



Denise Fennell shows off her well-stocked pantry full of local foods she has canned.

Savor the Flavor

Preserving foods stocks the pantry with year-round flavor

By Craig Reed

Janice Bartholomew and Denise Fennell love the burst of flavor they get when biting into a fruit or vegetable that was just picked off a tree or vine.

To enjoy those flavors year-round and not just during harvest time, the two women are avid food preservers. Each has taken the Oregon State University Extension Service classes to become master food preserver.

At their respective homes, Janice and Denise can, freeze, dry and ferment a variety of foods to enjoy their flavors beyond the summer and fall harvest seasons. Some of the fruits and vegetables are grown in their own small backyard gardens. They get the rest from local U-pick fields and nearby farmers markets.

“There’s so many different ways to preserve foods, there is no reason not to,” Denise says. “The flavors

stay and they are fantastic at a later time. I love the idea of prepping and preserving food for long-term storage through traditional methods or new scientific-tested methods for later use.”

Janice says the effort that goes into food preservation is worth it.

“When I go into my pantry in the middle of winter, look at the food I have there, it’s pretty rewarding,” Janice says.

Janice has been an avid food preserver since she and her husband, Bruce, sold Bart’s Market in Oakland and she became a master food preserver in 2010. She now has more time to work in her home organic garden, where she grows numerous vegetables and herbs.

“To watch a tomato plant start from a seed after planting it in the garden, to watch it grow, to see it get bigger, to see the tomatoes is satisfying,” Janice says. “Then to see a jar of tomato sauce in



Janice Bartholomew grows her own gravenstein apples, from which she makes applesauce.

my pantry, it's like 'oh my gosh, I grew that from a seed. There's nothing like a homegrown tomato. It smells like a tomato. It tastes like a tomato."

Denise has a similar feeling about growing her own food.

"Watching the whole process is quite intriguing," she says. "To take the tiniest seed, to plant it, to watch it grow and blossom, to pick it, to eat it and to taste it, there's nothing like it. To nurture the plants, to watch them grow, a little bit of investment of time in them can reveal massive results."

Janice and Denise are complimentary of the farmers who grow food in the area.

"There's so much quality food available here," Denise says. "I'm amazed at how many people grow wonderful foods."

Denise and Janice encourage people to take advantage of what is grown locally and learn to preserve for later use.

"I think processed foods are making us sick as a nation," Janice says. "I wish people would realize preserving is easier than they might think. If

anything, go to a farmers market, buy local, fresh food and then start off small and learn how to can or freeze."

In addition to fruits and vegetables, the two women also preserve tuna they buy off the docks on the central Oregon Coast. Janice also smoked and canned trout her family caught at Diamond Lake last year.

Janice and Denise say they enjoy the preservation processes, but also are encouraged to go to the effort because of the health benefits of the food and knowing how and where it is grown.

Both are adamant about following the details of the different preservation methods to make the food safe for later meals.

"I'm a real follower of processing the food correctly," Janice says. "You have to be precise to be safe."

Janice says her first experience with gardening came at a young age when helping her grandmother, Bessie Noble. Janice also remembers watching her grandmother can some of the garden's produce.

Other members of Janice's family have followed her lead and have developed their own food niches. Bruce built a smoker to cold smoke a variety of cheeses. Son Darin built a dryer to make jerky and also makes pepperoni and salami from wild game and the family's home grown beef. Son Blaine has his own sourdough starter that he uses to make pizza dough, bread, pancakes and waffles.

"Maybe they learned the love of cooking from me," Janice says.

Denise also learned about gardening at a young age, helping her father, Bob Leeton, with his large garden. Bob especially liked to grow blackberries and boysenberries. The family didn't can, but at age 13 Denise began turning the blackberries and boysenberries into freezer jams and pie fillings.

After Denise and her husband, Derek, retired from their Southern California jobs and moved to east of Sutherlin, she grew a garden and began pressure canning in 2013. She became a master food preserver in 2014.

"I haven't stopped doing this since," she says.

Both Denise and Janice share their flavorful preserved foods with family and friends, especially at Christmas. That's an added reward for them for the time they put into growing, harvesting and preserving foods and their respective flavors. ■

Are You Prepared For When Disaster Strikes?

These simple tips can help you and your family survive a natural disaster

By Courtney Cobb

Wildfires, winter storms, earthquakes and flooding are just a few of the natural disasters Central Oregonians need to prepare for.

The big question is, if any of these events occur, are you and your family prepared to be on your own for a minimum of 72 hours? Do you have a “go-bag” ready with essentials and important paperwork?

September is National Preparedness Month. It is a great time to evaluate your preparedness for any emergency situation.

Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Emergency Services Coordinator Ashley Volz says any amount of planning ahead can help emergency service agencies work more effectively to help those in need.

Residents need to remember Central Oregon is unique in its geography. The fact is, much of our food and all of our fuel is brought in from outside the area. A severe winter storm or a large Cascadia-like earthquake





could impact the ability to buy groceries and other goods. It also can affect how fast emergency services can get to you.

“In the event of a disaster, it could be days or weeks before the county receives any help from outside areas,” Ashley says. “The ultimate responsibility for basic preparedness lies with each individual and/or family unit.”

The Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office Emergency Management Unit recommends people have a “go-bag” with 72 hours worth of supplies and at least a two-week supply of survival essentials at home. However, with the possibility of a Cascadia-like event, residents should plan to be on their own for a minimum of one month.

“We have a great handbook in place for residents to look at,” says Ashley.

The Family Emergency Preparedness Handbook walks people through how to create emergency kits in 40 weeks. It outlines materials needed for babies, seniors, pets or livestock, as well as

basic first aid.

“This plan was developed to help guide citizens in creating a 30-day supply of goods for each person in their household over the course of 40 weeks,” the handbook states. “This helps spread out the costs associated with buying new supplies, and will also make this project more manageable for those who are just getting started.”

By scanning the QR code on this page, you can download the handbook.

Emergency Services also recommends when creating your 72-hour kit or “go-bag” to make sure it is in a backpack. Ashley says the most vital items need to be placed within the “go-bag” because this is what you would take if you had to leave your home on foot, as in the case of a wildfire.

Once you have your “go-bag” and supply kits ready, make sure to check them at least once a year to replace any outdated items.

Any resources you can pull together will put you and your family one step closer to being prepared for a disaster. ■



Scan this QR code with your phone to download a handbook to help you build your own emergency kit.

Make Your Plan

As you start to make your emergency preparedness plans and kits, there are several sites you can visit to get more information and helpful tips:

- www.sheriff.deschutes.org
- www.ready.gov
- www.redcross.org

Power Outage Kit

Here are some quick tips to have your home equipped for a power outage. Many of these same items can be used for your basic disaster supply kits.

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and extra batteries.
- Easily accessible emergency phone numbers for your utility, doctor, fire and police.
- A cellphone with chargers, inverter or solar charger, or a telephone line connected directly to the phone jack. Remember, cordless phones and phones with answering machines rely on electricity to operate.
- A first-aid kit and prescription medications. If the outage is caused by bad weather, road travel may not be possible for several days.
- Clean drinking water. Have at least one gallon of water per person per day.
- A manual can opener and nonperishable food. A camp stove and fuel may be handy, but be sure to use it outdoors.
- A cooler for storing frequently used foods. Food will keep several hours in a closed, full refrigerator and up to two days in a closed, full freezer.
- Extra blankets, sleeping bags and warm clothes. If you are without heat, close off one room to live in and wear extra layers of clothes.
- Firewood, if you have a fireplace or wood stove.





Safety Campers mount up on their peddle cars ready to learn about road safety.

Day Camp Teaches Safety to Children

Bike, electricity, fire, emergency and gun safety are just some of the topics tackled

By Shelly Yockey

It was a day full of smiles and learning all about safety on August 4. Twenty first- and second-grade students joined 24 Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative volunteers at the headquarters in Port Orford for the first Safety Camp. Offered through CCEC's community involvement program, the event was made possible by the efforts of volunteer staff and community members.

Safety Camp is a scaled-down version of the weeklong Safety City offered by the city

of Brookings and taught by Dan Palicki, with the goal to educate children on the importance of safety.

Upon leaving, each child gained knowledge in when and how to call 911 to report an emergency, tips about fire safety, how to safely walk and/or ride a bike, what to do in the event of finding a firearm or weapon and learned the hazards of electricity and the importance of home electrical safety.

As students were registered and said goodbye to parents and guardians—some with

hesitation, others with energy and excitement—they were accompanied to the bike helmet area to be fitted with a free helmet. The students were divided into two groups to keep classroom counts small, then they were off.

"Look left, look right, then left again."

This was repeated throughout the day as peddle cars were driven through makeshift streets tucked between the CCEC office and warehouse. The street was painted with simulated sidewalks, crosswalks, stoplights, railroad

crossings and intersections. As each obstacle was approached, the drill was to look and ensure the peddle car could safely cross through the area.

"911, where's your emergency," was the voice at the end of the telephone line as retired dispatcher and event volunteer Arlene Remien answered the call.

Each child had the opportunity to make a simulated 911 call after a classroom discussion on when it is appropriate to call 911. One student used a scenario of a parent hurt and needing help. She

was asked her address and phone number. With help from volunteer coordinator and CCEC employee Marie Coleman, she relayed her home address and answered all the questions the dispatcher needed to send help.

After practice calls, children learned about fire safety from Gold Beach Fire Assistant Chief and CCEC employee Zane Adams. He gave a tour of the fire truck and stressed the importance of “stop, drop and roll” if a person’s clothing were to catch on fire. They learned that while a firefighter may look scary while wearing all their gear and a mask, it is important to not be afraid of them. They are there to help. If trapped in a building filled with smoke and fire and you hear, “fire department, call out” be sure to respond so they can escort you to safety.

Later, children viewed a short video from the Eddie Eagle GunSafe Program that teaches four important steps to take if a firearm or weapon is found. The 8-minute cartoon featured characters Eddie Eagle and the Wing Team, who were playing at the park when an unattended backpack was found under the bench by Gary the Goose. He asked his friends whose bag it could be and they all looked at each other in confusion and curiosity. The zipper was then opened and, to their surprise and awe, a handgun was revealed. This is where Eddie Eagle and the jingle comes in, “Stop, don’t touch, run away and tell a grown-up.”

The video explains how



Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative Lineman Nate Duey demonstrates the gear used to safely climb a power pole.

dangerous the gun is and that it is always important to leave it alone and tell a grown up. The children then all learned about gun safety, and that there is a big difference between pretend guns used in video games and real ones.

As the kids giggled and moved on to their next event, the jingle was chanted throughout the day. Parents can learn more about the program at eddieeagle.nra.org.

Of course, a trip to CCEC wouldn’t be complete without a visit from a lineman. Nate Duey, one of CCEC’s Port Orford-based linemen, volunteered his time for the day. He kept the attention of all students when he spoke about how electricity is generated, how power is provided to the homes the students live in and the dangers to be aware of.

He used an interactive board called Power Town to demonstrate these concepts and practiced with students on how to be certain they were a safe distance away from all electrical dangers.

If a tree took a power line down, would you know how

far the safe zone is? As everyone held up their thumb and fixated on the danger object, they stepped backwards until the object disappeared behind their thumb, knowing they were in the safe zone.

Later, Nate showed students the gear a lineman wears and uses while he demonstrated climbing a pole safely and enforcing safety measures all linemen take as they both climb and descend a pole.

Students also watched a short cartoon with Louie the Lightning Bug focusing on electrical safety geared toward what a first- and second-grader would encounter in everyday life.

A surprise visit from Eddie Eagle and McGruff the Crime Dog at both lunch and the closing awards ceremony was welcomed as students gathered around giving high-fives and warm hugs. The day ended with each student receiving a bucket of take-home goodies, which included a coloring book with Louie the Lightning Bug. “We’re Talking Electricity,” crayons, reflective

Thank You

A special thanks to our lead coordinator, Marie Coleman, and her sidekicks, Michelle Smith-Napier and Cori Million. Thanks to Dan and Barbara Palicki for mentoring our group and donating both time and equipment. Along with Arlene Remien our dispatcher, Trenton Brewer, and Peggy Ghiringhelli volunteered and assisted in the city street scenarios. Robert Tetrault donated a wooden train to be used at the railroad crossing and Rogue Credit Union provided a reader board advertisement for the event. Additionally, thank you to the 24 CCEC employees who volunteered and helped behind the scenes, assisted with setup, and served as helpers and instructors, contributing to the success of the event. All volunteers are appreciated. We look forward to planning for next year’s safety camp.

key chains, safety stickers, an Eddie Eagle safety booklet for parents and color pages for kids, bubbles and the bike helmet they used throughout the day.

Two names were drawn to win bikes donated by CCEC lineman Randy Foster and his wife, Lynda.

“Safety Camp wouldn’t have been possible without the Coos-Curry Electric Community Involvement Committee and the passionate volunteers who helped coordinate and plan such an amazing program,” says CCEC General Manager and CEO Roger Meader. ■

On the Steps of HISTORY

Dayna Harris of Cottage Grove represents Lane Electric on Washington Youth Tour trip

By Craig Reed

With her interest in history, Dayna Harris didn't have to think twice about applying for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Tour.

Dayna, who will begin her senior year at Cottage Grove High School this month, wants to be a history teacher after she finishes college. The Youth Tour is all about history. High school students traveled to Washington, D.C., where they visit monuments, memorials, meet with their state's U.S. senators or representatives, and listen to featured speakers.

Dayna first saw the application information for the tour in Ruralite when she was a sophomore. A year later, when she was a junior, she applied through Lane Electric Cooperative.

She says she was ecstatic when she was informed she had been selected to make the tour and would be sponsored by Lane Electric.

"It was a huge honor for me," the 17-year-old says. "I was so excited. I was over the moon."

Liz, Dayna's mother, says her daughter was thrilled to be selected.

"When she called me right after being told, I could hear the smile over the phone," Liz says. "I was so happy for her."

Lane Electric has sponsored students from its service territory for the Youth Tour for 40 years. Susan Knudsen Obermeyer, president of the Lane Electric board, helped select Dayna for this year's trip.

"Dayna is a perfect candidate for us to sponsor," Susan says. "We heard about her hunger for learning and her kind, thoughtful nature. She has the vision to see the role of electricity in adapting to the challenges of the future. This will fit in nicely with her goals. Dayna will make the most of her experience."

"We have seen the benefit the program has



Dayna Harris enjoyed her visit to Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., as part of the Washington Youth Tour trip in June.

provided to the youth that have participated. Those students are articulate and full of bright ideas. Our future is in good hands."

This year's trip was June 7-14. Dayna traveled in a group of 26 students and five adult chaperones representing rural electric cooperatives from four western states. In Washington, D.C., about 1,800 students from co-ops in 43 states participated in the tour.

Dayna says the trip forced her out of her comfort zone. She didn't know anybody else making the trip, so she had to talk and get to know others. She says that was a good experience.

"You're kind of thrown together, but then you get to spend time and get to know people from all over the state, from all over the country," Dayna says.

Students visited the National Archives, where they viewed the Declaration of Independence and

the U.S. Constitution; the Smithsonian Institution, a group of museums and research centers; the Newseum, a museum that focuses on free expression, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the evolution of communications; Ford's Theater, where President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated; the Holocaust Memorial Museum; and the National Mall.

"I don't think we spent enough time in any of the museums," Dayna says. "You needed way more time to see everything. The Newseum was really cool. There was a photo of the year so you could see different moments that photographers had captured throughout the years. It was a surreal experience to be in Ford's Theater and to be where one of our greatest presidents was shot and killed."

Dayna says riding the subway was also a unique experience. She had never been on one.

"To see all these people crammed into this tube thing, and then to get in one, it was crazy," she says.

Liz and Brandon Harris were able to talk to their daughter every day during the trip. They say she was thrilled with every new experience.

"Getting to see the landmarks, to hear about the history, to see how the government works, to hear about Congress, to get to go there and experience it for kids at this age was an incredible opportunity," Liz says. "We got to hear about her daily adventures, and she was just in awe of all the different things they got to do, all the people they got to meet."

"It is truly incredible that Lane Electric provides a student with this opportunity."

When the trip ended, Dayna says it was sad to leave her fellow travelers who had been strangers a week earlier, but were now friends. A couple of online group chats have been established, allowing Dayna to keep in touch with several of her new friends from the trip.

She is now looking forward to her final year at Cottage Grove High School and then on to college. She is considering attending Boise Bible College in Idaho, or staying closer to home and attending the University of Oregon in Eugene.

"I'm keeping my options open at this point," Dayna says.

Along with her major in history, she is considering a minor in Spanish. She has taken five years of Spanish classes and made a 10-day trip to Spain with members of the Cottage Grove High School Spanish Club in late June.

"It would be pretty awesome to come back and

teach in my hometown," Dayna says.

She would then be able to share her experiences from the Youth Tour with her students, explaining that even though a person might be from a rural area, there are still opportunities available to travel and visit historical landmarks in the United States.

"It was an eye-opening trip for me, a really awesome experience," Dayna says. "I can't thank Lane Electric enough for making it possible. ■"



Where It All Began

The Washington Youth Tour has coordinated visits to Washington, D.C., for high school students for a week in June since the late 1950s. The goal is to give students a close-up look at their nation's capital, to learn about the political process and to interact with their elected officials.

In 1957, then Texas Sen. and future U.S. president Lyndon Johnson inspired the Youth Tour when he addressed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual meeting. He encouraged electric co-ops to send students to the nation's capital "where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents."

Nearly 50,000 students from rural areas and small towns across the U.S. are now alumni of the Youth Tour.

Students met with Oregon legislators, including Rep. Greg Walden, far left.



Paul Fuller with his three retorts, which are basically giant pressure cookers. Photo by Craig Reed

Success In a Jar

Canned organic foods in a jar hit sweet spot in the market

By Craig Reed

Paul and Judy Fuller had canned and preserved foods for their own table for a couple decades when, in their mid-40s, they decided to turn their hobby into a family business, sharing their flavorful food products with others.

The couple began developing a canning facility on their Elmira-area property in

2000. They established Sweet Creek Foods as a business, expanding beyond their home organic garden by buying large quantities of produce from local organic farmers and selling a variety of foods in sealed jars.

The business name came from Sweet Creek, which flows through their property.

Paul and Judy first tested the market for their products

by selling at local farmers markets. When that proved successful, they began selling to stores in 2006 and closed their farmers market booth.

Sweet Creek Foods can now be found year-round in about 150 all-natural food stores from Bellingham, Washington, to the San Francisco Bay area.

“There’s such a bounty of foods grown in the Willamette Valley,” says Paul,

61. “We buy directly from about 15 local farms. No one is doing what we’re doing. We’re very unique in that we can into jars and everything is organic. Putting up food allows you to take whatever you have in your garden or in the fields and enjoy it in the winter time.”

“It’s been rewarding,” says Judy, 62. “It’s something we believe in—growing your own



Above, Judy Fuller boxes up canned pickles. Left, tuna bought straight off a boat in Newport is prepared for canning.

Photos courtesy of the Fullers

food, eating organic and now being able to share it. It tends to be healthier.

At Sweet Creek Foods, we believe in a more local family farm food system than a national corporate system.”

Judy had a background in canning, having helped her mother, Betty Herbert. Paul, who grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, had no prior experience with canning.

Paul and Judy began canning for themselves in 1979. One of their first purchases was a 44-quart pressure canner. They first canned green beans. After sealing 104 quarts, they discovered they hadn’t added salt.

“They were probably healthier, but they didn’t taste good,” Paul says with a laugh.

The couple wasn’t deterred.

They continued to can what they grew in their garden.

During those years, Paul was a commercial refrigeration contractor. He provided maintenance on coolers at numerous Willamette Valley farms, food stores, processing facilities and distribution centers.

He saw firsthand that nobody else was canning organic produce into jars.

They admit they had some anxiety.

“We had no model to go by,” Paul says. “We used our property for an equity line and we used our credit cards.”

“Once we got into it, there was no going back,” Judy says. “We had to make it work. It was hard for us, but we believed in what we were doing.”

Paul was able to set up the steam, refrigeration and plumbing systems himself. With his many contacts in

the refrigeration business, he was able to find and purchase used equipment that he then customized for the Sweet Creek Foods canning process.

One example was finding three retorts that Paul calls “giant pressure cookers.” Each retort can seal up to 500 9-ounce jars when under pressure. As jar sizes increase up to 24 ounces, the number of jars that will fit in the retort decreases.

Judy contributed to the new canning building by doing trim work and painting.

The Fullers’ two sons, Zach and Cody, also helped get the facility up and operating. Zach, 32, is the business’ operations manager. Cody, 28, is in an electrician apprentice program, but comes back to the farm occasionally to help out.

“We knew we had to be mechanized to make it work and we knew we had to get to producing a certain volume,” Paul says. “It was a little bit of a daunting thing to begin with. There was a time there when we were pushing the car uphill, but we finally reached a point where it was downhill.”

Paul and Judy say they had faith in their products because it was those foods that they liked to eat themselves. Their credit cards were paid off several years ago.

The Fullers contract with

local farmers for organic crops. The vegetables and fruits come straight from their fields or orchards to the Sweet Creek facility. The Fullers say they have stayed local because they want the consumer to know where the food came from and that the purchase supports the people who care about keeping food production close to home.

Sweet Creek Foods offers a variety of tomato and enchilada sauces, pickles, salsas, relishes, fruit spreads and applesauces. The products are gluten free. The business also buys tuna off a boat that fishes out of Newport. They can the tuna into jars.

“Our ingredients are quality,” Paul says. “We do small batches to better maintain that quality.”

In addition to Paul, Judy and Zach, the business has four other full-time employees. During the summer harvest of crops, a couple more seasonal workers help out.

In addition to packing its own brand, Sweet Creek Foods co-packs foods for several local farms that sell at their own produce stands or at farmers markets.

Paul and Judy say it is just another way for their business to help local growers keep their food local and provide it year-round thanks to the canning process. ■



Leta Strauss has always enjoyed history, but learning more about her great-grandfather's death in World War I was a new experience.

Curiosity Uncovers Family History

Genealogic research brings ancestors to life through storytelling

By David Rauzi

The path to learning more about Leta Strauss' early 20th century ancestor, William Droogs—a draftee in the U.S. Army who died in early 1918 when his ship was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland—started with a researcher outside her family. The resulting story fueled her passion for history to further explore her own genealogy.

"I was interested in history way back when I was kid," Leta says. "I always knew my great-grandfather was killed in the First World War. I always knew he

was buried in England, and that's about as much as our family really knew. We all had some level of his experience on the *Tuscania*. We knew it sank, but we didn't know the reasons he went, and we didn't realize that other Idaho County people were called up."

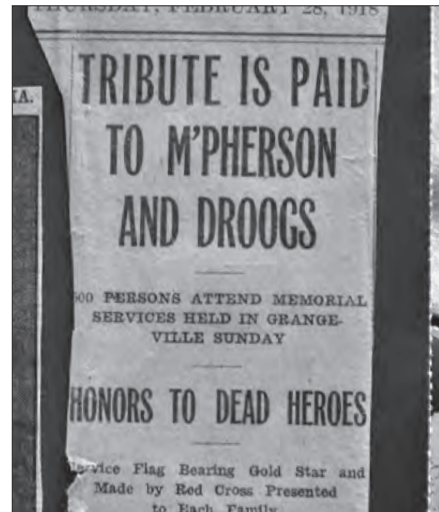
Leta grew up in Mt. Idaho, where its woods, fields, mountains and creeks were the neighborhood playground. The unincorporated community just outside Grangeville started its early days in a tussle with its neighbor for who would be the county seat. It was a place of refuge and a rallying point during the 1877

Nez Perce Indian War.

Early in her youth, Leta read one of the region's seminal history texts, "Pioneer Days in Idaho County," by Sister Alfreda Elsensom. It impressed upon her the historic place in which she lived.

"For me, growing up in Mt. Idaho, I had an interest in history from the beginning," Leta says. "Grangeville, and Mt. Idaho especially, gives me a great sense of place. It's very historic."

Leta says it is important to know the region is made up of more than places, dates or events.



Leta fills scrapbooks with photos and mementos every year for an annual gathering of cousins. Her great-grandfather was among the first Idaho casualties of World War I.

“Your family is a part of that history, too,” she says.

Leta’s genealogical journey was initially cultivated due to “Cousinfest”—an annual gathering of the family’s cousins. Each year, she would put together a scrapbook with family photos, mementos and notes detailing their history.

When her husband, Kenneth, died in 2016, Leta started attending meetings of the Idaho County Historical Society. That is where she found out one its members, Floyd Whitley of Cottonwood, was researching the S.S. *Tuscania* event and her great-grandfather, William.

“It never occurred to me that someone else cared about my great-grandfather to go to this effort,” she says.

Leta learned the full story from Floyd’s work. William was a logger. The Army needed foresters and mill workers to go to France to log and cut trees to build trenches. He was one of seven Idaho County men drafted for that service aboard the *Tuscania*, and the only one who died in the attack.

On January 24, 1918, William was one of 2,013 personnel of the U.S. Forestry Regiment onboard the *Tuscania*—a troopship part of convoy HX20, which departed Hoboken, New Jersey, for Liverpool, England. On February 5, the German submarine *UB-77* torpedoed the

ship. William was one of 210 casualties.

“One of the most interesting things I learned was the actual experience,” Leta says. “It became very real. It really came to life how he died.”

Floyd put together a complex series including military tactics, weather and sea conditions and personal interviews to tell an engaging story, Leta says. Floyd’s efforts included a visit to Islay Island, which commemorated the sinking on the 100th anniversary.

Leta relates Floyd’s telling of the men knowing the boat is going to sink, forming on deck and singing patriotic songs. Local musician Pete Northcutt played some of the songs, including “Where Do We Go From Here Boys?” during a presentation in Grangeville earlier this year commemorating the 100th anniversary of the event.

Part of the story includes rescue efforts led by the commander of the British escort destroyer *HMS Mosquito*. Against standing orders, it turned back to help pull men from the water.

“That commander lost his command as a result,” Leta says, but due to his actions—which inspired other destroyer commanders to act—men were saved.

Floyd’s presentation pulled together all the information into one spot, which Leta says came as close as possible to

circumstances of what happened to her great-grandfather.

“He tells it as a story and made it come to life,” Leta says, “more than just as an ancestor who died in the war.”

One of the lasting effects of an expanded view about her great-grandfather’s history was Leta being inspired to research her own family. She has begun her work on Ancestry.com, and is gathering memorabilia to start piecing together the puzzle of her family’s roots.

With technology continuing to open access and to documents and photos—as well as new areas such as tracing ancestry through DNA—genealogy research has surged in recent years.

Libraries, museums and historical societies provide the basics to start such family history journeys. New avenues to pursue include genealogy crowdsourcing using social media, where information requests are posted online to receive feedback and new directions to pursue.

“It’s encouraged me to want to find out more,” Leta says. “You kind of know the trajectory of everything that happened in your family, but when you sit down and start taping things in a book and start looking at dates and start thinking about what happened to them at that time, it makes you think about things in a different way.” ■

Cooperative Spirit Not Bound by Borders

Backyard entrepreneurs raise broiler chickens to bolster quality of life

By Dianna Troyer

Dispatched last year to Kenya as a volunteer with international aid organization CHOICE Humanitarian, 74-year-old Connor Creek resident Bill Loughmiller faced a daunting mission.

How could he help Kenyans launch a small agriculture business that would provide a quick profit and steady income with a small initial investment?

The retired agri-businessman and farmer would work with one of CHOICE Humanitarian's partners, Pwani University, 37 miles north of Mombasa in Kilifi, a city of 123,000 along the coast.

"People there prefer to eat chicken instead of beef as an entrée, so we decided to teach them to raise and sell broiler chickens," Bill says. "It's a way to help them improve their quality of life."

Within a year, the fledgling poultry production program has taken flight.

"We have about 20 local residents raising chickens," he says. "By the end of this year, we anticipate we'll have 50 producers."

Bill says seeing the program become established is gratifying. Since 1991, he has done international humanitarian work through the United States Agency for International Development and other organizations.

Several years ago, he chose to work with CHOICE Humanitarian—an



Mike and Sherry Spencer, left, and Bill and Colleen Loughmiller reminisce about their humanitarian and tourist trip to Kenya.

organization founded in 1983 to end intense poverty worldwide through programs involving education, health care and economic development. The organization provides micro-loans to help entrepreneurs establish a business.

"Loans provided directly to people instead of going through a government agency work best for establishing small businesses," Bill says. "One of the fastest ways to lift people out of poverty worldwide is to teach them to run their own agricultural businesses."

To showcase the poultry project to southeast Idaho farmers and ranchers,

Bill and a friend, Mark Darrington of Declo, organized a CHOICE Humanitarian expedition in February. The expedition blended adventure, education and humanitarian service.

Yost ranchers Mike and Sherry Spencer were among 12 couples who signed up.

"We were nervous at first about going," Sherry says.

Before embarking on their overseas adventure, they tolerated inoculations or pills to prevent malaria, yellow fever, hepatitis A and B, meningitis, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

"The plane ride was something you



Left, Major, as he prefers to be called, raises chickens for Pwani University in Kilifi, Kenya. Bottom left, singers and dancers dressed in traditional outfits greeted travelers who came to study the chicken-raising program in Kenya and meet those responsible for its success.

Photo by Bill Loughmiller

raise chickens and implement basic business principles. They also agreed to buy the chicken house kit, 100 chicks of an improved broiler breed that matured in seven weeks and high-quality feed.

In return, university officials agreed to buy the first two batches of chickens for the cafeteria.

“It was a way to ensure the new business owners could repay the loan,” Bill says. “After that, they could sell to anyone.”

After students and others tasted the plump, flavorful broilers, the university farm store quickly sold out when more batches of chickens were processed.

“The native chickens run free range and tend to have tough meat,” Bill says.

Restaurant owners near campus and local residents began buying the improved broiler breed instead of native chickens.

Through word of mouth, others joined the program.

“A woman named Julia became successful at raising chickens,” Bill says. “Over a fence, her neighbor watched her, then decided he would too. Four private farms not affiliated with the university started raising them, too.”

Besides seeing the poultry program, Sherry and others donated items to two schools and an orphanage. Verla Darrington of Declo organized the donation drive.

“We filled suitcases with school supplies, toiletries and deflated soccer balls to give away,” Sherry says.

Mike says they gave baseball caps to people they met.

“Those small gifts were really appreciated,” Mike says. “It made Kenyans see people from rural white America in a positive light. Wherever we’re from in the world, we have common goals. We all want to provide for our families.” ■



couldn’t prepare for,” Mike says of the 22-hour flight from Salt Lake City to Nairobi.

“It was a fascinating trip, and we’re so glad we did it,” Sherry says. “The Kenyans we met were hospitable and welcoming. We loved every minute.”

Singing and dancing students dressed in tribal regalia greeted them. Artisans sold them handcrafted beaded jewelry, woodcarvings and textiles. Safaris showcased African wildlife.

Along with those memories, the Spencers say the poultry entrepreneurs impressed them most.

“The program is catching on because people are realizing they can make money and have a better quality of life,” Mike says.

To establish the broiler chicken program, Bill and his wife, Colleen, lived on

the university campus for 10 weeks starting in January 2017. He raised chickens at the university’s demonstration farm.

Colleen says curious Kenyans wondered whether Bill would simply supervise or do manual labor.

“He won their respect by putting on his cowboy hat and going to work,” she says.

Bill designed and built a chicken house kit using lumber and wire netting available at a local store.

“The chickens needed to be in a house to protect them from predators,” he says. “Traditionally, they let their chickens run free and lose a lot to hawks or other animals. For sanitation, a cement floor was needed so it could be cleaned regularly.”

Bill attributes the program’s success to specific guidelines. To qualify for a microloan, participants were required to enroll in a four-week program to learn how to



John Gerstenberger retired after 32 years at Hood River Electric Cooperative. He served 21 years as general manager. In July, Libby Calnon joined the co-op as general manager.

Goodbye and Hello

As a longtime leader retires, HREC makes history with its first female general manager

By Drew Myron

John Gerstenberger—an earnest self-starter who rose from surveyor to systems engineer to general manager—retired in July after 32 years of service to Hood River Electric Cooperative. His replacement, Libby Calnon, is the first female general manager in HREC history.

Libby is only the second female rural electric cooperative manager in Oregon. The first was Cathy Wilson, who served as Wasco Electric Cooperative general manager from 1998 to 2008. Of the nation's 833 rural electric cooperatives, 74 are managed by women, according to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

For 20 years, Libby worked in communications and marketing at Columbia River PUD—an electric utility that serves 19,000 accounts in Columbia and Multnomah counties. In that role, she advocated for customers on regional industry issues and worked on projects related to economic development, strategic planning, outage management,

emergency response and service improvements.

She holds a master's degree in business administration from Western Governors University, a bachelor's degree in technical journalism from Oregon State University and is working toward her Cooperative Finance Professional Certificate through NRECA.

While Libby makes history in the Hood River Valley, she is continuing a family history as the third generation to work in the electric utility industry.

Her father spent more than 40 years in the industry as an electrical engineer and manager, and served as general manager of Skamania PUD. Her uncle was a lineman in Seattle, and her grandmother worked in customer service for Puget Sound Energy. Until recently, Libby's husband, Rick, worked in information technology at Columbia River PUD.

"I come from a public power family," Libby says. "I grew up in the halls of a PUD."

Libby also has deep roots in the area. Her great-grandparents were original members of HREC, and her grandparents,

Dayrl and Dorothy Swyers, lived on Paasch Drive. As a child, Libby spent summers and holidays visiting them. Her parents, now retired, live in Underwood, Washington.

“Moving here feels a bit like coming home,” Libby says.

Preserving the Past, Improving the Present

John joined HREC in 1986, working as a systems engineer then going on to serve as general manager for 21 years. Known for his progressive outlook, he made a mark with technology improvements.

“I’ve always been an early adopter,” John says. “When I came to the co-op, the first in-house billing computer system had just been installed. There were no PCs on-site at that time. I brought my own computer.”

There was no internet or email. Now a palm-sized smartphone has more computing power than HREC’s first monster-sized computer.

As general manager, John improved technology and connectivity and made HREC a forerunner by bringing broadband access to the Hood River Valley. Today, the Communications Access Cooperative Holding Enterprise—a nonprofit service through HREC—provides enhanced internet and connectivity for more than 2,000 subscribers.

Another milestone for HREC is the acquisition of its substation from the Bonneville Power Administration. Purchase of the station, located next to the HREC office in Odell, provides significant cost savings and increased efficiency to the cooperative and its members.

In an era of firsts, HREC stands out for its member-investment program. Created in the 1940s, HREC is the only utility in the Pacific Northwest to offer an investment opportunity that benefits both members and the cooperative. Similar to modern crowdfunding, an HREC investment turns members into partners with contributions that help fund utility needs. It typically provides return rates between 1 and 4 percent.

The investment fund is open to all Oregon residents. It has more than 200 contributors.

“The investment opportunity is very unique,” John says. “We were ahead of our time.”

As general manager, he served as steward of the program.

“It’s grown from a financing source for the co-op to a benefit for members,” John says. “We’re not only preserving the



The staff of Hood River Electric Cooperative gathers for a photo with retiring General Manager John Gerstenberger on his last day. From left are Jeremy McCleary, Doug Balzer, David Porter, Shane Willis, Clinton Curtis, Pamela Chapman, Brandi Kelly, Brenda Lewis, Paul Gerstenberger, John, Janette Elizondo, Ryan Tegart, Chris Walker and Simeon Story. Not pictured: David Adams.

Photo by Libby Calnon

heritage of the fund, but at a better level than before. We’re able to preserve and grow.”

Stability is a theme. Just four managers have overseen HREC operations since its inception: Willard Johnson from 1948 to 1973; Theodore Perry from 1973 to 1986; Don Walker from 1986 to 1997; and John from 1997 to 2018.

The board of directors offers longevity as well. Doug Mahurin has served 22 years; Butch Gehrig, 20 years; Patrick Moore, 20 years; Roger Nelson, 17 years; Gary Bloom, 15 years; John McGhee, eight years; Opal DeBoard, eight years; and Dick Sohler, three years. Jeff Osborn recently replaced Bernie Wells, who served for 20 years.

But the more things change, the more they stay the same. John and his wife, Lynette, remain in Odell, keeping a home base for an outdoor lifestyle of camping, fishing, hiking and motorcycle adventures.

“What better place to be?” John asks. “It’s super here.”

With the passage of time and leadership, HREC continues its mission detailed in 1945: “It shall be the aim of Hood River Electric Cooperative to make electric energy available to its members at the lowest rate consistent with sound economy and good management.”

Today, the co-op serves approximately 3,800 accounts owned by more than 2,700 members. Energy is delivered from three BPA points of power through approximately 250 miles of distribution line. Today, just as it was when it began 73 years ago, membership to the cooperative is just \$5. ■



Relaxing in the MarJo to discuss upcoming community projects, from left, are Marlene Geil, Zan Morrell, Gerry Geil and John Allee.

Restoration Projects Bring Back Mackay's Luster

With hard work and humor, a towering Minion and volunteers beautify Mackay

By Dianna Troyer

Whenever he is needed, Jon the Mackay Minion answers the call of duty and steps out of storage to help beautify downtown Mackay.

The 7-foot-tall Minion—an abandoned refurbished porta-potty—is painted yellow along with blue pants and suspenders. Jon mysteriously appears at businesses, whose owners must donate money to have him moved.

Volunteers supervise Jon's fundraising efforts and have been using donations to give

downtown businesses a facelift with a fresh coat of paint.

"The Minion has been the talk of the town and is well received," volunteer John Allee says. "People wondered where he would turn up next. Some people paid in advance to make sure he wouldn't be left on their property. Others wanted him standing at their business."

For their first project during summer 2016, volunteers painted the exterior of the Custer County Sheriff's Office. Their subsequent summer projects include staining Amy

Lou's, painting an old tailor shop and the old Pay-Master building, cleaning the interior of the Mackay Main Theatre, and removing debris and pulling weeds at two empty lots.

Realtor Terri Pritchett says her clients notice the beautification projects.

"Mackay is a historic town with older buildings, yet it looks inviting and progressive with the improvements," Terri says. "People coming to town for the first time tell me it looks cared for, clean and attractive."

Last summer, Christopher

James, who owns the theater on Main Street, had a new roof installed on the historic building. The distinctive red-and-white neon marquee was restored to its original glory. The theater and an adjacent concession area also received a new coat of stucco and paint.

"I'm for the community of Mackay and really appreciate the volunteers who have been painting businesses and sprucing up town," Christopher says.

Besides John, the main volunteers include Margie Hocking Van Orden, Gerry and Marlene Geil, and Zan



Morrell. They welcome and appreciate all who tackle projects with them.

They met while having coffee at Zan's business, The Liar's Den Bait and Tackle Shop.

"I'd been coming to the valley on weekends for about 30 years and retired up here and opened my business," Zan says.

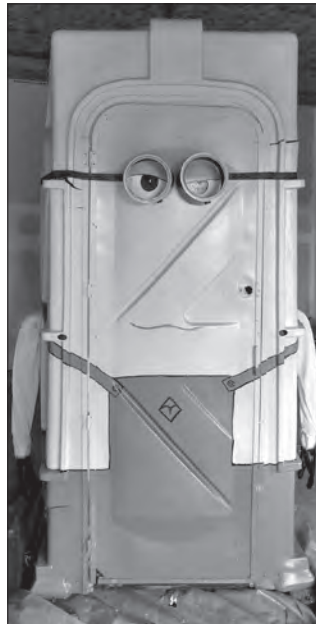
Marlene also retired here. "We kept running into each other when we went out to eat or to have coffee," she says.

"We all have a good sense of humor and want to beautify our town," Gerry adds.

The volunteers say they appreciate people's generosity. Some residents have donated to the beautification projects spontaneously.

"We were taking a break, sitting on the steps of the sheriff's office, and people would roll down their windows and hand us some money," John says.

Zan estimates about 50 donors provided \$3,000 to buy



paint and supplies.

"People would give \$25 to \$50," Zan says. "It really added up."

He says customers have commented about the beautification projects.

"We've heard positive comments from people who came for the solar eclipse and people who come to town to ride the trails with their UTVs," Zan says.

Joining in community celebrations, Jon the Minion even wore solar eclipse glasses last summer.

"We had to move a port-potty that was standing against the sheriff's office so we could finish painting," Zan says. "We tried to find the owner, but no one claimed it. We had some leftover blue and yellow paint and were brainstorming about what to do with it."

Margie recalls it was a blistering hot day, and they were exhausted from scraping old paint off the building. They took a break in the shade behind the office.

"We were sipping some ice

Clockwise from far left, businesses have been updated with a fresh coat of paint. Jon the Mackay Minion is a popular figure around town. Margie Hocking Van Orden and contractor Tim Rice discuss putting a new roof on the theater.

cold barley soda," Margie says, "and our wheels of humor and imagination began to churn."

They loaded the old toilet on John's flatbed trailer, strapped it down and headed to his garage.

"Within a few days, what emerged was entirely different from what went in," Margie says. "I literally cut the sleeves out of the shirt I was wearing, and Jon the Minion instantly had arms. His first visit was to the Liar's Den because Zan was always playing jokes on us."

To show support for the theater, Jon the Minion has stood near the front door. With the theater exterior improved, renovations inside will continue in the adjacent concession area, the MarJo, named for a previous owner's relatives.

Margie's uncle and aunt, Joe and Dolly Hocking Ausich, operated the show house for 40 years. They named the MarJo for their children, Mariann and Joe.

Volunteers say they hope the theater and the MarJo become vital again to the community. More remodeling needs to be done before they are ready to rent.

"The theater seats are still nice and comfortable," John says. "It has a capacity for 225 people."

The volunteers and their Minion are flexible with their projects.

"We see what needs to be done," John says. "We just do it and have fun in the process." ■



Howard Wright, left, has been a Wells Rural Electric Co. board member for 18 years. The 74-year-old spent many years building relationships in the community and beyond, including starting a popular summer youth basketball camp.

Photo courtesy of Wells Rural Electric Co.

Board Member Leaves Lasting Impression

From Nevada to D.C., Howard Wright made friends wherever he went

By Dianna Troyer

Howard Wright measures his service on the Wells Rural Electric Co. Board of Directors in numbers: six terms and 18 years. Yet the relationships he nurtured during that time are immeasurable.

Local board members counted on Howard to develop friendships while he represented WREC at regional and national meetings that dealt with issues affecting the electrical industry.

“He brought the board together with other delegates wherever we went,” says Mary Wright, a retired board member

who served with Howard.

Howard, 74, will retire from the board in October.

“There will never be another Howard,” Mary says. “He’s a special person from a very special Carlin family. If you go anywhere with Howard, you think he has so many friends, but it’s just Howard meeting people. No one is a stranger.”

Mary recalls a memorable event at a regional meeting of electric co-op board members.

“He joined us with a group of his new friends—five jovial Inuit directors from northern Alaska,” she recalls.

His gregarious attitude at regional meetings carried over to national events.

“Walking down a street in Washington, D.C., Howard greeted everyone cordially,” Mary says. “People responded to him. With him, I felt like I was walking down the streets of Carlin. When only he and I were delegates at a meeting, he made sure I was not left alone.”

Coincidentally, Mary says her and Howard’s families both trace their roots to Georgia.

Although they are not related, she says, “Talking to him is like going home again,



Howard's board work sometimes required meeting with state congressional staff, above. His demeanor and care for the community make Howard a popular figure.

like visiting with another cousin.”

Throughout his service, Howard remained committed to his campaign promises.

“I don't represent Carlin on the board,” he said when he was elected in 2000. “I represent all members in the service area.”

Howard completed classes to enhance his ability to serve and understand the complex issues involving electric rates and other concerns facing WREC.

He passed tests to become a Certified Credentialed Director with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and earned the Board Leadership Certificate. He studied courses concerning director duties and liabilities, the electric industry, board roles and financial planning.

Howard says the decisions reached in the board room were still often difficult.

“We discussed all sides of an issue,” he says. “After voting, we supported the majority decision when we left the board room.”

Howard also served on WREC's Next Dollar Foundation and helped select philanthropic projects to fund in the service area.

When his duties with the WREC

board were done, Howard turned his attention to the Carlin community, where he graduated from high school in 1962. A versatile athlete, he competed in basketball, football and track.

During his spare time from working at the Union Pacific Railroad, Howard organized a popular summer basketball camp for Carlin youth, teaching skills to athletes who would form the foundation for winning teams.

“The camp was always in early summer, so kids could keep their skills honed up,” Howard says.

He coached high school junior varsity basketball, Little League baseball and girls' softball.

“Even after our three kids graduated, we still went to all the games we could,” he says.

Some of the children he coached became WREC employees.

“Our board meetings started punctually, but sometimes Howard would still be circulating through the WREC building greeting people, especially those he had coached in younger days,” Mary says. “Someone would have to go find him when the meeting started.”

Howard applied sound business

principles not only with the WREC board, but also as a Carlin businessman. He ran a part-time auto repair shop, had a tow truck service and developed eight trailer spaces.

In the 1990s, he started a self-storage business.

“He was the first one to start a business like that, and it went really well,” his wife, D'Anne, says. “I wasn't as confident as he was, but he was right. Other people started similar businesses. Now there are four in town.”

Howard had more time for his many interests after retiring from the railroad in 2004.

During his six terms, whatever issue the board confronted, Howard says his and other members' goal “was to keep an adequate supply of power while keeping rates as low as possible.”

Board Chairman Scott Egbert says Howard would battle fiercely and take on the whole board for any single member if he thought something was not quite right, or that member needed a little extra help.

“He was definitely a friend to everyone and lifted everyone's spirits wherever he went,” Scott says. ■

VEA's First Power Systems Controller Apprentice Working His Dream Job

Nico Cipollini juggles full-time work, study

By Vern Hee

It was by chance that Nico Cipollini found himself as a Power Systems Controller apprentice right after high school.

Systems controllers configure and operate power systems. When the power goes out during an emergency, system operators – often referred to as dispatchers – help resolve the issue.

Nico had always been interested in working for a power company. He had grown up listening to his father's stories as a VEA lineman and believed that working as a lineman was a great career.

"I have so much respect for the linemen," Nico says. "I think honestly that linemen are the most awesome people, and it is the coolest profession out there."

Nico just figured that becoming an engineer was a good way to get into the industry. So when he graduated from high school in 2015, Nico was college bound to become an engineer.

Then his father, Tony Cipollini, who has worked as a lineman for 29 years



Problem solving is one of Nico's strengths.

Jeff Scheid



Nico Cipollini, with Dad Tony, a longtime VEA lineman.

with VEA suggested his son complete an internship at VEA. Tony wanted Nico to get a taste of what engineers did to help him make an educated decision on his future.

Tony's efforts resulted in a six-month internship at the end of 2015, which allowed Nico to explore both the engineering and IT departments at VEA.

After working with VEA as an intern, Nico had a clearer idea of how to make his dream of working in the power industry come true. The internship helped him make his decision, and he was driven to obtain a job working in the power industry.

Nico was even prepared to go to linemen's school to make his dream come true.

Then a month before Nico graduated from high school, he received a call from Kristin Mettke, VEA Executive Vice President of Engineering. The call would change his life. She offered him an apprenticeship to become a power systems controller, the first in VEA's 53-year history.

He has now been a VEA apprentice power systems controller for about two years. Nico is currently on track to finish his 8,000-hour, four-year apprentice program on schedule.

Nico passed the North American Electric Reliability Corporation certification after four months of studying and a year's worth of experience at VEA.

"In Nico's case, he is one of the youngest NERC certified system operators in the country," says Mike Geoffroy VEA Manager of Dispatch. "This certification is difficult to pass. He is one of the youngest to do it and get it."

While studying for certifications, Nico finished his Associate's Degree in May 2018 in Applied Science for Electrical Transmission Systems Technology from Bismark State College Online in North Dakota. He plans on getting a bachelor's in energy management from the same college.

According to Mike, Nico was in new territory for VEA.

Many of VEA's controllers started as linemen or came to Pahrump with previous systems controller experience.

Mike says VEA would typically choose from among experienced candidates, either in the field or operating systems. He says Nico is a good fit for the job, which requires controllers to be able to think on their feet and to solve problems quickly.

Often when members have problems, a VEA Customer Service Representative may refer the problem to dispatch, says Nico.

"Problem solving is one of my strengths," says Nico. "A member could call in an outage and the problem might be between the circuit breaker in the lines and all the way to the substation. We walk them through their problems to solve the issue."

"We are in charge of managing and monitoring the distribution system," says Mike. "If there is a power issue, we can help members resolve the issue."

He says the controllers also monitor the bulk electric systems and coordinate with VEA lineman and subcontractors for planned outages and necessary switching.

Mike likes the way Nico is juggling the



At the age of 20, Nico is the first VEA power systems controller apprentice and one of the youngest in the nation to obtain the North American Electric Reliability Corporation certification. At left is VEA COO Ramon Abueg, and Shane Coon, Power Systems Controller.

responsibilities of work and study.

"So far, so good," Mike says. "The hardest part is giving him real time at the desk on a computer. He gets simulations, but often those simulations are with someone else's system."

Since Nico started, he has worked closely with VEA Interim Lead Power Systems Controller Shane Coon, who was hired at the same time as Nico. Shane likes the fact that Nico is like a sponge when it comes to learning.

"Nico has an advantage over someone like me because he is so young, and it's much easier to teach him," Shane says. "Nico handles himself well."

Roy Bell, who recently retired as senior Power Systems Controller, says the apprenticeship was a good move for the company. Roy was lineman who became a Power System Controller. Roy believes it is a good way to build a unique experience that revolves around the position of power systems controller rather than line worker or some other discipline.

"I think it is a really good trend to educate our people like this," Roy says.

"Nico would see things that a lineman would not. The cross training and the cross experiences are really good training."

Tony thinks his son made a great choice and is proud of his accomplishments at VEA. He is amazed that he got his NERC certification at such a young age.

"I know what it takes to get NERC certified," Tony says. "For him to do it so young makes me very proud."

With his son almost fully qualified as a power systems controller, Tony has had to get used to taking directions from his son. The first time he heard his son's voice over the radio in such a capacity, he was working up in Fish Lake Valley. "It is a little bit different working with him, for I have been working in this field for a long time," he says. "Now it is like I am taking direction from him, which has happened three times."

The proud father says that at that point it's no longer about "father and son." It's all about VEA. ■



Karen Martinis, left, looks on as Pico Cantieni works on her espresso maker and Don Shriner finds a bit he needs for repairs at the Rodeo City Repair Café

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Local volunteers encourage repair and reuse over toss and replace

By **Cris Ellingson**

Don Shriner believes small acts of community make a big difference, which is why he enjoys the repair café in Kittitas County's Independent Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery Shop.

Repair cafés are free meeting spaces that are all about repair. Visitors bring in anything from clothing in need of sewing to broken weed trimmers. One thing each visit has in common: All repairs are free.

Guests can do their own work with tools provided, or they can get help from volunteers with more hands-on experience.

Don found out about the repair

café—renamed Rodeo City Repair Cafe in August—in Kittitas about 10 years ago. He says he liked the thought of connecting with and helping people. His desire to teach and raise awareness has not dwindled.

“I have always rejected the ‘replace because it’s old, buy because it’s new’ mentality,” Don says. “The concept of repair and reuse has always lit a spark in me. Recycling is not the stand-alone answer.”

Don says recycling is not a stand-alone answer, but part of the solution. He sees a need to develop a circular economy, one in which manufacturers, retailers and consumers are all responsible for dealing

with packaging and the impacts their products have on the environment.

“Repair Café is a grassroots effort in the true sense of the word,” Don says. “The circle stays in the neighborhood, and maximum usability is extracted from products we as consumers purchase.”

Don and his wife, Sylvia, have ties to Native American culture, which he says demands respect for all the earth provides. They share the belief that nothing is trash, water is life, and life is a circle. At the very least, do no harm.

“We have a core group that is buying into the concept and are totally supportive,” Don says, adding that support from outside the group of regulars is helpful.



Above, volunteer Pico repairs a bird fountain pump. Right, Suzanne Blakeney is ready to help with any sewing, darning or knitting needs.

“Repair Café International provides help, resources and encouragement. Ours is a new group. We have to walk our own path and have found that our strengths and success depend on support from the community, both with repairers and customers.”

He says the local IOOF has been a great partner and community resource. The group’s help is appreciated, but regulars and volunteers keep the shop running.

“I became involved from the beginning,” Suzanne Blakeney says. “I come in and offer to fix things. The intent is what is most important. With our throw-away thinking, we are trying to educate people that things can be repaired.”

Suzanne’s help includes tracking repairs, sewing, darning and knitting.

Chuck Dreyer sought out the shop so he could help, too.

“I saw the article in the Daily Record and want to help,” he says. “I’ve been tinkering since the age of 14, before I entered the service.”

He repaired a sprinkler that “quit going

shh shh shh,” according to its owner, Christina—who also brought in a bird bath that needed its pump repaired. After a little tweaking and a little nozzle cleaning with a pair of tweezers, the sprinkler was ready to go, to the delight of the owner. Her bird bath was also repaired.

Don says this time of year means quite a few weed trimmers, lawnmowers, chainsaws and other outdoor equipment comes in for repair.

“I brought a Weed Eater and small chainsaw in” says Pete Paget. “Both were inspected, fixed, repaired and work well—all within an hour’s time. These are really neat people.”

Bill Bobovski and grandson August Ward arrive with a weed trimmer spool. Dave Sturgell jumps to work, instructing them how to replace the line.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

“Repair Café is a neighborhood affair,” Don says. “Most people remember one garage where kids would come with their flat tires, skateboards and broken toys. It was usually a hub of neighborhood

activity with bicycles scattered about—a place kids could come and learn respect for tools, the value of the stuff they use and the value of knowing how to do stuff?”

Rodeo City Repair Café offers a similar environment. People from throughout the county can get together and help one another. As Don says, everyone had to learn sometime.

“None of us are born knowing how things worked,” he says. “Someone taught us. We are just trying to keep that alive, both as a repairing venue and as a teaching resource. Maybe by watching another do a repair, people will feel empowered to do it themselves next time. What have you go to lose? It’s broken already, right?”

As word spreads, more residents make their way to the café to offer or receive help, or just to socialize.

“We all need to work and make money,” Don says, “but we also need to make a deposit into the bank account of humanity regularly.” ■

Meetings are the second Saturday of the month at the IOOF Cemetery shop at 1900 Brick Mill Road in Ellensburg from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This winter, don't struggle to pay your heating bills. You may qualify for energy assistance through a federally funded program.



Community Helps Others Meet Energy Needs

Federal funds and local contributions help Eastern Oregonians pay their heating bills during financial difficulties

By Lisa Jacoby

Sue Weathers is always keen to spread the word about energy assistance programs—even in the aisles at the grocery store.

Sue works at the Harney County Senior and Community Services in Burns. Among her duties is helping administer the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It helps those who qualify pay their heating bill.

Oregon's LIHEAP is administered through local Community Connection agencies.

The program is available to individuals or families who demonstrate an "energy burden" and

have a gross income that is at or below 60 percent of the state's median income. Qualifying incomes are \$23,095 or less for one person; \$44,414 or less for a family of four; or \$58,626 or less for a family of eight. Applicants can either own or rent their home. The priority for the assistance funds goes to seniors and/or disabled individuals. The second priority is families with children 6 years old or younger.

"I work really hard to get seniors and people with disabilities in here," Sue says. "There are a lot of people who would qualify but don't come in."

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon administers LIHEAP in Baker, Union and Grant counties. Henry Manjarres oversees the program, which helped 3,972 people in 2,003 households from October 2017 to June 2018.

LIHEAP funds for the Community Connection program are available starting October 1. Harney County's program, which is handled by Community in Action based in Ontario, begins in late November or early December.

Applications are accepted until federal funds are

spent, which sometimes happens before the full year is up, Henry says. Fortunately, LIHEAP funds are supplemented by community agencies, which help when federal dollars are expended or in the case of an impending end in services.

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative donates \$1 for every meter to the energy-assistance program. OTEC's service territory is divided into four districts. The amount donated depends on the number of active meter counts in a particular district. In total, OTEC donates about \$32,000 for energy assistance each year.

"We designate those funds to our members who need help paying their electric bill," says Sandra Ghormley, OTEC director of member and program services.

LIHEAP in Baker, Union and Grant counties also receives donations from Avista, Pacific Power and Cascade Natural Gas. Harney Electric Cooperative donates money in Harney County.

"There are a lot of agencies involved in it," Henry says.

Qualifying for LIHEAP

Individuals or families can qualify once a year for LIHEAP, except in the case of a medical emergency or crisis. In the case of crisis, an additional LIHEAP payment could be available more quickly. Regular program funds are paid within 45 days.

Those seeking help can inquire at Community Connection offices in Baker City, La Grande and John Day, or at the senior center in Burns.

LIHEAP aids with all sources of heat: electric, oil, gas and wood. Fund disbursement is based on income. A family of four with an income of \$30,000 is eligible for \$450 to pay their electricity bill. A family of eight with an income between \$45,970 and \$61,291 qualifies for \$385 for electricity.

A complete eligibility chart is available at each community agency that administers the program. Once approved, the agency alerts the utility that funds are on the way.

When OTEC receives a voucher that LIHEAP funds are coming, collection actions are suspended for that account, and no late charges are applied.

"We are grateful to have such a good working relationship with our local social service agencies," Sandra says. "Together, we're able to connect members in need with the resources available. It's a good feeling to know that we've played a part in

Where to Call

To determine eligibility for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, people need to first call and make an appointment.

- ▶ Community Connection of Baker County
2810 Cedar St., Baker City
(541) 523-6591
- ▶ Community Connection of Union County
1504 N. Albany St., La Grande
(541) 963-7532
- ▶ Grant County Senior Programs
142 NE Dayton, John Day
(541) 575-2949
- ▶ Harney County Senior and Community Services
17 S. Alder Ave., Burns
(541) 573-6024

easing the burden of others."

If the approved funds exceed the amount of one month's bill, the remaining balance is applied to subsequent months.

"Some will cover three months," Sue says. "Most of the people we see are on a fixed income. They really count on that in the winter."

Mary Jo Carpenter, who manages Community Connection in Baker County, has seen LIHEAP help locals for more than 30 years.

"It's changed over the years, but the basics remain the same," she says. "The beauty of it is that you don't have to be in crisis. It is the thing that helps them through."

Mary Jo says Congress increased LIHEAP funding during the recession.

"We had a lot of money to spend, and we really did help people out," Mary Jo says. "Of all the programs we do, I think of LIHEAP as one of the better ones. It helps people who are struggling."

When seeking LIHEAP funds, applicants need to provide a Social Security card, photo identification, current electric bill and proof of income for all household members.

Each year when the program begins, Sue spreads the word through the newspaper and Facebook. She also visits various groups and churches. In Harney County, she depends on word of mouth to advertise the program.

Those who apply for LIHEAP may be eligible for other programs, such as weatherization or home repair. ■

Winterize Your Home With OTEC's Energy Programs

By Susan Parrish

Winter temperatures will soon arrive in Eastern Oregon and residents will turn up their thermostats. For the hundreds of Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative members who made energy-efficient improvements to their homes and commercial buildings in the past year, their spaces will be more comfortable. Their electric bills may be considerably lower than in years past, too.

In all, OTEC has provided rebates to residential and commercial members for 537 energy-efficiency improvements completed since January 2017. Those projects include installing one smart thermostat, 283 water heaters, 44 ducted electric heat pumps, 124 ductless mini-split heat pumps, 64 permanent air conditioners, and energy-efficient double-pane windows on 21 homes and commercial buildings.

Mini-Split Ductless Heat Pumps

Lori Graham watches Scott Fletcher and his crew from Scott's Heating and Air Conditioning install a ductless mini-split heat pump in her Union home, which previously was heated solely with a wood stove. Lori says she was looking forward to the ease of the efficient electric system geared for homes without existing ductwork—no more chopping wood, splitting kindling or building a fire.

"I'll be able to push a button and have heat," she says.

Scott says his customers have been happy with the results.

"They're quiet, efficient and trouble free," he says. "I put one in my master bedroom. They're that quiet."

Lori paid about \$6,800 for the system,



Although Jim and Kathy Myron from Union benefitted from an OTEC rebate following the installation of energy-efficient windows and a sliding patio door, Jim says the additional comfort is the true incentive.

including installation.

During the summer, Lori was busy with other home improvements. She bought an energy-efficient washer and dryer, and is replacing aluminum-frame windows with energy-efficient double-pane windows.

In all, she will receive three rebates from OTEC for her projects.

Energy-Efficient Windows

Will and Kim Brown built their Canyon City home in 1986. Its double-pane aluminum-frame windows lacked a thermal break between panes. The windows were hot in the summer and cold in the winter.

During five hot days in July, Will replaced all 16 windows with energy-efficient double-pane windows. After installing one new window, he shot an infrared laser thermometer first on an old window and then on a new window.

"The old double-pane window registered just over 100 degrees," Will says. "The new window next to it read 74 degrees. That's a big difference. These energy-efficient windows are worth their weight in gold. Our windows should make a considerable difference in the wintertime, too."

The Browns spent \$3,700 on the windows. Will, a licensed and bonded contractor, saved about \$3,000 by

installing them himself.

Just five days after installation, they measured a 20- to 25-degree difference between the outdoor and indoor temperature. Even when it was 97 degrees outside, the inside temperature was a comfortable 72 degrees.

At night, the Browns open the windows, and the house cools even more.

“This home is energy efficient, but the windows lacked any efficiency whatsoever,” Will says. “Now it’s like night and day. I can’t believe how they’ve mastered the efficiency of these windows. I was contemplating putting in a swamp cooler or an air conditioner, but now we don’t need to do that.”

Window rebates vary from \$2 to \$4 per square foot of glass.

Insulation

Although rebates are not yet available for adding insulation, it is one of the easiest ways to make a home’s interior temperature comfortable regardless of the weather, says Tyler Sheedy of Tyler Sheedy Construction in John Day.

“You’d be surprised at the number of homes that have no insulation in the walls or the attic,” Tyler says. “Insulation pays you in the summer and winter alike.”

Tyler says attics—the easiest space to insulate—often have zero to minimal insulation. When he was roofing a triple-wide manufactured home, he filled the attic with blown insulation for about \$300. The temperature difference in the home was immediate.

That time of year, the family typically built a fire in the wood stove as secondary heat. The day after Tyler insulated the attic, the family forgot to build a fire because the house didn’t get cold. The next day, they remembered to build a fire, but the house became too hot. With insulation in the attic, they didn’t need a fire.

“Insulation is not a huge expense,” Tyler says. “With the comfort and the

Get Rebates with OTEC’s Energy Programs

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative offers rebate programs for members who install electrical appliances or equipment in their homes or commercial buildings, including:

- ▶ Smart thermostats
- ▶ Water heaters
- ▶ Ducted electric heat pumps
- ▶ Ductless mini-split heat pumps
- ▶ Permanent air conditioners
- ▶ Energy-efficient double-pane windows

For information about these rebate programs, visit www.otecc.com/conservation/residential.

In Grant and Harney counties, call Supervisor of Energy Programs Susie Snyder at (541) 575-5426 or email ssnyder@otecc.com.

In Baker and Union counties, call Energy Program Representative Todd Hendrickson at (541) 663-2144 or email thendrickson@otecc.com.

cost savings, insulation will pay for itself in a short period of time.”

Comfort and Energy Efficiency

During the summer, Jim and Kathy Myron replaced the original aluminum-frame picture window and sliding patio door in their open living-dining room at their home in Union. Jim did most of the work himself. They paid \$2,000 for windows and some labor. The Myrons received a \$240 rebate from OTEC.

“For me, the rebate wasn’t the incentive,” Jim says. “The incentives are that it’s much more comfortable. You’re adding to the value of your house.”

Since installing the new windows, even on 95-degree days, the warmest indoor temperature was 75 degrees.

“These windows are designed to keep the heat out during the summer and keep the heat in during the winter,” Jim says. “We’ve noticed a big difference, not only in keeping the excess heat out, but also in keeping out the noise.”

OTEC Staff is on Hand to Help

Energy Program Representative Todd Hendrickson works with members to help them install energy-efficient home improvements, such as the new mini-split heat pump in Lori’s home. The popular rebate program offers \$500 to

\$1,000 per outdoor unit, depending on the model and installer.

If the installer is qualified by the Bonneville Power Administration, the member can claim a higher rebate. OTEC can help members find qualified installers in the area.

A \$100 rebate to install a smart thermostat is available to members with electric forced-air furnaces. A smart thermostat anticipates a family’s patterns of when they are home and away, and helps keep the temperature at a more efficient level. The user can control the settings remotely with a phone app. An additional \$25 credit is available if the smart thermostat is bought at a local vendor within OTEC’s service territory.

Incentives from \$100 to \$500 are available for water heaters, depending on whether it’s a standard storage water heater, on-demand water heater or a heat pump water heater. The buy-local rebate adds another \$25.

“One of our jobs as energy program representatives is to maximize rebate incentives so members can realize a faster return on their investment in energy-efficiency upgrades,” Todd says. “Whether it’s your home, commercial or irrigation systems, OTEC has a rebate to fit your needs. Call your local OTEC office. We’re here to help you.” ■



Carol Wright is volunteer CEO of the Graham-Kapowsin Community Council. She and volunteer driver/board member Leonard Blyton regularly staff the weekly food bank.

Big Hearts Make Life Better in Small Towns

Behind-the-scenes volunteers fulfill needs in rural communities

By Mary Morrison

They fix. They rescue. They organize. They work to bring about positive change.

They are volunteers working to make life better in rural southeast Pierce County.

For the most part, they work behind the scenes and eschew the spotlight. But their presence is not unusual in rural areas. Small communities don't always have the means or funds to support all the facilities and services needed by their citizens, so volunteers often step up to serve where needed.

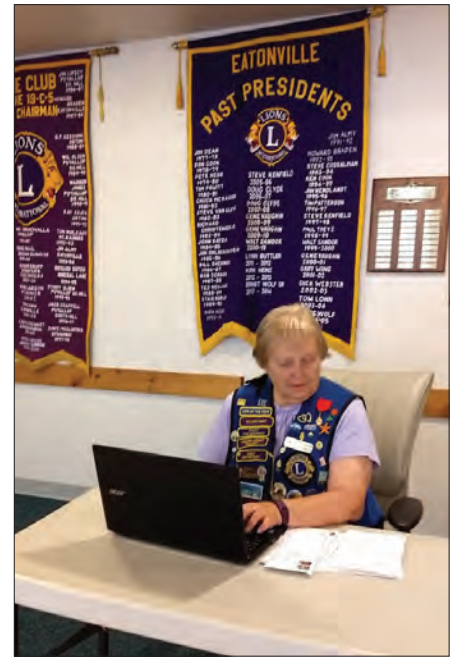
Carol Wright, Bill Starks and Geneal Palmer understand the need. They are

longtime volunteers who work to make a difference in their communities.

Though each takes a unique approach to volunteering, they share a dedication to making life better.

Geneal Palmer of Eatonville, who has volunteered in various capacities the past eight years, started in earnest after retiring from teaching. Giving back to the community was something she learned from an early age.

"I had the perfect role model," Geneal says. "My mother was quite active after retiring. She was a fourth-grade history teacher. After retirement, she wrote five books and was a regular contributor to a newspaper column and a radio show."



Geneal Palmer wears many volunteer hats, including a habitat presentation for visitors at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park and membership in the Eatonville Lions Club, above. Left, Bill Starks, left, and Mayor Anthony Rawlin McDaniel in front of the Fallen Heroes Memorial at Roy City Hall.

Above photos courtesy of Geneal Palmer

Geneal maintains a robust volunteer schedule that includes commitments to Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, the Ohop Grange and Eatonville Lions Club. She is an active member of the Dogwood Garden Club, serves as chairperson of the administrative council at her church and sits on the Eatonville Community Center board. As a director and trustee for the

rust out," Geneal says with a laugh. "As a woman in my mid-70s, I see others who are laid up, and I don't want to be like that. I like to be around people and get out. I want to feel like I'm contributing."

The same caring attitude spilled over into Bill Starks' life. After an Army career, he worked for the U.S. Postal Service and the security industry. He

later worked for a roofing company and in maintenance for a retirement community, volunteering to help others along the way.

Whether it was repairing an appliance for neighbors or fixing personal items for a retiree, Bill exercised the same caring mindset his parents instilled in him

"I've volunteered in some way my whole life," Bill says. "My parents were always helping people with their cars, building houses. It was an attitude."

His most notable volunteer opportunity came in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Bill volunteered to build shelters, set up purification stations, disperse food and provide basic medical care to victims.

His volunteer projects are not as high-profile these days, but are no less important. Bill often learns about community needs through contact with Mayor Anthony Rawlin McDaniel.

Continues on page 8



Leonard and Carol volunteer at the community garden and many other events throughout the county.

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“You can’t ask for a better person,” Anthony says. “He’s always there for me.”

Bill’s current volunteer service includes commitments to Heroes Promise—a veteran’s service organization—and the city of Roy, as well as occasional projects for his friends and neighbors.

Bill built a safety fence around a decommissioned water tower; rebuilt equipment and cleaned up the grounds at the city park; installed security cameras and motion lights at city hall; and assisted in an animal rescue operation that involved rehoming three dozen cats.

“I would consider just about anything,” Bill says. “If I don’t know anything about it or how to fix it, I’ll learn. You’ve got to keep learning, otherwise you get stuck in life.”

Like Geneal, Bill does not expect or want anything in return for his service.

“I like to keep busy, make life better for those who don’t have a lot of money,” Bill says.

Carol Wright of Graham wanted to improve lives by helping tackle a growing drug culture in the community.

In the 1990s, when she was working as a professor at Pacific Lutheran University, a new drug culture infiltrated the Graham community.

“Teaching was fun, but after a while, I just had to do something,” Carol says. “I didn’t want drugs in my community and didn’t want to have my daughter exposed to it.”

She searched for ways to make changes in the community and identify positive alternatives for youth.

Carol and a neighbor worked for three years to organize an afterschool computer class. Participation grew and more classes followed.

Her group’s efforts were recognized in 2003 when they were given the opportunity to work as the Graham-Kapowsin Community Council.

The council’s founder was leaving and giving Carol’s group the opportunity to continue its work under the council’s name, deriving the benefits from working as a nonprofit organization.

Today, the council works in conjunction with the Bethel School District to provide educational, cultural and economic enrichment opportunities through a variety of programs, classes

and activities.

Carol serves as volunteer CEO, overseeing day-to-day activities, spearheading fundraising and volunteer activities, and reporting to the board of directors.

As a community activist, Carol is busy volunteering; including teaching a science class and a reading class for children, and providing a community transportation service to the local food bank each week.

“I constantly ask myself, ‘What’s the most important thing I can do? Where can I do the best project?’” Carol says. “We’re looking for grants to purchase a building—portable, tiny home or something similar.”

ing—portable, tiny home or something similar.”

The school district cannot always accommodate the group’s need for space, so it would like a new structure to house the council’s administrative functions and possibly a visitor center and a job center for youth.

“We also need to focus on a community center,” Carol says.

A team of board members, volunteers and teachers do their part, but Carol says more help is welcome.

“I ask for volunteers at every board meeting,” she says. “I’m always looking for young people to engage and discuss how we could use their talents.”

Volunteer and council board member Leonard Blyton recalls how Carol helped his family during a time of need.

“Carol made time to take my mother to her appointments when her health was declining,” Leonard says. “It’s amazing she was able to do that given all the time she puts into (the council).”

Asked what drives her to volunteer, Carol’s response is simple: “Knowing the need.”

Three volunteers in three communities share one goal: to make a difference. ■



Top, A mountain biker catches some air on one of the new trails.

Right, A mountain biker rides the TeePee Rocks section of trail in Barnes Canyon.

Opposite page, Joel Rake-Marona picks out dirt to make a level trail.

Photos by Leslie Kehmeier/
Courtesy of Lincoln County
Authority of Tourism





Mountain bikers crave challenges, scenery of new trails near Caliente

By Dianna Troyer

Drenched in sweat, Jon Prescott digs out a section of a new mountain bike trail near Caliente. As he works, he looks forward to the reward of riding on the new trail.

“The physical labor is gratifying because you can see your progress throughout the days and weeks and months,” says the fit 30-year-old. “The full-time work crews who started building it last year have talked about having a similar perspective.”

In evenings and on weekends, three to four times a week, Jon rides the trails he has helped build and plan.

“Most of the new trails are for intermediate riders,” says Jon, the planning and environmental coordinator with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in the Caliente Field Office.

“I love the speed and technical challenge of mountain biking,” he says. “My favorite trails are ones that require focus to ride smoothly and that challenge my ability—like the directional descent in Barnes Canyon. I also really like the fitness aspect of riding and being able to spend several hours out in a new place exploring on my bike.”

Jon says crews stopped working the trails during the summer because the dry, powdery soil won't pack down. Crews will resume their labor in the fall and next spring when some moisture returns and the ground can be worked.

The BLM recently completed 12 miles of new trail and, within three years, hopes to build another 15 miles of trails. Those trails will link to 13 miles of new trails in the nearby Kershaw-Ryan State Park. The Nevada Division of State Parks will build and maintain that section.

The network of trails will eventually wind through pinion and juniper deserts, ponderosa forests, and canyons. Bikers

and hikers will be able to access the system from trailheads at Barnes Canyon about 5 miles east of downtown Caliente and also Ella Mountain Lookout Road 6 miles south of town.

Funding the project and designing the trails took about five years. Jon's been working on it for three.

“From a project management perspective, my focus is on getting quality trails on the ground that will attract mountain bikers from throughout the region.”

One section of the new trail called TeePee Rocks, with its eroded cone-shaped formations of pumice and ash, is emblazoned in mountain biker Leslie Kehmeier's memory.

“TeePee Rocks provides a stunning backdrop and is a must-see part of the trail system,” Leslie says.

The 45-year-old travel and adventure blogger says Lincoln County's terrain impressed her.

“The landscape around Caliente is kind of mind-blowing, definitely not what you might imagine for the Nevada desert,” she says. “No matter where you look, there are big mountains and lots of colors.”

Mountain bikers can ride the trails almost year-round, weather permitting. Jon says there are a few winter weeks when the cold and snow prevent use, and a few weeks in summer that are too hot.

To build the trail system, the BLM and state parks division partnered with the city of Caliente, Lincoln County, and the Southern Nevada Mountain Bike Association. The BLM portions of the project are funded by Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act appropriations.

“We've heard good feedback from bikers,” Jon says. “By next summer, we should have close to 20 miles of trail in Barnes Canyon done.” ■



Let Your Light Shine

Lighthouses are a labor of love for retired couple

By Sabrina Owens

Who would think a friend needing a night light could spark an idea that would lead to a passionate hobby?

That's what happened for Tom and Betty Baker.

Fifteen years ago, a friend, Lyn, frequently needed to get up during the night due to health issues. Her husband worked long hours, and she didn't want to disturb his sleep. Lyn casually mentioned she could use a night light.

Tom thought a lighthouse put on a timer would be the perfect solution.

That was the inspiration for his first lighthouse. Fifteen years later, Tom has created more than 100. He builds each one from scratch, with attention given to every detail.

Tom starts by drawing a pattern on a piece of wood.

"With us, it's a combined hobby," says Tom. "I make the structures. Betty does the landscaping and decorations."

Tom and Betty have been married 63 years. Originally from Pennsylvania, the Bakers moved here 25 years ago when they both retired from the postal service.

Although each lighthouse is unique, certain elements are included on all of them either because they typically are found on lighthouses or because of a personal connection to the Bakers.

Tom and Betty worked

many years for the postal service, so they always include a mailbox. A woodpile reminds them of time spent at their cabin in Pennsylvania.

It may take a discerning eye to find, but each also includes a flag, bell, chimney, Coast Guard sign, antenna, rain barrel, tri-post dock, stove pipe, picnic table and Dutch door.

Tom and Betty get inspiration from different sources.

"I get ideas from Pinterest," says Tom. "It usually shows all four sides of the houses."

Most of the creations are actual lighthouses Tom tries to replicate to scale.

"We're always looking for ideas," says Betty. "We enjoy doing jigsaw puzzles, and they have inspired a lot of the buildings."

From start to finish, each lighthouse takes around 100 to 150 hours of work.

You might wonder about the going rate for one of these exclusive lighthouses.

They are not for sale. Tom and Betty enjoy the creativity and time spent together crafting the lighthouses and find genuine fulfillment giving them to family and friends throughout the country.

It is truly a labor of love.

"I so enjoy this hobby," says Tom. "I don't know what I would do if I didn't have something like this." ■



This lighthouse design is one of Tom's favorites.





At left, Tom and Betty Baker with a replica lighthouse they created to match the one in the picture hanging on the wall. The picture came from a jigsaw puzzle their daughter gave them. They were inspired to build a matching lighthouse after putting the puzzle together. Bottom left, Tom likes the stucco exterior on this lighthouse. Betty suggested stone be added around the base to give it character. Bottom center, this lighthouse and farmhouse design show the meticulous attention the Bakers give to every detail. Bottom right, this lighthouse was inspired by a south Florida chapel the Bakers visited.

