

# THE Kaweah Commonwealth

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WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THREE RIVERS AND SEQUOIA~KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

## Hard(ly) news

### TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

by Sarah Elliott

First an update: Regarding the Mineral King webcam — www.mk-webcam.net — that lends its lens to Timber Gap (Telling it Like it is: “Windows on the World,” Sept. 7, 2007), Gordon Wood, cam-master, reports that he and the local Park Service have reached an agreement to keep the webcam operational for the foreseeable future.

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This past summer, our daughter assisted us for a few weeks at the newspaper office by bringing us current on archiving and indexing past articles. At the end of her stint, she left me a list of headlines that sums up what it’s like to publish a small-town newspaper.

Now, we are serious about documenting the life and times of Three Rivers and the local national parks. This newspaper will provide an important tool for future research.

But we certainly had a good laugh at ourselves with the following compilation that Jennie provided for us, proving that in a small town the breaking news can be few and far between, however, the pages need to be filled week after week. Here are some of the titillating news stories (okay, she called them “yawners”!) we’ve followed over the past couple of years:

**CDF has name change** (Feb. 23, 2007).

**It takes a village to launch a thistle attack** (April 20, 2007).

**Woodcutting permits available this month** (March 2, 2007).

**Clearance requirements triple to 100 feet** (March 17, 2006).

**Local business climate changes with season** (Nov. 17, 2006).

**Copies of parks GMP now available** (Dec. 8, 2006).

—see NEWS, page 2

## Park visitors seek refunds after enduring traffic snafu

By JOHN ELLIOTT

Some time the best laid plans of mice and men go astray... and apparently that’s what happened Sunday evening during the busy Labor Day weekend. Among the memories of hundreds of Sequoia Park visitors on that day will be an extended stint of waiting in line for a signal light to turn green on the Generals Highway near Amphitheater Point on the uphill side of the one-lane road construction zone.

According to varying reports from persons at the scene, the automatic traffic light actually turned green at regular 20-minute intervals but only permitted a small number of vehicles to pass until it turned red again. Cathy Alonzo of Three Rivers said she and several vehicles in her part of the long lineup waited for nearly two hours before calling the park dispatcher to see what might be causing the unusually long delay.

Alonzo said she had arrived in the traffic lineup shortly after 6 p.m. after showing some visiting friends around the Giant Forest earlier that afternoon. Her arrival time coincided with the time that traffic-control personnel were getting off for the day.

“We anticipated that the holiday weekend traffic might present some problems so we were escorting vehicles through the zone the entire day,” said Rosemary Stimpel, owner of Force Traffic Control in Exeter. “When traffic starts to build, we allow more vehicles to pass even after the lights have changed.”

The control personnel monitor the flow so that no wrong-way vehicles enter the narrow roadway in the one-and-a-half-mile zone. During work stoppages, the lights are set at one or two-minute intervals. The Federal Highway Administration, the lead agency in the project, re-

—see TRAFFIC, page 12

## Bike event has something for all

When Kevin Foster, a local adventure cyclist, decided to host a Smile Train charity bike ride in 2006, he didn’t know what to expect. A dozen riders forked over the \$50 entry fee and completed a road course that included a jaunt to Exeter and back over Rocky Hill.

A spate of donations was collected, enough to surgically fix 14 smiles. Everyone involved realized that the \$250 for each cleft palate operation was a small price to pay to do something life-changing for children.

Earlier this year, the second annual Smile Train Charity Bike Ride found a willing partner in the Sequoia Bike Jamboree. Now, tomorrow’s (Saturday, Sept. 15) fun-filled family fest seems destined to raise enough for a ton of smiles.

Greg Thompson, who organ-

ized the “jamboree” side of things, said he wants to cater to families of riders who aren’t experienced enough to complete a 25 or 50-mile ride like the other Smile Train riders. So his ride, which is really a parade that is more about bike safety, begins on Eggers Drive next to Three Rivers School and ends on North Fork Drive at the Arts Center.

There’s no registration fee for the bike parade, but there is an impressive prize package of freebies for each kid and adult rider who sign up. Along the way, Greg hopes to form a parade of bikes long enough to be officially listed in the next Guinness Book of World Records.

“We’re prepared with goodies for 750 bike riders and if we don’t break the record this time, we’ll do it next year,” Thompson

—see BIKES, page 8

## SKY HIGH



The Park Ridge Fire Lookout Tower in Kings Canyon National Park was placed back in service in 2004. See “On the Lookout,” pages 6-7.

## 3R RECREATION COMMITTEE: NO directors, NO youth sports

For those who choose to volunteer — and there are many in Three Rivers — there can’t be a more important opportunity currently available than on the Three Rivers Recreation Committee.

With more than one-quarter of American children being overweight or obese, it is imperative that community members work together to ensure that children have activities available that will keep them away from the television, computer, and video games as well as teach them athletic skills to last a lifetime.

Currently, three longtime board members are scheduled to depart the Recreation Committee board at the end of the year. Efforts in the recent past to recruit new

members have proven futile.

Now the situation is serious. If no volunteers come forward to serve on the board, it will be disbanded, which means organized youth sports in Three Rivers will also cease to exist.

“The primary programs consist of soccer, basketball, and tee-ball,” said Heidi Crouch, who has served on the board for more than 10 years. “The meetings are held at the school once a month and generally last about one hour.”

Ideally, parents of TRUS students have the most to gain by volunteering on the board, however, any interested Three Rivers resident is invited to apply by calling the Three Rivers School office, 561-4466.

### • KAWEAH COUNTRY OUTLOOK: three rivers • lemon cove • woodlake •

Saturday, September 15	Sunday, September 16	Monday, September 17	Tuesday, September 18	Wednesday, September 19	Thursday, September 20	Friday, September 21
Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny
Hi 84 • Lo 54	Hi 85 • Lo 55	Hi 86 • Lo 57	Hi 88 • Lo 56	Hi 83 • Lo 54	Hi 82 • Lo 53	Hi 81 • Lo 54

### WEEKLY OUTLOOK

There is a definite autumn feel in the air. On Thursday, Sept. 13, the weather took a sudden change for the cooler after a week of temperatures in the mid to high 90s. For the next week, the forecast calls for daytime highs in the 80s, several degrees below the norm for this time of year. On Wednesday, the nation’s hot spot was Bullhead City, Ariz., where the high was 112 degrees. In Stanley, Idaho, the mercury dipped to 24 degrees that day.