



Two contestants take off down the ramp for a fast start to the soap box car race down Condon's Main Street.

Photos courtesy of the Potter family

## Soap Box Excitement Returns

*Condon celebrates 25 years of racing down Main Street*

By Jody Foss

Kevin and Eileen Potter of Condon look forward to July 4, when soap box derby cars fly down Main Street after the parade.

"It's a family affair," Eileen says. "Our kids raced and now our grandson, Christian, races. It's something we look forward to all year."

Aside from being the 25th anniversary of the soap box derby, this year is particularly special for the Potters, who have been selected by the chamber of commerce to serve as grand marshals of the Fourth of July celebration.

In the early '90s, Kevin's late brother-in-law, Allen Hamner, and his friend, Eugene Colton, got the idea for a soap box derby to add to the fun on Independence Day.

"We started building some pretty basic cars, crude wooden affairs with lawnmower wheels," Kevin says. "We were push-starting them. We needed a ramp, so I got some really wet and long two-by-fours and bowed them. Dave Burres and Leland Eubanks helped out, and the chamber of commerce paid for materials."

The ramp is 10 feet wide and 21 feet long, with a starting gate and room for two cars.

Lucinda Neys helped Eileen paint checkered flags and the chamber of commerce logo on the side.

"After the parade, we pull the ramp

right out in the middle of the street," Kevin says. "The race runs 660 feet, two blocks to the crosswalk in front of Two Boys Market. The grade is about 6 percent. We have hay bales at the end of the race in case someone's brakes fail."

Eileen and her daughter, Marissa, time the event.

"The best time we've had was 26 seconds," Eileen says.

The derby offers two classes: open and hobby.

"The All American Soap Box Derby offers kits that families can build for about \$600, and we loosely follow their rules," Kevin says. "However, most of our racers build their own cars."

In the hobby class, the wheels can be no higher than 12 inches. The car can't be longer than 96 inches end-to-end, and



**Eileen and Kevin Potter are fond of the ramp Kevin and friends built in their front yard. “Before the ramp, we were push-starting the cars,” Kevin says.**

no wider than 4 feet. The car must weigh fewer than 75 pounds. The front of the car has to be able to rest on a 12-inch starting gate.

In the open class, one can enter “whatever you think you can push up on the ramp,” Kevin says.

One year, Jamieson and Marshall Plumbing entered a rolling toilet. The Stangel family had a crowd favorite called “La Bomba.” It was a surplus aircraft fuel tank with fins and fireworks spurting from the tail.

All cars in both classes must have working brakes. All racers are required to wear a helmet.

Kevin and his brothers enjoyed circle-track racing and demolition races in Umatilla when they were young. Along with those memorable experiences and 30 years as a mechanic at Mid-Columbia Bus, Kevin’s expertise and passion for racing is shown in the cars he builds.

“The first cars had a cross configuration with ropes for steering, then we got a little more sophisticated and had enclosed bodies,” he says. “We stepped up to sheet metal and tubular frame models with 12-inch regulation

wheels. Last year, I thought we needed something unique. It took me 10½ months to build. I would lay awake at night, building it in my head.”

Weighing 225 pounds and with 75 feet of electrical tubing for the frame, Kevin’s creation is all wood except for the header pipes, painted to look like chrome. In each cylinder head are two compartments holding 12 smoke bombs. Smoke pours out the header pipes.

“There’s a Kawasaki radial fan that

blows air through the engine, so when you start the car you push the button on the magneto, you get smoke,” Kevin says.

He says the 75-watt marine speakers add to the magic of the moment when the car takes off and speeds down the hill. Andrew Seale and his son Keith downloaded the sounds of a drag race off the internet and looped it into a sound track.

“It’s got everything we could manage, aside from a parachute,” Kevin says.

Its has a professional paint job from Dave Aamodt’s local body shop, decals from Melanie’s Such and Such, and “Potter Racing” lettering.

Each contestant gets two runs, with their best time entered.

Brian Johnson, who brings in the hay bales for the event, carries the cars back up the hill on a trailer for their second run.

The first four in each class go home with trophies.

This year, Name Badges by Jan—owned by Nick and Cody Bettencourt—are making special 25th anniversary trophies, which Kevin and Eileen are donating to the event.

Kevin and Eileen loan out their older soap box cars to kids who might not have the opportunity to race otherwise.

“It’s important to volunteer in these small communities, to keep things moving forward, to give back,” Eileen says. ■

## Fourth of July Grand Marshals

Eileen and Kevin Potter say they were humbled and honored to be selected as this year’s grand marshals.

Eileen is the office manager at Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative. She has served as a 4-H leader, on the fair’s auction committee and on the preschool board. She is vice president of the Gilliam County Historical Society and secretary for the volunteer fire department. She also serves as queen adviser for the Arlington Saddle Club.

Kevin served as a volunteer fireman

and emergency medical technician. He is a past exalted ruler of the Condon Elks Lodge, where he served on various committees.

“We love our little town,” Eileen says. “It’s a wonderful place to grow up and raise children.”

“Being selected to serve as grand marshals is quite an honor,” Kevin says. “Family is very important to us. We were raised here with our families surrounding us. It will be nice to give something back.”



Pedro Fuentes, center, played varsity soccer for Sutherlin High this year as an exchange student from Spain.

# A Cultural Exchange

*Students from Europe play sports and see the sights while attending Sutherlin High*

**By Craig Reed**

There has been a European presence in the Sutherlin High School sophomore class this school year.

Representing countries across the Atlantic Ocean are Pedro Fuentes and Johannes Boisen.

Pedro, 16, is from Madrid, the capital city of Spain. Johannes, 15, is from Harestua, Norway, a small

town an hour from Oslo, that country's capital.

Both students are completing their sophomore studies and will go home to their families later this month.

Living in the Sutherlin community took some adjusting for both boys. They knew some English, but needed a month or two to better understand the language at the speed it was spoken.

Sutherlin is much more

rural than what they were used to. Madrid is a city of 3.16 million residents with a metropolitan area of 6.5 million. Oslo has a population of 673,000.

But Sutherlin and its people have left an impression on the two students.

"I'll remember Sutherlin for the rest of my life," says Pedro, who came to Sutherlin through the American Field Service program. His hosts are

Steve and Trish McCracken.

Pedro's brother, Ivan, was an AFS student to Rochester, New York, three years ago. He recommended the program. On his application, Pedro wrote about himself and his interests, and was then matched with the McCrackens.

Johannes had a direct connection to Sutherlin, and had a specific reason for his one-year visit. He wanted to play American football and had



**Johannes Boisen played junior varsity football for Sutherlin High. Johannes is from Norway, but lived with his grandparents for the year.**

a place to stay in Sutherlin because his grandparents, Brad and Karen Boisen, are residents of the community.

Johannes calls the last year “a lifetime memory.”

“It’s been a great experience,” he says. “I’ve had a great time. I’ve done stuff I probably would have never done in Norway.”

The McCrackens and Boises are Douglas Electric Cooperative members. Both couples have raised their own children and were empty nesters prior to accepting Pedro and Johannes into their homes.

“Pedro has been very easy to have in our home,” Trish says. “He’s friendly and polite. He enjoys being here and is grateful for being here. When a kid lives with you for a year, you love him like one of your own kids.”

Brad says it has been 18 years since his kids left home, so having Johannes move in for a year “was a shock to our system, but a pleasant shock. Having a teenager back in the house, adjustments are natural.”

The Boises’ son—Johannes’

father—Nils Boisen, is the arctic and northern territory adviser to the World Wildlife Fund for Norway.

Brad and Karen quickly discovered they had to keep more food in the refrigerator for their growing teenage grandson. Johannes added 30 pounds and a few inches to his frame during the past year. He now stands 6-foot-5.

At Sutherlin High, the two students had math, history, English and science core classes in addition to some elective classes.

They also participated in school sports. Johannes was a full-time junior varsity football player and also played in several varsity games during the fall season. He was a wide receiver on offense and a cornerback on defense. He had enough varsity playing time to earn a letter. During the spring season, he competed in track and field, running in the 100-, 400- and 800-meter races and the relays.

In Norway, Johannes played football for two years on a club team. He says sports are not played through the school

system in Norway, but through clubs. To practice, he took a one-hour train ride into Oslo and a 10-minute subway ride to the field. He says the daily routine was worth it “because I love football.”

His club team played eight-man football, and most of the plays were passes. In the season before he came to Sutherlin, he had one game with 20 catches and had close to 100 receptions for the season.

At Sutherlin, Johannes found players must be more physical and mentally prepared to play compared to the club sport in Norway, where practices were not mandatory.

“You have to work for it, you have to earn it,” Johannes says. “You also have to have good grades. In Norway, you didn’t have to be in school to play the club sports.”

Pedro played for the Sutherlin High soccer team during the fall season. He was a starting midfielder. He also played junior varsity basketball.

The host parents made adjustments to their own schedules to accommodate the boys’ activities.

“You have to be available to run them to practices and games, fix them a late meal after their sports,” Trish says. “But that’s what you do when you have kids.”

Both boys say they were quickly accepted into the Sutherlin High community. They both made close friends and got to know each other as well. Johannes and his grandparents hosted a Super Bowl football party in February.

Pedro was one of the 10 students who attended.

Brad says he was pleased with how the school year at Sutherlin High went for Johannes.

“I’m quite impressed with the staff and facility here at the high school,” Brad says. “I’m really pleased Johannes was able to attend the school here. The friends he has made are high-quality kids. It’s been a good experience for him.”

Both boys have traveled throughout the Northwest. Pedro has been to the Oregon Coast, Crater Lake, the state Capitol in Salem and has snowboarded. Pedro traveled with classmate Andrew Munsey and parents Todd and Stephanie Munsey to Los Angeles and Disneyland during spring break.

Pedro also attended prom. His date was a foreign exchange student from Spain who attended Roseburg High School.

Johannes also visited the Oregon Coast, where he went to the aquarium in Newport and enjoyed a dune buggy ride in Florence. Other trips included visits to Seattle and Diamond Lake, and he hiked in the Cascade Mountains east of Glide.

Johannes says he hopes to return to the U.S. after finishing school in Norway. He wants to attend a college and continue to play football.

Both boys say they will be happy to see family and friends when they return home later this month, and they will have plenty of good memories to share. ■

Surprise Valley

# Ruralite

JUNE 2018



Norma Karrasch started tie-dyeing to brighten her son's clothes, but her T-shirts quickly became popular.

PHOTO BY JEAN BILODEAUX

## Tie-Dye Done Right

By Jean Bilodeaux

Just one word can shape a life. Sometimes the word can be an excuse for failure. Other times, it may create love and colorful, lifelong relationships.

For Norma Karrasch of Surprise Valley, that special word was “wyldeflower,” a term given to her by one of her foster children, Pataska.

In her early work life, Norma taught kindergarten in Feather Falls, near Chico, California. She lived off-grid and was 30 years old when she had her son, Tucker.

“I had him at the end of the school year so I could have time to be with him before I started teaching again in the fall,” she says.

As Norma soon found out, life can throw twists in the best of plans. When fall arrived, she couldn’t bear to leave her son.

“I waited so long to have a child that I wanted to be with him all the time, so I quit teaching kindergarten,” Norma says.

She started teaching preschool to be with Tucker.

As with many mothers of that era, she discovered that little girl’s clothes were colorful and creative, and little boy’s clothes were plain and dull.

Norma began tie-dyeing outfits for him to wear. Other parents noticed his creative and colorful clothes, and asked if she could make some for their children. Each outfit was individually designed and to order. Norma soon carried extra outfits in her car wherever she drove.

“I was soon selling tie-dye outfits out of my car,” Norma says.

Norma later started caring for foster children. Through the years, she has raised 47 foster children, including



**Norma Karrasch started tie-dyeing to brighten her son's clothes, but her T-shirts quickly became popular.**

13-year-old Pataska.

Walking home from school one day, Pataska noticed a field of dead grass. In that field was a brilliant wildflower in full bloom.

When she got home, she told Norma about what she had seen. Then she wrote Norma a note.

“You are the one bright wyldeflower

in my life,” Pataska wrote. “You are my wyldeflower.”

With that short note and that one word, wyldeflower—even though misspelled—a lifelong bond was formed. Norma adopted Pataska.

“I kept the spelling wyldeflower, and named my business Wyldeflower Dyes,” Norma says. “We each have



**Clockwise from above, Norma makes a variety of tie-dye clothing, including custom orders. She was inspired to make colorful clothing when her son was young and she thought boys' clothes were too drab. Instead of soaking her clothing, Norma uses a bottle to apply coloring.**

Wyldeflower tattooed on our ankles as a forever reminder of our lasting love. People even started calling her Wyldeflower."

After 30 years of living near Chico, Norma and her husband, Nick—who had just retired from the San Francisco Municipal Department—decided to move to Surprise Valley.

"Nick was raised in Virginia City, and the Cedarville area reminded him of where he grew up," Norma says. "It was time that we lived where he wanted to live. We love this area."

Norma has been supporting herself with tie-dyeing for 30 years—full time since 2011.

"I meet the most interesting people through selling my tie-dyes," she says. "It's humbling to know people want to

buy my work. I feel honored."

Norma buys her dyes commercially, then adds her own secret ingredients to prepare her 100-percent natural fiber cloth to accept and bring out the colors of the dyes. Rather than soaking the material, she uses a bottle to apply colors to her folded and tied cloth, then lets the cloth sit for 24 hours to set the colors.

Norma says her colors last a lifetime, with one exception.

"Once, a woman called me and complained that her shirt was fading," she says. "I sent her another one. It faded,



so I sent her a third one. It faded, too. Come to find out, she was washing them in a stain remover product that contained bleach. Don't do that."

Norma can make about three designed shirts or five freeform designs a day, from infant-sized to 5X. ■

*Find Wyldeflower Dyes on Facebook or call Norma at (530) 990-3055 for questions or orders.*



# Drafting a Future

## *Pair of horses plow the foundation for an organic farm*

**By Craig Reed**

Ruby and Amber would be proud that the farming tradition they helped start is plowing ahead on a grand scale.

The two Belgian draft horses will never be forgotten by Walt Bernard and Kris Woolhouse.

The certified organic and biodynamic farm is named after the four-legged creatures: Ruby & Amber's Organic Oasis.

Vegetables continue to be grown in the ground Ruby and Amber first walked and turned over about 20 years ago. Those vegetables, sold at their own farm stand, at farmers markets and through

a Community Supported Agriculture program, feed many people in south Lane County.

The two Belgians were instrumental in the development of a second business, Workhorse Workshops. Under the guidance of Walt and Kris, the horses were mentors to younger draft horses being taught their roles in farm work.

"It is quiet," Walt says of having horses pull equipment over the farm's ground, preparing it for one of the 50 varieties of vegetables that are planted and grown. "Working with the horses is a living relationship, and you can't beat that. You can't have that

with a tractor, but you can have it with a horse. There's gratification in having a cooperative relationship with an animal, and being successful at what we want to do."

Kris says working with the horses is "immensely satisfying."

"I think the horses enjoy it," she says. "There's satisfaction in getting the work done with the horses and getting food out of it at the same time.

"The horses certainly aren't as noisy as a tractor."

Ruby and Amber have passed on to horse heaven in recent years, but their work ethic and leadership will always be remembered by

Walt and Kris.

Ten draft horses now help out on the farm. Some of the horses have become experienced field workers and some are in training, with Walt handling the reins and providing the guidance.

He trains draft horses for other owners, or both owners and horses can attend a Workhorse Workshop for introductory or more advanced instruction.

Walt began holding the workshops and teaching horses and people 12 years ago. He has had 30 people attend the workshops in the last few years.

"When they are trained well, they can be like a second



person,” Walt says. “Whether mowing or plowing with horses, they figure out where they need to be to help out.”

Walt says the horses are good at pattern recognition, walking down a furrow and staying off the vegetable plants. A tractor must be steered or it will roll over plants.

Walt says the criteria for a horse to become a good worker is similar to that for a person: reasonably intelligent and fit and the ability to get along with others.

“Once you get a horse to do something good that it is willing to do, it is gratifying for the animal,” he says. “It’s the same with a person.”

Walt has a 90 percent rule when training horses and their owners. If he is not sure one or the other is 90 percent ready to pull equipment or to work the reins, he postpones that step in the training.

He says it is important the human and the horse have confidence in what they are learning. If they are not ready to advance, any confidence gained can be lost. That can be a step backward—especially for the horse, says Walt, who says it is best to progress slower.

His training philosophy includes having plenty of patience, clear communication, developing a relationship with the animal and being



**Left, Kris Woodhouse plants flower starts alongside a greenhouse. Above Kris works with Sara Geonczy, left and Anne Peterson. Opposite page, Walt Bernard drives a team of draft horses plowing a field.**

safe—the latter applying to both humans and horses.

Anne Peterson and her Haflinger horse Bella are in their third season working on the Ruby & Amber farm. They also help teach and mentor at the workshops.

“Bella really likes to work,” Anne says. “I think she’s more satisfied when she’s able to, and it’s nice to see the growth of the vegetables and flowers after putting in the hard work. I find it very satisfying, and I think Bella does, too.”

Walt says there is another important aspect to having horses work on the farm. Their manure can be composted along with that of the cows and chickens. The mixture becomes fertilizer for the fields.

Working the ground was not the initial career calling for Walt and Kris. Both were in the medical profession in Santa Cruz, California, when they decided in their late 30s they wanted career and location changes. They couldn’t afford acreage in California, so they looked north and

found their farming paradise in a Dorena-area valley in the western foothills of the Cascade Mountains.

With the help of Ruby and Amber, they first turned the ground and started planting in 1999.

Through the years, 12 hoop houses have been added to the operation, allowing the farm to grow and sell vegetables year-round.

“It’s really satisfying work,” Kris says. “You don’t make a lot of money, but it’s a healthy lifestyle.”

Kris and Walt have a stand at their farm during the heavy summer harvest season. They also sell their produce at the weekly Cottage Grove and Lane County farmers markets, to some Eugene area restaurants and 30 members in the farm’s year-round CSA program.

The farm’s mission was originally established with the help of Ruby and Amber. It continues, “Cultivating nutrition with live horsepower.” ■

*For more information on the farm, visit [www.Rubyandambers.com](http://www.Rubyandambers.com).*

# Lasting Love

*After 65 years together, couple still does everything together, even cutting the grass*

By Craig Reed

When the lawn needs mowed on the Larson property, it is not a one-person job.

Both Zane and Erma Larson go to their backyard shop and roll out their respective mowers. Zane rides on his mower, Erma pushes and walks behind hers.

"I like the exercise," says 85-year-old Erma. "It's good for me, keeps me healthy."

Mowing the lawn together is just one of the many things the couple have done together during their 65 years of marriage. They shared their vows on November 9, 1952.

Today, the couple live in their Coast Range home near the Low Pass Market—a business they operated back in the 1960s and '70s.

Zane, 86, explains his theory behind their successful marriage.

"I think respect," says Zane. "We never go to bed mad at each other. We resolve any issue we might have before we go to sleep. There's been nothing we couldn't resolve. It might sound corny, but we've just enjoyed a very happy life."

Erma says sharing with each other has been key.

"We're very open with each other," she says. "We love each other."

They have also learned to

adjust to each other through the years.

"I just let Zane do everything he wants to do and then I do what is left," Erma says with a laugh.

"She's a quiet little lady, but she doesn't bend very easy," Zane says. "She sticks with what she believes. I'm proud of her for that. You have to try to win her over with nice—if you can."

Zane says a good, long-lasting marriage starts with finding someone with similar morals. Then the couple must spend time together, be compatible and work at their marriage.

Granddaughter Lacy Larson has seen the relationship between Zane and Erma up close for most of her 27 years. Lacy spent a lot of time with her grandparents as a child and lived with them during her teenage years.

"I would say love and compassion, trust and honesty describes their marriage," Lacy says. "They communicate very gently, very calmly. I've never experienced them using harsh tones with one another. They always seem happy with each other. If they do get in a tiff, they talk it out, they settle it."

Dean Bowers of Harrisburg has known the Larsons since the 1950s. He has been a hunting partner of Zane's. The



**Zane and Erma Larson still enjoy spending as much time together as possible.**

two men joke that Zane has spent more wedding anniversaries with Dean than with Erma because until recently, they spent early November in hunting camp.

"I was glad he was able to make those trips," Erma says. "I wanted to keep him, so it was OK."

Zane says he got several requests from other hunting buddies to train their wives to be as understanding of those fall trips as Erma. When Zane was off hunting or fishing, Erma took the opportunity to spend time with her sister Peggy.

Zane and Erma's

personalities "just seem to be a good blend together," Dean says.

"They always seem happy," Dean says. "I've been around them a long, long time and I've never seen them have a cross word for each other. Probably other than hunting, if one is doing something, the other one is, too."

Erma's family moved to Oregon from Oklahoma in 1946 when she was 13. Zane was 14 when his family moved from South Dakota to Oregon in 1947.

Erma and Zane first met during their freshman year at Harrisburg High School. They



**Erma with a treasured photo from their 25th wedding anniversary party.**

went on their first date a year later as sophomores. They attended a Sadie Hawkins dance. The two recall that a girlfriend of Erma's threatened to ask Zane to the dance if Erma didn't. Erma did make the invite, and Zane accepted.

"You bet, I was all for it," Zane says of accepting Erma's invite. "I really liked her. I still do. I liked Erma from the very minute I saw her."

"He just liked the way I talked," Erma adds. "I was from Oklahoma."

Zane says Erma's accent was "cute." He says schoolmates teased her about the accent, but in a fun way.

Zane and Erma graduated from Harrisburg High in 1950. Zane spent one year at Oregon State College (now Oregon State University) before being drafted and joining the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Erma worked as a telephone operator in Harrisburg after graduation.

The two married in 1952



**The Larsons say good communication and similar morals make for a solid and lasting marriage.**

and moved to San Diego, California, for Zane's final year of Navy duty. Erma worked in the office of a roofing company that year.

The newlyweds moved back to Oregon late in 1953 and Zane went to work at his father's car repair business.

In the early 1960s, the couple rented the Low Pass Market. In 1970, they bought the market and the adjoining gas station and auto repair shop, operating them through most of that decade before selling them.

Zane and Erma raised their two sons at their Low Pass home, but both have since died: Chris in an accident in 1973 and Brad with health-related issues in 2017. Lacy is Brad's daughter.

After selling the Low Pass Market, Zane worked at different times as a mechanic, a log truck driver, a mill worker and on Harrisburg area farms. He retired from full-time work in 1995, but continued to do odd jobs part time for

another 20 years before completely retiring in 2015.

Erma also continued to work after the market sale. She worked at the Blachly Store, at Swanson Superior Lumber and for the Meals on Wheels program before retiring in 1994.

Zane and Erma say they have been fortunate to have good health through the years. Zane had a minor stroke in 2011, but says he doesn't feel any effects from it.

Zane's father lived until he was 91 and Erma's mother also lived for 91 years, so the two hope they have several more years together.

Their Low Pass neighbors frequently check on the couple to make sure they are doing well and to help out if needed. Lacy also lives nearby.

The Larsons continue to be the welcoming committee for the Low Pass area. Out at the front of their driveway is a sign that says, "If You Can't STOP, Wave." ■

## Buzzworthy Business

*Joe Holliman appreciates the importance of bees*

By David Rauzi

Joe Holliman's enthusiasm for apiculture is contagious.

"I love talking about bees," he says.

Joe's diligence in rescuing swarms and his efforts to have them thrive through many natural challenges have helped him better understand the "language" of bees.

"He'll stand there and talk about it for hours," says Joe's son, Hunter, 14, his right-hand helper in what Joe happily describes as both a hobby and an addition.

The extent that this hobby/addiction is shared by the family—specifically Joe's wife, Carla—shows in the observation hive he built into their two-story home, just within the treeline in the foothills south of Grangeville.

Joe says 50,000 to 100,000 bees can fit in the 15-frame hive with a Plexiglas observation window. A PVC tube connected to the outside allows bees to come and go.

The hive is empty now. Joe believes the swarm died off due to it being too warm for them during the winter.

For Joe, there is always more to learn about caring for bees—a driving interest he has made into a part-time job. For nearly eight years, he has provided swarm and hive removal across much of north central Idaho.

It all started with vegetables.

"My wife is really into gardening," Joe says.

Early in the process, they noticed a lack of pollinators in the area.

"That really concerned us," Joe says.

Due to the extreme cold during winters and high humidity, this region is hard for honey bees, he explains.



**Joe Holliman has been turning his enthusiasm for bees into a buzzing career.**

Photo courtesy of Joe Holliman

Those who raise bees professionally to harvest honey ship their hives south for the winter. For their own garden, the Hollimans use a 3-pound box of bees and one queen.

"Our garden just exploded," Joe says. "It was a night and day difference. In the quality of the vegetables, there was a huge difference. Gardening was always a struggle here, and we weren't getting the production we thought we should before we brought the bees in."

Joe's regular work keeps him busy, both as part owner in Clearwater River Supplements and during wildfire season, when he loads flame retardant into

aircraft at the U.S. Forest Service smoke-jumper base in Grangeville.

Joe entered the swarm- and hive-removal business as an outgrowth of his beekeeping hobby. Word spread as he searched for and collected wild bees to improve his hives.

"It went nuts," he exclaims.

People throughout the community were soon calling Joe to help remove bee colonies that had taken up residence in their homes, barns and property.

He uses an open-top wood toolbox that holds a variety of knives, brushes, spatulas and his handheld smoker.

Joe says he has a handyman talent



Joe's primary tools include a variety of knives, spatulas, brushes and a handheld smoker.

gained from his father, Charlie, a longtime area contractor, that enables him to build what he needs for the job. He built his own swarm box—a portable carrier with a removable lid that he can seal and use to transport bees. A portable vacuum apparatus with a 5-gallon plastic bucket with fitted screens inside captures bees safely.

Joe says there was a definite learning curve he navigated with his own hives. He learned the trade through research, discussions with other apiculturists and from the removals.

His first was an easy removal, armed with a cheap bee jacket bought off eBay. Another removal was a mean hive the customer said wouldn't let anyone get within 100 feet of. Joe and Hunter pulled up within about 50 feet of the location, opened their vehicle door and started getting hit.

"I got zapped twice before I could get the bee coat on," Joe says. "That's not the way it is 95 percent of the time. The European honeybees we have in our area are really a gentle bee."

The mood of the hive depends on the queen, which gives off a pheromone that can put the bees on the defensive and become aggressive. Africanized bees,

which Joe says are not common in the area, can be aggressive and give all bees a bad reputation.

"You learn to recognize how bees move, how bees react to some movements," he says.

Joe has been stung a few times, but says he does not blame the bees.

Taking on the hives does not scare Joe. He enjoys his work and understands the importance of bees, which is why he handles so many calls.

Joe says one problem he comes across is hives in walls. Some people may be tempted to spray poison in the wall to kill the hive, but there is no guarantee it will work. There is also a chance new pests will simply take their place.

Any comb, pollen and honey that remain behind in the wall can attract ants. Without the bees cooling the hive, the wax starts melting behind the wall, which can cause structural damage.

People recognize the value of bees to both residential gardening and commercial agriculture, he says.

"It's starting to get to where you're seeing more people wanting to save the bees," Joe says. "I get a lot of calls from people saying, 'Come save these bees. I don't want to see someone spray them.'



It's nice to see people want to save the wild bee population in our area."

There are challenges to beekeeping in the region.

"I was told by a lot of beekeepers, 'You'll never keep bees up here because it's too cold,'" Joe says. "I'll take that challenge."

To prove the beekeepers wrong, he built a climate-controlled shed with room for up to six hives he keeps at 48 F during the winter to allow for bees' normal dormancy period. The shed warms to 58 F as they resume activity in spring.

Joe says yellow jackets and hornets are a big problem.

"Last year, I lost eight to nine hives to yellow jackets," he says. "They're honeybee killers."

He relies on commercial traps with bait. In high yellow jacket population years, he can easily fill up one in two days.

As a beekeeper, you learn you are going to lose bees, Joe says.

"That's an unfortunate part of it, and you're never going to figure it all out," he adds.

Despite the challenges, the continued learning opportunity keeps Joe engaged in beekeeping—as does the supply of honey he has for personal use and to give to friends and family.

Joe has learned what bees make the best honey.

Bees collecting off raspberries produce "a really tasty honey," Joe says. "When the camas and wildflowers are in bloom on the hill, that's the best-tasting honey there is." ■

*Joe invites anyone interested in taking up beekeeping to contact him for help, which can include going with him on removal jobs and doing the work themselves to learn. For bee removal or to learn about beekeeping, call Joe at (208) 983-3057 or (208) 451-5495.*



Time to Write, hosted by Leah Stenson in Parkdale, is a free, supportive, relaxed gathering of writers.

# Literary Socialization

*Writers gather for creative support and friendship*

**By Drew Myron**

At first, the house fills with the gentle click of hands across keyboards, a scratch of pen on paper, turning pages. The room glows in soft, warm light, with comfy couches and pastoral views.

Then, relief and release with laughter, tea, wine and sharing.

Welcome to Time to Write, a gathering of local writers.

## **Where are the writers?**

A few years ago, Leah Stenson saw a gaping hole. The Columbia Gorge was

choked with visual artists—painters, potters, jewelry makers and more—but where, she wondered, were the literary artists?

For years, while living in Portland, she hosted a popular literary reading series and enjoyed connections with renowned poets. When she moved to Parkdale, she was surprised to find few events or opportunities for writers.

To her relief, she discovered the Pacific Northwest Plein Air, an annual event in which artists and writers visited locations throughout the Gorge as a way to spark creative expression. Hosted by the Columbia Center for the Arts in Hood River, the event evolved into Writing Up the Gorge, with a literary focus.

Still, says Leah, “I felt there was no way

for us, the writers, to really connect.”

So Leah opened her home, offered wine and cheese, and invited in writers. That single evening a few years ago was the first bloom in a garden of writing opportunities. From her Parkdale home, Leah hosts a monthly gathering of writers, along with writing workshops with Oregon notables. This month, she hosts Paulann Petersen, Oregon poet laureate 2010-2015, for a writing workshop.

“I see so much creativity in the area and it’s just going untapped,” says Leah, author of three poetry collections. “I want to help people feel more supported—more connected—and I want to get to know people in the community.”

She and her husband, Bill, bought their farmhouse a decade ago and spent five



Leah hosts monthly writing groups and workshops.

years restoring the property. They now split their time among Portland, Parkdale, and Bill's business in Tokyo.

### Making Time to Write

Time to Write is a monthly meet-greet-and-write session that helps people make space in their busy lives to work on writing projects.

"There's kinship and a kind of enthusiasm that's contagious," Leah says. "It's just nice to be together in community."

The monthly gathering is free, supportive and relaxed. Operating on a drop-in basis, one month may see 10 writers take part, the next month just four. Writers work in a variety of genres, from poetry to fiction, essay, children's stories and more. Some are professional writers who get paid for their work, others are new to writing and seek support. Everyone, it seems, finds friends.

"I laughingly tell people I have always been a writer in my head," Audrey Mlakar says. "And now, with the encouragement of the writers in the group, I have found the actual page, which is so much better."

With peer support, Audrey has dedicated more time and effort to the



Julie Hatfield, left, and Shannon Perry feed their creative spirits and connect with other writers.

## Express Yourself With Local Events

### Time to Write

A monthly gathering of writers meets at the Parkdale home of Leah Stenson. For info, email [leahstenson@comcast.net](mailto:leahstenson@comcast.net).

### Writing Workshop with Paulann Petersen

Saturday, June 30, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the home of Leah Stenson in Parkdale. The cost is \$45. Space is limited. Register at [paulann.petersen@gmail.com](mailto:paulann.petersen@gmail.com).

### Writing Up the Gorge

An annual event sponsored by Columbia Center for the Arts, Sunday, August 19

through Saturday, August 25. For more info, go to [www.columbiaarts.org](http://www.columbiaarts.org).

### Gorge Literary Journal

Published twice a year within the Hood River News and features writers living in the Columbia River Gorge. For more information, go to [www.gorgelit.org](http://www.gorgelit.org).

### Hood River Word's Fair

Includes readings, book signings, storytelling and workshops Friday, October 26 through Sunday, October 28, at Columbia Center for Arts. For more info, go to [www.columbiaarts.org](http://www.columbiaarts.org).

craft. In 2017, she earned the Writing Up the Gorge People's Choice Award for her work of flash fiction.

Shannon Perry, a retired Westside Elementary School teacher and poet at heart, is working on a middle-grade novel about Japanese century farms in the Hood River Valley. After she shares a chapter from the book in progress, the other writers offer encouragement and suggestions.

"It's fun to come to Leah's house," Shannon says. "She's warm and inviting and makes us laugh, and it's really great to have the camaraderie."

Julie Hatfield, editor of the Gorge Literary Journal, agrees.

"Writing can be lonely," she says. "It's nice to be with others who have that same passion, and to be around people who get it. I feel very safe and nurtured here." ■

# Spartan Race Transforms Idaho Competitors

By Dianna Troyer

Alex Adams and his friends navigate more than obstacles when they crawl through mud, slither under barbed wire, climb walls and leap over flames during each Spartan Race.

“Training for and competing in these races has changed our lives,” says Alex, 38, an insurance agent in Burley.

Alex is captain of The Outlaws—a team of athletes in the Mini-Cassia area who compete in the increasingly popular obstacle course races. Their next race is June 23 at the Thomas Pence Ranch near Payette.

Two years ago, Alex and three friends—Terry Lamb, Del Peters and Juan Labra—decided to become Spartan racers after hearing about the event through social media. Realizing they needed a team name, they chose Del’s suggestion, The Outlaws.

“The four of us had more than 70 combined arrests before turning our lives around, so we thought it was pretty fitting,” says Alex. “We never shy away from our past because we like the idea that people can see the change and growth in us and become inspired to do something similar in their own lives.”

The Outlaws’ mission is “becoming a better you, helping others become a better them,” says Alex. “Our goals are to support each other, show up for each other and set a good example for our community.”

Spartan races are growing in popularity nationwide because they test entrants’ physical strength and mental fortitude and “ultimately rip you from your comfort zone,” according to Spartan.com.

“If you think you can’t do it, you’re wrong.

**Alex Adams, captain of The Outlaws, leaps over the flame finale at a Spartan Race.**

Photo by Spartan Race Inc.



The Outlaws Spartan Race team includes members from a variety of careers, backgrounds and fitness levels.

Get to the starting line and show yourself what you are capable of,” the website proclaims.

Races are organized in categories: the Sprint, with about 20 to 23 obstacles in 3 to 5 miles; the Super, which has 24 to 29 obstacles in 8 to 10 miles; and the Beast, with more than 30 obstacles in 12 to 14 miles. Competitors register as either an elite racer who is competitive or an open entrant who simply wants to finish.

The four original Outlaws met women who were already Spartans through word-of-mouth while training at gyms.

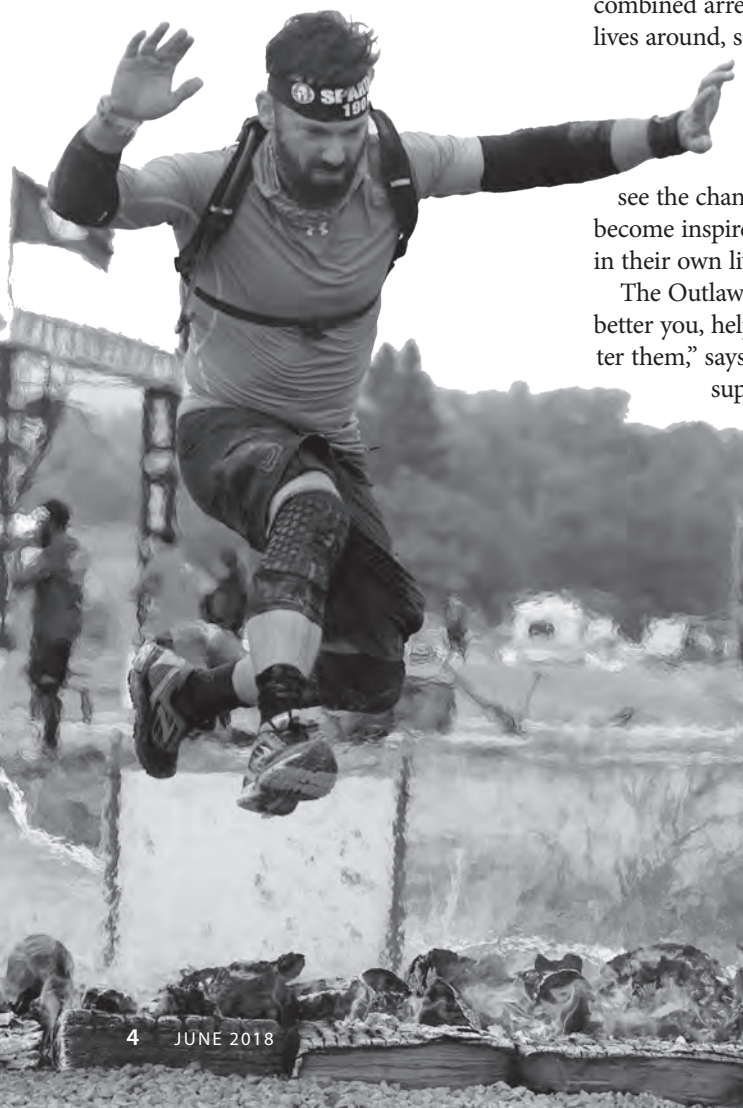
Echo Roberts, 40, completed her first race in 2013.

“I was a runner, but had become bored with it and needed a new challenge,” says Echo, a revenue integrity supervisor for several hospitals and The Outlaws’ treasurer. “The Spartan races are fun with the variety of obstacles.”

Teammate Adriana Ortega did her first race in 2015 after shedding 100 pounds.

“I’ve come such a long way,” says Adriana, retail service manager at Smith’s deli in Burley. “I love the races because they push my body, mind and soul. Racers help each other, too. At an obstacle, a stranger will ask, ‘Do you need a boost?’”

Last year, Adriana notched a trifecta by completing a Sprint, Super and Beast within a year. Feeling fit at 5-foot, 1-inch





**Clockwise from top left, Outlaw Terry Lamb pulls himself up a rope. Echo Roberts trains on a rope ladder. Alex Adams, left, and Terry escort Adriana Ortega near a Spartan Race finish line.**

Photos by Spartan Race Inc.

and 144 pounds, she plans to earn a double trifecta this season to celebrate her 40th birthday in July.

The Outlaws have 15 members, including the CEO of a local medical complex, a former Marine sergeant, and managers at professional offices and factories. Other members include Esmeralda Cruz, Von Williamson, Albert Ortega, Manuel Morales, Lory Davila, Isabelle Juarez and Hilda Ruiz. Ty Bedke, who trained with the Spartans, died last fall. The Spartans still consider him a member of the team.

“We welcome anyone and don’t make judgments about your fitness or personal goals,” says Alex.

To help prepare them for races, Terry serves as trainer.

“I’m the bulldog, the one who plans a workout, then starts growling and

encouraging everyone,” says Terry, who works at Anytime Fitness in Burley.

A recovered alcoholic after surviving a life-threatening car crash 10 years ago, Terry, 29, says the Spartan mindset and training have motivated him.

“I quit feeling sorry for myself and making excuses,” Terry says. “Through changes in my diet, a lot of pain from the accident has gone away.”

After a year of racing, Terry says he realizes he has a knack for it. At the world championships at Lake Tahoe last year, he placed 34th out of 4,700 racers.

While volunteering at the event for a week, his work ethic and attitude impressed organizers, who hired him in December. As an employee of Spartan Racing Inc., Terry will help set up courses for an upcoming series of races in football and baseball stadiums nationwide.

“I’m really excited to do this,” he says.

Alex says The Outlaws care about more than the races. To fulfill the Spartan ideal of giving generously, they have helped with food drives and painted houses.

“We also adopted a local special-needs group and have played softball with them, helped at their Christmas party and planned Superhero Day at the park,” says Alex. “We supplied an obstacle course, face painting and water balloons. It was fun and a tremendous success.”

The Outlaws’ team event coordinator, Jerica Denniston, says a Spartan event is the hardest thing she has ever done.

“When you cross the finish line, you’re so exhausted,” says the 32-year-old office manager at a pediatric dental clinic in Burley. “But you also have such a sense of accomplishment that you want to do another one.” ■



Lost River

# Ruralite

JUNE 2018

Pilot T.J. Park enjoys taking sightseers on aerial tours and encourages other pilots to explore the scenery and tranquility of the Lost River Range.

PHOTO BY T.J. PARK



T.J. Park and 4-year-old daughter Payslee enjoy a trip in T.J.'s Cessna 170, which he bought from a friend in 2017. He earned his commercial pilot's license in 2015.

Photos courtesy of T.J. Park

## Sharing the Thrill of Being Airborne

*T.J. Park enjoys taking friends, family and neighbors to the skies to show off the scenery of the Lost River Valley*

**By Dianna Troyer**

Perched in the cockpit of his Cessna 170, pilot T.J. Park says he never takes for granted the thrill of soaring over the Lost River Valley. Wanting to share his enthusiasm for flying, he offers scenic rides to local residents.

"I'm willing to take anyone flying," T.J. says. "I just ask people to help pay for fuel. It's not about making money. I just want to give people opportunities I never had when I was growing up here."

Passengers in his four-seater plane range from children to senior citizens.

"Kids want to know what it's like to fly and might become pilots themselves one day, so I'll make a 30-minute loop to the Mackay Reservoir and back to town," he says. "Some seniors want to see the mountains, but can't hike anymore, so we'll go up for about an hour so they can take photos and feel like they're on a mountaintop. The mountains and Craters of the Moon look phenomenal from the air."

The 32-year-old has been promoting aviation in Custer and Butte counties since he obtained his private pilot's license in 2013. In June, he will host a



**Above, T.J. plans to invite other pilots to a fly-in at Mackay Airport so he can show off the valley's scenery, which stretches in all directions. Right, T.J.'s wife, Kelsi, and daughters Oaklee and Payslee are frequent passengers.**

fly-in at the Mackay Airport.

He is also working with local government leaders, the Idaho Division of Aeronautics and the Federal Aviation Administration to obtain grants to repave the runways at the airports in Mackay and Arco, and to have fuel available for pilots in Mackay.

Living in Moore—about halfway between Mackay and Arco—T.J. flies from either town's airport. When the Arco-Butte County Airport Board of Directors needed a chairman in February 2017, he volunteered.

To fulfill his childhood dream of becoming a pilot, T.J. waited patiently for two decades. Growing up across the street from the Mackay Airport, he recalls how his heart soared whenever he watched airplanes take off and land.

"Seeing the planes fly in and out made me develop a passion for aviation," he says. "I always wanted to be a pilot, but it was unaffordable when I was young."

T.J.'s dream of flying never faltered. He saved his salary from the Idaho National Laboratory, where he writes procedures for maintenance workers at the advanced test reactor site.

In 2013, he took flying lessons at Blackfoot Airport. He completed the program in 10 months, passing written tests and the required 40 hours of flight.

In 2015, he earned his commercial pilot's license, allowing him to take passengers.

When a friend at work wanted to sell his Cessna 170 in May 2017, T.J. bought it.

"It's a versatile, dependable plane that's often used in the Alaskan bush," he says. "He wanted a smaller plane, and the Cessna was perfect for me to take passengers. We fly our planes together a lot."

Between Blackfoot and the Mackay Reservoir, about a dozen backcountry runways dot the landscape, enabling pilots to explore the region from the air.

T.J. often takes his wife, Kelsi, and their daughters Payslee, 4, and Oaklee, 2.

"They're supportive of me flying," he says. "Payslee really loves it, so we go about two or three times a week."

One of his frequent passengers is his grandmother, Alice Clark, who retired from the local U.S. Forest Service office.

"She loves finding old homestead sites from the air," T.J. says.

T.J. plans to invite other pilots to a fly-in at the Mackay Airport in June to show other pilots the valley's scenery.



"I'm still working on a date and will post fliers at airports in the area," he says. "I don't want it to conflict with other fly-ins."

A fly-in for nonmotorized glider or sail plane pilots is scheduled June 16 to 24 east of Moore.

"Someday my wife and I would like to promote Mackay as a destination for the aviation community," T.J. says. "There's so much to do here with fishing, golfing, hunting and seeing the local mining history. People could fly in, rent a golf cart to drive around town or a UTV to explore the Mine Hill."

He is optimistic about the future of aviation in the valley and wants to offer flying lessons one day.

"You see a totally different perspective from the air," T.J. says. "It's such an unforgettable experience and will keep people coming back." ■



Kendra Hall owns Kendra's River Inn Food and Lodging in Nehalem.

# Local Foods Highlight Historic Inn

*Innkeeper landed in Tillamook after falling in love with the coast as a child*

**By Denise Porter**

As a child, Kendra Hall recalls being mesmerized by the Pacific Ocean. A native of Alberta, Canada, Kendra's parents brought her to Newport for vacation as a child. The rugged coastline and mild climate were vastly different from her snowy homeland.

"I fell in love with Oregon," she remembers. "This was so completely different. I always thought about moving to the coast."

That's exactly what Kendra decided to do in 2000. She had been working in Utah at a nightclub and her husband died. She found a rental home in Oceanside, packed up her children and drove to the coast with no clear idea of her future.

Two years ago, Kendra became the proprietor at

Kendra's River Inn Food and Lodging in Nehalem.

The building is a piece of local history. In its infancy, it was a tavern frequented by loggers on their way home from work.

Today, the inn is decorated in Kendra's eclectic and comforting style. Each of the four guest rooms is unique, has a separate entrance and is charmingly decorated. The restaurant is on north side of the inn. Kendra lives in the top story of the large building.

From the road, she says, the inn looks modest—but looks can be deceiving. The inn is built onto the bank of the Nehalem River and the grounds are behind the building's frontal facade.

It was the view, the beautiful landscaping and the history of the building that drew Kendra to Nehalem.

"It's a lot of work and many hours," says Kendra,



**Above, one of the inn's comfy rooms. Top, a drawing of the front of the inn captures the homey nature of the business.**

“but I love it”

Every morning, Kendra prepares a scratch-cooked breakfast for her bed-and-breakfast guests. Every evening, she makes sumptuous food for her restaurant diners.

In 16 years, Kendra has hopped between four restaurant locations spanning from Netarts to Tillamook and now Nehalem. Along the way, she has collected a loyal local following.

Good food, she says, begins with fresh, local ingredients.

“This whole local/sustainable movement, or whatever you want to call it, I just do it,” Kendra quips, and then chuckles. “I always have. If you support me, I’ll support you.”

Kendra loves to shop for fresh fish from the fishermen on the docks at the Port of Garibaldi. The milk she uses is delivered from Bennett Family Farm in Tillamook. Of course, she uses Tillamook cheese. Brickyard Farms in Tillamook supplies her salad greens and other vegetables.

The list of where she gets her local products is quite extensive. She says she’s an expert at living the

term “value-added.”

“If you bring me tomatoes, I’ll cook with them and add value to your product,” Kendra says.

One of the things Kendra loves about the inn’s location is its neighbor. She’s a hop, skip and a jump down the road from the Nehalem Bay Winery. Their wines are on her menu.

Kendra is not a trained professional chef: she is a self-taught cook, and credits her parents with beginning her talents.

As a teen, Kendra recalls spending countless hours on her family’s phone chatting with friends. How do a phone and cooking go hand in hand?

Kendra grew up in the days when a home had a single telephone with a long cord. Her family’s phone was in the kitchen. The cord was long enough for her mom to cook dinner and visit on the phone at the same time.

Kendra chuckles, recalling her parents’ rule: If she was on the phone, she had to be baking something.

While her baking skills were already sharp, Kendra had good reason to hone her cooking skills when she first arrived in Oceanside: She had two young children to feed, little money and no employment. She soon found part-time work. She recalls learning to be financially prudent in how she spent her food dollars. Scratch cooking became necessary.

Soon, she learned to really enjoy the challenge of creating delicious food.

Kendra eventually opened her first restaurant at the old Wee Willy location near Cape Lookout State Park, and loved every minute of this new challenge. She later sold the building and opened another restaurant.

Kendra says living in Tillamook County was exactly what she needed. Her children grew up and, like their mother, both had a love of cooking. Both are professionally trained chefs.

It’s been nearly two decades since Kendra hopped in a U-Haul and headed for the coast. She was the big city woman bent on shaking up a small town. Looking back, she can see the journey was one of self-discovery.

“I came here with all these big ideas. They were going to listen to what I had to say,” Kendra says, then pauses, her eyes clouding with tears and emotion choking her voice. “No. It turns out Tillamook County taught me that I needed to listen. I listened and learned.” ■

*Kendra’s River Inn Food and Lodging is located at 34920 OR-53, Nehalem, OR 97131. She may be reached at (503) 368-7488.*



Mike Stevens demonstrates how to play the harmonica during a class for teens in Nenana.

## The Healing Powers of Music

*Harmonica is portal to connecting with teens, providing a voice for expression*

**By Kris Capps**

The most important audiences musician Mike Stevens faces every day are young people about to discover a new way to express their feelings. He helps them do that by handing them a harmonica.

Mike is an international harmonica virtuoso who has performed hundreds of times on the stage of the famous Grand Ole Opry.

His star trajectory took a

detour nearly 20 years ago when he visited a remote village in Canada and encountered young people sniffing gas. Mike has since dedicated his life to reaching out to young people, especially in remote communities.

He launched a nonprofit called ArtsCan Circle that connects artists with indigenous youth. Now he travels around the world, and throughout Alaska.

In March, Mike spent time

in a Nenana classroom with students from villages across the state. Many teens come from their home village to attend high school in this rural community on the Parks Highway. They live at the Nenana Student Living Center.

These are Mike's people.

Students learned how to use a device called a looper and tell a story through music and sound. Some strolled in with a guitar and ended up jamming with Jeff Getty,

another professional musician accompanying Mike. All these students learned how to bend notes on a harmonica.

In recent years, Mike has traveled to rural communities, such as Nenana, and remote villages, such as Hooper Bay, Tanana and Akiak. Under the umbrella of the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival, he empowers youth by helping them discover the healing power of music. He works closely with students and says



he sees the benefits, even during his short time with them.

“Mike Stevens showed our students how harmonica music can be used to express our inner feelings, and the power of this expression in helping to cope with situations requiring resiliency,” says Eric Filardi, a teacher at Nenana City Public School. “His captivating and energetic personality is immensely supportive of our kids, and invites them to take safe risks in the comfort of their own performance.”

The fact is, anyone can play the harmonica.

What Mike shares, according to Eric, is how to be inventive, resourceful and imaginative with that harmonica. Those are skills

needed to succeed today and in the future, he says.

Mike plans to return in the fall to visit the villages of Newtok, Akiak and perhaps some other communities.

“Mike’s tours are powerful tools of change in the communities that he visits,” says James Menaker, director of Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival. “He has the ability to connect with young people who have been marginalized in our society and draw out of them the reality of their thoughts and dreams and emotions.”

At one village during the March tour, teachers suggested Mike would be wasting his time trying to work with certain teens.

“They assured Mike that these young people did not



**Clockwise from left, Dante Burk jams with Jeff Getty during the workshop, which combined both harmonica and guitar. Each student receives a harmonica from Mike Stevens. Aquinnah Tremblay and Al Lane Jr. give harmonicas a try.**

Photos by Isaac Stone Simonelli

participate in art or dance or Native traditions, and he would have no more luck with them than any of their other adult professionals,” says James.

Within half an hour, with the power of a simple harmonica, Mike connected with those teens.

“He showed them how to create their own language using music and express in song what words did not have the power to convey,” says James. “He played and they played, and they played together, and they began dancing, pulling out

traditional dances that they had not performed in years and years. The teachers’ eyes popped open and their jaws hit the floor as they shared that they had never seen anything like this before.”

That is why Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival sponsors the tours.

“He is a shining example of what happens when you are able to awaken the inner artist of young men and women: community transformation,” says James.

He brings something the kids aren’t expecting, says James. Hope. ■



Cameron Huff, right, began golfing at Chimney Rock when he was just 3 years old. At age 23, he has returned to the community as the course pro.

Photos by CarolLee Egbert

# Upgrades Par for the Course at Chimney Rock

*Wells course gets new pro and clubhouse updates*

**By Dianna Troyer**

Golf Pro Cameron Huff says clients at the Chimney Rock Golf Course in Wells often do a double take when he introduces himself.

“A lot of people know my name, but don’t recognize me since I’ve grown up,” says Cameron, 23, a Wells High School graduate.

He was hired last November to manage the city’s nine-hole golf course and clubhouse.

“People have told me it’s exciting to have a hometown person coming back to manage it,” he says. “I want to make it a family-friendly place.”

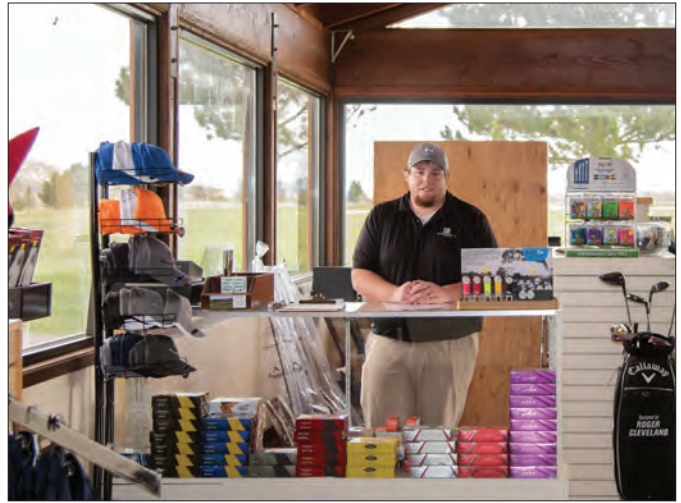
Cameron started playing golf at

Chimney Rock as a child when his parents, Kenny and Donna, bought him clubs.

“I’ve been golfing since I was 3 and still love it,” Cameron says. “My parents both love to golf here and got me started. I practically grew up at this course. When I came back to town, the course was just like I remembered it.”

After high school, Cameron enrolled in a 16-month program at the Golf Academy of America in Chandler, Arizona. He studied the financial and athletic aspects of golfing.

“We learned so much, from business management to teaching,” he says, referring to courses in accounting, law, human anatomy, physiology, and how to build and repair golf clubs.



**Clockwise from top left, Chimney Rock Golf Course hosts tournaments, clinics and the Wells High School golf team. The clubhouse recently was renovated. Cameron has been golfing the past 20 years and looks forward to helping the course grow and attract new guests.**

high school graduation parties.

“It’s available for weddings or reunions, too,” says Cameron.

Golf lessons and tournaments will be offered throughout the summer, including a children’s summer camp in late June.

“I’d like to get more kids involved in our junior golf program,” he says. “They’re our future.”

In July, Wells Rural Electric Co. and Wells Propane Inc. sponsor a tournament. In August, the Wells Amateur Tournament and the Chimney Rock Club Championship are planned.

“Our city crews do a great job maintaining the greens and landscaping,” Cameron says.

The city’s disc golf baskets will eventually be set up at the golf course.

“We have more room here than at the park where the disc golf course is now,” Cameron says. “I’m figuring out the best place to set it up here.”

At the end of the bar, Cameron looks out expansive windows to see Chimney Rock and the mountains to the southwest.

“It’s a perfect view,” he says. “It’s a beautiful place to golf and a great place to relax and visit.” ■

Through a career placement program, Cameron worked as an assistant pro at the Freedom Golf and Sports Course in Mesa.

When he learned the person running Chimney Rock was planning to retire, he applied for the job.

“Wells always has been and always will be home to me,” he says.

Cameron says golfing appeals to people of all ages for its camaraderie and exercise.

“We have golfers from kids to seniors in their 80s coming here,” he says.

Last fall, the city paid for extensive renovations at the clubhouse. Public works employees did the work.

Steps leading to restrooms were eliminated, bringing the building into

compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. A bar was moved from the middle of the lobby to near a wall to the west to open up the area near the front door.

The kitchen was expanded, new flooring put down and walls painted.

“It basically got an extensive and much-needed facelift,” says Cameron.

A pillar providing structural support in the middle of the lobby was left in place and incorporated into a new heating and air-conditioning system. Decorative wood was placed around it.

“I hang shirts and other clothing for sale from there,” Cameron says.

In May, the clubhouse was rented for

# Energy-Efficient Equipment Incentives

*Agricultural conservation program offers rebates for energy-saving irrigation sprinkler packages, variable frequency drives and cattle fountain freeze-resistant water tanks*

By Susan Parrish

Many Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative members know about incentives for installing energy-efficient heating and cooling systems in their homes and businesses. But did you know OTEC also offers incentives to farmers and ranchers who replace their older irrigation and stock watering systems with new systems that save water, electricity and money?

The cooperative's Agricultural Energy Efficiency Utility Rebate Program is for energy-efficient improvements to agricultural equipment. The program offers incentives from \$165 for a cattle fountain to larger rebates for pump motors and sprinklers.

OTEC offers the following incentives:

- Adding a variable frequency drive to irrigation pumps.
- Replacing leaking irrigation hardware, including nozzles, sprinklers, hubs and boot gaskets. Leaking hardware causes the pump to keep running and, therefore, uses more electricity.
- Installing cattle fountains.
- Installing a low-energy precision agriculture system—a sprinkler just above soil surface—or a low-elevation sprinkler application system—sprinklers positioned 3 feet or less above the soil surface.

## Variable-Frequency Drives

The cooperative offers incentives to farmers who add variable-frequency drives to irrigation pumps.

VFDs save water and electricity. The VFD can be programmed to allow the pump to ramp up the speed when more water flow is needed or ramp down the speed when less flow is needed.

Marc De Lint, who grows grass seed



**Cove farmer Marc De Lint, left, discusses the benefits of adding variable frequency drives to irrigation pumps with Gunnar Rolf, a technician with Roman's Precision Irrigation. Gunnar was getting the motor ready to run before hooking up the VFD.**

on about 1,400 acres in Cove, installed his first VFD about 20 years ago, and eventually installed variable drives on all his wells.

"As time went on, we knew that was the way to go," Marc says. "We could idle these motors and get the pressure we wanted. With the old style of pump, it's pumping too much water, too much pressure. With these variable drives, we can slow it down and have the correct pressure all the time."

Marc says he is saving energy as well as wear and tear on his equipment.

"Now we can idle it down to 15 horse rather than 150 horse 24 hours a day," he says. "If I'm running just one wheel line, I can turn it down. Your sprinklers aren't running as fast."

Marc also has upgraded his older wheel line sprinklers to low-pressure sprinklers through OTEC's rebate program, in addition to a subsidy through the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

"I signed up for these programs, and they helped fund these integrated sprinkler systems," Marc says.

Susie Snyder, OTEC energy program representative, says a number of factors are considered when determining the rebate, including whether the pump is a turbine or centrifugal style, the size of the pump and how long the pump runs at full speed compared to three-quarters or half-speed.

“Rebates for these are based on a measure and verification process,” Susie says. “We don’t know the estimated savings or the incentive until the measure and verification period is over.”

Since 2015, the cooperative has awarded more than \$90,300 in rebates for VFD upgrades.

### Incentives for Cattle Fountains

To be eligible for the rebate, cattle fountains must be freeze-resistant electric-free stock watering tanks and must replace electric water heater tanks.

To make a cattle fountain work, the animal pushes on a paddle to receive water. Any water remaining drains back into the ground.

Because the bowl is empty, there is no standing water to freeze in the winter. In warm weather it won’t heat up or grow algae or mosquito eggs. The water line is buried in the ground so water in the summer is cooler and water in the winter is warmer.

OTEC worked with the Bonneville Power Administration to create and implement the cattle fountain program.

“We were the first to get this rebate program going, and now it’s a standard offering through BPA energy-efficiency programs,” Susie says.

### Conserving Irrigation Water

Agriculture is the nation’s largest water user and accounts for 80 percent of annual water consumption.

In Oregon, irrigated farms produce 77 percent of harvested crops, according to the Census of Agriculture, Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey.

When farmers switch to irrigation systems that are more precise at applying



**Earl Barber shows the height of the new sprinkler package on his property in Burns.**

Photo by Connie Barber

water and that avoid soil saturation and runoff, water can be conserved. That saves money.

In the Pacific Northwest, typical center-pivot irrigation systems place sprinklers high in the air on top of the top pipe or on drop tubes. Inefficient high-pressure spray irrigation systems can lose up to 35 percent of water due to evaporation and blowing winds, according to the United States Geological Survey.

OTEC has partnered with BPA on two water-saving irrigation systems that place sprinkler heads much closer to the ground, significantly reducing water loss from evaporation and wind.

Low-energy precision agriculture—or a LEPA irrigation system—places an emitter-type sprinkler on or just above the soil surface.

Low-elevation sprinkler application—or a LESA irrigation system—places spray-type sprinklers 3 feet or less above the surface.

Both technologies save on water and electricity, improve the sprinkler system

application efficiency, reduce the direct evaporation from the sprinkler, reduce moisture loss from wet leaves and require less pressure to operate. Because they require less pressure, both systems reduce the pump power consumption per acre.

BPA funded research with Washington State University and University of Idaho on a pilot program to assess the viability and suitability of both LEPA and LESA systems in the Northwest. The study found that systems saved 5 to 15 percent on water.

Although the systems were designed for pivot irrigation systems, they also can be applied to lateral-move irrigation systems. Due to potential runoff losses, neither system is universally applicable to all fields, but are best applied on sandy soil or fields leveled for flood irrigation.

OTEC has offered the LEPA and LESA incentives to its agricultural customers for a year or so, but some of the other incentives have been part of OTEC’s program for more than a decade. Those programs have been in place long enough for farmers to realize a significant savings.

Last fall, Connie and Earl Barber of Burns installed a LESA system to irrigate their 230 acres of alfalfa and hay.

“We switched because we liked the idea of possibly conserving water,” Connie says. “We have such hot summers and evaporation is so great around here. We thought watering closer to the plants would make sense.”

In their old system, the sprinklers were 5 or 6 feet above the ground “as high as we could reach,” Connie says. “Now they are about 14 inches from the ground. It’s quite a difference.”

At press time, the Barbers were preparing to plant. They had not yet tested their new system, which cost about \$10,000. They received a \$3,770 rebate from OTEC via the BPA program.

“It was a nice shot in the arm,” Connie says. ■

*To learn more, email [epsteam@otecc.com](mailto:epsteam@otecc.com) or call your local Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative office.*

# OTEC Board of Directors Elects to Absorb BPA Spill Costs

**Bonneville Power Administration implements cost-saving measures**

By Andrew Cutler

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, along with other Bonneville Power Administration customers from across the region, have been fighting a battle against a court-mandated spill over eight federally managed dams for more than a year.

The spill began in April and is expected to run through June.

To relieve rate pressure and offset the potential lost revenue from the spill, BPA recently announced spending reductions and other cost-saving measures.

This announcement has OTEC and its members breathing a temporary sigh of relief.

In April, BPA—from which OTEC buys 99.5 percent of its power—said lost generation from the spill would increase Northwest power bills by \$40 million each year of the court-mandated spill. BPA projections estimated the cooperative's share of that total would be approximately \$450,000 a year.

After applying BPA's cost-saving measures, the current year spill cost dropped from approximately \$40 million for 2018 to \$10.2 million. OTEC's share is approximately \$150,000.

With BPA's efforts to reduce the impact this year, it gave the cooperative's board of directors the flexibility to not pass on this cost to its members. Instead, the amount of capital credits returned at the end of the year may be reduced.

Despite the good news for 2018, the issue looms on the horizon for the next several years. The court has mandated spills through 2022.



**McNary Dam on the Columbia River is one of eight Snake and Columbia river dams ordered to increase the amount of water spilled rather than used to produce electricity. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ordered more water to be spilled over the region's dams to help migrating salmon.**

Photo courtesy of the Bonneville Power Administration

"It appears to be a one-year reprieve for a five-year problem," says Anthony Bailey, OTEC's chief financial officer.

Bailey says OTEC can absorb the extra costs this year to lessen the burden on members, but next year may be a different story.

"The excess spill costs aren't going away, particularly because it will be an ongoing problem until 2022," Bailey says. "It is possible that next year our members may see a larger-than-usual rate increase to make up for costs not fully recovered in the previous year."

The spill saga began with a 2016 Oregon District Court ruling that

determined a federal management analysis violated the Endangered Species Act. Dubbed the Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion, the plan provided federal agencies on the Columbia and Snake rivers with a guide to managing fish and wildlife.

The district court ruled the biological opinion violated the Endangered Species Act and requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. The National Wildlife Federation and state of Oregon were listed among the plaintiffs.

In addition to federal agencies, the many defendants—who opposed the spill—included the states of Washington,

Montana and Idaho, as well as many of the confederated tribes.

The increased spill was ordered by U.S. Appellate Judge Michael Simon out of concern that not enough was being done to protect endangered fish in the operating plan for the Columbia and Snake river hydroelectric dams. More water over the dams is intended to help young salmon migrate to the ocean.

The spill was scheduled to begin in 2017. However, through the same efforts by OTEC and other BPA customers, it was delayed until 2018, saving OTEC members approximately \$450,000.

Simon also ordered an environmental study of dam operations in his April decision, which will consider the benefits and drawbacks of tearing down the four lower Snake River dams.

Michael Deen of the Public Power Council says the dams—where salmon generally pass with an average of more than 95 percent survival rate—are only part of the puzzle. Salmon and steelhead must also survive predation by birds and sea lions, which consume 11 to 43 percent of the salmon migrating to the ocean.

Conditions also vary in the ocean, where salmon live for several years before returning to their spawning grounds.

“Predation from birds and sea lions is a huge issue,” Deen says. “Survival through the hydro system is consistent from year to year.”

Although the appeal has been decided by the courts, work is ongoing at a federal level to bring the spill to an end.

Legislation passed the U.S. House in April to reverse the increased spill and revert to the status quo on Columbia and Snake river dams at least until 2022, when a new biological opinion will be completed. The 225-189 vote on HB 3144 was almost entirely along party lines.

Oregon Rep. Kurt Schrader was one of eight Democrats who backed it, according to a story in the Portland Business Journal. He was also a

## Your Oregon Congressional Delegation

You can reach the Washington, D.C., office of any senator or representative by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Ask the operator to connect you with the legislator to whom you wish to speak.

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co-sponsor, joining with Oregon Republican Rep. Greg Walden.

“Scientific experts steeped in fish recovery and clean renewable energy will be able to do their job based on good science rather than an ideological crusade to eliminate dams on the river system, resulting in the loss of our region’s best carbon-free energy asset,” Schrader said. “Simply put, the Columbia River power system will be managed according to the 2014 Obama administration-approved biological opinion until a new BiOp can

be completed by 2022, saving ratepayers millions of dollars.”

The bill has yet to be considered in the U.S. Senate.

“We encourage members to contact their U.S. representatives and make their voices heard,” says OTEC CEO and General Manager Les Penning. “It’s not over yet. That’s why people need to get involved to help put a stop to this and to end the waste of ratepayers’ money and the millions of dollars in lost generation. The battle is still on.” ■

# Energy Efficiency Starts at Home

*Turn to your electric co-op for cost-saving measures*

By Lisa Jacoby

Sometimes even simple tweaks to your lifestyle can make a big difference in saving energy and dollars.

Take your television. When you push the power button, it doesn't really turn off. It goes into standby mode and continues to use electricity. This is called a phantom load.

Todd Hendrickson, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative energy program representative, suggests using a smart power strip for these electronics.

The strip has multiple outlets that can sense when a device goes into standby mode. When that happens, the strip cuts power to that outlet. One outlet controls the rest. For example, if you turn off the computer, the other devices plugged in will turn off, too. Other outlets are designated as always on, such as a DVR, which is programmed to record a TV show.

These power strips feature a built-in surge protector. A surge may happen when power is restored after it's been off. A good surge protector stops an extra jolt and protects sensitive electronics.

Another simple way to save is by switching to LED bulbs. Although the savings can be minimal—about \$10 a year per bulb—these bulbs have a significantly longer lifespan than traditional lightbulbs.

In addition to these everyday ways to save energy, OTEC has several energy-efficiency programs that result in a bigger impact for commercial and residential members.

Todd and Susie Snyder, an OTEC energy program representative based in John Day, say OTEC's energy programs



Turn to Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative for more information on ways to save around your home. Brochures are accessible on the cooperative's website. Go to [otecc.com](http://otecc.com).

are member-driven.

"We have programs in place to incentivize you to not only buy qualified energy-efficient products, which saves you, our members, money, but also to purchase from our local vendors, which in turn benefits our local economy and all of us," Todd says.

## Heat Pump Water Heaters

OTEC offers rebates for the installation of new energy-efficient electric water heaters.

One eligible device has a heat pump on the top that draws air through coils to heat the water. By contrast, a standard water heater continually uses electricity to keep the water at the designated temperature setting.

"It's a big difference," Todd says. "Your standard water heater is basically a storage tank."

The only caveat is location. Because a heat pump water heater pulls warmth from the air, it is a good idea to place

it inside a garage or a shed. If installed inside the home, the area around it will be noticeably cooler.

"We know that some of our members prefer a storage water heater, and OTEC has a rebate for them," Todd says. "There are many new storage water products on the market that are very energy efficient, so OTEC keeps them on the list of eligible products."

## Heating and Cooling

Members who rely on a wood stove or electricity for their heat should consider installing a mini-split ductless heat pump.

Unlike heating through ducts, which can lose heat as the air travels throughout the house, these heat pumps have no energy loss and can both heat and cool a home. They can also be programmed for zonal heating and cooling.

"It's one unit that does it all," Todd says.

Heat pumps are also a great solution

for heating specific areas in the home or business that the primary heating system can't reach.

Although these units can cost several thousand dollars, the Bonneville Power Administration offers a rebate of up to \$1,000 for qualifying heat pumps put in by a qualified installer.

Installing this new heat pump could result in removing ducts from homes.

Susie says ductless is more energy efficient, but suggests doing research prior to choosing a model. She says to check the lowest temperature that the heat pump can still produce warmth. A backup plan—a wood stove or electric heaters—may be needed if it isn't effective below zero.

Before buying, contact OTEC to make sure you've chosen a model that qualifies for an incentive.

OTEC encourages members to enhance wood stoves with a system that is more energy efficient and cleaner for the environment.

"We're incentivizing people to augment their heating needs with an energy-efficient and cleaner source of heat," Todd says.

OTEC buys about 99.5 percent of its electricity from BPA, which means it is predominately clean hydroelectric power. OTEC's power is nearly 100 percent carbon-free.

"It's the cleanest electricity you can get, and this results in cleaner air to breathe," Todd says.

### Commercial Lighting

OTEC offers rebates for commercial lighting projects that result in a 25 percent or more reduction in wattage. New construction and retrofits can qualify. Inspections are required before, during and after the project.

"There again, that pre-approval is huge," Susie says. "As soon as a business decides to upgrade, we'd like to be involved to make sure we can get our members the best rebate available."

OTEC has more than 60 active

commercial lighting jobs in progress.

### Windows

Windows are less-efficient insulation compared to walls, but newer styles can make a difference in your energy bill. Homes with permanently installed electric heat qualify for an OTEC incentive.

Windows are rated by a U-Factor, which measures the rate of heat transfer and tells how well the window insulates. To meet Oregon code, windows must have a U-Factor of .35 or lower. OTEC offers an incentive for windows that are as low as .30.

"With windows, the lower the number, the better," Susie says.

A project that involves installing vinyl windows—replacing metal windows that develop frost in cold temperatures—could qualify for an incentive. Swapping out metal for vinyl windows filled with argon gas can boost efficiency and keep heat—or cooling from an air conditioner—from escaping.

### Smart Thermostats

Smartphones are transforming life every day. Smart technology affects home thermostats, too.

"You can access your home thermostat right through your smartphone," Susie says.

If you leave town for vacation and forget to set the temperature lower, you can adjust it by phone. The same goes for turning the heat up when you're returning home.

"You have more control, and the thermostats are higher quality," Susie says.

Call OTEC prior to buying to ensure the thermostat qualifies for an incentive.

### Energy Star

A stroll through an appliance store reveals several appliances with Energy Guide labels, but not all of these qualify for a rebate through OTEC.

"Having an Energy Guide label does not mean it's energy efficient," Susie says.

However, appliances such as a

## Buying Local

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative's "buy local" program is available to members within the cooperative's service territory who participate in an OTEC energy-savings project.

The purchase receipt must be from a local vendor in our service territory. Program requirements must follow the most current OTEC or Bonneville Power Administration project requirements, which can be found online at [www.otecc.com](http://www.otecc.com). The program depends on funding availability.

OTEC will either credit the member's electric bill or add it to the rebate check upon material verification. The incentives will be credited upon verification of the installation and successful completion of all OTEC and/or BPA requirements. A document inspection by an OTEC energy program representative may be required.

dishwasher or refrigerator marked with an Energy Star label may be eligible for a rebate.

### Tracking Use

OTEC members who are curious about their electric use can access an online graph by logging into their OTEC account and selecting "usage history" under the "My Usage" tab. The graph shows usage lows and highs for the time selected.

"Most of our members will say, 'Oh yeah, I know what we were doing that day that caused the higher usage,'" Susie says. "It's a great tool that is easily available. We have resources to help our members understand their usage, and resources if there's something they need to fix." ■

*For a list of energy-efficiency programs OTEC offers, go to [otecc.com](http://otecc.com) and click on "conservation." Choose "energy efficiency" to access several brochures. Members interested in learning more can call their local OTEC office and ask for energy-program assistance.*



Lori Mellick looks on as her husband, Mel, handles Cambria's Empire at their Sporting Green Thoroughbred ranch near Graham.

Photos courtesy of the Mellicks

## Bred for Success in Graham

*Sixty horses later, Mel and Lori Mellick are still on track*

**By Caleb Flowers**

Mel and Lori Mellick have operated Sporting Green Thoroughbreds, near Graham, for more than 20 years.

Mel first got into the business with his father, Norman, in the early 1980s. They bred and trained horses at Longacres Racetrack outside of Seattle.

"I told my dad, 'There's no way you can make money doing this,' and he replied, 'OK, we will just do it for fun then,'" Mel says.

It got really fun when they sold their first horse for \$10,000, he says.

Since then, the Mellicks have raised more than 60 horses, many of which are multiple stakes winners.

Mel is the "horse whisperer," so to speak, doing much of the handling and training. Lori assists around the ranch because, as she says, there is always work to do.

Today, Mel and his wife, Lori, own two mares they breed with stallions in Washington and California. They then "foal out" the fillies and colts. They raise them for 18 months and sell them at auctions or to individual buyers.

It may sound like a simple enough



**Clockwise from left, Mel and Lori started Sporting Green Thoroughbreds more than 20 years ago. The Mellicks have raised many horses, including Special Holiday. Five generations of Mellicks include, from left, Mel's father, Norman; great-grandson Theo; Mel; son Norm; grandson Tommy; and great-granddaughter Cambria.**

hobby, but don't be fooled. Countless hours go into the care of each mare and foal, not to mention the time spent poring over catalogs, family histories and racing histories to find the next horse.

It is more than a two-year commitment each time Mel and Lori decide to raise another horse. Results vary from successfully selling that colt or filly for thousands of dollars to losing the entire investment on one, such as when one of their colts got a rare infection and had to be put down last year.

Mel and Lori enjoy time with the horses.

"I love to watch their personalities as they grow up," Lori says. "They go through so many different stages in those first few years, and then it's on to their first workout and their first day on the

track. It's kind of like taking your child to kindergarten for the first time."

For Mel, the real fulfillment comes when he sees a horse win its first race—something Mel knows about firsthand.

"I won about 60 races back when I was riding," says Mel, who was a jockey from ages 16 to 19.

He raced around much of the Western United States in places such as Montana, California, Oregon and Washington.

After he won his first race, the bar was set high for Mel.

The path was not always easy. At 16, a severe riding injury nearly took Mel's ability to walk, much less ride horses.

Mel was on the track working a horse before a race one morning. At dusk, when he couldn't see that a gate to the infield was left open the night before, a sudden unexpected jolt from the horse threw Mel over the bar. The impact did significant damage. He broke his femur and was in a body cast for six months.

Mel was told his horse riding days were over, but he thought otherwise.

"Horse racing gets in your blood and you can't get it out," he says.

Eventually, Mel returned to riding and continued to win races.

While the racing side of things is still in their blood, Mel and Lori focus on the business aspect of breeding. Sporting

Green Thoroughbreds was No. 1 in Washington-bred sales in 1998. Mel and Lori also make frequent trips to California, since it's all about finding the right pedigree.

Another enjoyable part of the business for the Mellicks is that it allows them to involve family, including their six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Horse names include The Grans, Joshua's Journey, Cambria's Empire and Alabama Boy, all named after family members.

The town of Graham has been home for Mel and Lori since they first bought the farm in 1982. They have seen many changes in the horse racing industry, as well as in their hometown.

"I remember when there was just the corner store here," recalls Lori. "The horse racing industry isn't what it used to be either."

At one point, Washington was fifth in the nation when it came to horse racing.

"Now we're down to just the one race track in our state," Lori says, referring to Emerald Downs in Auburn.

But the two are working together to do their part to keep the thoroughbred industry alive. ■

*For more information about about Sporting Green Thoroughbreds, find the company on Facebook or [sporting\\_green@outlook.com](mailto:sporting_green@outlook.com).*



Tanner Electric Cooperative employees Blaine Barnard, left, and Kye Refvem are the cooperative's newest lineworkers.

## The Next Generation of Co-op Linemen

*Mt. Si High School graduates add to Tanner Electric's hardworking line crew*

By Anne Herman

Tanner Electric Cooperative's newest linemen are making a great first impression.

"We're really lucky to have guys this good," says Nick Himebauch, manager of operations and engineering at TEC. "They're good to the members, they work hard and they're smart. They always show up, always do their job and they are good human beings. It's easy to be their boss."

Nick is talking about Tanner Electric's Kye Refvem and Blaine Barnard.

Kye, a journeyman lineman, grew up in Fall City and graduated from Mt. Si High School. He had worked in construction and liked to be outside. He knew a lineman, and says the work sounded appealing. After graduating from high school, Kye went through lineman school in Idaho. When he heard Tanner had an opening for a groundman, he applied and got the job. He started his career less than a year out of high school.

He worked as a groundman for four months, then became an apprentice. He says his three-and-a-half-year apprenticeship was rigorous and thorough.

"Since lineman school focused mainly on construction, I didn't know what to expect from working for a co-op," Kye says. "This is great. I already know the area, and I know the people. I get to bump into my friends instead of driving all over to someplace I've never heard of."

What does the crew do in a day? The first priority is to keep the power on, which includes preventive maintenance. Kye also meets with members to address their concerns. If the lights are flickering, he troubleshoots the situation. He will start at the meter and work his way back to the house until he locates the fault.



**Left, Blaine and Kye load a transformer onto their truck. Above, Kye enjoys his work and says members are the reason Tanner Electric exists.**

For the line crews, it's all in a day's work.

"We try to leave things better than we found them," Kye says. "If it wasn't for the members, we wouldn't be here."

Blaine Barnard works as an apprentice on Kye's crew. He, too, went to Mt. Si High School and grew up in North Bend. His father was a lineman for Seattle City Light, so Blaine grew up on stories about that life.

"He'd tell me about storms that knocked over trees like toothpicks and blocked the right of way," Blaine says. "He'd arrive on the scene and think, 'How're we going to go about fixing this?' I like the challenge of building things and fixing things, too. Then I heard about the Tanner scholarship. It was awesome."

Tanner offers a \$4,000 Allan Billett Memorial Lineworker Scholarship each

year to a resident of the upper Snoqualmie Valley or Anderson Island. The recipient agrees to apply for any open apprentice position at Tanner Electric, giving Tanner first consideration. Details are posted on Tanner's website under Community Services/Scholarships.

Blaine applied for the scholarship when he was still in high school, and received it in May 2015. He went to lineman school in Oregon the following fall. Before he had finished, Jim Anderson, Tanner's then-director of operations, offered him a job as a groundman/helper on Anderson Island.

Three days after graduating from lineman school, Blaine went to work with TEC. He worked on Anderson Island for eight months. In September 2016, he became an apprentice in North Bend.

In addition to lineworker school, Blaine's new career requires Saturday school: an extensive every-other-Saturday training program that lasts for three years. Blaine is now two years into

Saturday school, and 2.5 years into his position at Tanner.

His commute is seven minutes, but that is not the only great thing about working for Tanner.

"I didn't know how much fun it would be," Blaine says. Everyone gets along so well. You can do linework anywhere in the world, but the people you work with and the fun you have—you can't find this just anywhere."

He says other rewards of the job include working on top of Rattlesnake Ridge, with a view of Mount Rainier and the fog in the valley below. Also included in the job is unexpected support from members on emergency middle-of-the-night calls.

"It's really funny when someone walks out at 2 in the morning to offer you coffee and snacks," Kye says. "I'm thinking, 'Why are you even awake?'"

The biggest reward, though, may be pride in their work.

"I live on the Tanner system," says Blaine. "The lights are on because of the work we do." ■

# KEA Scholarship Winners

*Students write winning essays about the benefits of electricity in rural Alaska*

Kotzebue Electric Association awards three four-year scholarships for \$750 each. There also is a one-year scholarship of \$750 to a student in a vocational program. Presented here are the essays from the scholarship winners.

**By Calia L. Sieh**

Thank you for allowing your members or children of the cooperative to have the opportunity to apply for your scholarship to help us further our education.

Kotzebue Electric Association has been in business as Kotzebue's only electric utility since 1949. With local men organizing to establish this company to provide service throughout the community we now live in today.

Without KEA, life would be a little difficult to live in at this day and age. We are privileged to be a member of the cooperative. Which not only provides us with electricity, but at a very reduced rate as we get the benefits from the Power Cost Equalization program the State of Alaska provides KEA with. Also, KEA is recognized state-wide for building a wind farm to reduce diesel fuel usage and create more energy locally. With that KEA also was seek out by various rural communities throughout Alaska to help them build wind farms as well, so they may provide the same services KEA spearheaded. Along with the other services KEA provides to not only the community members of Kotzebue, but they have helped many rural communities state-wide. Finally, KEA provides a local scholarship that financial supports it's members and children to further their education to better their lives.

Thank you for what your company does for our community and our state, there is hope that with your consideration of providing this financial support. I too will be encouraged to help my community, my region and my state as I further my education. ■



**By Xavier Jones**

There are many benefits of having electricity, and electricity has become critical for the rural regions of the state. Many of the villages have their own cooperative or association that provides the electricity to the community. In many ways, electricity has become the most important power source not only for our community of Kotzebue, but almost all of rural Alaska. Electricity is affordable, easily accessible and safe.

Yes, in Anchorage, fuel is inexpensive but in rural parts, fuel is even more costly. Due to shipping cost, the cost of fuel at the local gas station can be priced from around \$5.48 a gallon in Kotzebue; and up to around \$10 per gallon in Kobuk, Alaska. Running off fuel from the local gas station burns a hole in your pocket. It can cost a lot more money to pay for fuel than it does for local electricity. More and more of society converts to electricity rather than gas, propane or diesel because of the lower cost. In today's society, we are seeing more electric vehicles. Today in Kotzebue, it is not uncommon to see an electric or partial electric car drive down the road. Next winter we may see our first electric snowmachine here in Kotzebue.

Another big benefit of electricity is that it can be easily accessible and very efficient. The best example of the accessible and efficient use of electricity is how we run water and sewers throughout town. There are lift stations around town run off electricity. These lifts run the water into and out of the buildings. Most buildings in town have pumps that run water through plumbing fixtures. Thus, water can be simply run out of a sink on request. This is all thanks to electricity running the lifts and pumps. This is just one example of the benefits of the accessibility of electricity. Some of the other things include heating and lighting homes, running basic power equipment and, for people to power their electric vehicles.

Community safety is another benefit of electricity. Safety comes in many forms from electricity. Something as simple as lighting our streets makes our community safer. Lights are set up for the community because during the winter, there is more nighttime than daytime. With street lights, people feel more safe knowing they are able to see where they are going. Illegal acts are less likely to happen with street lights throughout town. Another safety benefit comes from the fact that electricity causes fewer fires than burning gas or propane.

Electricity is a huge benefit to our community. It keeps the cost of heating our homes down. It makes our community more efficient and a safer and better place to live. ■



### By Payton McConnell

The history of a co-op dates back to the early 1950s where the first Kotzebue co-op board was made up of bush pilots, a local grocery store owner, a reindeer herder, a mechanic, a church administrator, and a federal employee. When you think of the word co-op, you need to remember the early characteristics of a



co-op, “which was about every guy trying to help the other guy, and having a bunch of people get together to work on solving problems.” The benefits of the co-op way of doing business in rural Alaska are seen and felt in many ways. First, by doing business in a co-op rather than a private business, members can have more input into how the business runs. Members can voice their opinions, suggestions, or ideas to the members on the board.

Second, the organization of the board is voted by the members which also adds to the positive direction the co-op moves in that local voices lead with the needs and wants of the community. The members of the co-op can run for the positions on this board. The co-op also holds an annual meeting where the members attend to discuss old and new business, vote for new board members, and give public comment on the year’s activities. Another important benefit of the co-op way of doing business in rural Alaska is that a lot of rural co-ops come together to have a stronger voice for changes in rural Alaska. This follows the belief of “members, standing together” can do so much more.

Probably one of the most favorable benefits of the co-op way of doing business is that members pay lower prices for products and services because of the buying power of the co-op versus standing on their own. For example, purchasing fuel in bulk saves a huge amount of money because the co-op can purchase the fuel in one bulk order by teaming up with other rural co-ops. Places such as Bethel, Nome, and Kotzebue place a bulk order of fuel that is delivered by barge to reduce costs compared to the individual co-ops ordering fuel separately.

In the end, the benefits of the co-op ways of doing business serve rural Alaskans very well. They are responsible for providing affordable and reduced power in our homes. Co-ops are showing future innovative ways to continuing to bring the cost down for rural Alaskans by coming up with alternative ways to provide energy. These are seen by windmill farms, solar panels, and hydroelectric research. ■

### By Cassidy Kramer

First, I would like to thank you for being a co-op up here in Northwest Alaska. As a high school student, I haven’t been exposed to the idea of a cooperative business until I researched it for this scholarship. It seems like it is truly the smartest and most beneficial way to do business in a community. It is especially helpful up here in Kotzebue where the cost of utilities, including electricity, is very expensive compared to what people pay on Alaska’s road system or in the Lower 48.



I have learned that there are many benefits to a co-op electric company. First, the customer-members are the owners and are governed and guided by members who are elected by customer-members. This will ensure that it is locally controlled, which is important because we live in a unique place with unique needs. As owners, we have the right to voice our concerns or make suggestions to our governing body or in our annual meeting with other members present. From what my dad says, this is one reason we have been able to install wind-generated turbines for renewable energy to take advantage of the natural resources specific to our area. Doing this has saved us money while making us less dependent on fuel resources, which is expensive and detrimental to our environment.

Also, co-op members benefit each other and the company at the same time. My parents use KEA services and pay for electricity, and in turn, they receive the most efficient service for the best possible price. The profit that the company makes is given back to the members, either by a dividend or a credit to their account. The profit stays here in our local economy and isn’t sent to Canada, like with many outside-owned for-profit companies.

Thank you for considering me as a recipient of your scholarship, and thank you for the work you do to benefit our community. I am sure that when I return with my degree and become an adult member of Kotzebue, I will become a member of the KEA co-op. I look forward to it. ■