

# THE OREGON OBSERVER

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## Toss away the blues

The Brooklyn Elementary School PTO hosted a "Beat the Winter Blues" event Friday night, with food, games and raffle prizes for students and their families. Games included a toilet paper toss, basketball, cart races and a ring toss.

Above, Andrew Cameron, 8, of Oregon, winds up to toss a bean bag at a set of alien heads.

At left, Domnic St. Martin, 4, of Oregon, waits to see if his ring will land around the neck of a bottle.

At right, Ford Goble, 5, tosses a bean bag to complete the final leg of his cart race against younger brother, Eli, 4.

Photos by **Scott Girard**

### On the web

See more photos from the Brooklyn Elementary event:  
[UNGphotos.SmugMug.com](http://UNGphotos.SmugMug.com)



## Village of Oregon

# Plan could gentrify downtown

**Developers eye TIF, \$4 million apartment, senior center combo**

**BILL LIVICK**  
*Unified Newspaper Group*

A couple of local businessmen are proposing a redevelopment project that if realized would change the face of downtown Oregon.

Jeff Groenier and Mark Mortensen told the Village Board Monday about a preliminary plan to put a four-story residential complex on the southwest corner of downtown – and possibly include the Oregon Senior Center in the plan.

On the same day a separate development group pitched a \$25 million assisted living facility on North Main Street with the help of \$1 million in taxpayer financing, the Groenier-Mortenson plan also requested an unspecified amount of village

### Inside

\$25 million facility pitched on North Main

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### Inside



Panthers break four school records at state

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## Candidates for Village Board, OSD field questions

**BILL LIVICK**  
*Unified Newspaper Group*

Seven local candidates in the April election participated in a candidate forum Feb. 18, and all seemed to largely agree on the issues.

An audience of about 50 – many of them Oregon Area Chamber of Commerce members – listened to the candidates deliver opening statements and then field a couple of questions posed by members of the audience.

The chamber-organized event – featuring four people seeking three seats on the Village Board and three for two seats on the Oregon School Board – took place at Headquarters Bar and Restaurant on the village's south side.

Challenger and former trustee Phil Harms appeared with three Village Board incumbents – Jerry Bollig,



Photo by **Bill Livick**

Phil Harms speaks while others running for seats on the Village Board and School Board listen during last Thursday's candidate forum.

Jeff Bourdreau and Doug Brethauer – while hopefuls Krista Flanagan and Uriah Carpenter joined school board

### Inside

Candidate opening remarks, answers

**Pages 12-13**

president Dan Krause in answering questions.

Those three tackled questions relating to teacher compensation and random drug dog searches in the schools. The candidates for Village Board responded to a question about economic development and growth, and their support for a possible hotel development.

The event was moderated by chamber president J.J. Giese, of Thyse Printing.



**THE OREGON OBSERVER**  
Unified Newspaper Group Publications

**NATIONAL FFA WEEK**  
February 20-27, 2016

Oregon FFA members look back on the year

**Pages 7-8**



Spring 2016 magazine

# Oregon Fire welcomes two new full-timers

Two Oregon Area Fire and EMS District team members reached full-time status earlier this month after completing one-year probationary periods.

"They performed very well both before and during their probationary period, which made it very easy for us ... to make the recommendation to make them full-time status," Oregon EMS and Fire District chief Jack Mlnarik told the Observer. "I think they're individuals the district can be proud of."

Adam King was hired

last year from the Plover Fire Department to coordinate the department's firefighter training. He is married and lives in Albany.

King was also recently selected to attend a prestigious week-long fire academy training this June at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Md. King will attend the "Challenges



King

for Local Training Partners" class at the school, which is run by FEMA. Mlnarik said the program is one he also attended, saying the contacts made at the national training course will help to improve how the department's own firefighters retain and develop skills.

Village of Oregon resident Mike Venden has served three years as a paid-on-call firefighter before being selected for full-time service. In addition to his work as an EMT and firefighter, he has worked extensively maintaining the department vehicles throughout his years.

Venden is married and the couple have a young daughter, according to a release from the department.

The addition of the King and Venden brings the department full-time firefighting force up to seven, with an additional nine interns doing rotations from MATC. Another new hire is currently in a probationary status, Mlnarik said, and would eventually bring the full-time force up to eight.

- Jacob Bielanski



Venden



Photos by Scott Girard

Crews aim two hoses at different areas as the fire continued to burn.

# Fire destroys home on Lexington Drive

## Two dogs die in blaze

SCOTT GIRARD  
Unified Newspaper Group

Two dogs died in a fire that destroyed a Village of Oregon home Friday afternoon.

No one else in the five-member family, which includes children ages 1, 3 and 10, was injured in the fire that took more than an hour to extinguish.

Friends and family have raised nearly \$5,000 through myevent.com in the days since the fire for the Johnson family, which is currently looking for a place to stay while they rebuild their home, said Michael Johnson's sister, Meghan May.

May said the family was doing "as well as can be expected," but added that the dogs' deaths were "the hardest part."

"By the time firefighters got to the scene, the whole house was engulfed with flames," May explained. "The flames had spread throughout the house and it wasn't safe for the firefighters to enter."

According to a news release from the Oregon Area Fire and EMS, a call came in at 3:14 p.m. about the fire. While Friday's high winds made it "difficult for firefighters" to extinguish the blaze, they



The Fitchburg Fire Department brought a ladder truck to help fight the fire from above. Including the Oregon Area Fire and EMS District, nine departments were involved in fighting the fire.

## On the web

To donate to the Johnson family, visit:

[Myevent.com/  
MichaelAndreaJohnson](http://Myevent.com/MichaelAndreaJohnson)

had put out the fire by 4:23 p.m., the release said.

"Due to strong winds and advancement of the fire, crews initiated a defensive fire attack, that is, fight the fire from the outside," the release said.

The release also noted there was "minor heat damage" to a neighboring home.

Oregon Fire chief Jack Mlnarik told the Observer the fire was unintentionally

caused by "careless use of smoking materials."

The home was a "complete loss" with an estimated \$250,000 in damage, according to the release. Personnel from Brooklyn, Fitchburg, Verona, McFarland, Monona, Stoughton, Belleville and the Town of Madison responded to the fire along with Oregon Area Fire and EMS.

The family is currently staying with parents until they find a place for themselves. May said items like "laundry baskets, towels, blankets" and other everyday items will be needed eventually, but the family wants to "get established" in a new place first and is currently accepting gift cards.

"They're overwhelmed with gratitude from everybody and all of the support that they have felt from Oregon and from family and friends and from the community," May said. "They're grateful for everybody's help, the firefighters, the EMTs, everyone who responded."

- Unified Newspaper Group reporter Jacob Bielanski contributed to this article.

**Thank You**

To the fine folks who stopped to help me when I was being assaulted on Main Street at 1:30 pm on February 3rd... Thank you. It'll take weeks to recover from my injuries, but they did catch the guy. Again, thank you. It's people like you that make a difference.

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