

No Couch Potatoes

Couple goes from dating ad in Rural Mailbox to a marriage announcement

By Lori Mai

As a widow in March 2006, Dorothy Wilson (then Weaver) told her friends she was going to find a new guy, and that he would come in the mailbox.

Her friends thought she was crazy.

“You’re not going to find what you want,” they said. “And he’s certainly not going to come in the mailbox!”

Dorothy knew better. On his deathbed, her husband, John, said, “Dorothy, I will love you forever, but please move on.”

During the next few months, she often walked around the countryside surrounding their home in Pardee and prayed. Dorothy eventually decided the time was right to take a chance. She ran a personal ad in *Ruralite*.

“I thought about it for a long time,” she says. “I thought it would be something interesting, something different.”

In the fall, she carefully penned an ad that read “S/CW/F Christian country lady wants a Christian, country man, 60-69, for a friend. No couch potatoes, healthy, financially sound.”

Ira Jerry Wilson of Lapwai also was a recent widower. His wife, Donna, died from lung cancer the previous December.

Before her illness, the couple—thinking Donna would outlive Jerry since she was 10 years younger—had downsized from a 3,000-square-foot home to a 1,000-square-foot house.

“We remodeled everything so it would be easy for her to take care of,” Jerry says. “Little did I know I would be the one left with it, and I was sitting in that small



Jerry, 86, and Dorothy Wilson, 82, met in January 2007. They married 11 months later.

house, not liking it.”

Bored one day, Jerry picked up the latest copy of *Ruralite*.

“I don’t read ads, but for some reason I read that magazine cover to cover,” he says.

Dorothy’s ad caught his eye.

“I saw she was from Central Idaho, so I thought I would check it out,” Jerry says.

He wrote a letter, attached a photo of himself and put it in the mail.

Dorothy received a number of

responses, but she was only interested in Jerry’s. They agreed to meet at the Fireside Restaurant in Orofino on January 1, 2007.

Dorothy recalls there was about 2 feet of snow that day along the road from Pardee to Orofino. She knew she would have to leave early that afternoon to make it home before dark.

When she arrived at the restaurant, Jerry wasn’t there. She waited a half hour, and still no Jerry.



Dorothy and Jerry saved the original ad, above, and Jerry's response, left. Jerry was the only respondent who interested Dorothy.

He finally drove up with his little white dog. Jerry had forgotten his hearing aids and had to go back and get them.

"When you live by yourself, you don't need hearing aids," Jerry jokes.

The two hit it off and began seeing each other. Jerry and Dorothy married November 24, 2007.

Jerry, 86, and Dorothy, 82, say they appreciate their relationship not just because of love, but from tough life experiences before they met.

Jerry grew up in the Blue Mountains on the Grouse flats near Troy, Oregon. His mother died when he was 1 year old.

It was the Depression, and his father worked wherever he could, often in other areas for long periods. As a young boy, Jerry was left to do all the milking, pitching hay and other ranch work. He says his schoolteacher stepmother treated him decently, but she paid less attention to Jerry once she had her own children.

"I wasn't ever really a kid," Jerry says, "and I never got approval for anything. My dad found fault with everything I did. I had a lot of resentments."

Jerry dropped out of school and left home at age 16. He worked in the woods or sawmills, mainly doing maintenance, for which he had a natural talent.

In trying to "act like a man," he found solace in liquor.

He married, but that marriage ended

in divorce. He eventually learned to live sober via Alcoholics Anonymous.

He married again, but the marriage was unhappy. Always working odd jobs doing construction, welding, maintenance and the like, Jerry says his big break came when his first wife, Bonnie, included him as a partner in a cleaning business in the Lewiston/Clarkston area. She handled Potlatch Corp., and he took care of all the other business accounts.

Things went well for 10 years, until Potlatch closed the mill. In 30 days, the cleaning business went from 35 employees to five.

Things began to spiral out of control for Jerry. He went bankrupt. He lost his house. He divorced his second wife. He was disabled due to an industrial accident on a construction site where he was working. And his daughter took her own life at age 28.

"I related it to being like a drowning person," Jerry says. "When you're struggling, and you think you're gonna get up, but you just keep going down, down, 'til you hit bottom, and then you push back."

Jerry met a pastor in Arkansas who had a profound impact on his life. He then married Donna, who he met in AA. They had a good marriage. Until she died, Jerry says things were looking up.

"When you start to do things right, things start happening," Jerry says.

Like Jerry, Dorothy's life was far from simple. She was born and raised in Arcadia, California, where her father and uncle engineered the first rockets made for the military. While her family was wealthy, Dorothy says she was considered the "black sheep," and her sister inherited all their money.

"I don't care about money, but I got to find out what it really felt like not to know where the next penny was coming from," Dorothy says.

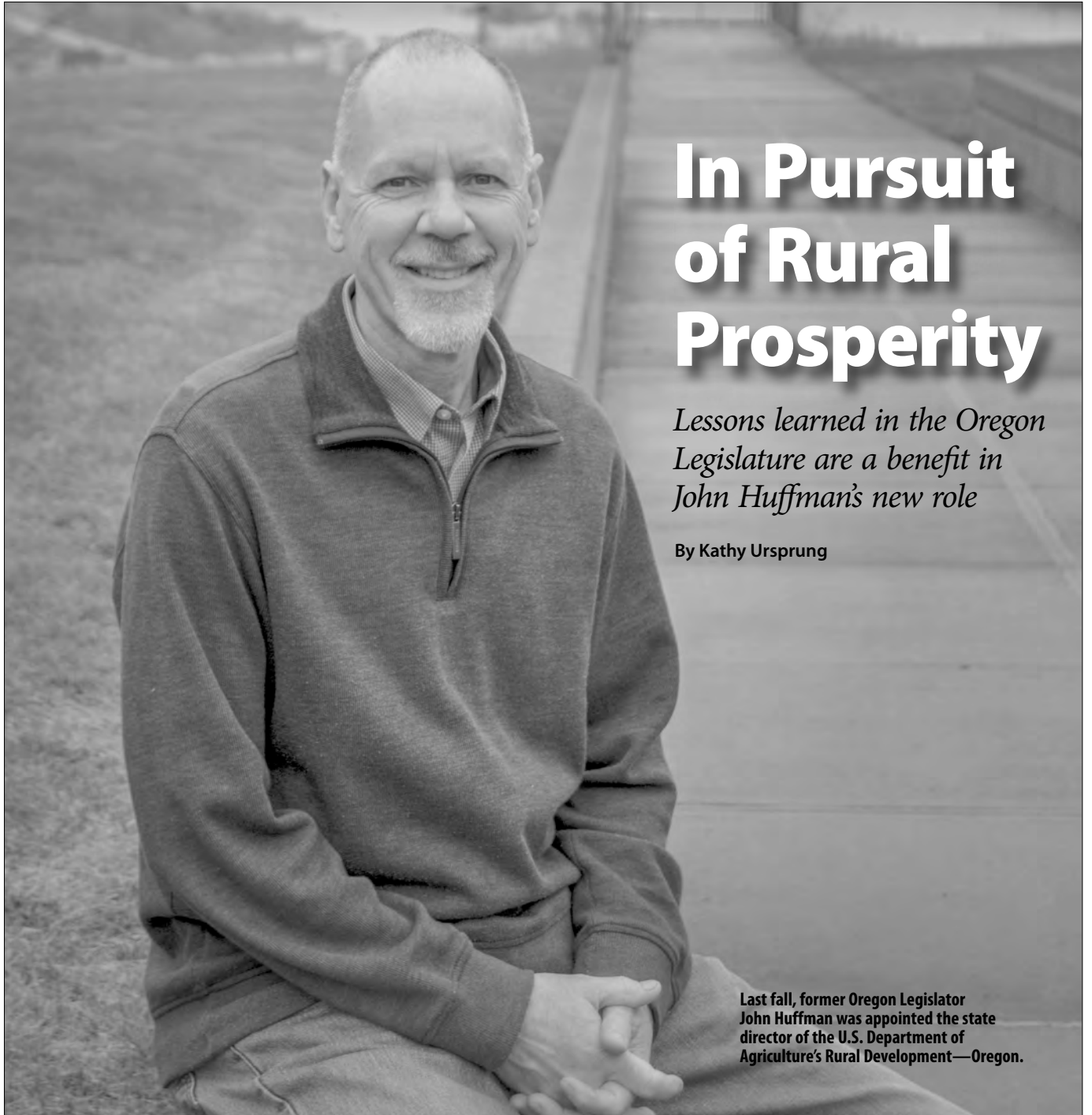
Dorothy's first marriage to an alcoholic husband ended in divorce after 24 years and raising five children. She then met and married John. During that 24-year marriage, she sewed for people and owned a shirt shop and a doll shop. Together, they ran an adult foster home. When John became ill, she was his caregiver until he died.

Jerry and Dorothy say they have found peace now in the joy they have with each other.

"Marrying Jerry has set me free," Dorothy says.

They have fun every day not being couch potatoes. They chuckle at the ad that brought them together, but both say it was no accident.

"I think God sent me on a journey for a reason because everything I've really wanted, I've received," Dorothy says. "I don't know anybody else who has what we have. I never dreamed it would be so wonderful." ■



In Pursuit of Rural Prosperity

Lessons learned in the Oregon Legislature are a benefit in John Huffman's new role

By Kathy Ursprung

Last fall, former Oregon Legislator John Huffman was appointed the state director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development—Oregon.

John Huffman strolls through the Oregon Veterans' Home, a site that exists today because of the committee he served on in the 1990s to get a construction bond passed in Wasco County.

The home was a glimpse of a career to come: serving the people of north central Oregon and now, the entire state.

After more than a decade of working to improve the quality of life and a stronger economy as a legislator in the Oregon House of Representatives, John focuses on the same thing at the statewide level.

Last fall, John left his seat in House District 59 to take the role of state director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development—Oregon.

"I think my work is summed up well in Secretary Perdue's directive to increase rural prosperity," John says from The Dalles, where he makes his home.

USDA Rural Development is dedicated to improving the quality of life and economy in rural America. Its more than 50 programs provide loans and grants to support rural areas

with business development and expansion; infrastructure improvements; homeownership; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access.

As state director, John manages those programs in Oregon. He also serves as the eyes and ears of Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in rural Oregon, communicating the state's unique challenges and needs to officials in Washington, D.C.

Investment in modernizing and building rural infrastructure is another part of the organization's role.

"Ultimately, longterm targeted investment in rural infrastructure will mean more jobs in rural America, access to capital for rural communities, more commerce and international trade, accelerated startup of small businesses, and entrepreneurial innovations," John says.

He is also working to develop innovative options for policy, program delivery and administration, and enhance customer service through efficient and effective delivery of resources.

"In some cases, this might mean coming up with solutions that get government out of the way," John says.

Another part of his job is developing sound organizational structure and good management practices that use taxpayer dollars as efficiently as possible.

John tackles his new role with the benefit of his experience in the legislature.

"It was a real growing experience for me in many ways," John says. "I practiced patience. I tried to listen more, not just talk. I knew going into the House—in fact, I mentioned this to the county commissioners when they appointed me—that relationships are everything."

John says building those relationships and working across the aisle in the House set the stage for virtually all of his accomplishments.

"From getting lots of money for great projects in the district to legislation putting the welcome mat out for the drone industry to comprehensive public records reform," he says, "I am able to look back fondly, with no regrets."

Those relationships also helped John gain his current role. He and his predecessor, Vicki Walker, served in the legislature together in 2007 and 2008.

John also has had a longstanding relationship with U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (R-Dist. 2). In 1986, John considered running for the House, until Greg shared his intentions to run for the seat once held by his father, Paul Walden.

"That was the day I decided to put any political ambitions I had on hold," John says.

Twenty years later, after John sold his business, the congressman sent a message through his good friend, Gary Grossman.

"He basically said that since I had sold Q104 Radio, I didn't have an excuse to not say yes," John says.

After 10 years in the House, John decided he had more to give.

"I'm only 60 years old, and I still have a desire to do as much as I can for folks in rural Oregon."

—John Huffman

"I promised constituents that I wouldn't be a career politician, and 10 years sounded about right," he says. "But I'm only 60 years old, and I still have a desire to do as much as I can for folks in rural Oregon."

While John's new service area is larger, he still works with many of the same folks he worked with in the legislature and private business the past 34 years.

"I'm helping connect businesses, communities, people and organizations to USDA grants, loans and loan guarantees," John says. "But I also do the consulting that I have always done. If I meet with someone and I don't have a USDA solution that meets their need, then I work to help them find assistance through a state agency or a partner organization. I enjoy helping people meet their needs and solve their problems."

Many of those people are in his old legislative district. In Wasco County, for example, USDA Rural Development helped Columbia Gorge Housing fund construction of Heritage Heights—an affordable apartment complex for farmworkers and their families.

Throughout rural Oregon last year, USDA Rural Development provided:

- \$402 million in housing loans and guarantees.
- \$1.3 million in grants to help low-income families buy, build or repair their homes.
- \$22 million in rental assistance to help keep housing costs reasonable for low-income families living in USDA-financed apartments.

- Site coordination for a children's summer food program.

After running a radio station for decades, it's no surprise John is particularly interested in telecommunication, which is also a priority for the organization.

"Years ago, I helped bring US Cellular to Wheeler County," John says. "Now, Secretary Perdue has a real focus on getting broadband infrastructure into rural and frontier parts of the state. I am meeting with a number of potential partners that can help expand broadband options into the very rural parts of Oregon."

Despite his busy statewide role and maintaining a Portland office, John returns to The Dalles on weekends to be with his wife, Korina. She used to travel with him to Salem and served as his office administrator at the legislature.

"Korina and I made a great team for the district in the Oregon Legislature," John says. "We got a lot done for the region. Now, she is blessed to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. However, I do miss working with her on a daily basis." ■

From Wheat to Wind



Ormand Hilberbrand is founder, owner and operator of Oregon's first independent wind farm. PáTu has six utility-scale wind turbines that generate enough clean energy for 2,200 homes.

Sherman County farmer generates energy success

By Drew Myron

The odds were against him, but challenge defines Ormand Hilberbrand. This former farm boy traveled the globe, returned to his roots and emerged a leader in renewable energy.

A 1969 Sherman High School graduate, Ormand is founder, owner and operator of Oregon's first independent wind farm.

PáTu Wind is a 9-megawatt wind farm 3 miles east of Wasco on the Hilderbrand land. Operating since 2010, the project consists of six utility-scale wind turbines that convert wind into 27,000,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, generating enough clean energy for 2,200 homes.

Oregon has a handful of small, community wind projects in operation, but Ormand's was the first to be developed without direct corporate support.

"Ormand is the leader in independent wind farming," says Brian Skeahan, managing director of Community Renewable Energy Association, an advocacy group for Oregon-based renewable energy. "PáTu is the only producer of its kind serving power to Portland General Electric."

Ormand's roots in the area grow deep. His family has farmed dryland wheat in Klondike since the 1800s.

Ormand's parents, John and Wanda, continue to farm wheat around the turbines, and were the first in Sherman County to allow turbines on their land as part of the Klondike wind power project owned and operated by Iberdrola, one of the largest wind energy developers in the U.S.

After graduating with a degree in agronomy/soils from Oregon State University and a graduate degree in international business, Ormand became a force in international irrigation development. Working for Valmont Industries, renowned for center pivot irrigation systems, Ormand lived around the world, from Mexico to Madrid, from Saudi Arabia to Shanghai.

When he returned to Oregon in 2000, Ormand says he wanted to develop something in his own area that's good for the environment, the state and local community.

"After working and traveling and living in other countries, I wanted to help our own country become more energy self-sufficient," he says.

PáTu was a vision years in the making. The \$24 million project is the work of Ormand and his brother, Jeff Hilderbrand, and silent partners.

Initiated in 2005, it took more than five years to turn Ormand's plan into a power-generating reality. His dream required dogged pursuit of financing—and all looked promising until the recession hit.

"In 2008, you had to pull up your pants and persevere," he says.

Although Ormand secured a loan through Oregon's Department of Energy, those funds were only available once the project was in operation. In the meantime, Ormand needed a loan to cover the purchase of the turbines and construction costs.

Big banks showed no interest in lending for construction, particularly in a time of financial uncertainty. Smaller banks, with limited experience in this type of project, turned him away too. To get started, Ormand took a second mortgage on his house and dipped into savings. Then, finally, a private investor stepped in.

PáTu secured a 20-year power purchase agreement with Portland General Electric, and a long-term transmission agreement with the Bonneville Power Administration. But



"We're providing jobs in the area," Ormand says. "On a dollar-to-dollar basis, there is more return to the local economy on the small projects than the larger projects." Here, a construction crew sets a spreader bar used by a crane to lift the generator and gearbox housing onto the top tower.

Photo by Bruce McGregor Photography

Ormand says even these arrangements can be arduous.

"I came from working in a free market versus a regulated system," he says. "With a private company, you always have to adapt to be competitive."

Wind energy companies have contributed more than \$17 million in property taxes, fees and investments into Sherman County, according to a 2011 assessment of wind's impact on the area.

Boosted by these property taxes, Sherman County has enjoyed a windfall of capital construction projects, including a new school, library, courthouse and city halls. In addition, the Sherman County's Resident Compensation Program pays \$590 per household as a means of sharing wind energy revenue.

While the region is filled with large-scale commercial wind developers, small wind farms provide a boost to the local economy and serve as working symbols of self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

PáTu produces more than power. It employs local and regional folks to

provide site monitoring and maintenance, technology support, accounting, legal assistance and more.

"We're providing jobs in the area," Ormand says.

Ormand estimates his wind farm puts \$500,000 a year into Sherman County in the form of salaries and taxes.

"On a dollar-to-dollar basis, there is more return to the local economy on the small projects than the larger projects," he says.

The name "PáTu" means snowfields, according to the Wasco and Yakama tribes who believed the snowfields surrounding Mount Adams were the source of all life and energy. True to its name, PáTu Wind has generated wind power for seven years and successfully contributed to Oregon's sustainable energy landscape.

"He's a visionary," Brian says of Ormand. "He's also brave and persistent. This is not for the faint of heart. There's a lot of sweat equity from the Ormands of the world." ■



U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, left, and House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden, right, tour McNary Dam on the Columbia River.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Public Affairs

Bringing Energy to Central Oregon

Oregon's tireless 2nd District congressman is chairman of arguably the most powerful committee in Congress

By Ted Case

Bonneville Power Administration's massive crackling transmission lines loom over forests and sagebrush as they transmit electricity generated from the Federal Columbia River Power System to areas in Central and Eastern Oregon. These several thousand miles of high voltage lines—and the scores of substations that are part of an amazing integrated system—are undeniably economic drivers of Oregon's rural economy.

While the future of this infrastructure has been at the center of much debate, local congressman, Greg Walden—the chairman of the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee—is in a unique

position to influence policy decisions that could affect your pocketbook.

Last year, the Trump administration proposed to auction off BPA's 15,000 miles of transmission assets to the highest bidder. This proposal was universally opposed by public power advocates, because it had the potential to dramatically raise electricity rates if the infrastructure was sold to out-of-state corporations only interested in squeezing every dollar out of the humming wires.

But first the proposal had to pass out of Walden's House Energy and Commerce Committee. He not only blocked the proposal, he invited U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry to Oregon to get a firsthand look at the utility infrastructure at McNary Dam.



Walden poses with Washington Youth Tour students from Oregon on the U.S. Capitol steps.

Perry made the trip, and conceded the administration's transmission sell-off was dead on arrival. He said the tour gave him an appreciation of "an incredibly complex system that is a fascinating part of America's story."

This was just one example of Walden using his clout to the benefit of his constituents in Oregon's sprawling 2nd District.

The 59-year-old Walden is a lifelong Oregonian whose ancestors came to Oregon by wagon train in 1845. A graduate of the University of Oregon, Walden, along with his wife Mylene, spent more than two decades as radio station owners in Hood River. He was first elected to Congress in 1998, representing 20 counties in central, Southern and Eastern Oregon.

Bev Clarno, a Central Electric Cooperative director who served with Walden in the Oregon Legislature, calls him "deliberate and genuine."

She also observed Walden has remained grounded despite his seniority.

"He has never allowed himself to succumb to Potomac fever like many who serve in Congress," she said, noting Walden is constantly on the road in his 90,000-square-mile congressional district.

Last year, Walden's itinerary brought him to Prineville to discuss economic development. Economic development specialists in Central Oregon have long touted the area's attributes to lure new businesses: a diverse and dynamic business community, a talented workforce and the lowest operating costs in the state. Until recently, the

"Too many rural communities in Oregon lack the broadband access they need to join the 21st century economy."

—Greg Walden

area's critical infrastructure was also a key selling point for potential businesses—except when it was revealed there was not enough transmission capacity in Crook County to sustain new businesses that required large amounts of electricity.

This was dire news for local leaders in Prineville who were under the impression the area had access to a surplus of electricity through BPA.

At the Prineville meeting in 2017, Walden convened local leaders, utility representatives and BPA officials to discuss how to solve the area's transmission problems that threatened future economic growth.

"When Greg got involved, that's when the ball started rolling," said Dave Markham, CEO of Central Electric Cooperative. "He coordinated all the different interests and brought clarity to the issue."

Through a series of studies, BPA developed a plan to increase transmission capacity to deliver the electricity that Markham said, "will help us recruit jobs we need in Central Oregon."

Other pressing issues for the Oregon's 2nd District also line up well for Walden's committee, which has a broad portfolio that includes not only energy issues, but telecommunications, health care and consumer protection. Walden is particularly focused on improving rural broadband for his constituents.

"Too many rural communities in Oregon lack the broadband access they need to join the 21st century economy," he said.

But Walden, in his first year as chairman, put a spotlight on the "energy" part of his panel, culminating in a series of high-profile hearings titled "Powering America" that explored the vulnerabilities of the energy grid and the issues around Columbia and Snake river systems.

"Hydropower is the cornerstone of our entire energy package here," Walden said.

For all of the complexity of these seemingly intractable issues, Walden says there is always one thing for lawmakers to remember: "If we put the consumer first, we'll end up with good public policy." ■



West Oregon Electric Cooperative invites its members to learn more about the benefits of WOEC membership on its website, www.westoregon.org.

What Can Your Co-op Do for You?

WOEC offers numerous services to make members' life easier

West Oregon Electric Cooperative does much more for its members than just keep the lights on.

With a quick visit to the WOEC webpage at www.westoregon.org, members can take a glimpse into a wide variety of services and benefits that many members may not know exist.

Through the easy-to-navigate website, members can check the status of their account and the balance of their bill, or if their payment has been received. Members can also sign up through SmartHub to make payments online and from their smartphone.

SmartHub also offers three tools for examining use: monthly past use, month-to-month daily comparisons, and average use per month.

All three tools chart average temperatures and provide other useful data with the click of button, and all in one place.

Through SmartHub, members can also view past billing and payment history by month.

For those interested in learning a bit more about their co-op, the WOEC

webpage offers a wide range of information, from a history of the co-op to bios of the current board of directors and a map of WOEC's service district.

Those who have students in high school should look at the Sam Hearing and VOLTA scholarships the co-op awards each year to deserving students.

Members also can read past issues of Ruralite.

WOEC General Manager Bob Perry suggests all WOEC members visit the co-op's website and take a few minutes to register their account in the SmartHub system.

Co-op Connections Card

Another benefit many WOEC members may not be taking full advantage of is the Co-op Connections Card. All members can use this card for discounts at participating local and national businesses.

WOEC is a member of Touchstone Energy Cooperative, which represents a nationwide alliance of member-owned electric co-ops. Collectively, Touchstone Energy delivers power and energy solutions to more than 750 unified local electric cooperatives across 46 states.

Bob was recently elected to serve on Touchstone





Energy's national board of directors, and encourages members to learn more about its benefits.

One benefit of Touchstone Energy membership is the Co-op Connections Card, which is provided free to all members. The discount card may be most useful for WOEK members looking to save on health care services such as prescriptions, vision, hearing aids, lab work and dental care. Co-op Connections is not insurance, but provides discounts at certain health care providers for services.

WOEK members can learn about the Touchstone benefits and locate service providers through the WOEK webpage.

Looking to cut down on the cost of prescriptions? An online search shows Banks Pharmacy, Fred Meyer, Rite Aid, Walmart, Target, Safeway, Walgreens and Bi-Mart as participating regional pharmacies where many members may already shop. There is also a mail-order service for extra convenience, and a price quote tool to compare prescription prices.



Energy-Assistance Programs

WOEK also offers several energy-assistance programs to its members. The cooperative is proud to offer a helping hand to its members who find themselves in need throughout the year.

Bob recently reported to the board of directors that WOEK assisted 186 members with \$59,611 in support during 2017 through the co-op's Care to

Share and low-income energy assistance programs.

WOEK recently created a new program, Power Up, through the Oregon Energy Fund. The program allows members to make contributions to assist other WOEK members. Members can either opt to regularly round up their monthly bill, make a regular contribution of a set amount or make a one-time contribution to the program.

WOEK members also stepped forward recently to assist the family of Tigard Police Officer Matthew Barbee, who was seriously injured in an automobile accident. WOEK collected \$1,522 in donations to help the Barbee family pay their electricity bills during this critical time.

Equal Bill Pay

During the winter, WOEK members often see a spike in their energy use. Along with that increase in use comes what can often be an unplanned surge in the monthly bill.

WOEK offers members some options to help navigate these monthly bill fluctuations.

Those who have more than 12 months of good bill pay history as a WOEK member and a zero balance can sign up for budget billing. The previous 12 months' bills are averaged to create a set amount for each month. This allows for consistent household budgeting and eliminates the potential for large and unexpected bills during the holiday season.

Bob suggests another option for members who may not qualify for budget billing: creating a personal budget plan.

When warmer weather rolls around, members may continue to pay a larger amount and build their credit on their account. When the monthly bill starts to increase in the fall and winter, excess funds in the account are drawn automatically. This eliminates the chance of any unwelcome surprises on an electric bill.

Whether it's helping neighbors with energy assistance during a difficult time, providing online and easy-to-use tools to help members manage and stay up to date on their account, or offering access to discounts through Touchstone Energy Cooperative, WOEK has benefits and services all members should explore. ■

For more information about any of WOEK's programs, call (503) 429-3021 or go to www.westoregon.org.



From left, Hudson Bruns, Kaleb Folck Jr. and Taylor Leach enjoy receiving free books by mail every month through Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which partners with the Lowell School District and the Fall Creek Education Foundation to support the program.

Photo courtesy of the Lowell School District

Books by Mail Boost Early Readers

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library supplies free books to preschool kids

By Craig Reed

When the mail arrives, there is excitement in Shelby's house and also over on the next block at Mason's house.

Packages for the pre-schoolers are addressed to the kids. When Shelby and Mason tear into the wrapping, they discover a new book, each with a new adventure, a new opportunity to look at words and another chance to learn to read.

The book might be "The Little Engine That Could," "Lookout Kindergarten, Here I Come," a Dr. Seuss book, a Winnie the Pooh book or a Good Dog Carl book.

It's a process to encourage reading by preschoolers and it was instigated—and now promoted and sponsored—by Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Age-appropriate books are mailed every month to

children up to age 5.

The Lowell School District and the Lowell/Fall Creek Education Foundation partnered with the Imagination Library two years ago. Twenty-one Lowell area preschoolers have graduated from the program since then and 20 kids are now active. Since the program's inception, about 850 books have been shipped to Lowell kids.

It costs the Lowell/Fall Creek Education Foundation about \$2 a book. The rest of the cost is covered by Dolly Parton Imagination Library. There is no cost to the child's family. All children are eligible, regardless of the family income.

"Reading is the gateway subject to all subjects," says Johnie Matthews, second-year principal at Lundy Elementary School in Lowell. "Reading is a foundation for learning. It allows you to thrive in all subjects. This program seeks to build a love for



Maureen Weathers, a board member of the Lowell/Fall Creek Education Foundation, left, and Johnie Matthews, principal of Lundy Elementary School in Lowell are happy to welcome the Imagination Library to the area.

reading, for learning, in the kids.”

Maureen Weathers, a board member of the local foundation, says the Parton program is making a difference in the community. Of the 25 children who entered Lundy’s kindergarten last September, most had participated in the reading program.

“It’s good for the kids in our community to be better readers,” Maureen says. “The kindergarteners are coming into school more prepared than some have been in the past.”

In November, the book program in Lowell and also in the Crow, McKenzie and Oakridge school districts got a financial boost when Lane Electric Cooperative’s board of directors made a \$1,100 donation to each. The donation covers the local \$2 expense to get books to Lowell preschoolers this school year. The other three donations are seed money to get the program started in those areas. These four school districts are in Lane Electric’s service territory.

The seven members of the Lane Electric board heard about the Parton program at a presentation made by Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative representatives at the annual meeting of Oregon electric cooperatives last November. OTEC is involved in bringing the Imagination Library to children in Baker, Union, Harney and Grant counties.

“When our board members came out of that session, they were on fire about what a great way to support literacy,” says Lane Electric General Manager Matt Michel. “They came back and said if

we have some donation money, let’s get the conversation going with other school districts about the program. Let’s refill Lowell’s fund and get some seed money to the other districts.”

Matt explains that in making the four donations, Lane Electric is meeting three of the Seven Cooperative Principles: Education, Training and Information; Concern for Community; and Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

“We’re grateful for Lane Electric reaching out to us and providing support for this library program,” Maureen says. “We’re a small rural school and a little bit can go a long way for us.”

Maureen says the donation will help provide 500 to 600 books to the district’s preschoolers.

“It really will make a difference,” she says.

The book gifting began in 1995 when Dolly established the program in Sevier County, Tennessee, where she was born and raised. She was inspired by her father’s inability to read and write. She wanted to help children fall in love with books and reading.

The idea behind the Imagination Library was that even if young children could not initially read, they would look at the pictures, imagine their own story and eventually learn to read the accompanying words.

The program quickly spread from Dolly’s home county to all of Tennessee and beyond. There are now participants across the United States and in Canada, England and Australia. Almost 1.2 million children are registered in the program and more than 98 million books have been mailed during the past 22 years. To those participants, Dolly became affectionately known as “the book lady.”

The Dollywood Foundation now manages the program. It chooses the books and mails them. The local partner recruits and manages the list of young recipients.

Lowell got involved in 2015 when Abby Rius, a Lowell teacher, heard about the program through a Eugene connection and then pitched it to the school district. The Lowell/Fall Creek Education Foundation became the local nonprofit partner with each of its six members, donating \$100 to help get the program established.

“Abby saw a need in kids from our community,” Johnie says. “Some kids come into our school with some definite reading needs. Some of our pre-K kids don’t necessarily have access to books at home.” ■



The owners, from left, Jerry, Tim, Alan and Matthew Whalen.

Fiddler's Green: A Golfer's Toy Store

The 14,000-foot pro shop is a regional draw for those looking to upgrade equipment

By Craig Reed

Play and business at Fiddler's Green Golf Center is back on par at the 51-year-old facility after having to play through some rough days a few years back.

The center—and the golf industry overall—suffered through some challenging times a decade ago when gas prices increased to \$4 a gallon, an economic depression hit the U.S. and the Tiger Woods' inspired golf boom was abruptly knocked off course by Wood's personal problems.

However, Fiddler's Green stayed the course, under the ownership and guidance of the Whalen family. Co-owners and brothers Tim, Matthew and Alan, and cousin Jerry have been sharing the responsibilities for operating the golf center since its ownership transitioned to them from Dan and Gerri Whalen during 1996 and 1997.

"Tiger Woods was driving the golf business," says Alan Whalen. "It was on a tear up until 2007 and 2008 I don't know if we'll ever see Tiger Woods' era numbers again, but he got a lot of people to at least sample the game, and business has now come back."

Fiddler's Green has experienced many changes and expansions since Dan and Gerri bought the 2,371-yard, par 3, 18-hole course and small pro shop

in 1975. They took possession from Ben Simpson on January 1, 1976.

"It seems there was an expansion every year during the first 15 years we were here," Alan says.

One of the projects was the addition of a 14,000-square-foot retail display area that features hundreds of drivers, irons, wedges and putters, bags and carts, accessories and clothing. Fiddler's Green promotes itself as the "Home of the Nation's Largest On-Course Pro Shop."

Neal Brown, a longtime avid golfer from Roseburg, has been visiting the center since 1984. He says he stops in six to 10 times a year, making the 15-mile side trip to the center when he is traveling on Interstate 5.

"It starts with golf," Neal says of his visits to Fiddler's Green. "It's the inventory they have there and their ability to put a club in your hand and have you hit balls on site. You can hit them and drive them and see how the club reacts in your hands."

"For the area we're in, you really can't get that experience and that customer service anywhere else. They are really good at helping you, at welcoming you. If you want to hit clubs to try them out, it's the place. In most cases, golf shops don't carry the



inventory they carry. They have one of the best retail displays I've seen. It's like a big kids' candy store for golfers. It is just a fantastic experience."

A more recent change for the golf center was an upgrade its interior and exterior lights last year. Its 14-stall driving range is well lit and open until 11 p.m.

"The lighting system was 34 years old," Alan says. "Everything is now LED. We absolutely like it. It is bright and we're anticipating a much lower operating cost and a longer lifespan for the new lights."

Fiddler's Green is a member of Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative. The center was able to take advantage of a rebate program offered by the co-op.

"We're pleased that our energy-efficiency rebates reduced the cost of Fiddler's Green lighting project last year," says Joe Jarvis, Blachly-Lane's general manager. "Some of our commercial members don't know that we offer energy-efficiency rebates targeted to their needs. It's a win for our whole community when we can help commercial members save energy and reduce their costs."

The golf facility has been improved and enhanced numerous times since the concept for it originated back in the 1960s by rye grass farmer Ben Simpson. He liked to golf, so he decided to build his own course, turning 40 acres of his farmland into the par 3 layout.

John Zoller of Eugene designed the course, originally named Country Place. Ben supervised the local businesses that helped build it. The holes ranged from 70 yards to 216 yards from tees to pins. Three artificial lakes were built. Two of the holes involve hitting balls over water.

In 1975, the Whalens—who had moved from Iowa in search of a warmer climate—decided to buy the business despite no experience in the golf



industry. Dan had previously been a traveling clothes salesman. Dan and Gerri changed the name of their new business to Fiddler's Green.

The couple, their young sons and their nephew worked hard at learning the golf business. Dan and Gerri didn't play the game much because they were too busy running and upgrading the business. Dan managed the business and its sales. Gerri worked the lunch counter.

The boys played the game, but admittedly didn't excel at it because they were spending about as much time or more maintaining the tee areas, fairways and greens as they played.

Other changes through the years included more driving range stalls, a club repair shop, an embroidery shop and a growing online business.

Today, Tim is 61 and Jerry is 59. They share responsibility for buying golf equipment and accessories for Fiddler's Green. Matthew, 56, is the financial officer. Alan, 55, is the general manager and the center's information technology person.

"Working with family has more advantages than disadvantages," Alan says. "We all do something different, and one guy doesn't want the other guy's job. We've created our niches and that is what we do. There's cooperation among us, and we trust each other that we're each getting the job done.

"A lot of people like golf. When they come to our center, we're pleased to welcome them and to help them with their golf needs." ■

Above, Jade Headings warms up on the driving range. There are also bays reserved for testing clubs.

Left, Jerry and Fiddler's Green employee Amy Goodwin review the inventory of irons.



Extreme pogo athlete Biff Hutchison flips over brick pyramids at a famous BMX and skate park in Queens, New York. He competes and performs around the world.

Photo composite by Nick McClintock

Head Over Heels for Extreme Pogo

Biff Hutchison sets records as he bounces and performs around the world

By Dianna Troyer

A tattoo over his heart reminds Biff Hutchison of his late father supporting him as an extreme pogo stick competitor and entertainer.

“He worried about me and would look the other way whenever I did flips and other tricks,” says Biff, who began competing in the sport of extreme pogo in 2009 when he was a sophomore at Burley High School. “He told me if I wanted to travel and do my

tricks, I had to make some money at it. I took that as a challenge. He motivated me in his own way. He’s one of the reasons I’m where I am today.”

At 23 years old, Biff makes his living traveling the United States and the world performing with the Xpogo Stunt Team or individually at halftime shows for the NBA and the National Collegiate Athletic Association. He also teaches classes in Burley, where he lives, and performs solo shows at schools and

other venues.

Biff holds more than a dozen records for tricks on his stick. His most recent record—set March 3, 2017—was a front flip over a 10-foot bar.

“Doing what I love with pogoing has taken me all over the world to amazing places,” says Biff, who earns part of his income from corporate sponsor Vurtego, the leading manufacturer of extreme pogo sticks. “It’s been a blessing. I’m sure my dad would be proud.”

Biff’s father, Jeremy, worked

as an equipment operator for the Raft River Highway District in Malta for more than 10 years and shod horses. He was diagnosed with brain cancer when Biff was in high school.

“He died when I was 18,” Biff says. “While I was sorting through his paperwork, I found a sketch he had drawn of a horse with a horseshoe, so I had it made into a tattoo over my heart.”

His father chose to be buried at Valley Vu Cemetery in



Malta, above the valley where he grew up and worked.

As a tribute to extended family members who still live throughout the Malta area, Biff performed his pogo stunts at the Raft River School last spring.

He owes his nickname to his uncle Gary.

“He called me that as a kid instead of Breckon, and it stuck,” Biff says.

While bouncing, “there’s a moment at the height of a bounce when you feel weightless,” says Biff, who discovered the sport in 2006. “It’s really addicting.”

He is self-taught.

“I’d practice flips and other tricks on our trampoline, then do them with my pogo stick,” he explains.

For several years, Biff won categories at Pogopalooza—a world championship competition—and eventually gained support from Vurtego. After graduating from high school, Biff began traveling about nine months a year, performing and competing.

“The camaraderie of the sport when it first started is still strong,” he says. “We all encourage each other.”

In 2014, Biff curtailed his travel schedule after marrying his best friend from high school, Braelyn.

“Now I’m gone a week or two a month, and when she can, she travels with me,” he says. “She’s supportive and suggests some new tricks.”

Biff says one of the most memorable places he has



Left, Biff has performed around the world, including Paris, Korea and atop the Great Wall of China. Above, he performed during the halftime show January 21 at the University of Oregon Ducks’ basketball game.

Left photo by Nick McClintock, above photo by Flynn Nyman

bounced is atop the Great Wall of China.

“I really liked Paris, too, and Korea—every place I’ve gone,” he says.

To stay at the top of his game, Biff practices regularly, varying his workouts based on his performance schedule.

“Usually, I try to do an hour or so of trampoline a day and practice two or three times a week,” he says. “If I’m not on many gigs, I might just pogo once or twice a week. If I’m doing a lot of shows, I don’t usually practice outside of shows to avoid injury and to recuperate between performances.”

Throughout his career, Biff has recuperated from 27 bone fractures to his wrist, leg, fingers, toes and right ankle.

“In November, I was in California filming a tutorial for Vurtego when I slipped on the peg and broke my ankle,” he says.

To help aspiring pogo riders avoid injury, he teaches hour-long classes at Upside Down Tumbling in Burley.

“I teach kids a progression of tricks, how to develop muscle memory and to fall safely,” Biff says. “As a coach, I’m proud to see them do well. If one of them breaks one of my records one day, that’s great.”

One record still eludes him.

“I’ve been obsessing over it for about nine years,” Biff says. “No one has ever done a double backflip. I’ve done it and dismounted without the stick, but I want to do it while staying on the stick. This summer, I’ll be training for it and plan to practice two to three hours a day, every day.”

One of his most notable records was the world’s highest jump of 11 feet and one-half inch, only to have a friend break it by half an inch in November.

“It just gives me incentive to take it higher,” Biff says, smiling.

He plans to pogo as long as he can.

“Jumping as high as I can brings me joy,” he says. “That’s what keeps me in the sport.” ■

A Chance to Compete on the Courts

Students from across the county work on basketball skills and play with peers

By Lauren Brown

While rural school students often benefit from smaller class sizes and a flexible curriculum, extracurricular activities can get short shrift simply because they don't have enough participants.

However, rural schools in Harney County have sports options.

Within the past few years, Crane Athletic Director Jamie Siegner has helped revamp a rural basketball league, inviting students from Crane, Burns, Diamond, Double O, Drewsey, Frenchglen, Fields, Pine Creek and Suntex to participate.

Players form teams based on grade and ability level. They practice at their own schools during the week, then join their teammates on the weekends for tournaments.

On a Friday morning the first week of January, kids and parents trickled into the Crane High School gym. Kids came ready to play in athletic shorts, T-shirts and court shoes. It was draft day.

Kindergartners through eighth-graders grabbed basketballs and started shooting at baskets around the gym. Volunteer coaches set up stations, while parents settled on the bleachers to watch.

Jamie gathered the coaches for a quick huddle before calling the 40 or so participants together for a chat about how the day's activities would proceed.

The kids were divided into groups by age to work on various skills. Stations included shooting form, layups, passing, pivots, defense and jump stops.

While the teams are mostly broken down by grade level, occasionally a



Coach Kelsey Miller explains a passing drill to a rural basketball league participant.

younger child needs to move up or an older child needs to move down, Jamie says.

There are three divisions and at least three teams in each division.

The kindergartners are in their own division and are separated into two teams that only play each other.

"They can get lost in the shuffle with the older kids," Jamie says. "They get the

most playing experience if they play each other."

The lower division is made up of first- and second-graders. They use a shorter hoop, which is 8 feet high.

The upper division consists of third-, fourth-, fifth-graders and middle schoolers. They use a standard 10-foot hoop.

Jamie says the league structure had



Crane Athletic Director Jamie Siegner explains to basketball league participants how draft day works. In the background, from left, volunteer coaches Vern Brown, Kelsey Miller, Shelly Potter and Denise Adams look on.

to change a few years ago because enrollment was down at the rural schools. Some schools did not have enough students to field a complete team, and it simply wasn't beneficial for the younger kids to play the older kids.

However, change never comes easy.

"It took a little bit of convincing, and it took a couple of years to implement the new structure," Jamie says, noting the result is a system that works well.

Draft day ensures teams are even and each student plays at a challenging level. Weekend tournaments are in Crane and Burns through the middle of February.

Angelia Sanchez has two children, Isabella and John, in the program. She likes the low-key environment, which she says is conducive to introducing children to the sport.

Angelia is a Crane kindergarten teacher, and says she enjoys seeing community members at the weekend tournaments.

"It's good for the kids from the rural schools to socialize a little bit," she says.

Kelsey Miller has been a volunteer coach for three years. She grew up in

Red Bluff, California, playing basketball for as long as she can remember. She acknowledges that the arrangement with all of the small rural schools is different than her experience growing up, but likes the friendly atmosphere.

"It's a great system they have set up," Kelsey says. "It's all volunteer-based, too, so everybody wants to be here."

High school-aged assistant coaches also help offer a positive atmosphere, giving tips to the younger students.

As draft day progressed, the players became more comfortable with each other and the coaches as they rotated from station to station. They giggled at themselves when they made mistakes and cheered each other when they did something well.

While competition is an inherent component in school sports, so is fostering a sense of teamwork, individual accomplishment and triumph.

Jamie says that was her aim in restructuring the league.

"My goal was to make sure each kid has a chance to be a hero and be successful," she says. "It allows everybody



Above, Jacob Potter anticipates the ball during a passing drill. Top, two girls wait their turn to shoot the ball at a station focusing on shooting form.

to be successful playing at their own level." ■

For more information about the rural school basketball league, contact Crane Athletic Director Jamie Siegner at (541) 493-2641, ext. 252, or email siegnerj@harneyesd.k12.or.us.



Monty Elliott is owner of Oregon Coast Comics in Tillamook. He organized the Oregon Coast Comic Con coming to Tillamook in March.

In a Galaxy Not Too Far Away: Oregon Coast Comic Con

By Dan Haag

Bringing new events to an untested audience can be a daunting task. Besides the myriad logistical undertakings, is the anxiety that perhaps folks won't like trying new things.

You can emphatically cross that particular worry off the list of the Second Oregon Coast Comic Con (formerly Northwest Comic Con).

In 2017, the

Tillamook-based comic con attracted around 1,500 people.

"It was just a great big ball of awesome," says organizer Monty Elliott. "There's no comparison to last year's show with the level it's been kicked up."

Running Saturday and Sunday, March 24 and 25, at the Tillamook Air Museum, this year's event promises to be a celebration of the fantastic and the heroic, with more than enough fun to make

even the grumpiest Sith Lord crack a smile.

With comic conventions thriving in big cities such as Portland and San Diego, how did one make its way to Tillamook?

"It was kind of, 'Hey, I wonder if we could get people to come to the coast and have some fun in the off-season?'" Monty says.

The idea began to gel in fall 2016. Monty realized it had limitless potential.

"The next thing you knew, guests were lined up and it kind of ran from there," he says.

According to Monty, the idea came from the hope of making the event more accessible to everyday fans of superheros, sci-fi and fantasy—something he felt was often lacking in the larger venues.

Bigger conventions—such as Portland's Emerald City or Salem's Cherry City—pay



Above, fun of all sizes is in store for everyone at Oregon Coast Comic Con.

Photo by Brian Cameron

Left, “Walking Dead” alum Vincent Ward was a big draw at the 2017 event and returns in 2018.

thousands of dollars for guest appearances and attract 10,000 to 30,000 attendees.

Monty, who regularly attends both conventions, says he has routinely stood in line for five hours to wait for a \$200 autograph.

Those hoping to talk with a graphic artist or character actor at a larger convention are often out of luck.

Monty says the most fun he had at Rose City Con was going to a table where there was no line and talking with the vendor one-on-one.

“We wanted to have 20 people like that, where everyone could come in and meet those 20 people,” says Monty, who deals with heroes and villains regularly in his day job as owner of Oregon Coast Comics in Tillamook and as the general manager of Salem’s Cherry

City Comic Con.

Though on a smaller scale, the guest lineup for Oregon Coast Comic Con is impressive.

Among the guests are “Walking Dead” alum Vincent Ward, DC and Marvel artist Mike DeCarlo, artist and “Zombie King” Arthur Suydam and suit actress Sandi Sellner of Mighty Morphin Power Rangers.

In particular, Monty is thrilled to have the event at the air museum, where the larger space can accommodate the events’ anticipated second-year growth.

There will even be historical tie-ins with the museum and comics. Old, rare comic books will be on display alongside the museum’s wartime exhibits—a nod to what soldiers of the era would have read.

“It’s amazing how comic books were influenced by that period of history,” Monty says.

Monty says he had no trouble attracting notable guests.

“The more work we put into it, the more the word got out,” he says, adding that because of last year’s success, bigger talent companies are approaching him for future Oregon Coast Comic Cons.

Both days will feature a huge gaming area, discussion panels with guests like Ward and DeCarlo, and close to 100 vendors. Food and refreshments will be available.

One big change from 2017 is this year’s event also offers an app with maps of vendor locations and times of guest panels and events.

Monty hopes people will get into the spirit of the convention and don costumes,

Admission Prices

- Saturday, March 24, age 12 and older—\$20
- Sunday, March 25, age 12 and older—\$15
- Two day admission, age 12 and older—\$25
- Weekend admission, Saturday or Sunday, age 3-11—\$5

or “cosplay.” Though not a requirement of admission, there will be costume contests on both days. Several professional “cosplayers” will make the rounds, including a group dressed in Star Wars costumes. There will even be an all-ages “Cosplay Karaoke” for a bit of musical fun.

Monty stresses the weekend is a family-friendly event, and encourages fans of all ages to come and enjoy.

Monty is excited for the second year and is looking ahead to next year.

“We are already working on 2019,” he says. “Some big names have already reached out to us.” ■

For a complete list of guests and vendors for Oregon Coast Comic Con or to buy tickets, visit www.oregoncoastcomiccon.com. Tickets also will be sold at the door both days of the event.



These Lego Robotics teammates call themselves the Philosophers. They are, from left in the back row: Curtis Beck, Myles Cooper, Dawson Cooper, Jordan Zeisiger, Zach Burgess and Alex Burgess. Front row, from left, Joe Benson, Lucan Nussbaumer, Levi Mowrey and Jonny Redman.

Photo courtesy IDEA Homeschool Program

Young Inventors Soak Up Success

Team of students creates the hydracelet, a low-tech way to track water intake

By Kris Capps

Ten elementary and middle school students in Fairbanks recently invented a simple way to help people keep track of how much water they drink every day. They even won an award for it at a recent Lego robotics competition.

The invention is a simple silicone wristband with the numbers 1 through 8 displayed in white on the

band. A square-shaped slider is moved from number to number every time the wearer drinks an 8-ounce glass of water.

“We just picked that idea,” says 12-year-old Alex Burgess, a who helped develop the project with his robotics team. Alex and his teammates are from the Interior Distance Education of Alaska homeschool program. They call themselves the Philosophers.

Every year, the robotics competition they



Team members show off their hydracelets.

participate in also includes a research project. This time, the theme was hydrodynamics. Teams had to come up with a water-related challenge and solve that challenge. The Philosophers decided to find ways to help people remember to drink plenty of water every day.

“I didn’t know that much about water,” says Alex, who is in sixth grade. “I did the research, and I found out water is really important for you. I know if you don’t drink enough you die. Everyone should know that.”

But people should also keep track of how much they drink every day, he says.

At first, team members thought they would create an app, but that didn’t work. Then they developed the idea of a bracelet. After all, they reasoned, there are lots of things that help adults remember to drink water: apps, watches, expensive water bottles. There are plenty of free apps, but those require a tablet or smartphone to use. There is really nothing for kids.

“This is cheap, fun and easy to use,” says Alex.

Team members did their homework. Once they came up with the idea, they figured they better talk to some experts. Several of the students arranged to interview their own doctors.

“We talked with three different pediatricians,” says Zach, Alex’s twin brother. “They all thought our idea was great and that the problem is a real problem.”

Kids and adults just don’t drink enough water, says Zach.

They created a poster board to explain their project: “Water is very important for our bodies. Half our body is made up of water, and we must have water to live and function properly. However, up to 75 percent of kids in the USA are not drinking enough water to stay properly hydrated.”

Why is this bad? It can lead to headaches, muscle and joint pain, dizziness, nausea, fainting, moodiness, fatigue, constipation, dry skin and lack of concentration.

“Even mild hydration can really affect how kids live, play and learn,” the team declares on its poster board.

They started designing prototypes and eventually settled on a simple silicone band. They call it the hydracelet.

“It’s hydro, like water, and bracelet,” says Levi Mowery. “We merged those two words.”

The project was such a hit, the team won an award for it at the robotics competition.

The team did some fundraising and made 200 bracelets, all different shades of blue. The sliders that wrap around the bracelets are created with a 3-D printer, and are different colors. When the team came home from the statewide competition in Anchorage in January, they had distributed or sold just about all their hydracelets.

They are already getting feedback from customers.

“My cousin is going through leukemia, and the hydracelet has been helping her so much,” says Alex. “She gets dehydrated.”

“A guy in Big Lake, he has a kidney problem, and he has to keep drinking water,” says Levi. “He thought our whole project was really, really good, so he bought 10 of them.”

They are on the hunt now for a new partner with a 3-D printer so they can expand and make a larger quantity.

“We want to try to get to the point where we have sold enough that we can buy a really big batch and give them to hospitals and schools for free,” says Dawson Cooper, a seventh-grader on the team. “We’re not in it to make money. We’re in it to help other people. And we’re hoping to keep this idea going even after Lego robotics is done for the year.”

“They do all the work themselves,” says Danielle Burgess, a mother of two boys on the team. “The keyword is facilitate, and help them apply the process. It’s been interesting. They’ve learned so much this year, just talking to people and getting out in the community.” ■

Learn more about the hydracelets on the Facebook page Hydracelets-Team Philosopher. The team encourages users to share photos and stories about their own use of the hydracelet. The team also has an Etsy shop at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/hydracelets>. Hydracelets are \$3.



From left, Mike, Richard, Robert and John Spillman stand in front of Grease Monkey Auto Care Service Center, the anchor business in a development started to provide much-needed services for the community.

Photos by Sarah Spratling

Work is Play for the Spillman Brothers

The Spillman brothers forego retirement to launch new businesses in West Wendover

By Dianna Troyer

New businesses opening in West Wendover are a tribute to the late Merle Spillman, who taught his 11 children to approach life and investments with hard work and humor.

Instead of retiring, his sons Mike, Bob, Richard and John formed a limited liability corporation three years ago and discussed what new businesses were needed in their hometown of West Wendover.

"We decided to name our company Bomarc Investments to honor our parents," says Mike, who manages the new Grease Monkey Auto Care Service Center and Monkey Shine Car Wash at 801

Florence Way. "It stands for Boys of Merle and Ruth. People ask us what the letter C stands for. We had to figure out how to end it somehow, so we decided that letter would work," he adds, laughing.

Mike says the brothers get along and enjoy working together.

"We always manage to see the humor in different situations," he says.

The brothers hired Ascent Construction to build Grease Monkey, which opened in late August, and an adjacent 14,000-square-foot retail plaza. Businesses that will open there include a mailing and copy store, a dollar store and a dry cleaner.

"We still have some retail space available for people to lease," Mike says.

The brothers chose Grease Monkey as their anchor business because they thought residents and travelers on the nearby interstate would benefit.

"We're the first Grease Monkey to open in Nevada," says Mike. "We researched different franchises, and the company is really good to work with for owners. They're headquartered in Denver."

Residents have been supportive.

"We changed a lot of oil to celebrate our grand opening, and now we're seeing return customers," Mike says. "People come here because it's convenient. I used to have to crawl under my car on the floor in my garage to change the oil. It's nice to not have to do that anymore."

The staff also can do light mechanical



From left, Mike, Robert, Richard and John say they are excited to open their new businesses for the community.

work, such as changing spark plugs.

While Mike oversees Grease Monkey, Bob will manage Rocket Cleaners—a tribute to their 96-year-old mother, who lives at an assisted living center in Salt Lake City.

“Everyone around here knew her as Grandma Rocket,” says Bob. “She had a ’73 Chevy with Glasspack mufflers and drove like she had them, so you know how she got that name.”

Bob chose a dry cleaning business because there isn’t one in town.

“We’ll also do serviced laundry for shirts and other clothing,” he says. “Plus, we’ll have big washers to do sleeping bags and blankets.”

Bob also will manage Buckshot’s, a discount and dollar store.

“Ninety-five percent of the merchandise will cost a dollar, except some seasonal items in the aisles that will cost about \$3 or \$4,” he says. “We want to offer a variety of products.”

Since the Spillman brothers filed their corporate name, Mike says their business



John, left, and Mike worked with their brothers to decide which franchises would benefit West Wendover. The brothers chose Grease Monkey as the anchor business.

venture has been positive.

“Ascent Construction has done a wonderful class A job for us,” he says. “We’d all

rather be working here at our new businesses than be retired.”

Three years ago, Mike retired as maintenance superintendent at the nearby potash plant after working there 43 years. His father had moved his family to town in 1956 to work as an electrician at the plant.

“Retirement wasn’t really for me,” says Mike, 68. “I love to fish, garden and get outside, but the winters are long. I’ve loved working here. I’m seeing people I haven’t seen in a long time, and it’s great to visit with new people, too.”

Bob, 56, had been working for a company that sells small consumer products such as sunglasses and flashlights to convenience stores.

“My brothers talked me into this,” he says, grinning.

John, 54, had worked in the casino industry in marketing for three decades.

“With his experience, we persuaded him to join us, too, and help find tenants,” says Mike.

Richard, 62, lives in Hyrum, Utah,

and was looking for investments after selling his software company, Spillman Technologies Inc., in 2016.

While succeeding in their respective careers, the brothers have always remembered who they were in their father’s eyes.

“He gave us all funny nicknames,” Mike says. “I guess with 11 of us, it helped him remember us. I’m number four and ‘Finnegan’ for the kids’ song ‘Mike Finnegan.’ Richard is number seven, and his middle name is Eugene, so he became ‘Richard Eugene the Flying Machine.’ Bob was number 10 and named ‘Buckshot Bob.’ Then there’s the youngest, John, who is ‘Johnny Jump Up.’”

Some of the Spillman brothers’ future customers might be their own family members coming to town for their annual summer reunion.

“By now, there are about 155 of us who come to our reunion,” says Mike. “We have to rent the community center because it’s the only place big enough for us.”

Bob sums up the brothers’ attitudes about being entrepreneurs in their hometown.

“We’re all excited to be opening these businesses the community needs,” he says. ■

Sallal Grange Strikes a New Chord

Musicians reinvigorate a space and organization, offering a place for regular community gatherings

By Anne Herman

The Sallal Grange has weathered many changes through the years, transforming as the community it serves has shifted from rural to almost suburban.

Founded in 1932, the Sallal Grange continued in the tradition of local Granges until 2004, when the charter was closed.

Monte Lynch, master of the Grange at the time, says it died down due to “lack of interest.” People were bored with the open meetings, and there was not much farming in the North Bend area.

“I was the only member who had a cow,” says Larry Houch.

As Monte and Larry tell the story, the original members resisted change and eventually died off, leaving the Sallal Grange with few members and no clear purpose. For several years, the building was mostly empty, used only for voting and event rentals.

In 2010, Nels Melgaard, a musician and owner of the Nursery at Mt. Si, had the idea of reopening the Grange as a music venue. About 70 musicians banded together, and in December of that year,



Susan and Max Kismarton are captivated as Shirley Bridgman reads her story, “The Hummingbird,” at the Grange’s open mic night in February.

the Sallal Grange was re-chartered.

It has grown from there.

These days, the Grange is home to a variety of events that reflect the organization’s traditional values of family, grassroots activism and community service. There is a family potluck and open mic the first Friday of each month. In February, it drew about 100 people.

The Grange also includes a community service component.

It provides the materials, instructions and space for Project Linus, which



Hot dogs are featured at the monthly potluck.



The Sallal Grange is at 12912 432nd Ave. SE in North Bend. The Grange hall is available for rentals.



Above, Monte Lynch plays guitar at the Grange's open mic night. Right, some of the Sallal Grange members. Back row, from left, Chris Smith, Nels Melgaard, Gary Davidson and Kathi Davidson. Middle row, from left, Monte Lynch and Pam Williamson. Front row, from left, Larry Houch, Leah Aichele and Kitty Lynch.



brings people together for a day to make blankets for kids who find themselves in traumatic situations. There is an e-recycling event for community members to drop off unwanted printers, computers and other electronic devices.

Grange members built a tiny house to donate to the Low Income Housing Institute in Seattle. They have a weekly dairy drive, collecting as much as 3,000 pounds of cheese for the food bank.

Not much of the old emphasis on farming remains, but Grange members did create a display for the King County Fair of produce that grows in the Snoqualmie Valley.

Honoring the traditional value of education, the Sallal Grange holds a biweekly lectures series on subjects ranging from

soups of the world to making planters out of old boots.

It also is a venue for plays, including Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" last April.

"Music was just the starting point," says Chris Smith, one of the musicians who played at the Grange's February open mic.

Although the specific information shared and activities sponsored have changed through the years, the Sallal Grange has once again become a hub of community service and culture. ■

A National History

The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry was founded in 1867 to improve agricultural production, and to further the economic and political wellbeing of the community in general.

It became an educational association, a social center for farming families and a lobbying body.

The Grange is politically active—working for farming causes and improvements to rural life—but does not endorse a particular political party or candidate.

According to the National Grange website, "For 150 years, the Grange has continuously fought for the rights of farmers and rural Americans everywhere, taking hometown words and policies to the steps of Congress year after year."

Larry Houch of Sallal Grange says the national organization's efforts resulted in such improvements as telephone service in rural areas, and school buses being painted yellow for safety.

From the start, women had equal rights to vote on Grange business and were allowed to hold office—a groundbreaking practice in 1867.

"We proclaim it among our purposes to continue our historical appreciation of the abilities and equality of women," the Grange's website states.

There are also Grange programs for children and teens—with meetings run by young members—to teach them leadership and public speaking skills.

National membership grew quickly, from about 200,000 in 1873 to about 858,050 in 1875. The Grange became a center of American farm life.

By the 1920s, about 20 percent of the U.S. population belonged to a local Grange, Larry says.

Today, the national membership is about 160,000. ■

Wreaths Across America Honor Troops

Lincoln County sixth-graders make annual odyssey to Arlington National Cemetery

By Dianna Troyer

A hush falls over sixth-graders from Lincoln County School District as they lay wreaths on white marble headstones at Arlington National Cemetery. Every December, a new group makes the trip during National Wreaths Across America Day.

“Our students sense the sacredness there and are respectful,” says Pete Peterson, principal at Panaca Elementary School. “They whisper or talk quietly as they move along.”

When each remembrance wreath is laid, the troop’s name is spoken “to remember not their deaths, but their lives,” according to the nonprofit Wreaths Across America website.

Pete began organizing the annual odyssey to Washington, D.C., in 2006. Fundraising projects are scheduled year-round to help defray costs.

“The trip is a way for them to understand the ultimate sacrifice of our soldiers, to make a difference during the holiday season and to learn about our country’s history,” says Pete.

Last December, 50 students and 60 adults from Panaca, Pioche, Alamo and Caliente participated. Three students representing the county’s schools laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown. Video of the ceremony is on Pioche



Every December, volunteers dress thousands of headstones at Arlington National Cemetery.

Elementary School’s Facebook page.

When Pete first read about Wreaths Across America, he says he was impressed and deeply moved.

In 1992, Morrill Worcester, a Christmas wreath company owner in Maine, had 5,000 leftover wreaths. He and volunteers put them on headstones at the national cemetery.

A teacher in Maine who heard about the project volunteered his sixth-graders. The project gained more

volunteers after being posted on social media.

Today, about 4,000 volunteers place nearly 250,000 wreaths on Arlington headstones every December. Wreaths are also placed at other cemeteries nationwide.

“When I first read about it, I really wanted our sixth-graders to experience it,” says Pete. “But it was already October, and I wondered how to organize and pay for it within two months, and whether the school board and parents would even approve.”

Pete describes himself as “the kind of guy who isn’t afraid to ask.” He called his friend, County Commissioner Spencer Hafen, “and we went to work raising the money, calling people and explaining why we wanted to take the students,” Pete says. “It seemed like everybody wanted to help.”

With donations the first year, each participant had to pay \$100 of the \$650-per-student cost.

Seeing the financial



Carson Boyce dresses a tomb with a remembrance wreath. When each one is laid, the soldier's name is spoken to remember their lives.

Photos courtesy of trip chaperones

support, the school board and parents endorsed the trip, too.

“Now, it costs about \$750 for each person,” says Pete. “We want the trip to be reasonably priced.”

To keep expenses down, Pete negotiates bus and hotel prices, buys airline tickets when they go on sale and organizes suppers in the hotel.

“People have been so generous to us when they learn what we’re doing,” he says.

One year, Pete and other adults were shopping at a small grocery store near their hotel to make sandwiches for supper. A customer noticed

the volume of food they were buying.

“He asked me where the party was that night,” recalls Pete. “I laughed at his joke and told him we brought some sixth-graders from small towns in Nevada to lay wreaths at Arlington. He handed me a \$50 bill.”

The local generosity and support is impressive, too.

“Several people have walked into my office and asked to pay for a child who may not have had enough money to go,” says Pete. “People want to see the students have this opportunity.”

Besides laying the wreaths,



Above, Pete Peterson helps unload wreaths. Top, the group visits the sites throughout Washington, D.C., including a stop at Mount Vernon.

the sixth-graders visit the Holocaust Museum and other historic sites during the six-day trip.

They see a play at Ford’s Theater, and they look for the names of local soldiers, Larry Brown of Caliente and Kurtess Walker of Parowan, Utah on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

“Renee Hansen was a friend of Kurtess’ and lives in Panaca and asked us to bring back a rubbing of his name,” says Pete.

They also tour monuments, the Capitol, Mount Vernon, several of the Smithsonian museums, the Bureau of Engraving, the National Archives and the Natural History Museum.

Pete says the annual journey has become a trip of a lifetime for many students.

“I can’t say enough about the parents who make this happen every year,” he says. “We’re grateful that people are generous with our fundraising events.” ■



House Energy and Environment Chairman Ken Helm, far right, championed cap-and-trade legislation. Also pictured are Rep. Phil Barnhart (D-Eugene) and Rep. Werner Reschke (R-Klamath Falls).

Capping Off a Frenzied Legislative Session

Carbon legislation took a high-profile role in the Oregon legislative session, but ORECA's leader testifies that the state's carbon policies are far from aligned

Sen. Michael Dembrow and Rep. Ken Helm, chief sponsors of legislation to put a price on carbon in the state of Oregon, had no time to waste. Even with the support of House Speaker Tina Kotek and House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, the lawmakers had only 35 days to pass complex legislation establishing a cap-and-trade carbon market.

Ted Case, executive director of the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, testified on February 7 at a public hearing before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the House Energy and Environment Committee. In his testimony, Case thanked Dembrow and Helm for improving the legislation, but said Oregon's electric cooperatives "cannot support SB 1507 or HB 4001 until the state of Oregon recognizes their current environmental policies are not only inconsistent with the proposed cap-and-trade-legislation, they are punitive for rural Oregonians."

In his testimony, Case cited Gov. Kate Brown's policies that devalue the federal hydropower system, increasing electric rates for rural Oregonians and increasing carbon emissions equivalent to putting 180,000 new cars on Oregon roads.

"It is clear the state of Oregon will not be able to meet its carbon goals if federal hydropower continues to be devalued," Case said.

SB 1507 and HB 4001 faced stiff opposition from a wide range of agriculture, industry and transportation groups. House Republican Leader Mike McLane said the legislation could cost Oregon families hundreds of dollars a year, with no meaningful impact on global climate change.

The full text of Case's testimony is on page 5. ■



Environment and Natural Resources Chairman Michael Dembrow led the cap-and-trade effort in the Senate.



**Statement of Ted Case, Executive Director
Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association on SB 1507
Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee
and House Energy & Environment Committee**

February 7, 2018

Chair Dembrow and Chair Helm and members of the Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee and House Energy & Environment Committee:

For the last few months, ORECA worked collaboratively with the Clean Energy Jobs Utilities and Transportation Work Group to address our initial concerns with SB 1070, particularly with respect to the ability of electric cooperatives to comply as regulated entities under a state cap-and-trade program. We greatly appreciate the efforts of Sen. Dembrow and Rep. Helm to work constructively with us to improve the legislation. However, we cannot support SB 1507 or HB 4001 until the state of Oregon recognizes their current environmental policies are not only inconsistent with the proposed cap-and-trade legislation. They are punitive for rural Oregonians.

ORECA members purchase their power from the Bonneville Power Administration, which markets the power produced at federal dams. The state of Oregon continues to aggressively pursue policies and operations that significantly reduce hydropower generation at the federal dams in the Columbia River Basin. Spilling water at these dams has far-reaching ramifications for electric cooperatives and the environment that the state of Oregon refuses to acknowledge. For example, increased spring spill is estimated to cost \$40 million to consumers, will increase carbon emissions by approximately 840,000 metric tons a year and have unintended consequences for migrating juvenile and adult salmon. It is clear the state of Oregon will not be able to meet its carbon goals if federal hydropower continues to be devalued. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, the state of Oregon has been unwilling to find common ground with respect to the operation of the federal dams.

While we also appreciate the sponsor's sincere interest in developing a carbon proposal that invests in rural Oregon, we have many unanswered questions about how the cap-and-trade policy will impact electric utility rates, transportation costs and jobs in rural Oregon and "frontier" Oregon areas like Harney County. These questions require significant examination that the short session cannot provide. Nevertheless, ORECA and Oregon's electric co-ops stand ready to work with the Oregon Legislature and Gov. Brown on these issues, including opportunities to reduce carbon through the electrification of the transportation sector using carbon-free hydropower.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Annual Meeting a Cornerstone for Cooperative Organizations

Please join us Saturday, April 28, for a celebration with your neighbors

The founders of Escambia River Electric Cooperative likely would be astonished at how EREC has flourished during its 79 years of existence.

Some things changed. Others remain the same.

From its inception in 1939 to today, the cooperative has grown from 88 members to 10,946.

The demand for and use of electricity has increased. From a single lightbulb hanging in the center of the room to electric water wells and today's modern conveniences such as computers, entertainment centers and time-saving electric appliances, the world of energy use has expanded more than our first members could have imagined.

One constant is EREC's way of doing business. EREC still seeks to bring members safe, reliable and affordable electricity. It is still a democratic organization controlled by its members. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. Members have equal voting rights: one member, one vote. And these rights are exercised each year at EREC's annual meeting.

EREC is gearing up for the 2018 annual meeting Saturday, April 28, at Northview High School. The meeting begins earlier this year, with registration and voting at 8 a.m. and the business meeting starting at 10 a.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to elect the board of trustees, share important financial information, occasionally vote on other matters such as bylaw changes and, of course, distribute great door prizes.

Willie Mote has attended EREC annual meetings since the early 1970s. He and his wife, Addie Rue, enjoy the entertainment, food and door prizes.

"It amazes me how many prizes they give away," Willie says. "I've been fortunate to win several prizes through the years."



Ryne Barrow won a heater at his first annual meeting as a member.

EREC's annual meeting is a community gathering where neighbors meet new neighbors or catch up with old acquaintances.

As our lives get busier with life's demands and more interaction with others is online via social media, the value of face-to-face human connections becomes more important. Few organizations are as uniquely positioned as EREC to bring together members of local communities.

Ryne Barrow attended his first annual meeting as an EREC member in 2017.

"I really enjoyed talking with everybody at the meeting," says Ryne. "I live in Bratt, so I'm also

a member of the water system, and it was good to talk to those guys. It's great to be a member and be a part of it."

He says he and his wife, Bethany, plan to attend the annual meeting every year.

While rural Americans may do a better job of staying connected to neighbors, it is not something to take for granted. The simple act of smiling, saying hello and shaking someone's hand can help brighten each other's day.

EREC's annual meeting is designed to take care of the important business of your co-op and the equally important business of building community.

All cooperatives serve both an economic and social purpose. While safe, reliable and affordable electric power is crucial to our mission, improving the quality of life for all members is at the core of what we do every day.

If you have not attended the annual meeting in the past, or if it has been a few years, we urge you to take the time to be with your fellow co-op members.

EREC is connected to you by more than just power lines. We are your neighbors, and we look forward to seeing you at your annual meeting. ■

Please note the earlier start: Registration is at 8 a.m. Business meeting is at 10 a.m.



Willie Mote won a surge protector at last year's meeting. He and his wife, Addie Rue, enjoy EREC annual meetings. "We have had to miss a few, but we hate to miss it," Willie says.



Brent Scott pedals a bicycle to turn a small generator to create electricity and power the lightbulbs during an annual meeting around the turn of the century.



EREC Trustee Herman Johnson congratulates J.C. Walker on his door prize after an annual meeting in the 1990s.



EREC Secretary/Treasurer Campbell Salter announces that they have a quorum for the 1997 annual meeting.

A Loving, But Temporary, Home



John Morris and Godiva, a pit bull terrier mix, seem to be engaged in a heart-to-heart conversation.



Dixie, a labrador retriever/black mouth cur mix, shows how comfortable she is as she seeks a belly rub from John.

By Denise Whitehead

Stepping into the offices of Trail of Hope Animal Rescue, you realize this is not a typical animal shelter. In fact, it doesn't feel like walking into an office or an animal shelter at all. It feels like you are being welcomed into someone's home.

That's the goal John and Dee Dee Morris had when they accepted responsibility for filling this community need. They want the dogs in their care—and the humans who stop by—to feel at home, safe and cared for.

The two show love for the animals without even thinking about it, with a dog in each lap and more playing at their feet.

I am greeted by a small Chihuahua, Gidget, who stands lovingly at my legs, allowing me to pet her. Everyone gazes in amazement. I'm told the small, light-colored, quiet pup has had difficulty adjusting to the shelter. Scared, she has avoided most people. I would have never known. Gidget seems well socialized and eager to receive my attention.

John and Dee Dee know the shelter transition is not always easy. It takes consistency, love and respect for the animals.

At Trail of Hope, every dog I meet greets me with wagging tails and an eagerness to please and be loved.

The dogs radiate happiness.

It's not just the dogs that are impacted by this caring attitude. Multiple volunteers appear to help clean kennels, wash laundry, take dogs for walks, or just sit and visit with the dogs.

John says he appreciates being a consistent part of his volunteers' lives.

From providing a place for lonely seniors to feel a sense of purpose to teaching young men how to fix things around the property, John takes pride not only in his work with the animals, but relationships with community members.



Trail of Hope
ANIMAL RESCUE



A Community Partnership

The Glades Electric Charitable Trust was proud to donate funds to Trail of Hope Animal Rescue, helping the facility upgrade from two to nine kennels. ■

Compassion and love for the dogs and community is only part of what it takes to run an animal rescue.

John and Dee Dee say they had always hoped to open a facility such as this. Last year, they started looking at properties, applied for 501(c)(3) status and investigated financing options.

They expected to take their time and build their dream in the coming years.

That changed in October 2017 when they were contacted through social media by the then-manager of the Okeechobee Humane Society shelter. Dee Dee was told the shelter was closing its doors. She and John had five days to decide whether to accept responsibility for the program.

"It's been clean up, repair and improvement since day one," Dee Dee says.

They have worked tirelessly to restore and rebuild a property that was falling into neglect. They have learned about underlying medical issues in dogs, developed relationships with local veterinarians and established a temporary home for the animals in their care, up to 40 at a time.

While they work hard to create a comfortable, clean and safe home for the dogs in their care, they have not lost sight of their mission. This is a temporary home. The ultimate goal is to find a happy



forever home for all of the animals.

Dee Dee networks through multiple shelters and communities around the state through social media and the animal rescue's website. Many adoptions have come from online connections outside the local community.

Dee Dee and John screen each potential adopter to ensure they are prepared to accept the responsibility of a new member to their family.

Their hard work comes at a cost. They made a small initial investment to take control of the facility, but still have monthly expenses for rent, utilities, veterinarian bills, pet food, building supplies and more. John and Dee Dee committed from day one not to go into debt while making their dream a reality.

The animal rescue receives no federal, state or county funding. While they hope to begin a grant-writing process, for now they rely on generous community donations and adopting out as many dogs as possible each month. ■

For more information about Trail of Hope Animal Rescue, call (863) 357-1104 or visit www.trailofhopeanimalrescue.org. To learn more about the Glades Electric Charitable Trust, call (863) 946-6200.

John and Dee Dee Morris walk two Trail of Hope Animal Rescue dogs, Godiva, left, and Gidget, giving the animals a chance to practice their leash-walking and socialization skills.

You Can Make a Difference

John and Dee Dee Morris recognize how important it is to interact with their dogs on a regular basis. While they take many opportunities throughout the day to pet and play with the dogs, their first volunteer opportunity in animal shelters was taking dogs for walks—and they welcome others to take that step.

Their hope is to create trails around their property for dog walking. In fact, this hope inspired the name of their organization, Trail of Hope. Even now, before the trails are completed, every dog is taken for a daily walk by John, Dee Dee or one of their many volunteers. Each dog gets individual attention during this time and learns valuable skills of how to be managed on a leash, making them easier to adopt out.

Trail of Hope welcomes new volunteers and donations to help keep the Morris' dream running smoothly. Check the rescue's Facebook page to find out the donation drive item of the week, or call (863) 357-1104 to learn how you can help. ■



Zeus is eager to find his forever home. In the meantime, he needs someone to walk him.