



Community sports digest  
.....Page 6



Your health: Ask Dr. Gott  
.....Page 3

LETTERS  
Storm over road work?  
.....Page 4

INSIDE  
World briefly  
.....Page 2



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The Ukiah

Mendocino County's  
local newspaper

# DAILY JOURNAL



Tomorrow: Cloudy  
and cool with rain

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## AFTER THE FLOODS

### Red Cross needs help

By SETH FREDLAND  
The Daily Journal

Mendocino County's local Red Cross chapter is suffering from volunteer fatigue and a shortage of bilingual helpers in the wake of the New Year's storms.

Despite peaking two weeks ago, the flooding is still making its presence felt in homes across the county. Red Cross officials said some families will continue to learn this week that their homes were red-tagged as uninhabitable or posing an "imminent danger."

During the past two days, Red Cross volunteers have found a few small neighborhoods of county residents who do not speak English and were unaware of help available to them to rebuild their homes. Many of Mendocino County's collection of these families reside in Hopland along the Highway 101 corridor.

Some of these families were concerned that contacting the Red Cross would bring a visit from Immigration and Naturalization Services, said Red Cross spokeswoman Rose Nagy Ostrander.

"We are not political in any way," Ostrander said. "We don't do that. If people need help, we provide help."

Red Cross volunteers are now meeting with those families to discover their needs and what services the organization can provide.

As of last weekend, the Red Cross has spent at least \$200,000 in Sonoma and Mendocino counties. That funding went to four Red Cross shelters, paid for prescription medicines and paid for motel and hotel costs for clients once shelters closed, among other expenditures.

Other Red Cross donations for Mendocino County include:

- Feeding 1,986 meals and snacks

- Providing 73 clean-up kits, which include brooms, buckets and gloves

- Distributing 112 comfort kits, which include personal hygiene products such as shampoo and toothpaste

The Red Cross will continue to follow up on request calls from both Sonoma and Mendocino counties until the calls stop coming in.

To help those affected by the New Year's storms, individuals, organizations and businesses can make financial contribution to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by contacting 707-577-7600 or 1-800-HELP-NOW, or online at [www.sonoma-county.redcross.org](http://www.sonoma-county.redcross.org).

Seth Fredland can be reached at [udj@pacific.net](mailto:udj@pacific.net).

## Fire at Anton Stadium

City estimates \$10,000 damage to bleachers

By BEN BROWN  
The Daily Journal

A fire broke out at Anton Stadium Sunday morning damaging a portion of the main bleachers. Firefighters from the Ukiah Fire Department quickly extinguished the flames before they could spread to the rest of the structure.

The fire was reported at 8:59 a.m. by a local resident who was walking his dog near the stadium at the time.

One firefighter jumped the fence around the field and controlled the fire with a pressurized water extinguisher, while others opened the gate. Once the gate was open, a fire engine was used to fully extinguish the flames, said Skipp Williams, acting captain on scene. Firefighters cut out the burned area to make sure the fire was fully extinguished.

The fire burned a hole in the west side of the bleachers, beyond the central stairs, and damaged a 10 foot by 20 foot area around the first row of seating. The top of one central beam appeared to have burned, though not badly, and the storage area below the bleachers was damaged by fire and water.

Sage Sangiacomo, city community services director, said the fire was caused by unauthorized activity and not by failing electrical components. There is no wiring running underneath the bleachers. Liquor bottles were found near the site of the fire and Sangiacomo called it "highly suspicious."

Williams said the exact cause of the fire was under investigation.

Fire investigators estimate the cost of the damage at somewhere between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Sangiacomo said the damage would probably cost \$10,000 minimum to repair.

Sangiacomo said the city plans to repair the damage, but no formal plans will be made until the damage is fully investigated by city insurance investigators. They are expected to be in town sometime this week, said Sangiacomo.

Williams said the damage was not extensive, and that the stadium is safe to use as long as the damaged area was roped off.

See FIRE, Page 16



Ukiah firefighters work to subdue a small fire in the bleachers of Anton Stadium Sunday.

photo by Peter Armstrong

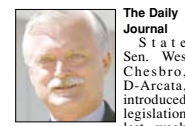


Any Wellnitz/The Daily Journal

The fire damaged a lower section of bleachers, seen here Monday morning, part of which had to be cut away.

## Senior subsidy to be renewed

Helps retirees afford health care



The Daily Journal State Sen. Wes Chesbro, D-Arcata, introduced legislation last week that would continue a health care subsidy program for retirees who live in Mendocino County and other rural areas of California without access to affordable health care alternatives.

Assemblywoman Patty Berg, D-Santa Rosa, signed on as a co-author to the bill. Chesbro's bill would extend until 2012 the subsidies received by about 7,000 retirees on fixed incomes in California who have no access to affordable health maintenance organizations (HMOs) near their homes. Without the bill, the subsidy would end in 2008.

The Rural Health Care Subsidy Program is aimed at making health care costs more equitable for those retirees who live in more isolated rural areas, and for a variety of reasons cannot move to other areas.

Chesbro, a longtime advocate for the rights of retirees and the elderly, was also the author of the original legislation that established the subsidy program. Under the plan, retirees living in areas without HMO access may receive up to \$500 annually in subsidies (or up to \$75 monthly toward Part B Medicare premium costs).

"These people have worked entire careers with the state sometimes in the same rural area where they end up retiring," Chesbro said. "They aren't the ones who decide where affordable health care will be located. Therefore they shouldn't pay a higher price for basic health care than any other state retiree."

## Groups to sue state over 'booze for kids'

Press conference scheduled today over 'alcopops'

By STEVE GEISSINGER  
MediaNews Group Sacramento Bureau

SACRAMENTO - Bay Area lawmakers and several advocacy groups plan to formally announce a lawsuit next week against the state over alleged lax regulation of sweet, fruity "alcopops" that makes them available to teens in neighborhood stores, sources said Friday.

The lawsuit will claim the drinks - such as Smirnoff Ice, Bacardi Silver and Jack Daniel's Original Hard Cola - have been misclassified as beer under the state Alcoholic Beverage Control Act, according to plaintiffs' documents, prepared for a news conference today to be led by Democratic Sens. Liz Figueroa of Fremont and Carole Migden of San Francisco.

"Parents should be outraged that these products clearly target and reach underage girls," said J. Edward Hill, president of the American

Medical Association, in a prepared statement.

Officials at the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control were not immediately available for comment on the lawsuit or matching legislation lawmakers plan to introduce.

The state classification allows alcopops - which contain distilled alcohol and are essentially a mixed drink in a bottle - to be sold in 15,000 additional retail outlets statewide, mostly convenience stores in residential neighborhoods, according to Mothers Against Drunk

Driving of California and other groups.

Alcohol-control advocacy organizations claim "the beverages are designed and marketed for entry-level drinkers that an American Medical Association survey shows are being aimed at teenagers, particularly teenage girls."

The AMA study indicated a third of all girls older than 12 have tried alcopops. Sixty percent of teen girls who have seen alcopops ads also have tried them.

Along with the lawsuit, Figueroa and Migden plan to introduce legislation aimed at

re-classifying alcopops.

The alcohol industry attempted to head off such efforts at the close of last year's legislative session. A change would, among other things, boost taxes on alcopops and therefore the overall price.

The bill's promoters said they were simply trying to bring California law into conformity with federal regulations.

The governor vetoed the legislation, after the state Attorney General's Office

See BOOZE, Page 16

UNWIND Year End Hot Tub Sale Stop by Matre's 509 S. State St., Ukiah