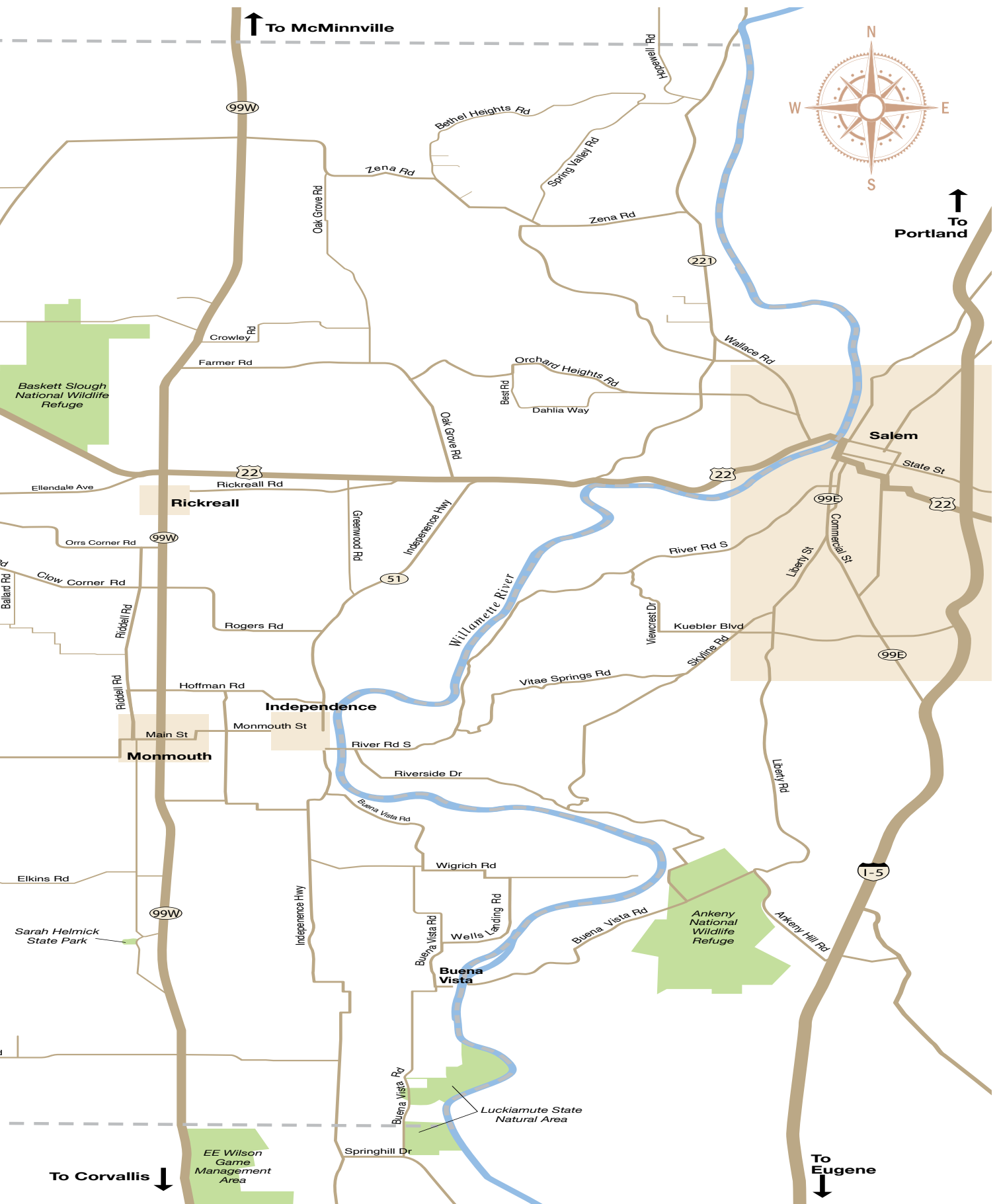
check out their Facebook page
Willamina Mud Drags

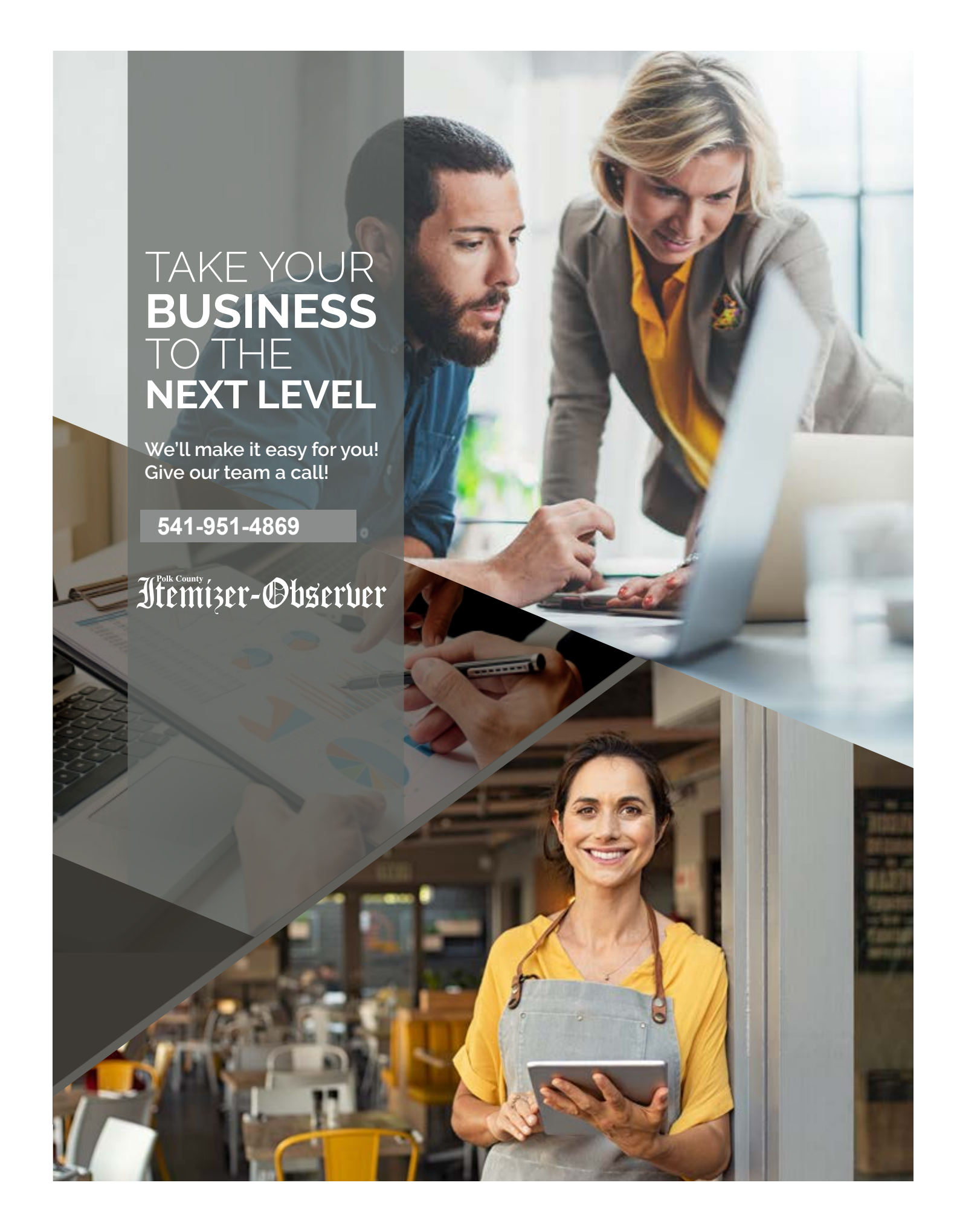
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**map not to scale





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Polk County
Itemizer-Observer



Discover all the unique finds at the Polk Flea Market on the first Sunday of every month except August.

Being the largest and oldest flea market in all of Polk County, you'll see thousands of one-of-a-kind items and collectibles spread out over 250 tables of merchandise in three buildings.

From antiques to tools and industrial decor, there is always something for everyone. The Polk Flea Market is the perfect place to find unique treasures for your home or collection. Admission is only \$1 for a chance at finding that treasure you didn't even know you were looking for!



At Polk Flea Market, we pride ourselves on being the go-to destination for vinyl and gaming, toys, tools, collectible jewelry, glassware, textiles, camping and fishing gear and so much more!

Always the 1st Sunday, September through July with early buying Saturdays and Sundays.

Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center.



Deb Thomas
Owner Operator
Promoter Event Coordinator
503-428-8224

Early Admission: Saturdays 10am - 3pm / Sundays 6am - 9am \$5.00

General Admission: Sundays, only 9am -3pm \$1.00

520 S. Pacific Highway 99W
 Rickreall, Oregon 97371
www.facebook.com/PolkFleaMarket





Salem Health has Polk County covered

For everyday health care needs:

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West Valley Hospital

525 SE Washington St., Dallas
503-623-8301



Medical Clinics

Dallas

Primary care
1000 SE Uglow Ave.
503-623-8376

Monmouth

Primary care
512 Main St. E, Suite 300
503-838-1182

Independence

Primary care
1430 Monmouth St.
503-917-2255

Central Health and Wellness Center

1601 Monmouth St., Suite 100
503-838-0045

salemhealth.org/westvalley 

