

You Said It

“It doesn’t necessarily feel like your typical, quiet library.”

~ Lori Oemig

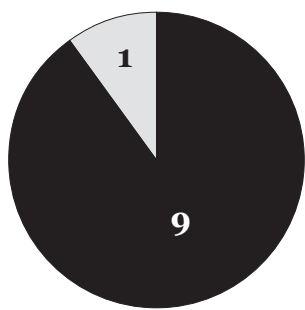
Oemig is new director / Page 5

Rumor Has It National Weights and Measures Week is March 1-7; it marks the signing of the first weights and measure law by President John Adams, March 2, 1799.

Hit the Polls Are you excited that March came in like a lamb? Yes = No =

Go to the Courier Sentinel Facebook page to find this week’s poll and vote!

Last Week’s Do you celebrate Fat Tuesday?



Yes = 1 | No = 9

The mission of the Courier Sentinel, as a local, hometown newspaper, is to support our democracy, by publishing editorials and letters to the editor, that stimulate thought and discussion, but, because of the ongoing divisiveness following the recent U.S. presidential election, we have decided to put in place a moratorium on editorials and letters that will further inflame partisan rancor, and ill-will within our community of readers. We need a period of quiet, so we can begin to listen to one another. The newspaper will continue to run editorials, but as commentary on our local news coverage. We welcome letters from our readers that also focus on local issues, things that we cover in these pages. Kris O’Leary, general manager

– Editorial –

Community support needed for fireworks display

Members of the Courier Sentinel editorial board include publisher Carol O’Leary, general manager Kris O’Leary and Star News editor Brian Wilson.

“It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward, forever more.”

John Adams, who would go on to become the nation’s second president, wrote those words to his wife, Abigail, in a letter July 3, 1776, about the passage of the Declaration of Independence.

“Illuminations,” what people today call fireworks, have been part of the Independence Day Celebration for the past 245 years. Whether they are the sparklers that light up family picnics or the shells that explode in cascades of light across the night sky, fireworks displays have become an intrinsic part of the annual celebration of the birth of the United States.

For many years, the City of Cornell has budgeted \$4,000 for its annual fireworks display, and

leaves it up to the company hired to get the most bang for their buck. Faced with the same sort of inflationary expenses as any other business, the city’s longtime vendor, J&M Displays, let the city know that the cost of this year’s show would be about 20 percent higher than last year.

City council members are faced with the choice of cutting back on the annual show in order to keep to the budget, or finding additional revenue to pay for it.

With local government perennially cash-strapped, because of Madison-imposed levy limits, it is hard to justify shifting money from things like road maintenance or vehicle replacement to blow more stuff up.

At the same time, fireworks displays mean more than just one day of revelry. Fireworks displays draw people from outside the community to the park and keep people in the community for the 4th of July weekend.

With tourism an essential part of the city and regional economy, a quality fireworks display is an investment in tourism. People who come to the

community for fireworks spend money here and help support local area businesses.

Fortunately for the city, a third option exists, with community members spearheading a campaign to raise funds for the show. Fundraising events, including a donkey basketball tournament Friday, March 18, have been planned.

In addition, community members are encouraged to support the fireworks by making donations. Donations may be sent to city hall and those giving are asked to designate that it goes to the fireworks display.

Few things cost the same as they did a decade ago, and as the city looks to future budgets, council members must take these increasing costs into account. Community partnerships are also essential in making the show bigger and better in years to come.

Local groups, businesses and individuals must work together, to ensure that Cornell’s fireworks are truly memorable for residents and visitors, and that the community lives up to John Adams’ challenge of celebrating the nation’s birth.

– Time For A Tiara: Column by Ginna Young –

Free money? I grant you I’ll be first in line

In my line of work and with my many involvements in community improvement groups over the years, I’ve learned a lot about grants. Before anyone gleefully puts my name down as a potential grant writer, I haven’t actually written them; I just understand a lot about them, so don’t even think of recruiting me!



Anyway, I’ve discovered that some people don’t know or understand what a grant actually is – some people think a grant is borrowed money. In actuality, it is free money, given by a government entity or a non-profit organization. It’s not a loan and cannot be taxed, it is just that – free money for the taking.

A private citizen cannot apply for the money (unless it falls under a heading, such as natural disaster funds for agriculture, which could still be considered a business), it needs to be a municipality or non-profit organization, but in some cases,

businesses are the only ones who can apply for the grants.

There are a lot of different grants out there and each one varies.

You don’t just receive the grant, you have to apply for the funds and must meet any requirements associated with it. Each grant specifically spells out what the money can be used for.

As I mentioned, each grant is different, but have one thing in common: you MUST use the money you applied for, for what you applied for.

If not, you pay that money back and probably are red-flagged until the end of time, or banned from applying for a grant for at least a few years, anyway.

Like I said, each grant is different, so you really have to research if it is the right one for your community’s needs and if you meet the requirements.

Sometimes, you’re prevented from applying for a grant for a period of years, such as with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. When that’s the case, it’s important to

weigh what scope of work is the most priority and if it’s feasible to accomplish.

One drawback of the CDBG grants, is that most are matching grants. So, if you’re awarded \$500,000, depending on the match percentage, you may have to chip in with \$500,000 of your own money.

Some grants are 80/20 matches, especially dealing with roads and bridges. While this helps fund the projects that are the most expensive, you still have to lay out some money.

I personally like the fully funded grants, meaning you receive the amount requested and don’t have to kick in any of your own money. There are times, of course, when you don’t get any funding, which is hard to swallow, after all the work and waiting. It also begs the question, now how do we pay for our project?

So, when there’s free money to be had for community improvements, I’m first in line to encourage whoever is in charge to go for it! Who doesn’t love free money?

Soil amendment for multiple benefits

By Kayla Bergman, senior policy associate, Center for Rural Affairs



Where am I? (See Page 5 for location)

Biochar is an agricultural practice that is gaining in popularity – but what is it?

Created from a variety of feedstock, including corn stalks, wood and even manure, biochar is a specialized form of charcoal suitable for use in the soil.

To create biochar, feedstock and manure are heated to high temperatures under controlled conditions. The gas or oil produced is used as a renewable energy source. The carbon left behind in that process is biochar.

There are benefits provided for the environment during the production process and once it has been applied to the soil.

The production process concentrates carbon that would have been released back into the atmosphere as the plant or manure decays, therefore reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Biochar is also extremely porous, allowing it to retain water – which plant roots can access when it is added to soil. Studies have shown a 5 percent biochar amendment in certain soil types, increases

the water holding capacity by up to 50 percent, which can serve as a flood mitigation benefit.

During a recent trial in Nebraska, when applied to irrigated lands, biochar was proven to reduce the need for irrigation by up to 37 percent. This is significant in a time of water conservation.

Biochar also retains both carbon and nitrogen in the soil. The carbon is transformed into an absorbent material, which can lead to less runoff and leaching into waterways.

Biochar has the potential to help build soil, conserve water, produce renewable energy, sequester carbon, reduce inputs and potentially increase yield on lower productivity ground. While it won’t work everywhere, biochar has the potential to be a valuable tool for farmers and landowners.

This is a relatively new practice on agricultural lands, but seems to be one-way for renewable fuel production to use a byproduct in a productive way.

Established in 1973, the Center for Rural Affairs is a private, non-profit organization, working to strengthen small businesses, family farms and ranches, and rural communities, through action-oriented programs addressing social, economic and environmental issues.