

Chico Enterprise Record

1-4-2020

Camp Fire briefs

EVENT

Biochar workshops

In the new year, learn how to dispose of biomass like trees killed by the Camp Fire and sequester carbon with biochar. The simple burning method produces less smoke and carbon emissions and produces a beneficial soil additive that can improve water retention and re-vegetation. Butte College, the Butte County and Yankee Hill Fire Safe Councils, and the Big Chico

Creek Ecological Preserve will host a series of workshops and on-site demonstrations throughout communities in the Camp Fire burn scar in the first week of January. The workshops will start on Monday, Jan. 6 with a 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. seminar in room LRC 145 at Butte College at 3536 Butte College Drive in Oroville. A demonstration will then take place at Berkeley Olive Grove at 8 Rocky Drive in Oroville from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. There will then be field demonstrations in Concow on Tuesday and Wednesday, Paradise on Thursday, and the Big Chico Ecological Preserve on Friday. For more information, see the online flyer or reach out to Steve Feher at sifeher@scdinstitute.org.

FIRE RECOVERY

BIOCHAR IS PROPOSED TO DISPOSE OF WOODY DEBRIS



PHOTOS BY CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Kelpie Willson, left, teaches Marcia Burchiel how to conduct a controlled burn using a process that creates biochar Monday in Oroville.

A series of workshops this week will educate property owners about the beneficial charcoal

By Camille von Kaenel
cvonkaenel@chicoer.com

OROVILLE » Local colleges and fire safety groups kicked off a week of workshops teaching people how to burn piles of woody debris more cleanly and produce a beneficial charcoal with a seminar and demonstration on Monday.

Butte College, along with the Butte County Fire Safe Council, the Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council and the Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve, is organizing the series. The groups saw an opportunity to educate Butte County residents about the technique following the Camp Fire, which burned hundreds of thousands of trees that now need to be disposed of. Many of the trees are being trucked hours away to biomass power plants or to sit in a storage yard.

Biochar is another solution. It is a type of charcoal that can retain moisture and nutrients in the soil when combined with

compost. Putting biomass into the soil also sequesters carbon, which would otherwise go into the atmosphere and contribute to global warming. It is produced using a special burning method that produces less smoke than a traditional pile burn.

"We all recognize that a lot of biomass waste needs to be processed, and we are encouraging local property owners to do this themselves with minimal equipment," said Steve Feher, a teacher at Butte College focused on biochar and the executive director of the Sustainable Community Development Institute. He's taught and researched biochar for several years, and is now shifting his focus from just the agricultural and carbon sequestration benefits of the method to the benefits it may have for Butte County residents after the fire.

"The purpose of this is to get a wide area of Butte County involved," he said about the workshops, which will be held in Con-



A controlled burn results in biochar Monday in Oroville.

cow, Paradise and Forest Ranch all week.

On Monday, around a dozen participants gathered at Berkeley Olive Grove in Oroville for the first of the demonstrations, held after a morning seminar at Butte College. Darro Grieco, the owner of the grove, has been participating in biochar workshops and research with Feher for a few years because he's interested in the agricultural benefits like carbon sequestration

and soil health. He saw Monday's workshop as an opportunity to bring the technique to a different group, namely people used to pile burns who may be interested in doing them more efficiently.

First, they prepared water hoses nearby to quench the fire and save the charcoal. Then they loaded three metal containers, called kilns, with pruned olive branches.

Chico Enterprise Record

1-7-2020, page 2 of 2



PHOTOS BY CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

A workshop participant conducts a controlled burn in Oroville.

Biochar

FROM PAGE 1

They set fire to the top layer, then continued placing branches into the kiln.

The flames created a “fire cap” at the top of the pile, burning off smoke and oxygen because they stayed very hot. Meanwhile, the wood at the bottom of the pile smoldered, turning into biochar rather than ash. The top-lit burning technique can also be used on piles not in kilns.

“This is cleaner, safer and recovers more of the carbon,” explained Kelpie Wilson, a consultant with Oregon-based Wilson Biochar Associates. People in the Amazon used biochar to build up a dark, rich soil long before Europeans came to the continent, and now it’s enjoying a resurgence of sorts, she said.

Wilson helped develop cutting-edge biochar methods and products for modern agriculture. She re-



Jocelyn Dunning, left, helps Richard Roth balance as they fill a kiln with twigs to burn and create biochar Monday in Oroville.

turned to her college town of Chico for this week’s workshops. Ruby Harris, a project assistant at the Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council, watched intently at Monday’s workshop.

“I was kind of skeptical at first,” she said.

She’s done many pile burns before, but it can be a tiring and lengthy process. What’s more, the lasting trauma of living through the fire is making

her hesitant to get too close to flames or keep any remnants of her burned forest. But she’s changing her mind because, she says, the heat of the flames can actually burn the piles more quickly and the soil additive can be beneficial to local agriculture. She’s still learning the techniques and is particularly interested in those that require little investment or equipment. She was taking close notes to bring back to

WORKSHOPS

The next field workshops will take place:

- Tuesday, Jan. 7 from 9 a.m. to noon at 13006 Concow Road, Oroville (Concow) and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at 13211 Concow Road, Oroville (Concow).
- Wednesday, Jan. 8 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 3635 Charqui Court, Oroville (Concow).
- Thursday, Jan. 9 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 7279 Pentz Road, Paradise.
- Friday, Jan. 10 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve at 352114 Mile Road, Forest Ranch, off Highway 32.

her neighbors.

“If I can be turned, they can too,” she said. “Once we get it right, we can bring them more information.”

Contact reporter Camille von Kaenel at 530-896-7764.

Chico Enterprise Record

1-11-2020

CAMP FIRE

World Renew comes to Butte county to give help

Staff reports

WALK-IN CENTER SCHEDULE 1/13/20-1/24/20

The Camp Fire Long Term Recovery Group (CFLTRG) has announced that it is partnering with World Renew Disaster Response Services to identify households with unmet needs resulting from the Camp Fire in November 2018. According to a press release, World Renew will have volunteers in several different locations throughout Butte County from Jan. 13-24. The data gathered from this Needs Assessment will be critical to securing additional resources to address the unmet needs of our community. Residents affected by the Camp Fire who need additional assistance to recover can talk to a volunteer at one of the walk-in centers noted below.

Unmet needs not previously accounted for through any FEMA registration will be recorded and reported to the CFLTRG and its member organizations. Any assistance survivors received through FEMA is not contingent upon, nor is it impacted in any way by completing a survey with the World Renew team. This assessment is

HELP » PAGE 3

not connected to any aid received from FEMA. Survivors should bring their FEMA ID number with them if they have one. Survivors may also call 440-462-5874 with questions. The Camp Fire Long Term Recovery Group (CFLTRG) is a community collaborative comprised of nonprofit, private and public organizations working together to address the unmet needs of Camp Fire survivors after federal and state resources have been exhausted. Collectively, the CFLTRG identifies long-term recovery issues and develops strategies with the group's combined vision and resources.

Visit www.campfirerecovery.org to learn more.

DATE	TIME	COMMUNITY	ADDRESS
MONDAY, 1/13/20	10:30AM-4:30PM	PARADISE	Paradise Hope Center 311 Circlewood Dr.
TUESDAY, 1/14/20	11AM-5PM	MAGALIA	Magalia Community Church 13700 Old Skyway
WEDNESDAY, 1/15/20	10AM-5PM	PARADISE	Paradise Alliance Church 6491 Clark Rd.
THURSDAY, 1/16/20	10AM-5PM	PARADISE	Paradise Alliance Church 6491 Clark Rd.
FRIDAY, 1/17/20	10AM-5PM	PARADISE	Paradise Alliance Church 6491 Clark Rd.
SATURDAY, 1/18/20	10AM-4PM	MAGALIA	Magalia Community Church 13700 Old Skyway
SATURDAY, 1/18/20	9AM-4PM	CONCOW	Canyon Lakes Market (Dome Store) 3610 Sky Crest Drive
SUNDAY & MONDAY	OFF	OFF	OFF
TUESDAY, 1/21/20	10AM-4PM	CHICO	Salvation Army Center 567 E. 16 th St.
TUESDAY, 1/21/20	10AM-4PM	CONCOW	Jake's Burger 11975 State Hwy 70
WEDNESDAY, 1/22/20	10AM-4PM	CHICO	Salvation Army Center 567 E. 16 th St.
THURSDAY, 1/23/20	11AM-5PM	OROVILLE	Oroville Hope Center 1950 Kitrick Ave.

World Anew will also be at Gridley's Orchard Hospital at 240 Spruce Street HCR Conference Room on Jan. 24 from 9 a.m. to noon.

Chico Enterprise Record

1-31-2020

FIRE RECOVERY

Volunteers needed to plant trees in burn area

By Camille von Kaenel

cvonkaenel@chicoer.com

CONCOW » The Butte County Resource Conservation District is looking for volunteers to help plant oaks in the areas burned by the Camp Fire over the next couple weekends.

The group is coordinating replanting efforts not only to restore the forest, but also to choose a mix and distribution of species adapted to higher temperatures and resilient to frequent fires.

“It’s important we replant trees that have a shot with the climate that we’ll have in the future,” said Wolfy Rougle at the Butte County Resource Conservation District. “The forest people will remember from their childhoods as 80 percent pines and 20 percent oak will change. It may be switched.”

The project will kick off on Sunday, Feb. 2 in Concow, whose pine forest has been turned mostly into shrub-land by repeat, intense fires. The goal is to plant 400 native, fire-resilient black oaks on Granite Ridge. Volunteers will meet at 9:30 a.m. at High-



CAMILLE VON KAENEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

A new study found that high-severity fire is turning some forests into shrublands across the Sierra Nevada. Concow, pictured here in August, is a prime example.

way 70 and Concow Road. The planting is scheduled to wrap up by 12:30 p.m.

Rougle said she needed more volunteers for the next weekend’s planting effort, which will take place in Paradise on Saturday, Feb. 8. There are two shifts in two different locations. In the morning, volunteers will meet at 9 a.m.

at 2902 Neal Road to plant 400 blue oaks in the southern Paradise ridge. In the afternoon, volunteers will meet at 1 p.m. at the parking lot at 6848 Skyway to plant 200 black oaks at different sites in Paradise and Magalia.

People can sign up via the Butte County Resource Conservation District Face-

book page or by emailing shepard@bcrd.org. All are welcome, but people under the age of 18 should be accompanied by a guardian.

Other planting days will be posted on the District’s Facebook page.

Contact reporter Camille von Kaenel at 530-896-7764.

FIRE RECOVERY

HOMESTEADERS WANT TO 'PAY IT FORWARD'



PHOTOS BY CAMILLE VON KAENEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Craig Wilcox, left, and Jess Olson survey the garden they built in September with the help of the Raney family for an episode of the Discovery Channel TV show *Homestead Rescue* in Concow on Wednesday.

Their property will be featured on the Discovery Channel show 'Homestead Rescue'

By Camille von Kaenel
cvonkaenel@chicoer.com

CONCOW » A Concow family got a helping hand from the Discovery Channel TV show "Homestead Rescue" to get their land looking more like a home after the Camp fire.

The show pairs homesteaders with Marty, Matt and Misty Raney, a father, son and daughter team with experience homesteading and living primitively. The episode featuring Craig Wilcox, Jess Olson and their sons Riley and Liam Olson-Wilcox is expected to air at the end of February, they said.

The family said they likely

would not have been able to move back, at least not as quickly, had they not received the help. The intervention and filming took place at the end of September.

"We gave them carte blanche, because we had nothing on the property," said Wilcox.

"It was just so nice to have people back on the property," added Olson.

Finding home

The family first moved to Concow in 2014. Olson, who grew up in Butte County, had long dreamed of homesteading, and Wilcox was eager to follow the woman he calls "love."

HOMESTEAD » PAGE 4



Riley Olson-Wilcox, 11, pets Burrito the donkey at his family's homestead in Concow on Wednesday.

Chico Enterprise Record

2-7-2020

page 2 of 2

Homestead

FROM PAGE 1

They found some land at the edge of the community above the Concow Reservoir. Next door stretched hundreds of wild acres of Sierra Pacific Industries land. Mountain lions and bears frequently visited. They planted a garden. They brought in donkeys, goats, chickens and ducks. Their big two-story house rang with the shouts of foster children, particularly teenage boys, whose chores included feeding the animals. The connection “worked wonders,” said Olson.

That was the case for Riley Olson-Wilcox, now 11, who the couple adopted along with his brother, Liam, 9, and another son. On Wednesday, two of the family’s donkeys, Benjamin and Burrito, immediately went to Riley when he approached their enclosure, nuzzling his pockets for cookies.

He’s the one in charge of the chickens in the case of a fire. The family practices four times a year. On the morning of Nov. 8, 2018, after running into the house yelling that fire was everywhere, he started gathering the animals to evacuate. But the trailers were already on fire, recalled Olson.

“Just let them all out,” Olson recalled telling her



CAMILLE VON KAENEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Craig Wilcox shows off one of his family’s baby goats at their homestead in Concow on Wednesday.

sons. “We’re going straight to Plan C.”

As they fled, she knew the house would be destroyed. The flames were coming from all directions. Pine cones burst through the air like fire balls. Thick smoke made it almost impossible to see. Eventually, they were able to take refuge at the meadows at Camelot.

There, they started worrying about the animals they left behind: Daisy and Gracie the guardian donkeys; Blue Bear, the indoor cat that snuggled like a dog; Tom Sawyer the turkey that blushes when women approach. Later, they learned that a neighbor had stayed behind to fight the flames. He looked over the animals, most of which survived. The ducks had even returned to their usual feeding spot, their enclosure in ashes around

them.

Then they had to figure out what came next. They considered moving to Chico permanently, taking care of some chickens in their backyard, or moving out of state.

But the children couldn’t understand why they’d move. The hills were home.

“Everywhere you go, there’s some sort of disaster, so we figured we’d better stay with what we know,” said Olson.

A new nonprofit

Now, the family lives in a recreational vehicle on their land while they wait to rebuild a house. The boys are back to playing in the hills, climbing on trailers, throwing Frisbees and biking in the reddish dirt. They’re taking care of all the animals, too. There’s one new twist: the family is renting

out their kiko goats to do fire abatement around the area.

“I want to pay it forward,” said Olson.

Back in December, she and a few other community members formed the Concow Yankee Hill Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit to help bring in resources to the area from Pentz to Pulga, which has not received as much attention as Paradise.

Their first action was filing a claim against Pacific Gas & Electric Corp. Following in the footsteps of Jody Jones, the former mayor of Paradise, and her husband Ron Jones, the group wants money to pay for repairs to the area’s roads, most of which are private and dotted with potholes after heavy clean-up truck traffic.

More community meetings will come to gather feedback, said Olson. She wants to find out how to fill in gaps in recovery, like From the Ground Up Farms, Inc., another active nonprofit in the area.

“This whole community has gone through trauma after trauma,” she said. “It has needed more of a voice.”

It’s a theme for the family: On Wednesday, Riley was eager to return to the novel he was reading, “Pay it Forward.”

Contact reporter Camille von Kaenel at 530-896-7764.



Karen MacGowan, the co-owner of the Rock House, shows a detail Tuesday in the historic rock walls in the Concow structure.



The Rock House is a cafe and music venue and a historic site off of Highway 70 in Concow that was damaged in the Camp Fire.



David Stookey, the co-owner of The Rock House, recently built a new table for the outdoor patio at the place, seen Tuesday in Concow.

ROCK HOUSE RECOVERING

CURRENT OWNERS WORKING TOWARD REOPENING



PHOTOS BY CAMILLE VON KAENEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Karen MacGowan, the co-owner of the Rock House off of Highway 70, looks up Tuesday at the angel she discovered on the walls of the building.

By Camille von Kaenel
cvonkaenel@chicoer.com

CONCOW » The historic rock walls of the Rock House, a cafe and music venue off of Highway 70, made it through the Camp Fire. But the place itself is struggling to come back.

The walls have withstood storms and fires before. The current owners, Karen MacGowan and David Stookey, are hoping their own dreams of reviving the place withstands the arduous and costly aftermath, too.

"I'm not sure how people are going to do this," Mac-

Gowan said.

The buildings have been the backdrop to the story of a community since 1937, when they were constructed with locally-sourced rocks. They were intended as a station for travelers heading further into the mountains. The faint outlines

of the original shower stalls are still visible on the 18-inch thick walls.

Over the decades, a cast of characters found shelter and communion there: the gold miners trading nuggets for a beer, the family members who

ROCK HOUSE » PAGE 5

Chico Enterprise Record

2-26-2020, page 2 of 2

Rock House

FROM PAGE 1

visitors say haunt the place, the longtime former owner Bob Ausmus, whose death left the place in disrepair.

MacGowan and Stookey bought it in 2014, putting all their savings into the purchase. They were from Southern California and were pursuing a dream to get away from it all and live and work off the land, surrounded by trees and animals and part of a community full of stories. They poured themselves into bringing the place back to life.

Stookey, a skilled construction worker, built a patio and a stage on the side of the building. MacGowan booked up-and-coming local musicians outside in the summer and inside in the winter. She ran a cafe with items like bacon-wrapped filet mignon and held wine tastings. The Rock House became a place for the community to decompress, she said. They held Thanksgiving dinners in the two-story communal room. The man who carved the turkey would later lose his life in the fire that swept the area



CAMILLE VON KAENEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Karen MacGowan, the co-owner of The Rock House, a cafe and music venue, walks inside the main building Tuesday in Concow.

on Nov. 8, 2018.

Stookey had just put the finishing touches on the roof and could not bear to

see it all burn. He stayed to fight the fire until he was escorted off the property by firefighters.

The flames crept up many hours later and torched the main big building. Everything flammable was destroyed, from the second-story tub left hanging off the wall to the chairs to the iconic sign of a cowboy character, now rusty and bent on the side of the road.

MacGowan found meaning in the new details uncovered in the rock wall, like an angel formed out of a white rock on the outside of the main building.

"Someone put it there for a reason," she said. "I don't know what it is, exactly. But it's here."

Some of the other buildings, like the patio, survived nearly intact, the fencing scorched but standing. The kitchen was unscathed. Even the plants inside survived. MacGowan remembers the person who gave her each plant at their grand opening a few years ago. One is in Fort Bragg now, another in Mendocino. Much of the community has scattered.

"It's going to be different," she admitted on Tuesday. "But I want to provide what was here again, for the

community."

At first, they thought they were going to just come home and fix everything, she said.

Then an issue with the clean-up arose. Though the walls survived, the government authorities doing debris removal were concerned they were structurally unsound because the heat had weakened the mortar. MacGowan and Stookey would have to take them down or prove they were historical, a long process that could give the Rock House an exception. The walls full of memories had become mere debris.

MacGowan and Stookey enlisted local historians, architects and engineers to help their case. After going through four engineers, one of them finally did the tests on the mortar the government was looking for last summer. The results showed the walls and foundation were sound. The walls could stay.

By then, MacGowan and Stookey had no choice but to hire private debris clean-up crews. She crowd-sourced around \$7,000 from the community, which almost covered the full costs of the clean-up. The debris was finally gone in September.

Electricity came back at the end of January. It was another important item to check off the list. Next, they'll have to re-stock the kitchen and get approval from the public health department.

They busy themselves with tending to the property, like replanting some trees and building new outdoor tables. The process has been draining. MacGowan and Stookey had no insurance on the buildings. That means recovering what they had before would require them to go into debt.

MacGowan compares herself to a spruce tree in the patio: half of it looks green and vibrant and alive, and half of it has died.

Stookey, in particular, laments barriers like the cost of permits or new regulations.

"God put us here for a reason," MacGowan gently reminded him. "It's not money, that's for sure. But we are here now."

She's still pursuing an official historical designation to help preserve the building. She's hoping to reopen in spring.

Contact reporter Camille von Kaenel at 530-896-7764.

Speaker celebrates womanhood, heritage

By Natalie Hanson

nhanson@chicoer.com

CHICO » A journey through womanhood through the lens of the Native American experience was celebrated Tuesday evening at Chico State.

The fourth annual “Women of Wisdom” event in the Bell Memorial Union spotlighted Native American heritage and feminism with keynote speaker Kimberly Cunningham-Summerfield.

The event was free to the public and also offered refreshments and a space for children and DIY crafts.

Cunningham-Summerfield, Tsalagi (Cherokee) and culturally adopted Mewuk, has been demonstrating and presenting programs since the ‘70s. She is a cultural practitioner with skills in basket weaving, cordage making, food preparation, traditional resource gathering, traditional uses of fire, traditional land management, tool making and storytelling.

Cunningham-Summerfield also holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology with a minor in American Indian Studies from Chico State and an master’s degree in administration, planning and social Policy from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

“I am a storyteller, a mom, a wife, a grandma, a disabled veteran,” Cunningham-Summerfield said. She called her husband “the music to my life.”

Cunningham-Summerfield said speaking on Mechoopda-occupied land



CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Kimberly Cunningham-Summerfield immersed herself in the audience as she shared stories raw with emotion and a touch of theater Tuesday during Women of Wisdom in Chico.

Women

FROM PAGE 1

at Chico State has a lot of significance for her still, after attending the university decades ago — “it really hasn’t changed.”

Walking around Chico State and seeing how the campus has transformed in the past few decades, “We talked about change, the things we saw and the things we miss,” Ben Cunningham-Summerfield, Kimberly’s husband, said.

Cunningham-Summerfield said she wishes the university would honor more Native American faculty and teachers on campus.

“I would love to see more



CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Heather McCafferty, left, assistant curator at the Valene L. Smith Museum of Anthropology and Coral Doyle, a museum studies graduate student, display baskets Tuesday in Chico that were weaved by Maidu women.

(people) recognized and honored ... and yet there’s no mention of any of the Mechoopda people that are local and indigenous,” Cunningham-Summerfield said. “There are so many that could be — culturally,

artistically.”

For these reasons, Cunningham-Summerfield said she hopes there is more active listening in the community, to indigenous people and to women.

Cunningham-Summerfield also hoped that female audience members would take away from her presentation that “they’re powerful, beautiful.”

“I would like them to realize their beauty and strength ... to laugh, and not be afraid to cry,” Cunningham-Summerfield said.

More events at Chico State can be found on the school’s calendar at csuchico.edu/calendar.

Contact reporter Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.

Chico Enterprise Record

3-12-2020

PUBLIC SAFETY

Investigators: Man found sleeping near fire confesses to arson

Staff reports

OREGON GULCH » A man was arrested Tuesday after allegedly confessing to starting a fire off View Lane in Oregon Gulch north of Oroville.

Firefighters responded to a blaze engulfing an RV trailer at a property that

spread to nearby grass and other vegetation, said a press release issued Wednesday by Cal Fire-Butte County.

Carlos Yanez, 32, was arrested on suspicion of two counts of arson, one to property and the other to grasslands as well as one count of arson during a de-

clared state of emergency.

According to the release, Yanez was found sleeping nearby with a quad all-terrain vehicle. Upon investigation, detectives matched tracks found near the fire to the tires of the vehicle and questioned Yanez.

“After a brief interview and spontaneous state-

ments made by Yanez, he was arrested,” the release said.

The release said Yanez confessed to starting the fire as well as other fires over the years.

Yanez was taken to the Butte County Jail.

The investigation is ongoing, the release said.

Chico Enterprise Record

4-7-2020

CRIME

One shot in Concow, suspect at large

Staff reports

CONCOW » A person was shot Saturday at 5000 block of Big Bend Road, Concow and is currently in stable condition, though the shooter has not yet been caught.

Deputies obtained an arrest warrant and are looking for Sean Franco, 42, of Concow, said a press release issued Monday by the Butte County Sheriff's Office.

According to the release, witnesses at the scene identified Franco as the shooter

and said he left after the incident occurred.

The individual who sustained the gunshot wound was taken by helicopter to a hospital where surgery was conducted and the person is in stable condition, the release said.

After some investigation, deputies and detectives found that Franco lived next door to the gunshot victim and the Sheriff's Office SWAT team served a warrant to search the residence later on Saturday.

The release said evidence related to the shooting was found along with marijuana grow. What they didn't find was Franco.

A judge signed a warrant for Franco's arrest on suspicion of assault with a firearm as well as being a felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition, according to the release.

The Sheriff's Office is asking that those who may have information about this case call Detective Brian Mollath at 538-7671.



Franco



SCHEER
MEMORIAL CHAPEL
FD975
SERVICES

*Knowing neighbors, having friends,
and people we can count on...
like the Cosgrove family and staff
at Scheer Memorial Chapel.*

*Serving the families of Oroville and
Paradise for more than 50 years*

For more information
3410 Franklin Blvd. • 538-5355

Your plumbing is fixed.

**RIGHT.
RIGHT NOW.**



Chico 343-0330 Oroville 534-1500
Paradise 872-7900 Orland 865-9010
Corning 824-2300

actionnewsnow.com

4-10-2020

YANKEE HILL MARKET STAYS OPEN FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES



Employee Nathan Mubarake also said customers are not coming in as often but when they do, they are buying more.

Posted: Apr 10, 2020 9:53 AM

Posted By: Christina Vitale, Elita Goyer



YANKEE HILL, Calif. - People living in rural areas do not have as many resources as those living in bigger cities.

Canyon Lakes Market, also known as the Dome Store, is the only market within miles, so they are staying open to help serve their communities.

The store is taking safety measures like installing a plexiglass divider at the register, wearing gloves and sanitizing but it is not letting the coronavirus keep them from their essential job.

Employee Nathan Mubarake said many of the people who depend on them live in Concow and Yankee Hill.

"We're just a little mom and pop shop and we're here for them as much as they are for us," said Mubarake. "So, we try to stay open for them because they support us as much as we support them."

Mubarake said without the store, people in the area would have to drive a half-hour to Paradise just to get groceries.

He also said customers are not coming in as often but when they do, they are buying more.

The Dome Store is open every day from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

CAMP FIRE

NVCF approves grant extension on permit fees

Town Council decision was next; \$50,000 given to Paradise sign rebuild

Staff reports

The Butte Strong Fund committee approved a \$1 million grant on Friday that would continue to help pay permit fees for primary residences in Paradise as well as provide new incentives for rebuilding rentals and multi-family housing.

The Paradise Town Council was set to vote on the acceptance of the grant last night and if it did, the grant will be expanded to allow fee reductions for second homes and multi-family housing, with the goal of providing more rentals.

Last year the Butte Strong Fund approved \$1 million for the town of Paradise and \$500,000 for Butte County that helped pay 50 percent of the permit fees up to \$3,500 for homeowners who wanted to rebuild a primary residence.

Individuals can learn about the Rebuild Incentive Program by contacting the town's Development Services Department at the Building Resiliency Center in Paradise or calling 872-6291, ext. 411.

That was the largest among 18 grants totaling \$2,051,450

that were approved the past two months.

The other grants include:

Oroville Hope Center: A grant of \$218,492, matched by \$218,492 from the American Red Cross, will pay for operational support for long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts. The Disaster Relief Division of the Oroville Hope Center serves as the main county-designated Camp Fire donation hub. It works in conjunction with the Paradise Hope Center, where survivors can access food, water, clothes and support services.

Camp Fire Shed Project: A \$150,000 grant will provide funding for another round of the highly successful volunteer effort. Members of Paradise Adventist Church will partner with Maranatha Volunteers International to build and deliver 400 high-quality, secure storage sheds to selected recipients who live throughout the Camp Fire burn scar. The project directly benefits people who lost their homes, are living in RVs and who intend to rebuild.

Habitat for Humanity of Butte County: A \$250,000 grant will support increased staffing, technology and systems to help the organization achieve its goal of increasing and sustaining more home production each year.

Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council: Funds \$49,995 in vouchers for

residents to use at three markets and stores near Concow.

Butte 211: A \$25,000 grant will allow Butte 211 to create a public, user-friendly 211campfire.org website providing real time updated community resource information for fire survivors, disaster case managers and other workers assisting in the Camp Fire recovery.

Welcome to Paradise Sign Rebuild: A \$50,000 grant will contribute to rebuilding the iconic sign on the Skyway.

Habitat for Humanity of Yuba-Sutter: A \$50,000 grant will allow the organization to hire a fund development officer for Camp Fire-related affordable housing projects. The employee will play a vital role in securing funding for the construction of homes for Camp Fire survivors.

Community Resource Coalition: A \$50,000 grant will help with ongoing needs of the resource center in Paradise that was established by the organization to provide goods and services to Camp Fire survivors.

Paradise/Butte Gleaners: A \$25,000 grant will provide provisions for homeless Camp Fire survivors in Concow, Magalia, Gridley, Paradise and Oroville that aren't normally carried at the food bank. That includes disinfectant products, wipes, hand sanitizers, Lysol spray, bleach and

other cleaning items.

First Baptist Church of Paradise: A \$15,000 grant will allow the organization to continue to distribute food and other items for people affected by the Camp Fire.

Butte Schools Self-Funded Programs: An \$18,000 grant will provide mental health support services and group counseling to employees or retirees of Butte-Glenn Community College District, Butte County Office of Education, school districts and two charter schools in Butte County.

Abundant Manifestations of H.O.P.E.: A grant of \$19,478 will provide propane distribution to eligible households at North State Food Bank distributions in the burn scar.

Butte County Sheriff's Office: A grant of \$7,040 will purchase a trailer to carry a chipper for trees and brush. The Butte Fire Safe Council obtained a grant to buy the chipper but not a trailer. Inmates from Butte County Jail provide the labor, overseen by the Sheriff's Office. With this trailer and chipper, work crews will be better equipped to assist with continuing efforts to clean up the more remote areas affected by the Camp Fire while also helping to maintain defensible space as vegetation returns.

FEES » PAGE 2

Fees

FROM PAGE 1

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 582: A grant of \$11,500 will buy and deliver gravel to the trailers, RVs and other temporary dwellings of 53 families or individuals in and around Concow who lost their homes in the Camp Fire.

United Way of Northern California: A grant of \$45,150 provided support for United Way's Stable Housing Opportunities Program and allowed United Way to deploy \$900,000 to vulnerable households.

Hometech Charter School: A \$16,800 grant will assist 35 students unable to access or afford wifi. HotSpots were donated

by T-Mobile but the broadband lines for all devices will cost \$16,800 over 24 months.

Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council: A \$49,995 grant will allow the organization to hire two part-timers and also will support a newsletter, website, payroll services and facility fees associated with meetings at Concow School and the historic schoolhouse. With the latest grants, the North Valley Community Foundation has awarded more than \$33 million for community recovery via the Butte Strong Fund, Camp Fire Relief Fund and donor-designated funds.

The Butte Strong Fund is a partnership of fundraising efforts led by NVCF, Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. and Aaron Rodgers, the Green Bay Packers quarterback and Chico native.

The Butte Strong Fund provides funding for eligible organizations or local government entities that are directly serving people affected by the Camp Fire. Individual assistance is handled through those organizations.

Organizations interested in applying for Butte Strong Fund grants can visit ButteStrongFund.org to determine if they qualify for funding. Those that do can submit a brief grant inquiry before being invited to submit a full application. Staff at NVCF will facilitate the application process.

The Butte Strong Fund is still receiving donations. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to Butte Strong Fund, 240 Main St., Suite 260, Chico, CA 95928 or by visiting www.buttestrongfund.org.

Chico Enterprise Record

4-17-2020

SHOOTING

Woman shot husband during domestic violence dispute, according to Butte County Sheriff's Office

Staff reports

CONCOW » Detectives with the Butte County Sheriff's Office are investigating a shooting that took place Saturday in Concow.

A woman called and said she shot her husband during a domestic dispute in a remote area of Concow, said a press release issued

Thursday by the Sheriff's Office.

Deputies found the woman and her child near the scene upon arrival and then found her husband who was treated and taken to a proper landing zone where he was airlifted to a hospital.

The husband was identified as John Williams, 30, of

Magalia. He was later discharged from the hospital, the release said.

Upon further investigation, the release said, deputies believe there was a domestic violence situation and both the woman and their child were interviewed.

Williams was interviewed Tuesday when he told detectives he drank alcohol, blacked out and did

not remember what had happened.

According to the release, the investigation results will be given to the District Attorney's Office for review once the investigation is over.

Those with information about this incident are being asked by the Sheriff's Office to call 538-7671 to speak with Detectives Brian Parsons or Brian Mollath.

CAMP FIRE

RIDGE RECOVERY EFFORTS STRETCHED BY NEW DISASTER



PHOTOS BY MATT BATES — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Nancy Morgan, right, loads groceries onto a pallet for Nancy Harlan at Magalia Community Church on Wednesday in Magalia.

By Camille von Kaenel
cvonkaenel@chicoer.com

Disaster relief groups still serving those hit by the Camp Fire say they have seen a sharp uptick in demand as people who were recovering find themselves without a job and isolated because of the coronavirus.

The existing safety net has been able to quickly provide some help — but the worldwide scale of the disaster is already stretching resources previously funneled towards recovery. It's an example of the cumulative toll of disasters in a short span of time that puts already vulnerable people at extra risk.



Nancy Morgan, right, makes a grocery list for Nancy Harlan at Magalia Community Church on Wednesday in Magalia.

Seventeen months after the fire, only around 125 of the 14,000 homes have been rebuilt. Hundreds are still living in temporary, sub-standard housing like trailers while they waited. They had just made it through

winter — and now, many of those who had found jobs are no longer working and are stuck at home.

At Magalia Community Church, a hub of resources for the upper ridge community, people wait in their cars in long lines to pick up food. The church served 85 people a day before the coronavirus; now, it serves around 185, said Shell Morley, an elder and office manager at Magalia Community Church.

“We had gotten those numbers down before,” she said. “Most people had just started to feel like they were recovering. ... We were struggling, and now this is thrown on top.”

Chico Enterprise Record

4-17-2020

page 2 of 2

Recovery

FROM PAGE 1

The distribution takes place outside. The tents with clothes and furniture have been closed for safety. Morley said she had talked at length with a man who was finally getting his mobile home delivered to his property — but would now be unable to furnish it.

In addition, without in-person services, the church has lost donations from members that were key to keeping the place running. The number of volunteers has dropped, too; a crew from AmeriCorps got called back to avoid further spreading the virus. Food banks in Solano and Contra Costa counties are still delivering, but there are new restrictions as they pivot to serving the extra need in their own areas.

Resources diverted

“We’re having to get creative,” said Morley. “But the



MATT BATES — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Nancy Harlan loads groceries into her car at Magalia Community Church on Wednesday in Magalia.

longer this wears on, the harder it will be to meet the need.”

In Paradise, the Paradise Hope Center is continuing its distributions of water to people who still haven’t had their water system cleared by the Paradise Irrigation District or who still have concerns. There was an uptick, particularly at the outset of the stay-at-home

orders, because panic-buying had emptied the stores of essentials, said Josh Jamison, the site manager.

“For the most part, we’ve tried to keep to what we normally do as best we can,” he said.

But that hardly counts as recovery, said Jenny Lowrey, who leads From the Ground Up Farms, Inc.

“We’ve lost the prog-

ress we’ve made,” she said. “We’ve regressed to the same spot we were after the fire, scrambling for scraps.”

She was recently able to distribute \$5,000 of fresh groceries she bought in Chico to people in Concow, with a grant from the North Valley Community Foundation. The problems of access to food there are dire, she said: Many of the community members in Concow, though they are used to and knowledgeable about living off the grid, have not yet had the time or the ability to get their own gardens up and running after the fire, she said.

Longer term, she’s concerned about the delay in resources for the recovery.

“The biggest challenge now is that funding has dried up because this is worldwide,” said Lowrey. “I have many grants that were out that said they’ve turned all of their funding over to COVID-19. It’ll take another year of grants.”

She’s also a part owner at the Lake Concow Camp-

ground, which was being retooled to serve as a park for Camp Fire survivors to live at safely. But the utilities hadn’t yet been connected — a still widespread issue in areas that were burned.

“Everyone’s just spending double on gas and propane now,” she said.

Teri Rubiolo, who cooks for people newly or previously homeless and runs the only distribution center in Concow, said she had to take a break because of concerns about exposing her elderly and already medically compromised community to sickness. She and other private donors continue to go on shopping trips, though some stores now limit bulk purchases. She said she’d be ready to start cooking again later this week.

“I can’t shut myself in like everyone else because then there would be no one to help,” she said.

Contact reporter Camille von Kaenel at 530-896-7764.

Chico Enterprise Record

4-23-2020

PREVENTION

FIRE CREWS BURNING BRUSH EARLY IN SCAR



PHOTOS BY RICK SILVA — PARADISE POST

Cal Fire-Butte County's Chris Atkins, left, and James Polander, right, cut up a log during a prescribed burn on Tuesday at Station 36 in Jarbo Gap.

By **Natalie Hanson**
nhanson@chicoer.com

CHICO » Nestled among Concow and Yankee Hill's trees, Cal Fire-Butte County Station 36 sits in the midst of the remains of the Camp Fire burn scar. Driving up Highway 70, what's left of some homes are still visible amidst dry brush and wood, despite many cleanup projects by fire crews.

In late April after some much-needed rainfall, grasses on the hills between the burnt trees are growing tall, lush and green. However, with temperatures rising this weekend, this fuel is still needing to be cleared.

That's why Cal Fire-Butte County is acting early to conduct brush burns in areas like this — the station was threatened in the Camp Fire when "flames came roaring out of the canyon there," public information officer Capt. John Gaddie said. The operation continued Tuesday morning, to burn brush piles down to ash by noon and protect the station.

This area is covered in "post-fire fuel" — burnt trees — and Gaddie said it will take time to address other burn projects in other parts of the county that were not touched by the Camp Fire, like in Loafer Creek and Cohasset.



Fire burns cut-up logs Tuesday during a prescribed burn at Station 36 in Jarbo Gap.

These projects are partially stalled for now. Vegetation management Battalion Chief Gus Boston said Tuesday the Loafer Creek project has been completed, as was the Station 36 burn Tuesday morning.

The problem? Rising temperatures and winds are expected this weekend.

"The weather is changing and everyone's got a sense of high hesitation when the weather gets hotter and drier and the winds pick up, so I think they're going to suspend a little next week, see what the weather does," Gaddie said.

"The grass can cure very quickly, with four or five days of upper 80, 90 degree temper-

atures," he said. "We just want to exercise caution, because of the history of what's gone on with the county."

Personal responsibility

Gaddie added that defensible space and proper weed maintenance is still very much on the shoulders of homeowners living in rural, sprawling forest areas like the land nearby him at Station 36 — not just for their safety, but to protect fire crews. It's policy that crews need to assess a structure and whether it is worth saving without risking the lives of fire fighters, he cautioned.

"If a house has pine needles all over it and brush right up

next to it, and the driveway going up to it is covered in brush, they're going to drive right by it and find something they can protect," Gaddie said. "They're not going to put themselves in a position to hurt themselves and most likely, possibly that structure's not going to survive. It's been compromised because the property owner has not reduced that fuel and gotten that defensible space."

He cautioned people to start weeding around their homes now, in the cool mornings before heat grows in the later hours of the day and increases the curing (drying out) of grasses on their property. This is also to avoid potential ignitions if people use equipment like lawnmowers on a hot afternoon among drying grass.

"We tell people to get out there early when the humidity's high and there might be some dew still on the plants," Gaddie said. "The ignition goes way down because it gets hotter and drier throughout the day."

"We're getting into that time of year where you have to evaluate day to day," he said. "There is no fire season anymore here. It's year-round, regardless of where you are in the state."

Contact reporter **Natalie Hanson** at 530-896-7763.

Chico Enterprise Record

4-30-2020

CRIME

Suspect arrested in April Concow shooting

Staff reports

CONCOW » Deputies with the Butte County Sheriff's Office made an arrest Tuesday of a suspect in a Concow shooting case.

On April 4, deputies responded to Big Bend Road where they found that a man had been shot. The man received surgery and is currently recovering from the wounds.



Franco

Witnesses at the scene identified Sean Franco, 42, of Concow as the shooter, said a press release issued Wednesday by the Sheriff's Office.

According to the release, Franco was found by detectives in Plumas County where he was staying at a motel.

Franco was arrested on suspicion of assault with a firearm, assault

with a deadly weapon, being in possession of a firearm while prohibited and cultivation of marijuana for the purpose of sale.

Earlier on in the investigation, the release said detectives had searched Franco's residence which was located near where the shooting occurred. The release said additional evidence was found at the home including a large marijuana farm.

Detectives believe Franco was growing marijuana to sell to people in the Bay Area. At one point, detectives went to a Napa home where they found evidence that Franco had gone there after the shooting, the release said.

Franco was booked into the Butte County Jail with a bail of \$500,000.

Those with more information on this case are urged by the Sheriff's Office to call Detective Brian Mollath at 538-7671.

CAMP FIRE

Lake Concow delays reopening

Campground has several projects underway; the forested refuge was a gathering place before fire

By Camille von Kaenel
cvonkaenel@chicoer.com

CONCOW » Lake Concow Campground is on the path to recovery.

It's one of those places uniquely hit by two crises in the past two years: It was a forested refuge before the Camp Fire tore through and took out trees and structures and a gathering space before gatherings became vectors of disease.

Its caretakers have taken several steps to bring it back to life since the fire.

"This is an exciting year," said Jason Romer, one of the Konkow Partners, a group that has an agreement with the owner since 2013 to lease and eventually buy the property. "The shock and the disorientation are over, and the campground is getting ready to reopen soon."

In the past two months, the pandemic has made the recovery a bit more tenuous.

"Even the excited part is a little bit of a roller coaster," admitted Romer.

The 88-acre property borders the Concow Reservoir, five miles off of Highway 70 in the heart of the community. It had spaces for tent and recreational vehicle camping.

Romer first got involved by hosting a music festival there and said he has been spending summers there with his son for years. The campground hosted weddings, family reunions, birthdays, concerts and events like the Buckeye Gathering, a primitive skills workshop. The Konkow Maidu, the original residents of the area, had access to a sweat lodge and a sacred space.



JENNY LOWREY — CONTRIBUTED

The Lake Concow Campground's reopening has been postponed because of the pandemic.

When the Oroville Dam spillway crisis hit, evacuees sheltered there. When the Camp Fire blazed through, people dove into the waters of the lake to escape and survive the flames.

The concrete pit toilets made it, but little else.

The campground was also vastly under-insured, which is not uncommon, and has been without income for 18 months.

The debris from the handful of vehicles and other structures that had been burned has been removed. Parts of the garden have been replanted with the help of Chico State students in what was supposed to be the first of several volunteering events.

The power was just finally reconnected a few weeks ago, after some unexpected delays.

The grand reopening was to be this year's Easter Egg Hunt, scheduled for April 22. But the event had to be postponed because of the threat of spreading a potentially deadly virus — and postponed again, and again.

Romer said he hopes, tentatively, that some of the partners and the caretaker of the campground will be allowed to move in later this summer or fall. There still needs to be some construction on facilities to accommodate guests. One of the campground's goals is to provide a place to stay to Camp Fire survivor families still looking for housing.

There are plenty of other projects underway at the location in the meantime.

Jenny Lowrey, who leads the nonprofit From the Ground Up Farms, Inc. and is also a Konkow Partner, has mobilized her nonprofit to bring in grant money to turn the campground more into a community resource.

For example, two containers are scheduled to be delivered on May 29 and will become distributions sheds. People will eventu-

ally be able to borrow tools and how-to books, like from a library. The goal is to help the community, which has experience living off the grid, rebuild even though they may have lost their tools in the fire or be confronted with new construction challenges.

At the moment, From the Ground Up Farms, Inc. is soliciting designs for murals on the walls of the containers.

Lowrey said another grant will pay for a publicly accessible children's playground, which the community is helping design as forest-friendly.

Funding has also been secured from the Butte Strong Fund to rebuild a sacred cultural area. The group hopes to work on the project with the Konkow

Valley Band of Maidu.

Raychel Smith, another part-owner, acknowledged that the future is murky. Because of the virus, she's not sure when or if many people will be going to festivals again, she said.

The Lake Concow Campground has a calendar on its website, lakeconcow-campground.net, where events will be posted.

Smith said "good things are happening."

She grew up in Concow and currently lives near the campground. She found

meaning in one of her recent visits.

Her kids have always enjoyed hanging out at Eagle Island, a peninsula that becomes an island when the water is high. They've been watching a family of eagles there for many years.

The other day, while visiting to upkeep and enjoy the property, she spotted one again. It was the first time since the fire.

Contact reporter Camille von Kaenel at 530-896-7764.



Concow Lake is seen looking pretty full of water on May 11, 2016.



Concow Lake is seen looking pretty full of water on May 11, 2016.

Chico Enterprise Record

6-2-2020

COMMUNITY

Bulletins bridge the information gap locally

By **Camille von Kaenel**

cvonkaenel@chicoer.com

MAGALIA » Magalia and Concow now have bulletin boards to help distribute news about the community, the coronavirus, and Camp Fire recovery.

The boards were installed over the last two months and intend to fill an information gap as some residents lack reliable access to internet or do not have social media accounts.

The bulletin boards were shepherded by Todd Hall, a member of the Chico Arts Commission who works for Cal-Flor Accessory Systems, and Megan Kurtz, Camp Fire liaison for Chico State.

The Magalia bulletin board is outside of Sav-Mor Market at 14001 Lakeridge Circle. The Concow bulletin board is at the Canyon Lakes Market, otherwise known as the Dome Store, off of Highway 70.

“We were looking for alternative ways to support a community having major communications issues,” Hall explained.

That’s become especially important during the pandemic and the related stay-at-home orders as office work, government meetings and other in-person consultations transition to only online. The Upper Ridge and Concow can have intermittent service.

The boards are mostly community monitored and run, although some members of the Long Term Recovery Group will continue to contribute information as possible.

The Upper Ridge Community Council, after pushing for a bulletin board at the market, helps monitor and update it.

In Concow, Hall said that by the time the installation crew had toured the area and had lunch after putting up the board earlier this month, several documents with local information had already been affixed.

He said the group was assessing needs for other bulletin boards at locations like the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s temporary housing com-

munity in Gridley.

The concept was first proposed by Mary Gardner of the Chico Arts Commission. The Spiritual and Emotional Wellness Committee of the Camp Fire Long Term Recovery Group helped organize the project.

Chico State funded the materials, and construction labor was contributed by Cal-Flor, North Valley Energy Watch, and Butte College’s Create Space.

Contact reporter Camille von Kaenel at 530-896-7764.

Chico Enterprise Record

6-3-2020

CRIME

Sheriff's Office: 91-year-old fires shotgun at deputies

By Jake Hutchison
jhutchison@chicoer.com

CONCOW » A Concow man was arrested early Tuesday morning after a day of negotiations and allegedly firing a shotgun at deputies.

Don Pejsa, 91, was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder of law enforcement personnel, said a press release issued Tues-

day by the Butte County Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's Office received reports from a friend of Pejsa that he was unreachable via telephone since Saturday.

Deputies went to Pejsa's ad-



Pejsa

dress at the 4900 block of Nobb Road in Concow and knocked on the door, letting Pejsa know they were with the Sheriff's Office, the release said. This was when Pejsa allegedly pointed a shotgun at the deputies out of his window.

The deputies asked him to put the shotgun down and he fired it at them, the release said. Other law enforcement agencies were called in including the Sheriff's

Office SWAT team.

After hours of negotiations, Pejsa fired another round at roughly 1:30 a.m. Tuesday morning.

Pepper spray gas was used on the residence and at roughly 2:50 a.m., he exited and was arrested.

Contact reporter Jake Hutchison at 530-896-7750.

SUPPLIES

Teen's nonprofit helps Camp Fire survivors

By Anne Gelhaus
Bay Area News Group

CONCOW » In the year since Cupertino High School freshman Prajval Sharma founded Mysupportforkids Foundation, the nonprofit has supported those in need in India and closer to home.

Prajval was inspired to create his nonprofit after visiting Blind School, Gadwal, Telangana, India in June 2019.

"During my visit in June, we provided food packets and basic supplies," Prajval wrote on his website. "These kids come from low-income families and some from orphanages. We had a detailed session where I presented science concepts to them in a way they could understand. We also spent extended time having a Q&A session on as they wanted to know a lot about life in the USA."

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred similar efforts in local communities, as well as in India. In late May, Mysupportforkids provided food to residents of Telangana and organized a drive-through food pickup at a Salvation Army in San Jose.

On May 30 Prajval and other volunteers traveled to Concow, a community in Butte County that was destroyed by the Camp Fire in 2018.

"Many residents there have not yet recovered from the impact of this deadly disaster," he wrote. "The current pandemic has made survival even more difficult for the community and presented various challenges for kids' nutrition as well."

Mysupportforkids.org organized a drive-through site in Concow for distributing more than 100 food



COURTESY PHOTO

Cupertino High School freshman Prajval Sharma hands food to a resident of Concow, a community in Butte County that was destroyed by the Camp Fire. Prajval undertook the May 30 effort through the Mysupportforkids Foundation, a nonprofit he founded a year ago.

packs, hygiene kits and snack packs that included organic fruit juice and kids' cereal.

The effort was a collaboration with SEWA International, a Hindu faith-based nonprofit.

Prajval raised funds for

this event by tutoring on weekends and with a few donations.

"It is very important to give back to society," he wrote, "specifically by doing more to help kids reach their maximum potential so that they will be able to de-

velop into responsible citizens who can one day support their own families.

To donate to the Mysupportforkids Foundation, visit <https://mysupportforkids.org>. To volunteer, email to info@mysupportforkids.org.

Chico Enterprise Record

6-11-2020

CAMP FIRE

Special online viewing of Ron Howard film

By **Laura Urseny**
lurseny@chicoer.com

PARADISE » Filmmaker Ron Howard's documentary on Paradise and the Camp Fire "Rebuilding Paradise" will be available for local on-line viewing this weekend before being released nationally.

Registration is being taken now for two early on-line screenings of "Rebuilding Paradise."

Viewers can register for 2 p.m. or 5 p.m. viewings June 13 and 14 by visiting the site <https://rsvp.theworldsbest.events/lzmgn>.

Former Paradise Mayor Steve "Woody" Culleton has been spreading the word about the viewing. He says to paste the above site into their browser and then sign in with name and email address to get the information to watch it. Registration has to be done by 6 p.m. Friday.

"Because the movie has not been released yet it will be by invitation only so if you are one of the many Camp Fire survivors that have reached out to me here is the invitation ..." Culleton said on Facebook.

To this publication, he added, "I really like the film, it really captures the spirit of our community and why we live here... it is a real display of the resilience that it takes for a



RICK SILVA — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Filmmaker Ron Howard speaks to Paradise Unified School District Superintendent Michelle John in December 2018 as Ponderosa Elementary School principal Ed Gregorio listens.

community to recover from such mass destruction and come back despite all the many obstacles."

According to the site, an email link will be sent on the morning of June 13 to watch any of the four showings.

Produced by National Geographic Documentary Films, the documentary shows what happened to the Paradise ridge and how it fought back to rebuild.

The website <https://films.nationalgeographic.com/rebuilding-paradise> describes the film from Academy Award-winning direc-

tor Ron Howard as "a moving story of resilience in the face of tragedy, as a community ravaged by disaster comes together to recover what was lost and begin the important task of rebuilding."

Famed filmmaker Howard spent several days filming in Paradise in December 2018. Howard has links to the area, with his mother-in-law having lived in Paradise for about five years.

Howard told the Paradise Post in 2018 that the film would be called "Believe in Paradise," but that changed

before its release.

The above website also lists organizations and resources that have helped in the rebuilding, including Paradise Rotary Foundation, North Valley Community Foundation, Butte Strong Fund, Camp Fire Long-Term Recovery Group, which has recently reorganized as Camp Fire Collaborative, and the American Red Cross. The websites have links to the organizations and provide an ability to donate.

Contact reporter *Laura Urseny* at 530-896-7756.

PG&E

PG&E PLEADS GUILTY

Utility admits to 84 counts of involuntary manslaughter, agrees to pay \$25.5B to Camp Fire victims



PHOTOS BY CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

William Johnson, PG&E chief executive officer, apologizes Tuesday for the destruction the company caused during the Camp Fire after emerging from the Butte County Superior Court in Chico.

By **Natalie Hanson**
nhanson@chicoer.com

CHICO » Pacific Gas and Electric formally admitted to the death of 84 people in the Camp Fire on Tuesday morning on the first day of a closed-door hearing at Butte County Superior Court.

PG&E CEO and President William Johnson pleaded guilty on behalf of the company for all 85 felony counts. According to District Attorney Michael Ramsey's Camp Fire Public Report, these counts included "one count of unlawfully and recklessly causing the Camp Fire as a result of its gross negligence in maintaining its power line, and 84 individual counts of involuntary manslaughter naming each of the persons directly killed in the Camp Fire by PG&E's criminal negligence." Although not discussed Tuesday, the report also noted the indictment also included "three special allegations for PG&E's causing great bodily injury to a firefighter; causing great bodily injury to more than one surviving victim; and causing multiple structures to burn (listed as approximately 18,804 structures)."

PG&E had asked to immediately plead guilty, be sentenced and reach the settlement agreement of \$25.5 billion of compensation for victims of the fire. The settlement

increased from \$13.5 billion as the utility negotiated its bankruptcy plan.

After hearing the names and viewing the pictures of all 85 people killed in the Camp Fire, Johnson stood and made a formal apology on behalf of the company to "take responsibility for the fire that killed the people whose pictures we just saw."

"PG&E will never forget this fire," Johnson said, adding he has heard many stories of "pain and anguish" from fire survivors in visits to Paradise and will listen closely to more accounts from the victims' families in the hearing starting tomorrow.

"The lessons PG&E has learned from this fire are being taken to heart and driving comprehensive changes currently underway at PG&E," he said. These changes include improved inspection and operation protocols, "all being done to make sure this tragedy that occurred in this community never occurs again."

PG&E » PAGE 4

PG&E

FROM PAGE 1

"I apologize personally for the pain that was caused here," Johnson continued. "We can't replace everything that was lost here, but we hope by pleading guilty here and by accepting accountability, compensating the victims ... and rebuilding in Paradise to honor those who were lost and help this community move forward."

Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey stood and noted Johnson "never looked down" while viewing the pictures of those killed in the fire.

"He looked directly at each of the photos and I applaud him for that," Ramsey said.

The public hearing will reconvene Wednesday at 9 a.m. via live stream to hear from all victims' families and Camp Fire survivors as part of the testimony before the company's sentencing.

Contact reporter **Natalie Hanson** at 530-896-7763.



Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey turns from reporter to reporter Tuesday as he discusses his office's investigative Camp Fire report.

"I apologize personally for the pain that was caused here. We can't replace everything that was lost here, but we hope by pleading guilty here and by accepting accountability, compensating the victims ... and rebuilding in Paradise to honor those who were lost and help this community move forward"

— PG&E CEO and President William Johnson

Families speak on behalf of deceased

By **Natalie Hanson**

nhanson@chicoer.com

CHICO » Nearly 600 days since the day the Camp Fire burned the town of Paradise as well as areas of Magalia, Butte Creek Canyon, Pulga and Concow, families were given the opportunity to speak on behalf of relatives who died due to the fire in public court Wednesday.

After PG&E CEO and President William Johnson pleaded guilty on behalf of the utility to 84 counts of manslaughter in the Nov. 8, 2018 fire, the victims' families read their statements about their deceased family members, often addressing PG&E. When needed, Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey helped read individuals' statements or contacted them for a phone call statement.

Words of loss

Many said they were at a loss of words to describe the pain of losing a family member so tragically, often using words like "anguish," "helplessness," "despair" and "guilt." The knowledge of a loved one having died in pain, frightened and alone, was mentioned by most family as a continuing source of grief.

Some recalled speaking to their relative as the fire approached their homes.

Russ Keith Stewart's daughter Sherlyn Stewart said, "My voice was the last he heard saying 'I love you.' His last text to me was 'I'm OK for now. Pray.'"

Laurie Teague recalled how her father Herbert Alderman, 79, called at least five times, "each sounding more panicked and desperate, pleading for help, begging for someone to come get him."

"His last words on the phone were, 'the fire is two houses away, help me,'" she said. "Then the phone went dead.

"How absolutely terrified Herb must have been.



CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey turns from reporter to reporter Tuesday as he discusses his office's investigative Camp Fire report.

Trial

FROM PAGE 1

My heart aches for him. No human being should ever have to suffer the imaginable pain and terror of dying by fire."

Marie Wehe died in her pickup truck trying to escape.

"The suffering she must have endured is unthinkable," daughter-in-law Lisa Wehe said. "Our mother was the center of our life."

Brandon DuVall said he also keeps reliving his father Robert DuVall's death in his vehicle.

"All alone, he was helplessly trapped like a caged animal in the cab of his truck," DuVall said, adding that Beverly Powers, Robert's partner, also died just feet away.

Tammy Fulton said the images of the bodies of her aunt Joy Porter and cousin Dennis Clark Jr. were used in multiple videos and "will forever haunt me."

Ariel Funk's father Paul Ernest did not die on the day of the fire, but instead on Aug. 5, 2019, after nine months living in intensive care due to third-degree burns from protecting Funk's mother in the fire. His wife survived, but both she and Ariel lost their homes as well as a husband and father.

The fire did not spare those in good health. Meriel Wisotsky said her mother Ethel Colleen Riggs was in

great physical shape when she died at 96, already planning her 100th birthday party. Wisotsky said when it took seven months to identify her mother's DNA, "that's what brought it home to me how hot it (the fire) was."

Skye Sedwick said her father John Sedwick "was not your stereotypical 82-year-old" as he still worked full time and hoped to soon retire. Sedwick also taught Sunday school and at the Gold Nugget Museum, played music every Saturday at the Feather River Senior Center and was writing a book "which he called his legacy," his daughter said.

After fighting the fire all day until about 10:30 at night, John Sedwick ultimately died when flames returned to his house.

The loss of a child was also felt by Tom and Pat LeBlanc when Pat's daughter "offbeat, brilliant, witty" Kimber Wehr died unable to escape her home — "Being unable to save your child is an incalculable nightmare," LeBlanc said.

Many family members said they suffer post-traumatic stress disorder and have been prescribed medications for anxiety and depression. Others have since died due to other health conditions, which other family members thought were worsened by their grief.

Through tears, LeBlanc that added his wife Pat, suffering from Stage Three pancreatic cancer, was consumed by grief over her

daughter and ultimately died due to the cancer Dec. 6 2019.

After his father Forrest Rea, a philanthropist who gave wood and food to many members of the community, died, Rob Rea also said he is now suffering from cancer and his sister died of breast cancer in August 2019.

Ted Radcliff said after the death of Joan Tracy in the fire, her son Mike Tracy suffered a stroke in 2019 that took his life. He was only 52 years old and Radcliff said he believed stress and grief were part of his death.

PG&E responsibility

Most family members chastised PG&E for its negligence and failure to maintain equipment.

"Although the corporation has pleaded guilty to 84 counts (of manslaughter), it was not a corporation that made the decision over and over and over again to divert money. ... Those were decisions made by people focused on profits," Laurie Teague said.

Phillip Binstock, remembering the death of father Julian Binstock, read off a list of over 20 fires PG&E had a role in.

"You had the capacity to know that what you were doing would kill people," Binstock said, addressing the company. "You allowed your failed equipment and inspections to kill people. I want to tell PG&E, you murdered my dad."

Joseph Downer, brother of victim Andrew James

Downer, expressed anger that PG&E CEO in 2018, Geisha Williams, left the company with severance pay.

"He was my big brother, he taught me so much in life," Joseph Downer said. "PG&E took this from me."

"Maybe my dad's story can remind them (PG&E) that it isn't money that lasts," Sheryl Stewart said. "It's family and love. And they stole that from me."

"We didn't get a chance to say goodbye to our mom," Tammy Konicki said after losing her mother Sheila Santos. "Because they didn't think human life was important enough, and they wanted to save money."

Fifteen of Konicki's family members lost all they had in the fire, she said.

Brian Lee Hunter, whose father Gary Lee Hunter died trapped in his home, lamented that "a person who killed another person can go to jail for life" but a company "can walk away with a small financial burden."

"How many failed opportunities?" Skye Sedwick said, calling it a "culture of apathy, neglect and greed, synonymous with PG&E. How many more have to die?"

The Butte County Superior Court will resume the public hearing 9 a.m. Thursday with one family member statement before proceeding with sentencing. A live stream will be available on the court's YouTube channel.

Contact reporter Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.