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# Methow Valley News

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## Surrender to Mistletoe Madness

Twisp's annual holiday event enlivens the town on Thursday

The event offers plenty of shopping opportunities, but also a host of other activities for all ages.

Things get started at 4 p.m., and include:

- Businesses throughout downtown Twisp, TwispWorks and the surrounding area will be open starting at 4 p.m. to offer discounts, drawings, cookies, cider and holiday cheer.
- Santa Claus will amble along Glover Street from 4-5 p.m. At 5 p.m., Santa



File photo by Steve Mitchell  
Frosty welcomes you to Twisp.

See **MADNESS**, A3

## WSDOT may charge towns for snow treatment

State cites budget crunch for changes

BY RALPH SCHWARTZ

State officials say they can no longer afford to apply sand and salt to snow and ice on Highway 20 in Winthrop and Twisp unless the towns cover the cost, putting local officials in a bind about how to keep drivers safe.

The news, delivered to town officials on Nov. 26, was especially unsettling because it came one day after the first snowfall of the season. Twisp Police Chief Paul Budrow said he responded to nine vehicle crashes between Winthrop and Highway 153 on Nov. 25 and 26.

**“We are very concerned about the health and safety of people in our community.”**

Twisp Mayor Soo Ing-Moody

“We are very concerned about the health and safety of people in our community,” Twisp Mayor Soo Ing-Moody said at the Nov. 26 Town Council

See **WSDOT**, A3

## A BANG-UP DAY

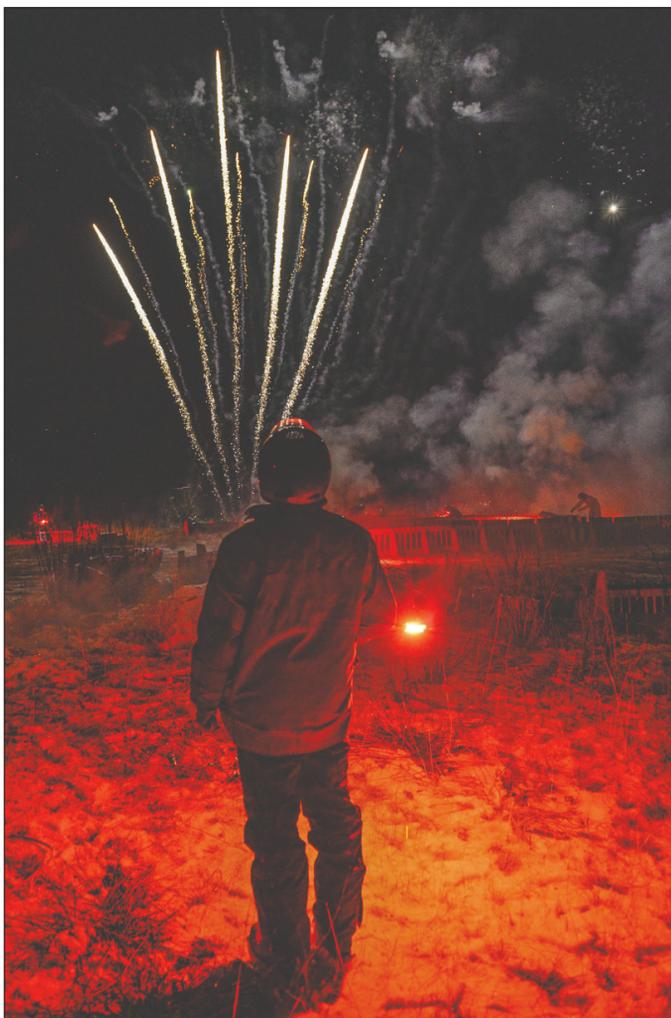


Photo by Steve Mitchell

The view from the staging area for the Christmas at the End of the Road fireworks show was surreal. See more photos on page B4.



Photo by Marcy Stamper

Over the past 50 years, Okanogan County commissioners have repeatedly asked property owners to remove this gate on French Creek Road. But the landowners say the road beyond the gate is their private-access road and that the gate prevents trespassing.

## French Creek Road access case will have another day in court

Dispute hinges on evidence of public use

BY MARCY STAMPER

An Okanogan County Superior Court judge will consider century-old documents and maps along with actions by county commissioners over the past 50 years to determine whether a 3-mile stretch of French Creek Road is public or private. The case has a court hearing on Wednesday (Dec. 4).

Gamble Land & Timber and Cascade Holdings Group say 3 miles of French

Creek Road are their own private-access road. Okanogan County and the Okanogan Open Roads Coalition, a citizens' group that advocates for keeping back roads open to the public, contend that the road was officially recorded as a county road 128 years ago and has always been public. All parties claim that because no facts are in dispute, the case should be dismissed in their favor.

After initially saying it would abide by the court's decision in the lawsuit, in the past few months Okanogan County has taken a firm stand in the case. The county says evidence recently discovered in county files and the conclusions

of two surveyors show French Creek Road has been a county road for more than a century.

“The fact that the road physically exists, and that people have been driving on it, and arguing about it for a hundred years or more is evidence that it was built,” David Gecas, the county's chief civil deputy prosecuting attorney, wrote for the county. “The fact the road appears on numerous old maps is evidence that it was built.... The fact that French Creek Road, which has gone by a number of different names over the years... substantially matches the path of the old Methow Valley Road according to two 2019 surveys is evidence the road was built.”

But Gamble and Cascade Holdings are relying on another way that roads are created — by prescription, meaning that people used a road in its first five years and that the road was maintained within the first seven years. They say the road was never properly opened under territorial law and that there's no evidence to show the entire length of the road was built and used by the public within five years.

“The OORC has produced no evidence that Okanogan County undertook any activity — such as road construction, road maintenance, road signage, etc. — to substantiate that the ‘Methow Valley Road’ was built and used by the public in the five years following the

See **ROAD**, A2



Property owners installed signs on French Creek Road declaring the end of the county road. But Okanogan County and the open roads coalition say the entire road is a public county road.

## County admits to unlawful detention of immigrant

Denies other allegations in legal response

BY MARCY STAMPER

Okanogan County has admitted that “official policy and practice” caused it to unlawfully detain an immigrant, violating her Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable seizures. But the county denied that it detains people at the request of federal immigration authorities.

In a Nov. 15 response to a lawsuit filed on behalf of Maria del Rayo Mendoza Garcia by two immigrant-rights groups, attorneys for the county denied most allegations and asked for a jury trial and for the case be dismissed.

The county admits that Mendoza was entitled to be released as soon as a Douglas County District Court judge ordered her released on her own recognition. It also admits that Mendoza

was picked up from the county jail by an officer with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). But the county denies that it detained Mendoza for additional time based on an immigration-hold detainer issued by U.S. border patrol agents.

Okanogan County is requesting a jury trial, dismissal of the case, and legal fees.

Mendoza was held last March for nearly two days in the Okanogan County jail. The lawsuit alleges that the county detained her for two extra days.

The plaintiffs are currently in discussions with Okanogan County over

the next steps in the case, Aaron Korthuis, a staff attorney with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, said by email last week.

**The plaintiffs are currently in discussions with Okanogan County over the next steps in the case.**

Aaron Korthuis, staff attorney with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

The immigrant rights project and Columbia Legal Services filed the lawsuit in Eastern District of the U.S. District Court in October.

The complaint charged Okanogan County, the Okanogan County Sheriff's Office, and Tammi Denney, the county's chief corrections deputy. In its response, the county said the doctrine of qualified immunity, which protects public officials, bars the

See **COUNTY**, A2

ADDRESS LABEL

THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUES.
Dec. 5	Dec. 6	Dec. 7	Dec. 8	Dec. 9	Dec. 10
40°	39°	39°	40°	39°	32°
26°	25°	24°	23°	24°	22°
Chance of Rain/Snow	Light Precip, Freezing Fog	Freezing Fog, Cloudy	Freezing Fog, Partly Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Partly Sunny

WEATHER DATA BASED ON A COMBINATION OF NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE AND ACCUWEATHER.COM FORECASTS FOR TWISP

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