



BRIGHT!

The Umatilla Electric Cooperative Scholarship Program annually awards scholarships to deserving students of all ages pursuing higher education. The amount and number of scholarships awarded has been increased in 2019 to 14 awards of \$3,000 each. The scholarships come from the Umatilla Electric Scholarship Fund, which is managed by the Oregon Community Foundation on behalf of UEC.

A five-member UEC Scholarship Selection Committee (which includes UEC board and community members) selects the recipients from among candidates. The scholarships must be used for educational costs, and the student must enter college in the fall of the school year for which the scholarship is given.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2019 AWARDEES!

*Awardees future plans as expressed at the time of scholarship award.



ALEXANDRA VERELA LEPE plans on training for the Oregon Army National Guard and attending Pacific University to study criminal justice and political science, hoping to one day run for Congress.



ALEXIS VERKIST graduated from Weston-McEwen High School and will attend Brigham Young University-Idaho in the fall to pursue a nursing degree.



AMBER TREAT completed an Oregon Associate of Arts Transfer degree with honors while attending Stanfield High School and will attend Corban University to study pre-medicine.

ASPEN GARTON will attend Weatherford College in Texas this fall to pursue a degree in Elementary Education and play softball.



GIDEON FRITZ plans to attend Blue Mountain Community College in the fall before transferring to an Oregon university to study natural resources.



MADISON ANDERHOLM will be attending the University of Idaho this fall pursuing a double major in medical sciences and mathematics.



MYKA DAVIS is a graduate from Irrigon Jr./Sr. High School attending Mt. Hood Community College this fall to study early childhood education.



NICOLE PHILLIPS will be attending the College of Idaho in Caldwell, beginning her studies in marketing media and communications.



TRENT DURFEY is attending Carroll College in the fall to study health sciences and possibly transfer to Montana State University to pursue his master's degree.



VANESSA MICHELLE SCHMIDT earned her Associate's degree while attending Pendleton High School. She plans to continue her OSAA All-State Dance ambitions while studying biology at University of Portland this fall.



ZULEMA GAYTAN is a 2019 Riverside Jr./Sr. High School graduate with plans to attend Western Oregon University this fall to pursue a master's degree in health science.



KELLIE ZEPEDA earned a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and is pursuing a doctorate in physical therapy at the Oregon State University. She intends to return to her hometown and serve rural workers who may suffer a range of injuries and illnesses due to their strenuous work environment.

NOT PICTURED: LAURA PONCE AND EMILY MENDOZA

ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIP

TANNER BASS is a 2013 graduate of Ione Community Charter School and our 2019 awardee. The electrical engineering scholarship is a \$5,000 award given to exceptional students in Umatilla, Morrow or Union counties who are currently at a sophomore level (or above) majoring in electrical engineering and working towards a career path in the utility industry.

Skip Zapffe, right, gives Andrew Richmond some advice on his shooting technique during practice.



A Blast of a Mentor

Skip Zapffe draws on a lifetime of shooting experience to help trap shooting team

By Kathy Ursprung

As shotgun blasts echo against the hillside in a cattle pasture south of Dufur, a grizzled man in a cap and battered canvas coat paces behind the line of teenaged shooters, occasionally stepping up to offer a piece of advice.

“Shooting is kind of whoever can stare the hardest,” explains Skip Zapffe, 80, of Pine Hollow. “You can only use your primary vision for a very short time and you have to train that. You really have to focus.”

It’s also much different from shooting a rifle. While shooting a rifle, eyes are trained on the sights. In shotgun

shooting, the eyes are focused in the distance on the clay target.

A lifelong shooter and fish and game guide, Skip has been helping the Dufur School clay target team since it started three years ago. He not only helps the students train their vision, he can help them determine whether they have a dominant eye for shooting purposes.

During a shooting fun day the team hosts just before the state championship, he even helped Sheriff Lane Magill identify his dominant eye.

Skip grew up hunting and fishing, and ran duck clubs and sporting clay tournaments around Sequim, Washington. He also guided fishing

trips on the Rogue, Salmon, Snake and Deschutes rivers.

Skip and his wife, Beverly, are retired from the guide business now, “which means we pretty much do the same thing, only no one pays us for it,” Skip says.

About 25 years ago, Skip and Beverly started shooting competitively.

“Since then, I’ve shot more than 200,000 registered sporting clay targets,” he says.

Sporting clays are a bit different from the trap shooting Dufur practices. Sporting clays mimic game bird hunting scenarios from multiple clay shooting stations, while trap uses one thrower with five shooting stations. But the



Team members take turns warming up and then shooting for their scores as Skip observes. From left are shooters August Harvey, Hunter Wagenblast, Andrew Richmond and Nate Obrien.

shooting principles are largely the same.

The couple still shoots competitively. They recently traveled to the Seattle Trap and Skeet Club's state championship.

Skip is a key part of the Dufur team's process, says head coach Robert Wallace.

"The kids just love Skip," he says. "They asked me prior to the season starting, 'Is Skip going to help us this year?' Skip's knowledge and skill of the sport are tremendous. We so appreciate Skip's involvement and coaching to help our kids be much better shooters."

While most trap teams practice at club facilities, the Dufur team has been a do-it-yourself program from the beginning. Parents and teammates haul the thrower out into a cattle pasture. They set up a gazebo tent over some empty cable spools that stand in for tables, where parents provide a spread of pizza, burgers or sandwiches, and boxes of shotgun shells await the shooters.

"I like that it's not super serious," says Peyton Neal, a three-year team member.

Many of the students mesh shooting practice with other spring sports.

"It's more of the fun and less of the stress," Peyton says. "We're always beating our own scores."



Jessica Elam takes aim at a trap shooting target in the distance.

"We take it seriously, but we also hang with friends and have fun," says Alex Barrett, a first-year team member.

"That's a good group," Skip says of the Dufur team. "The thing we try to do most—and first off—is make them safe. Next, we have to have a good time, because to be really competitive, it takes a lot of time and practice. We don't want them to be discouraged." ■



Team Shows Strong at State Tourney

Parker Wallace of Dufur, above, took first place in the male novice category at the Oregon State Trap Shooting Tournament on June 22 at the Hillsboro Trap and Skeet Club. He shot 81 out of 100 targets.

Dufur took 11 of 15 regular season team members to the tournament. They competed in novice, junior varsity and varsity classes based on their season average scores.

Skip Zapffe also attended to help with the coaching. He loaned Jessica Elam, Dufur's only female competitor, a gun customized for clay target shooting.

Jessica was team high gun—the highest score on the team in her classification. Peyton Neal was team high gun in junior varsity class. Nathaniel O'Brien was team high gun in the varsity category.

The tournament was the largest shooting event in the western United States, with 477 registered participants from throughout Oregon.

Coming Together as Community

Elkton residents support one another and embrace growth opportunities while keeping to town's character

By Craig Reed



Marjory Hamann, left, executive director of the Elkton Education Community Center, and Dan Burke, Elkton's mayor, discuss the addition of a softball field, quarter-mile track and 100-meter track. The backdrop to the new facilities is a vineyard—one of several that have been planted in the area the past 15 years.

Two recent events are proof of the togetherness of the Elkton community.

A snowstorm in late February knocked out the power for several weeks to rural residents in the Coast Range. Neighbors stepped up and helped each other through the rough spots of the outage.

In May, most of those same folks voted in favor of a bond that will enhance and upgrade the educational facilities that help shape the future of its younger residents.

"The people of the community find positive things we know we can work on together, and we work on them," says Dan Burke, a lifelong resident of Elkton and the town's mayor. "The storm reinforced how special this community is. When things get tough, you don't always see the best in people. But it was exactly the opposite during the storm, with people wanting to help and neighbors checking on their neighbors."

Andy Boe, Elkton School District superintendent, says passage of the school bond shows the community respects how the district is spending the money and how the school system affects its children. There are 268 students, kindergarten to 12th grade, in Elkton's school system.

"We're starting to see some families come back to us after they've been out elsewhere and have seen what it is like," Andy says. "I can think of five families who have returned to the area and have brought their kids back to this school."

Andy, Dan and Marjory Hamann, executive director of the Elkton Community Education Center, agree the people of the area are special and help make the community special.

"It's the diversity of thought and the ability for people to come together and collaborate," Andy says. "We may not all believe in the same things, but we can come together and make the right decisions. It is refreshing to be here."

"There's a shared sense of how important it is to work together so this small town can stay vibrant," Marjory says.

"All of us working together is what makes us a community," Dan says.

While the population of Elkton is just more than 200 residents, the community stretches out in all directions for many miles. The town sits at the junction of highways 38 and 138, putting it on a designated scenic byway between Interstate 5 and the coast.

Elk Creek is on Elkton's east side, and the Umpqua River flows along its southern edge. The Pacific Ocean is 42 miles to the west, Roseburg is 37 miles to the southeast and Eugene is 54 miles to the northeast.

"We're on the way to everywhere," Marjory says.

The Umpqua River offers plenty of recreational activities: fishing for salmon, steelhead, shad and bass; boating; rafting; and swimming. Douglas fir forests surround the area, with pastured valleys and hillsides that provide feed for livestock.

In the past 20 years, eight vineyards have been planted and five wineries established. The Elkton Oregon American Viticulture Area was approved in 2013. The wine industry has joined logging and livestock as economic drivers in the area.

"It looks like wine has become more of a significant player in our community," says Terry Brandborg, who came to the area with his wife, Sue, in 2002 and planted pinot noir grapes. "We're looking at quite a bit of expansion of the industry in our region. It will benefit everybody that lives in the area."

"There's a great synergy between ranch and forest people who have been here for a long time, but it seems like they have embraced newcomers who have come in and contributed to the wellbeing of the community's economy and its growth."

Another highlight of the community



The Umpqua River, which borders the community of Elkton, provides plenty of recreational opportunities and incredible scenery.

is the Elkton Community Education Center. It was the brainchild of Carol Beckley, a retired teacher. Her vision was a center for mentoring young people, cultivating native plants and promoting Elkton. She bought a sheep field and invited residents to create projects that would enrich the community. The center, now celebrating its 20th anniversary since becoming a nonprofit in 1999, has evolved into a full-service community center and tourist destination.

The 30-acre center features a butterfly pavilion, a replica of historic Fort Umpqua, flower and vegetable gardens, a native plant park and nursery, walking trails, a library and art exhibits.

The center employs Elkton students during the summer, giving them a variety of experiences—from business to customer service. The students give tours of the center, work in the café or join the garden team that works in the vegetable garden and maintains the landscape.

“We see ourselves as a wraparound organization to the school, providing hands-on, real-world experiences here,” Marjory says.

Dan says the addition of vineyards, wineries and the education center have helped Elkton grow. He says the town prefers slow growth to maintain the outdoorsy, rural character it has had since Elkton was established around Fort Umpqua back in 1850. The settlement was incorporated November 4, 1948.

Today, potential developments include Airbnbs, renovation of the Masonic Lodge into lodging and a softball field, a walking/running quarter-mile track and a 100-meter straight track complex on the west side of the education center.

“I think we’re doing a good job of building on what is positive in Elkton,” Marjory says. “Slow strategic growth doesn’t change the community’s character.”

Elkton’s website features the phrase, “A Community Invested in Its Natural



Todd Harrington, a resident of the Elkton area, is a longtime fishing guide on the Umpqua River. In addition to salmon and steelhead, the river has become well known for its smallmouth bass fishery.

Resources.” Those resources include clean air, green forests and the Umpqua River—constants that will help Elkton maintain its character through many more years.

“We understand we have to change, but we don’t want to see Elkton lose its character,” Dan says. ■

A Mountain-Biking

Oakridge's natural beauty and well-maintained trails draw outdoor enthusiasts

By Craig Reed

Five hundred miles of ups and downs, twists and turns, and exhilarating fun await mountain bikers in the Oakridge area. Those miles of trail in the Cascade Mountains have made the Oakridge/Westfir area a mecca for mountain bikers. Travel Oregon has given the rural community the moniker "Mountain Bike Capital of the Northwest."

There's the 6.5-mile Moon Point Loop, the 21-mile Waldo Lake Loop, the 5.6-mile Flat Creek/Dead Mountain Trail and the Upper Alpine and Lower Alpine trails, to name a few. All offer climbs, but plenty of downhill. Scenery ranges from forest and tall timber to meadows and wildflowers.

The Oakridge trails are part of the

Oregon Timber Trail—a 670-mile backcountry mountain biking system that travels the length of Oregon, from the southern border with California to the Columbia River Gorge to the north, with many east and west options.

Many Oakridge trails were established and used by wildlife, Native Americans, hunters, loggers, watchmen to reach fire lookouts and ranchers to move their cattle to high-elevation summer pastures. During the past 25 years, those trails have been renovated and maintained by the mountain bike community, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service.

"Oakridge didn't go out and look for mountain bikers," Mayor Kathy Holston says. "The mountain bikers found Oakridge. The area has all these legacy trails that mountain bikers took to. It's a perfect place to ride for most of the year. We have some great trails—from easy to moderate to the top end of difficult. It's become a destination for mountain

bikers as they've come from all over the world to ride here."

Once in Oakridge or in nearby Westfir, riders can pedal from town to reach trailheads and the trail system, load their bikes on a vehicle or arrange for a shuttle to reach other trailheads, all within 50 miles.

"It's pretty fantastic that you can bike from town," says Michelle Emmons McPharlin, who has ridden her mountain bike on these trails the past 10 years. "You can ride into a wilderness experience from town or it's only 20 to 30 minutes by vehicle to more backcountry trails. It's world-class cycling on a legacy trail system."

Mountain biking in the area got its first major recognition in 1996 with the Cascade Cream Puff. Organized by mountain biker Scott Taylor, it attracted about 40 riders for the 100-mile ride the first year. This year's 24th annual event August 3 is expected to attract around 150 riders, as it has in recent years.

In addition to the 100-mile route, a 50-mile Fritter route and a 25-mile Doughnut Hole course are offered. All three events start and finish in Westfir Portal Park.

"The Cream Puff started to make people more aware that this area was a mecca for outdoor recreation, in particular mountain biking," says Michelle, who is race director for the event.

While many riders are from the West Coast, the event also draws bikers from Canada, Australia, England and other distant locations.

"It's known as America's toughest mountain bike race," Michelle says. "I think there is some validity to that, considering the elevation changes."

The 100-mile course—which is two 50-mile loops—includes 12,815 feet of climbing, 12,828 feet of descending and a high point of 4,775 feet above sea level.

"It's an epic ride with classic views,



Above, riders round the corner as they emerge from the one-lane Office Bridge in Westfir. Opposite page, mountain bikers compete in the Cascade Cream Puff.

Photos by Daniel Sharp

Mecca

vistas, mountains, meadows, flowers, forests,” Michelle says.

Other events are the Sasquatch Duro in May, Roam Ladies in June, Mountain Bike Oregon in July and the Oakridge Triple Summit Challenge in September.

Preparing the trails is almost a year-round activity because trees, branches or landslides may cover a trail at any time.

The mountain bike community and U.S. Forest Service invest hundreds of hours annually to clear the trails, with help from members of the Greater Oakridge Area Trail Stewardship, the Disciples of Dirt, the Alpine Trail Group Association and the Scorpions.

“We have some great trails, and the mountain bikers are willing to help maintain them,” Kathy says.

The Oakridge/Westfir communities may have been hesitant initially to welcome mountain bikers to an area where logging had been the main industry, Kathy says, but as logging decreased, the area needed to redefine itself to be more than a small dot on Highway 58. Recreation—especially mountain biking—has provided that new, positive identity.

“If logging was not going to be king here, the question was, ‘What can we do?’” Kathy says. “Recreation gradually became a strong part of our economy. People started coming here to recreate, and recreation brought us dollars.”

While mountain biking has become a recreational gem for the area, camping, hiking, fly fishing, kayaking and paddle boarding also attract visitors.

“We’ve been marketed as a diamond in the rough for outdoor recreation,” Kathy says.

The community has become supportive of mountain biking, with many locals volunteering at the organized events.

Richard Veatch, a longtime mountain biker, says the area provides riders with “freedom and escape.” ■



Up Close With History

Co-op-sponsored trip to nation's capital 'amazing' for Deadwood student

By Craig Reed

Zach Pennel enjoys history, so when the 17-year-old rising senior at Triangle Lake Charter School had the opportunity to see the history of the United States up close, he didn't hesitate.

He applied for the Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour that involves a week-long trip in June to the Washington, D.C., area. His application to Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative included a written answer to the question, "If I was elected president, what changes would I make?"

Zach focused his answer on three issues: beginning the process of decreasing the national debt, reinstatement of net neutrality laws to eliminate "the monopolizing practices of a handful of internet conglomerates" and addressing "the corrosiveness of political polarization which has increasingly led to the inability to see, much less find, common ground with individuals with whom we disagree."

Blachly-Lane's Youth Tour selection committee was impressed with Zach's application and chose him to represent the co-op on the Youth Tour.

"I really wanted to go east where there is a lot of history that I had read about in books but had never had the opportunity to see in person," Zach says. "That was the driving force for me."

Zach had never been on an airplane or farther east than the Oregon-Idaho border.

His family has lived in Deadwood in Oregon's Central Coast Range since 2003, so his trip east opened his eyes not only to history, but to the diversification of people and their lifestyles.

He traveled in a Pacific Northwest



group that included 21 students from Oregon, five from Washington, and one each from Alaska and Idaho.

During the tour to view the memorials, museums and other landmarks, Zach met students from across the U.S. He heard different accents and met students who had much different backgrounds than his.

The students were on the go every day during their visit in Washington, D.C., leaving from Portland on June 14.

On day one, they visited the memorials for Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr. and Iwo Jima, Arlington National Cemetery and the Washington National Cathedral. The students also squeezed in a Washington Nationals baseball game.

"That was a day of a lot of walking," Zach says.

The following four days, the tour included visits to Mount Vernon, George Washington's estate; Ford's Theatre, the site of Lincoln's assassination; the National Museum of the Marine Corps; the International Spy Museum; memorials for the Pentagon, Air Force, World War II, Vietnam War and Korean War; the National Archives; the Holocaust Memorial Museum; the Smithsonian



Zach Pennel at home, moving bales of hay.



Above, Zach's perspective of the Washington National Cathedral. Left, Zach is dwarfed by the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. Opposite page, Zach at the World War II Memorial.

folks. He heard some different accents and really enjoyed that. On the way home from the airport, he started imitating some, then asking us what part of the country it was from. Ordinarily he's a quiet individual, but he talked nonstop about his experiences on the way home."

Zach will have plenty to share about his summer experience with his classmates when they return to their Triangle Lake school in September. He plays football and basketball, and competes in track and field for the school. He's also a member of the Triangle Lake Robotics Club.

Zach says he appreciates Blachly-Lane's sponsorship of his trip and suggests other students apply for future trips.

The Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., since the late 1950s. About 50,000 students from rural areas and small towns across the U.S. have made the trip.

"I really want to thank Blachly-Lane for providing this opportunity for kids in its service area who are not exposed to this type of experience," Derek says. "It may only scratch the surface, but it gives them some idea of what is out there. It was an incredible experience for Zach. I just can't overstate the gratitude we have for the utility in sponsoring him for this trip." ■

Institute's museums of American History, Natural History and Air and Space; the Washington Monument; and the Library of Congress.

There was also a cruise on a Potomac River boat and a lunch visit to Ben's Chili House to taste its "best chili with endless chili fries," Zach says.

On the final day of the tour, the Oregon contingent met with Rep. Greg Walden.

"To walk up close to these places, to read about them, was amazing, stunning," Zach says. "To see up close how we've gone from revolution to where we are today, to see how the nation was founded, definitely puts a light on things that I had only read in history books. The books and now seeing it put it all together."

His parents, Derek and Tricia Pennel, thought the trip was a wonderful opportunity for their son. They had no worries about having Zach travel so far from home, especially since their daughter, Makenna, made the same trip in 2015.

"My daughter had a wonderful experience so that made us rest easy with Zach making the trip," Derek says. "Zach is a history buff, so we knew him going to Washington, D.C., and experiencing some of that history was going to be an incredible experience for him.

"Being in a small school with only five or six students in his high school class, Zach hasn't had the opportunity to interact with many kids his age. But on this trip he got to meet a number of new

Klickitat PUD

Ruralite

AUGUST 2019

Keeping Washington Green

Klickitat PUD helps lead the way
in producing renewable sources
of transportation fuel

Page 4

Klickitat PUD's H.W. Hill Renewable Natural Gas facility uses methane from the Republic Services landfill in Roosevelt to produce renewable natural gas for transportation fuel.

PHOTO BY BETH SCHRODER



The H.W. Hill Renewable Natural Gas facility is near the Republic Services landfill in Roosevelt.

See Innovation at Work

Klickitat PUD's H.W. Hill Renewable Natural Gas facility is one of the largest in the U.S.

Klickitat PUD has completed its renewable natural gas facility, producing one of the lowest carbon emission fuels available at one of the largest facilities of its kind—and it's located right here in Klickitat County.

The H.W. Hill Renewable Natural Gas Project began commercial operations at the Roosevelt Regional Landfill in November 2018.

Large, clean and efficient, the facility produces approximately 65,000 gallons (ethanol gallon equivalent) of biofuel each day.

The facility employs unique technologies that have never before been used in a landfill application to process the gases. These technologies include a cryogenic nitrogen removal system that separates nitrogen from the methane by cooling the gas to minus 280 F.

This technology was chosen because of reduced

horsepower requirements in the gas cleaning system and to reliably produce gas that meets the strict specifications of the Williams Northwest Pipeline. Gas produced here is typically 98% or more pure methane.

The facility has received national and international attention for the scale, scope and innovative technologies employed. While pages could be filled with explanations of each of these technologies, Klickitat PUD staff would rather show them to you.

A dedication ceremony is planned for September. You are invited to bring your friends and neighbors to see the innovative facility. You won't be disappointed.

For more details, stay tuned to the KPUD Facebook page or Klickitat PUD dedication webpage at www.klickitatpud.com/rng-dedication and the. ■



Clockwise from far left, components of the RNG facility include the nitrogen removal unit tower. Project Engineer Dan Waino of Montrose Environmental, left, and Klickitat PUD General Manager Jim Smith at the RNG facility. Various filters are located at the inlet to the RNG processing facility. The H.W. Hill Renewable Natural Gas facility is an innovative operation receiving national and international attention.





Teen Archer Is a Straight Shooter

*Competitor Ryan Dieckhoff
enjoys bull's-eye success*

By Craig Reed

At just 3 years old, Ryan Dieckhoff had his own bow and was shooting blunt arrows at a variety of outdoor objects.

Ryan, now 17, began shooting target arrows and consistently hitting the bull's-eye. His accuracy paid off. He won the National Archery in Schools Program's Oregon state high school archery tournaments during his sophomore, junior and senior years at Bend High School. Those wins qualified him for national and world tournaments.

As a junior, he placed first in 3D shooting at the Western Nationals. At the NASP world event in Louisville, Kentucky, he finished in the top 5%.

"I shot good, but other people just did better," Ryan says of the world competition. "There were people up to age 18 from all over the world there. There were a lot of good shooters."

Ryan was the only one from the Bend High archery club to advance to the world competition and is one of only two from Oregon to compete at the event.

After winning state again his senior year, Ryan advanced to the Western Nationals. He finished 11th in 3D shooting and failed to qualify for the world event.

"I didn't shoot too bad, but I needed to be better to advance," he says.

The archers shoot six rounds of five arrows each with three rounds from a distance of 10 meters and three rounds from 15 meters. The bull's-eye is worth 10 points. Each ring going outward is worth one point less. A perfect score is 300. Ryan's best score was a 291 to win Western Nationals during his junior season. His other state and national

scores ranged from 276 to 286.

Ed Creasy, who has coached Ryan the past three years, says there are many good archers at nationals, so nerves may have come into play for the young bowman during his recent Western Nationals shoot that ended his high school archery career.

“Ryan is definitely a good shooter,” Ed says. “He’s dedicated a lot of time to the sport. Every year he just amazes me with his dedication and his improvement.”

Ryan says being a good archer requires a lot of repetition.

“It needs to be perfect repetition,” he says. “Everything has to be right and the same—your stance, the release, the back tension, your attitude, your mindset.”

Ryan’s parents, Rodney and Lawrie Dieckhoff, are both archers. They mentored Ryan when he first picked up a bow and pulled the string.

At ages 5 and 6, Ryan was shooting at 3D targets in PeeWee Division archery tournaments. He enjoyed some success. He and his brother, Steven, who is 3 years older, competed against each other with their bows at home, giving them plenty of practice and a competitive attitude for the weekend shoots.

On many occasions, Ryan opted to pick up his bow and shoot outdoors rather than stay indoors with a video game controller in his hands.

“It was fun, it was something we could do as a family,” Ryan says. “It brought me outside so I wasn’t cooped up in the house.”

Ryan was inspired to improve with his bow because he wanted to be good enough to join his parents and his brother to hunt deer and elk with their bows.

“I knew if I was going to draw my own (hunting) tags and hunt by myself, I needed to be better at it,” Ryan says.

Lawrie was happy to see her son take to the sport and spend time outside perfecting his shot.

“If that is what makes him happy, keeps him outdoors, keeps him from being a juvenile delinquent, gives him something to do, I’m all for it,” she says. “I think shooting helps him clear his mind, helps him concentrate.”

Lawrie says it’s a joy watching Ryan shoot.

“He has pride,” she says. “He’s more competitive with himself than with anybody else. He doesn’t get upset, he



Seventeen-year-old Ryan Dieckhoff has excelled in archery. He uses the bow on the left for competitive target shooting and the bow on the right for hunting. The turkey is a 3D target he uses when practicing his archery skills.

doesn’t get mad. He keeps his composure.”

Ryan says now that his high school archery career is behind him, he will look into entering some open tournaments in the Pacific Northwest and prepare for Oregon’s archery hunting seasons this fall. There will be some family outings and probably some friendly competition in pursuit of deer and elk.

Ryan has hunted with a bow in past years, but has yet to tag an animal—although he has had a few chances.

“It’s funny,” he says. “I can hit a target, but put an animal in front of me and I can’t hit it to save my life.”

His plans also include attending Central Oregon Community College in Bend and earning either a welding/fabrication certification or an associate degree in a trade.

Ryan will continue to pull the string on his bow.

“You can always get better,” he says. “It’s probably nothing you can ever perfect.” ■



A Way of Life Northwest Rivers

RiverFest educates the public about the importance of the Northwest hydro system

By Taylor Beightol

In 2018, the Pasco Chamber of Commerce started RiverFest—an event to shed light on what breaching the dams would mean for everyone who enjoys the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Organizations from the greater Columbia region set up booths at last year's RiverFest and are excited to participate again.

"Everybody was having a blast and it was a great

opportunity for people to have some family fun entertainment," says Troy Berglund, community development and member relations manager at Benton REA. "Last year was a huge success, and we're excited about making it even bigger and better this year."

This year, RiverFest is September 7 at Columbia Park, Lampson Pits in Kennewick, Washington. Approximately 100 exhibitors from multiple industries will

be set up from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with stories about how the Columbia River system ties into their daily lives and activities to help teach how the river and dam system work.

Activities include paddleboarding, mazes, Lewis and Clark reenactments, live music, river tours and more. Food vendors will be on site. Last year's vendors included the WE Ice Food Truck and Lamb Weston french fries.

RiverFest created so

much excitement last year, it inspired Congress to hold a congressional field hearing for the House Natural Resources Committee about the lower Snake River dams, according to the Pasco Chamber of Commerce.

Many politicians and activist groups want the dams breached to increase fish survival rates.

According to the "Citizen's Guide to the 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation: Protecting Salmon and



Children experiment by building bridges, putting in culverts or seeing what happens when they try to straighten the Rolling River's path in an interactive sandbox display.

Photo by Energy Northwest

Steelhead in the Columbia River Basin," dams in the Columbia and Snake rivers are on track to have a 93% and 96% average per-dam survival rate for migrating juvenile fish.

As a largely agricultural area, many people in the region depend on water from the rivers to irrigate their farms.

"The water that the dams provide help water the agriculture in the area," says

Brandon Lott, a blueberry farmer outside of Burbank, Washington.

Robert Echenrode, general manager of Umatilla Electric Cooperative, attributes the success of Hermiston, Oregon's farming industry to the dams.

"In Hermiston, we are lucky to get 9 inches of rainfall a year," Robert says. "But what doesn't fall from the skies hasn't limited us from progress. Today, we enjoy the



Children of all ages got their faces painted and completed their Riverfest Passports in 2018.

Photo by Meghan Rickard

benefits of a multibillion-dollar farm and food processing economy in the Hermiston-to-Boardman area because of water and energy."

"Some of the biggest draws to our area are the local farmers markets and farm-to-table restaurants," says

Hector Cruz, vice president of Visit Tri-Cities. "Tourists enjoy fresh produce, and we wouldn't have that without the dams."

Tourism is a large industry in the region, providing the

Continues on page 8



RiverFest

Continued from page 5

Tri-Cities area with \$500 million of revenue annually and 6,300 jobs. The rivers in the greater Columbia area provide citizens and tourists the opportunity for recreational water activities year-round.

According to Hector, the dams keep the rivers deep enough to irrigate farms, support shipping vessels and provide recreational activities. Without the dams, the rivers no longer would be able to juggle all of these tasks and a multitude of industries would be impacted.

RiverFest is an opportunity to educate children and adults alike about the rivers.

“The dams provide

STEM—science, technology, engineering and math—education activities for youth and adults in our area,” Hector says. “Anyone can take a tour of the dam and learn about hydropower along with many other educational opportunities.”

Activists against the dams believe hydropower provided by dams can be replaced with other renewable energy sources, David Reeploeg, vice president of federal programs at the Tri-City Development Council, says those are intermittent sources.

“One of the very unique and important elements of the four lower Snake River dams is that they do provide that solid base load and can be kind of amped up or down as needed, when the

Clockwise from top left, The Ryan Point paid a visit to RiverFest 2018. Kids try their hand at the helm of a Coast Guard tugboat. RiverFest 2018 attendees spin the hydropower trivia wheel to earn a prize

Photos by Energy Northwest, Coast Guard photo by Franklin PUD.

intermittent generation isn't enough,” says David.

He says TRIDEC and the Tri-City community are excited about increasing the use of intermittent renewable energy in the area, but the power grid isn't able to support it yet.

Rachel Little, biologist and outreach coordinator at Benton Conservation District, agrees.

“In Benton County, about 80% of the electricity used is generated through hydropower—a clean, renewable, carbon-free source of power that still allows for barge traffic and migrating salmon,” Rachel says.

Along with supporting many important industries, the dams provide the deep water that allow everyday activities in the water, such as recreational fishing, kayaking, swimming and windsurfing, as well as camping along the shore.

RiverFest highlights the importance of the river system to those in the community who enjoy these activities and want to continue having access to these rivers outside their door for years to come. ■

For more information about the event, visit www.pascochamber.org/riverfest or visit their Facebook page, RiverFest 2019.

Digging for Summer Adventure

The Wilson family runs a fee-for-dig operation at Royal Peacock Opal Mine



Denise and Barry Nash work the bank digging for opals at Royal Peacock Opal Mine. They have been coming to the mine for eight years.

By Lauren Brown

Tucked in Nevada's remote Virgin Valley is an oasis where those looking for a different kind of summer vacation can search for their own opals.

The Wilson family has owned the mine since Julie Wilson's grandfather, a horse and cattle man, bought it in 1944 because her grandmother "always liked the bling and sparkle of the opals," Julie says.

When Julie's parents, Harry and Joy Wilson, got married, they ranched along with Harry's parents in Virgin Valley and put Royal Peacock Opal Mine on the map. They tried to mine opals commercially for a while, but it was hard to entice people to work in the middle of nowhere—and there wasn't a consistent market for opals at the time.

In the 1970s, the Wilsons opened the mine as a fee-for-dig operation. Guides take visitors to the mine each day to dig in the bank or the tailings—material that has been chipped off the bank and left in mounds that people can rake through.

Harry and Joy promoted their business by going to trade shows. The mine has been featured on the Travel, Discovery and History TV channels. The couple also successfully petitioned the Nevada Legislature in Carson City to have the black opal from Royal Peacock Opal Mine designated as the official Nevada state precious gemstone.

Julie is proud of her family heritage and of the work her folks put into the mining operation.

"They are the backbones of Virgin Valley—the oldest family in the Virgin Valley—and we're still here," she says. "There's generations still coming up. Hopefully they will continue it on, because it is a unique kind of place."

Julie and her son, Jake Anderson, run the business with the help of guide Craig Greeninger, who helps customers at the mine site. John Witzel and his daughter, Laurel, are among those who assist at the mine and the gift shop. At the mine, Jake teaches people where to dig and what to look for.

Through periodic volcanic eruptions and climatic changes, hydrated silica filled voids within organic matter under very specific conditions to create opals. Royal Peacock has had some of its opal carbon dated at 10 million to 16 million years old, Jake says.

Jake also creates fine jewelry with the opals, which is available for sale at the mine gift shop.

"I get a thrill out of it," Jake says. "There is some beautiful stuff coming out of here."



Joy and Harry Wilson petitioned the Nevada Legislature to have the black opal from Royal Peacock Opal Mine designated as the official state precious gemstone.

Photo courtesy of Julie Wilson

Virgin Valley gems are different from Australian or Ethiopian opals, which are more common in the market. Jake says it is important to make sure anyone who works with opals that come from Royal Peacock mine is familiar with Virgin Valley opals and their unique properties. They absorb heat at a higher rate than other opals, and are more prone to crazing—or cracking—if they aren't stabilized properly.

"People appraise these opals like they would an Australian opal or an Ethiopian opal, but it's far more valuable than one of those," Jake says.

On the morning of a dig, guests meet at the rock shop and determine if they will dig in the bank or the tailings. Bank digging is hard work. Prospectors use pick axes or other sharp tools to cleave clay from the bank. If that doesn't appeal, there are huge piles of tailings.

Jake and Craig offer instruction and rotate around the digging area to make sure folks find opals.

"We have people that have been coming here for 25 or 30 years, and they come back once or twice a year," Julie says. "Some years they get amazing opals, some years they get so-so opals, some years they get skunked. It's the luck of the draw because you know you're dealing with Mother Nature. I always tell people it's either one more swing with the pick or 100 more swings of the pick"

One such prospector is Barry Nash, a primary care physician from Winter Haven, Florida, who first visited Royal Peacock eight years ago and caught the opal bug. He usually visits the mine two or three times a year to try his hand at finding the iridescent gems.

"This is a fantastic place," Barry says. "It's so quiet, so peaceful. It's just amazing."

When he lucks out in the mine, he carefully ships his finds home to Florida.

If You Go

What: Royal Peacock Opal Mine is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., May 15 through October 15.

Where: #10 Virgin Valley Road, about 35 miles from Denio, Nevada. Go to www.royalpeacock.com for directions.

Lodging: Stay at the onsite campground. The cost is \$40 to \$45 a night for RV spaces, \$10 a night per person for tent/dry camping or \$85 a night for single occupancy, plus \$10 per additional person, in one of the furnished lodgings.

Mining: \$190 a person per day for digging in the bank, \$75 a person per day for digging in the tailings. Children 12 and younger can dig in the tailings at no charge with a paid adult.

What to bring: Pick axe, shovel, rake, bucket and other mining tools, as well as water, sunscreen and bug spray. See website for a complete list. Tools are available to rent.

What to wear: Lightweight, breathable layers. It is often hot at the mine site. Sun hats and eye protection are recommended. Sturdy shoes, hard-toe shoe coverings and hard hats are required for bank digging.

For more information: Call the shop at 775-941-0374.



Julie Wilson and Laurel Witzel display some of the opal jewelry sold at the Royal Peacock Opal Mine gift shop.

"We have quite the collection," he says. "I've got them sitting on my desk. Most of my patients know I'm an opal miner, so I always show them what I found on my previous trip."

Julie says people from all walks of life experience the mine.

"Some find us on the internet or social media, some from word of mouth, and some just see the sign on the highway and drive in," she says. "I tell people that if they come in here and want to dig, they have to look at it like an adventure. If they look at it like an adventure—like a treasure hunt—then they have a great time. It's just a lot of fun." ■



Chase Green, left, and Kobe Marinac, founders of Kobe Skye Productions, edit their contest entry for a 90-second horror movie.

Teens Offer Videographer Expertise

Chase Green and Kobe Marinac live up to their motto of Clean Cut Creativity

By Dianna Troyer

Internet anonymity has its advantages for two young Mackay videographers whose clients assume they are young professionals in their 20s or 30s.

“If people knew our ages, they might not think we were qualified,” says Kobe Marinac, 18, a 2018 Mackay High School graduate.

He and longtime friend Chase Green, 16, a high school junior, established Kobe Skye Productions in February to offer their self-taught expertise as freelance videographers.

With a motto of Clean Cut Creativity, they produce videos for bands and businesses, and also film special events.

“Videography is our passion,” Chase says. “I love great photos and editing them together with clips, narration and music, and seeing how it all falls together—sometimes in a way you never expected.”

Kobe says he is fascinated seeing how his vision comes to life in film.

One of their first clients in Las Vegas hired them as a favor. Kobe’s aunt works for GigaCrete—a company that makes building materials and structures that can withstand hurricanes. She suggested the owner hire Kobe and Chase to make a video for him to show potential investors.

“He told us he had low expectations of us but would give us a try anyway,” Kobe says. “When he saw what we did and

how professional it was with cuts, camera angles and graphics, he was blown away and said he’d use us for future productions.”

After Kobe spent three weeks filming, Chase edited the piece.

“He told us he was surprised at our maturity and how we captured the vision he has for his company,” Chase says.

They posted the video at their website, kobeskye.com—a name they picked after brainstorming.

“It just sounded good,” Chase says.

The two friends’ fascination for video began in junior high.

“When I was about 15 and Chase was 13, our parents were concerned about the amount of time we were spending on



Chase and Kobe brainstorm about shots on their film and single-lens cameras.

our computers,” Kobe says. “Now they understand because they’re seeing our career paths develop as freelance videographers and how it has paid off.”

Chase has won national awards for his agricultural videos. In March, he earned \$500 for the school’s FFA program for winning first place in the national NASA HUNCH student video contest about the role agriculture could play in space. He showed how hydroponics could be used to grow fresh food for astronauts.

In May, he won \$1,000 as a national finalist in the www.farmfluencer.com contest for making a video about the role agriculture plays in his life.

“My teacher finds ag video contests for me to enter and encourages me,” Chase says. “When I’m filming, editing and narrating a video, I want to make a genuine connection with viewers, so I choose my words and photos carefully. I like to ask questions to interact with viewers and make them think.”

Chase and Kobe juggle their film projects with their other jobs, often staying up late at night to edit videos in their

home offices.

Kobe works at his family’s River Park Golf Course in Mackay. He also trains two days a month with the U.S. Navy Reserve after enlisting last fall for eight years. In May, he returned home from seven months of initial training, excited to apply the principles he learned there to their production company.

“Boot camp really boosted my confidence and taught me to have grit and that I can do just about anything on almost no sleep,” he says.

Kobe joined the Navy to help pay for college, but he doesn’t have time for school yet.

“I’m too busy with projects,” he says. “Besides, it’s nice to have jobs that pay me to learn as I go. Technology changes so fast that cameras and editing software are often outdated in a year.”

Along with working on projects for Kobe Skye Productions, Chase edits video gamers’ clips into a montage that can be posted online.

“You get to know gamers online, and they send me clips,” says Chase, who has

a fan base of more than 5,000 followers on his Twitter account @bigpndaa.

Wanting to develop their expertise, Kobe and Chase recently bought a professional TV camera and have been using it for projects in Idaho and Las Vegas.

After the golf course business slows down in October, Kobe plans to move to Las Vegas to work on video projects and develop their client base.

Kobe’s mother, Helen, supports their ambitions.

“It’s wonderful what they’ve done,” she says. “We’ve always encouraged Kobe to follow his dreams. They’re really good at what they do.”

While Kobe is living in Las Vegas, Chase will continue to enter ag video contests and edit montages.

Even though they will live 700 miles apart, Kobe and Chase will continue to brainstorm with their computers networked.

“We’ve always worked well together,” Chase says. “Who knows where this will lead.” ■

CLEARING THE WAY

Regular right-of-way maintenance
increases safety, reduces outages

A recent right-of-way clearance project carved a safe path for Mt. Wheeler Power lines and equipment.

Photos by Mitch McVicar

By Christina Sawyer

As part of Mt. Wheeler Power's mission to improve the quality of life in the communities we belong to, one of our top priorities is providing members with safe, reliable electricity.

While our line crews are always ready to respond to outages at a moment's notice to restore power as quickly and as safely as possible, fulfilling our obligation to reliability is about far more than being prepared when the power goes out.

While outages are inevitable, operations personnel are dedicated to executing a detailed preventive maintenance program that ensures your lights stay on as much as possible by avoiding outages before they happen.

Federated Rural Insurance company encourages cooperatives to become proactive in right of way clearing and tree trimming to mitigate the liability from power-line-caused wildfires such as the California wildfires that PG&E was held

accountable for.

Mt. Wheeler Power crews' complete inspections to identify potential problem areas and projects to strengthen our distribution system.

"We have found that winter is the best time of year for our right of way clearing procedure because the equipment used, including large dozers and specialty brush and tree mowers can serve as a catalyst during dry conditions causing wildfires." Says Bill Ricci, Mt. Wheeler Power operations manager.

As shown in these photos, it's important to clear trees that could damage equipment and cause outages or make accessing problem areas difficult, potentially lengthening the duration of outages.

While right of way clearing is used primarily on our long distribution and transmission lines, tree trimming is completed all year long in the urban areas. We encourage our members to maintain their trees under secondary lines and educate them on proper tree planting by

producing and distributing a tree planting guide, which is available at www.mwpower.net.

Right-of-way maintenance and tree trimming are essential, time-consuming jobs. While Mt. Wheeler Power just completed its second season of their right of way clearing procedures, the use of an outside contractor to complete aggressive tree timing has been practiced for the past 12 years. These experts help Mt. Wheeler Power cover twice the territory making the most of these long summer days. Mt. Wheeler Power hopes to have this same level of success with the right of way clearing practices.

The mitigation procedures provide a level of protection to our members and allow us to successfully provide a safe and reliable energy source. These projects are an essential, ongoing part of reliability. Our goal is simple: Make sure you have access to the electricity that powers your lives and our communities whenever it's needed. ■



Many Mt. Wheeler Power poles and lines—such as those pictured above—run through areas with heavy brush and thick trees.



While maintenance projects can be time-consuming and require heavy equipment, clearing brush from around poles is a vital part of protecting equipment from wildfires.

Watch Out for Scammers

A few simple steps can arm you against thieves

By Christina Sawyer

Keeping your account information up to date is the first line of defense as you strive to protect yourself against fraud. Mt. Wheeler Power sees fraudulent calls increasing in the area as scammers are now cloning local phone numbers and using our logo.

The co-op is diligently fighting against these deceitful criminals and is determined to provide you with tools to defend yourself.

It is less likely that a fraudulent call will send you into a panic if you regularly maintain a current account. By paying your account on time each month, you can confidently disregard the scammer's threats that your account is past due.

Mt. Wheeler can help you stay current on your account by setting you up on auto draft. This is done by providing your banking information. On the due date, Mt. Wheeler Power drafts the account balance



for you, ensuring your account is paid on time. Call the office and request your account be set up on auto pay.

Mt. Wheeler's billing procedure is set up on a single billing cycle. Billing statements go out around the 15th of the month, with a due date that falls between the 4th and the 9th, depending on how many days are in the billing cycle. The exact date is noted on your billing statement.

The day after the due date, friendly reminders are mailed out. You have 10 additional days to get your payment to us without penalty. However, 11 days after the due date, if a payment has not yet been received, you will get a final notice in the mail. This is your last reminder. If the account is not paid in full by the date indicated on this statement—seven work days—the account is subject to collections and or disconnection.

Mt. Wheeler Power does not make individual phone calls to delinquent accounts demanding payment. If your account is delinquent to the point of disconnect, one of our crew members is sent to the service address to collect payment or disconnect the service. A \$50 collection fee is required. If service is disconnected, an additional \$50 reconnect fee is required.

By paying close attention to your billing statements, you will know the status of your account, putting you in charge when a scammer tries to talk you out of your hard-earned money.

Another way to keep your account up to date is to register it online. You can do this by visiting www.mwpower.net. Choose Online Bill Pay, then Register Account. During this process, you will be prompted to create a user name and password. Then choose

the Account Maintenance tab and add your account and meter number(s). You have full access to your account billing information.

If you get a suspicious call, you can quickly look at your account and see what your balance is and the due date.

Pay careful attention when going to our website. It is best to type in the web address yourself rather than using a web search that can lead to fraudulent sites offering to pay your bills for you. While such services do exist, they are not directly affiliated with us and can take several weeks for your payment to reach us, risking delinquency and service fees being applied to your account.

We understand that little can be done to stop these scammers, but you can protect yourself by being aware of your account status. If you find yourself on the other end of a suspicious call, ask the following questions: What is my account number, my meter number or service address? These are all questions a legitimate Mt. Wheeler Power employee will know. If the caller cannot answer all of these questions, ask for their number and offer to call them back. Chances are this will scare them off. We also recommend contacting local authorities if you receive a suspicious call.

We do our best to protect you, but ultimately, it is up to you. Being informed and aware of your account status is the best way to guard your finances. Remember, never provide payment over the phone to anyone threatening to disconnect your service. Hang up and call us directly at (775) 289-8981 and ask to speak to any of our member service representatives. We will gladly answer any of your billing questions. ■

The screenshot shows the Mt. Wheeler Power customer portal. At the top, there is a logo for Mt. Wheeler Power with the tagline "Powering Your Future". Below the logo are navigation links for "Customer Service", "Login", and "Register". The main content area is titled "Account Login" and contains a welcome message: "Welcome to the Mt. Wheeler Power customer portal. Access to this information is limited to customers and employees of Mt. Wheeler Power. You can enter the system by typing your username and password in the areas provided below and clicking the 'Login' button. For first time users select the register account button to create a username and password. The registration process will enable you to associate one or multiple Mt. Wheeler Power accounts to your username." Below the message are input fields for "Username:" and "Password:". There are "Login" and "Cancel" buttons, a "Remember Login" checkbox, and "Register" and "Reset Password" buttons.

Visit www.mwpower.net and sign-up for an online account so you can always check your balance before paying your bill.



WREC Breaks Ground on New Building

By Garrett Hylton

The Wells Rural Electric Co. Board of Directors held a ceremonial ground-breaking for the cooperative's new operations facility during its June 18 meeting in Wells.

The ceremony officially kicked off the construction phase of the project after nearly 24 months of planning.

Dirt work and construction started in earnest in July, with construction picking up this month. The facility is expected to be completed and in operation sometime next spring.

The new building will be adjacent to WREC's headquarters in Wells. It will provide ample space to adequately and reliably deliver electricity to cooperative members for decades to come.

"As all things grow and develop, so has Wells Rural Electric Company," said Scott Egbert, president of the WREC Board of Directors. "Today, electricity is a necessity for life, and our members are using way more than in the past. That trend is going to continue in the future. From our early beginnings with one small building, we've continued to expand to meet our members' needs and now—not just

because of what is happening today, but what is going to happen in the future—we're breaking ground for this new building."

WREC hired Cooperative Business Solutions—a company that specializes in working with cooperatives on facilities projects—to do a facility needs evaluation and help plan and build the new facility.

With a projected cost of \$7.92 million, the price tag of the new building represents an important but necessary investment in the cooperative's future.

Several local contractors submitted



competitive bids for the project, and a significant portion of the costs will stay in local communities.

“We only work with electric cooperatives all over the country,” said Max Ott, vice president of CBS. “One of the things we do our best to do is to work with local subcontractors to keep projects as local as possible.”

The current operations center opened in 1974 when WREC served 1,601 accounts with fewer than 800 miles of energized line. Today, WREC serves more than 6,000 accounts with 1,412 miles of energized line running through more than 10,000 square miles of service territory. The new facility will help the cooperative meet members’ growing demands while also allowing better work

efficiencies and more convenient access for members by moving employees closer together. Most importantly, it will provide room to meet future demands.

“One of the great things about this is the ability for us to provide future careers,” said Wells City Manager Jolene Supp. “Any time in the community you can have kids graduate from high school and go off to college and then have careers waiting for them, it’s win-win for us. Wells Rural Electric is doing that right now. This building says, ‘We care about the community’. Adding the assessed value, adding the jobs, doing the development and providing the calling card for our community is really important to us, and we’re excited to see the ops center moving forward.” ■



Wells Rural Electric Company’s member-elected board of directors joined CEO Clay Fitch June 18 in Wells for a groundbreaking ceremony for the cooperative’s new operations facility. The building, now under construction, is due to open in spring 2020.

Photos by CarolLee Egbert

Dental Clinic Debuts in Carlin

By Dianna Troyer

An unfortunate event led to a series of fortunate events for Dr. Barry Sorenson, who recently opened Carlin's only dental clinic.

Barry, 40, says his grandmother's unfortunate accident serendipitously opened doors to his career advancement in northern Nevada.

"None of this would have happened without her," he says. "When she hurt her knee about 10 years ago, her neighbor came to visit and told my grandma about her son who was a dentist in Spring Creek, Nevada. He wanted to retire and was looking for someone to buy his practice. During her recovery, she encouraged me to pursue my career goals and check it out."

At the time, Barry was working at a dental clinic in Mountain Home, Idaho. He contemplated the idea of owning a solo practice in Nevada.

"I was familiar with Elko County from my team roping days in high school and college," says the St. George, Utah native. "I really liked northern Nevada and the idea of raising our children in a small town."

In 2010, he bought the clinic in Spring Creek and named it Family Dental Care.



Dr. Tom Dickson in the lobby area of Family Dental Care in Carlin.

Photos by CarolLee Egbert

As he settled into running his new business, he envisioned eventually expanding to the nearest towns and offering dental services in Carlin—a town of 2,400 about 38 miles northwest of Spring Creek, and Elko, about 15 miles north.

Before Family Dental Care opened in Carlin, the nearest dentist was in Elko, a 40-mile roundtrip. Since opening a satellite office in Carlin in April, Barry says his clients have told him they appreciate having a local clinic.

"Parents have said when their kids had a dentist appointment, they had to take them out of school for half a day because of the drive time to Elko," Barry says. "They've told me they're grateful our office is in town because their kids can be

here for an hour and easily go back to school."

Opening the Carlin clinic required more than a year of planning and meeting with the city council and mayor to discuss the idea.

"We asked their advice about a location," Barry says.

Mayor Dana Holbrook and the council suggested a lot at 617 Main St., where a casino and cafe had once operated. The building, dating to the 1950s, contained hazardous asbestos and had fallen into disrepair. The city acquired it and received a federal grant to safely tear it down and clean up the property.

"The cleanup was done about the same time they were looking for a location," Dana says. "We gave them a good price as an incentive to come. We're excited because Carlin

hasn't had a dentist in recent memory. With the clinic open, our seniors won't have to drive far for dental care."

The clinic is the first new business to open downtown in about two decades, he says.

"Hopefully, it will become an anchor to attract more businesses," Dana adds. "We'd like it to be the start of an economic revitalization in that part of town."

Barry says the location is ideal because it is easy for clients to find the clinic in the center of town. Last fall, he had a 1,700-square-foot modular office building placed on the lot. With dental equipment installed, the clinic opened in April.

Carlin resident Gayle Zomar is grateful to have local dental care.

"They're excellent with patients of all ages, especially children, and are friendly," she says. "I've never had discomfort or pain even when they gave me a Novocain shot. The hygienist is pleasant and never hurts you. For entertainment, they even have a TV, so you can watch a movie."

She said she also appreciates how the dentists support community events.

"They came to our bingo games at the senior center and brought their children



too,” she says.

At the Carlin clinic, Barry rotates with two other dentists: Dr. Joseph Johnson and Dr. Tom Dickson. Along with the Carlin office, they opened a practice in Elko, taking over Dr. Marvin Conley’s practice when he retired recently.

“In Carlin, we’ll add another hygienist and be open more hours as needed,” Barry says. “I’ve always believed in doing all I can for a community. We appreciate the continued support we’re receiving. I never expected all this to happen when I bought the practice in Spring Creek. It’s exciting to see everything fall into place.” ■

The Carlin clinic at 617 Main St. is open Tuesdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call 775-754-2900.



Top, Dr. Tom Dickson talks with patient Richard McNamara. Left, Dr. Barry Sorenson with his wife, Des. Above, dental instruments and equipment at the clinic.

California Man Finds His Niche in Tonopah

Roots run deep for Ramsey Cline

By John M. Glionna

TONOPAH – He's known around town as the Rocket Scientist.

Ramsey Cline first landed here in 2012, with ideas to help breathe economic life into a former mining mecca. With his slender frame, shaved head and urban sensibility, he joined residents who have spent their lives laboring in the local mines or test site.

The 31-year-old was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, attended West Point and graduated from the University of Southern California. While soft-spoken, he still stood out.

He's the eldest child of vintners Fred and Nancy Cline, founders of the Sonoma-based Cline Cellars Winery in California – a family that traces a historic connection to the area. Nancy Cline's grandmother, Emma Ramsey, was once postmistress of nearby Goldfield. Harry Ramsey, her great uncle, owned an early bar in Tonopah and got rich after staking a claim in one of the region's most prosperous silver mines.

Generations later, Nancy Cline, who had always reserved a soft spot for Tonopah, spearheaded an investment campaign to bolster the area her ancestors helped shape. In 2011, the Clines bought the Mizpah hotel and built a new micro-brewery. They refurbished an old beer brewery into a



For Ramsey Cline, a favorite spot to hang out in Tonopah is the Tonopah Liquor Company.

Photo by John M. Glionna

hostel-style annex to the historic Mizpah.

They have also embarked on a makeover of the Belvada, the five-story edifice is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The plan is to reopen the old State Bank and Trust Building later this year as a high-end 40-room hotel with retail shops and a basement speakeasy.

They have also refurbished the Mizpah Club, the once-grand casino in the middle of town. Ramsey Cline had convinced his parents the casino made sense because gaming had played such a big role in Tonopah's past.

So, Cline left Bigelow Aerospace in Las Vegas and relocated here as the general manager of the new casino. In Las Vegas, Cline had patented an idea for a collapsible meteorite shield for a space habitat his company was designing. Now he used that expertise to repair old slot machines and fine-tune the surveillance system.

The locals were watching.

"Ramsey is all business, all the time," says Marc Grigory who, along with his wife, Tiffany, runs the Tonopah Liquor Company across the street from Cline's casino. "He's got so much going on in his head, thinking about the next idea, what he can do. He doesn't stop."

But Cline's personal reinvention from big-city boy to rural-country lad featured some bumps in the road. In Tonopah, the Burger King closes at 9:30 p.m.

But slowly, Cline came to prefer Tonopah's glacial social pace. He could walk everywhere, leaving his car parked for weeks. Here, Cline knew most people by their first name. He rode bull in the town's annual rodeo.

His project in town also gave him the opportunity to run his own business. It's a sense of responsibility he learned as a boy working on his father's Northern California farm.

Tonopah reminded him of that. He might even stay

awhile. "I like Nevada," he says.

But some of his city contacts are shaking their heads over such plans.

Jim Marsh, a Las Vegas entrepreneur and family friend who owns property in nearby Belmont and Manhattan, told Cline: "A young man like you cannot continue to live in Tonopah. You've got to get back to civilization."

But Cline insists he's doing just fine on his own.

There are stresses here. After opening the Mizpah's annex, with ten hostel-style rooms with a shared bath and kitchen, he helps supervise the Belvada project. But he spends most of his time inside the 5,000-square-foot casino. To save money, Cline seeks out older slot machines and repairs them with new parts. "These days, a new slot machine costs between \$16,000 and \$20,000," he says. "That's more than my car."

Finding good help can be difficult, causing Cline to work double shifts as bartender and pit boss. Still, he keeps his eye on the prize – to make Tonopah a viable weekend getaway alternative for tourists from both northern and southern Nevada.

Meanwhile, he's been working on his bull-riding technique. ■

Retired Cop Helps Preserve Nevada's Past

Coldest of cold cases for former detective

By John M. Glionna

Bob Romans documents the dead.

On a sunny spring afternoon, he pulls up to another solitary gravesite that had long ago insinuated itself amid the cracked, waterless earth and desert scrub ten miles south of Pahrump.

"There's Queho's grave," he says, switching off the vehicle's ignition. "Looks like someone has vandalized it, set a fire."

Like a visiting relative, or an archeologist, he kneels to dust the horizontal stone and straighten the small rocks that together spell out the gravestone's epitaph: "Quehoe, 1889-1919, Nevada's Last Renegade Indian. He Survived Alone."

"If these pebbles get scattered anymore, people won't be able to read this," he says. "Nobody will know who's here."

For two decades, Bob Romans has waged a self-appointed campaign to chronicle some of the countless generations-old graves scattered across rural Nevada. He seeks out forlorn sites, their crumbling wooden stakes and faded marble slabs marking the final resting places of miners, cowboys, ranchers and settlers – many of them unfortunate souls caught at the wrong place at the wrong time.

The retired Michigan cop has ridden his all-terrain



Bob Romans began chronicling lost graves nearly 25 years ago when he moved to Southern Nevada from Michigan.

John Glionna

vehicle through ghost towns and along scabbly dirt tracks, and often to places without roads at all, to record 5,500 graves for the website www.findagrave.com, a repository for cemetery records, official or otherwise.

For Romans, 67, such puzzle-solving is one man's attempt to preserve the past, to impose order upon history's chaos. The former detective considers these monuments as the coldest of cold cases.

His goal: offering these forgotten 19th Century gravesites a 21st-Century online resting place.

With many burial sites, Romans provides not only photographs and backstories,

but also GPS locator coordinates and links to the graves of family members.

Sometimes, the work involves a bit of sleuthing. He might find a decrepit wooden marker and only half a name. But hours at UNLV, poring over microfilm records of old newspaper stories, research followed up by emails and telephone calls, usually solves the case. One post about the Lincoln County grave of a European-born watchmaker prompted the man's great-nephew to visit from Belgium, and Romans served as the relative's desert tour guide.

"A good detective is a problem solver," he said. "And a lot of genealogy is answering the question, 'Now, how do I

figure this out?'"

Romans moved to Las Vegas in 1995 and began finding lost graves while on ATV jaunts into the outback. His own past drew him to investigate. During a genealogy project in Michigan, he found the gravesite of a great-great grandfather the family did not know existed – located just a few feet from the other plots.

He saw the emotion the find elicited. If it worked for family, why not for such strangers as future historians and descendants of the dead?

The stories behind the graves, he says, often read like fantastical fiction.

There is the infant Barbara Tomlin, who was buried in 1908 in Mineral County,



Toddlers Clyde and Kenneth Hart, who died within a few weeks of each other more than a century ago, are buried on a hillside off state Highway 266 in Esmeralda County.

Jeff Scheid

within view of the house where she was born – so her grieving mother could forever look out her back window and see her daughter’s solitary grave.

There is U.S. Army Major Horace Holt, buried in rural Clark County in 1906, whose division led Abraham Lincoln’s funeral procession. There is James Davidson, buried in Lincoln County in 1869, who died along with his wife and son after being separated from their wagon train along the Old Mormon Road.

And Clyde Hart, a boy who died of diphtheria in 1907, months before his younger brother Kenneth met the same fate. Their grave sits on a hillside near Palmetto, tended by neighbors who place flowers at the site.

Many believe Kenneth was buried someplace else, but Romans disagrees. “Those two boys died in the middle of winter, when the ground is rock-hard. There is no way

their parents dug two graves miles apart,” he said. Romans’ website post also links to the burial spots of the boys’ parents in California.

The ground holds innocent children and ruthless killers like Queho. A mix of Cocopah and Paiute Indian, he went by the single name Queho, a form of Spanish slang for grumbler or complainer.

Romans believes Queho may be one of Nevada’s earliest serial killers, who butchered some two-dozen people for their food or provisions. He often left telltale clues – uneven tracks etched into the sand with his clubfoot. Many victims were shot in the back or had their skulls cleaved with an ax.

“Queho just tried to survive,” he said. “But to do that, he killed lots of people.”

In 1940, prospectors found his mummified remains in a cave just south of the Hoover

Dam, a burlap bandage on his leg suggesting he died from a snake bite.

Also found were items from Queho’s victims, including a badge taken from LW “Doc” Gilbert, a watchman at the Gold Bug Mine who was shot in the back.

For two decades, Queho’s body endured a lurid succession of public displays – inside glass-topped coffins and atop a float in the annual Elks parade – until the group eventually decided to throw the corpse away.

In 1975, Roland Wiley, a former Las Vegas District Attorney, bought the remains and buried them along the Old Spanish Trail, overlooking the now-deserted Cathedral Canyon monument he built for his late daughter, Carol Ann.

And that is where Bob Romans stood, gazing down upon the grave of a killer whose remains he believed

nonetheless deserved to be preserved and remembered.

Yet recent years have not been kind to Queho’s memorial. Romans points to a concrete slab with the imprints of small hands – which he believes might be from the relatives of Queho’s victims – has been hammered and cracked.

He gazes west toward the distant Nopah range and then pauses, listening to what sounds like the rat-a-tat of machine gun fire in the distance. He says the site must be a party site for local teenagers.

After a bit more dusting and cleaning, Romans leaves the grave to its fate, but not before sighing sadly.

“Every one of these graves has a history that deserves to be told, but many of their identity markers are fading fast,” he says.

If not catalogued, he says, most could be lost to the sands of time. ■

LIGHTNING THE WAY

Each of these students from Union, Grant, Harney and Baker counties has been awarded a college, trade or lineman college scholarship from Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative.



Alaina Carson
Eastern Oregon University
Speech language



Alexandra Colton
Oregon State University
Veterinary medicine



Alexandra Gomes
George Fox University
Nursing



Aspen Birkmaier
Eastern Oregon University
Ecological biology



Blake Frost
Oregon Tech
Mechanical engineering



Braden Bell
Gonzaga University
Biomedical/biology



Caden Spencer
Volta Trade School



Carson McClelland
Georgia Institute of Technology
Biomedical engineering



Chase Wilcox
Treasure Valley Community College
Nursing



Danielle McCauley
Otterbein University
Biology and zoo and conservation science



Danner Davis
Northwest Lineman College



Elizabeth Babcock
Psychology/pre-nursing
Oregon State University



Emily Black
Pacific University
Business



Heather Mosley
Walla Walla Community College
Elementary education



Jace Hays
Northwest Lineman College



Jacquie Cobb
Northwest Nazarene University
Nursing



Kourtney Lehman
Oregon State University
Agricultural business and management



Kyler Malone
Eastern Oregon University
Nursing



Logan Brashler
George Fox University
Biomedical engineering



Madi Mckrola
Oregon State University
Psychology



McKeely Miller
University of Oregon
Business



Megan Bingham
Utah State University
Nursing



Parker Landon
Embry Riddle Aeronautical University
Computer engineering and space physics



Samantha Sexton
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Journalism



Sophia Pettit
Weber State University
Education



Sydney Thompson
Eastern Oregon University
Education



Tea Recanzone
University of Texas at Austin
International business



Trey Recanzone
Central Washington University
Biology and ecology



Zach Schwin
Northwest Nazarene University
Math

Technology in Agriculture

By Lisa Jacoby

David Bouchard zooms in on the map image, selecting a cartoon-like tractor icon. With a few clicks of the mouse, he can see the tractor's speed, fuel level and other operations—handy if the farmer has an operating issue and David is in another county.

"I'm 90 miles away, but I can support him," he says.

David is an integrated solutions manager for Tri-County Equipment, which sells John Deere machines and serves customers in Union, Baker and Wallowa counties.

He has spent most of his adult life around agriculture. He worked for Ward Ranches in Baker County through high school and college, then worked in service for Caterpillar for 26 years.

David has been with Integrated Solutions for five years. He has seen a lot of changes in agriculture over those years.

"The technology is growing so fast," he says.

His job is to help customers learn the newest systems installed on tractors and other farm equipment—technology designed to increase the efficiency of farming, with a goal of increasing production on the same amount of land.

"There's not more farm ground available, but more people eating food," he says.

The answer is to make use of all the ground. To plant corners of a field, farmers needed



David Bouchard of Tri-County Equipment uses a computer program to remotely monitor a customer's tractor systems. The program is a prime example of how technology has changed the business of agriculture.

to overlap rows and use extra seed. New technology allows the operator to shut off certain sections as the machine comes in at an angle. More crops can be planted into the odd-shaped areas of the field with overplanting.

David says this system can pay for itself in one year with the additional crops harvested from those field corners.

New systems can also record a machine's history, with that data accessible through a smartphone. This history can show, for instance, a tractor's speed through a field. If one spot consistently

records a slower speed, the farmer can investigate the cause—which can be as simple as a slight hill in the middle of the field.

Another high-tech part of David's job is placing moisture probes in fields. Most are 3 feet long with nine sensors, although 5-foot probes are used for deep-rooted alfalfa crops. The probes, which track moisture content, air temperature and soil temperature, are solar-powered and communicate by cellular data.

The sensors communicate how deep a rainstorm penetrated the ground, for

instance. A chart shows green for good moisture content and red for lack of water. It also tracks when a field needs water.

"What we're after is efficient irrigation," David says.

This information helps farmers water the crops that need it, which in turn lessens the demand on water supply.

"All these are tools to make better decisions," he says. "It's a lifestyle, but a business, too."

Having access to data helps farmers adjust their practices. Soil sampling on a grid can, for instance, determine 23 micro and macro nutrients

and soil pH in a field. By looking at a computer-generated map, farmers can see where a field is nutrient-deficient.

David doesn't always rely on remote access to help his customers. By setting up a receiver on his truck, he can train on-site, or park next to a field and simultaneously keep watch on a tractor and his computer so he can offer help if needed.

GPS Technology

Jess Blatchford has worked fields for more than 30 years in Baker Valley. He has seen firsthand how GPS can increase production.

"It made a huge difference," he says.

By using GPS technology, farmers can make more precise rows to make the best use of their land. Jess says this technology resulted in 34 extra feet.

The technology also reduces the fatigue that comes with trying to maintain the straightest rows possible in pass after pass. Blatchford Farms works 1,800 acres in potatoes and wheat.

"You can spend a long day and not be totally exhausted," Jess says.

GPS systems have changed and improved. Satellites tend to drift, which means a signal has to triangulate using a base signal. Now, using real-time kinematic positioning with a base station on his farm, Jess says accuracy is "sub-inch and repeatable."

He has GPS in both the tractor and potato planter.

"Even if the tractor drifts,



Many farm implements are equipped with GPS technology, which allows farmers to make more efficient use of fields.

the planter can counteract that," he says.

The new system also can complete several tasks in one pass—fertilizer, tillage, planting, treatments—which means more efficient use of time. Jess says it saves 50% on fuel consumption and 70% on tractor time and labor.

Even though the GPS system steers down the rows, the operator is still responsible for the machine. Jess says the monitor begins each session with a contract stating the operator is responsible for collision avoidance. The system won't start until the operator pushes the "agree" button.

Other safety mechanisms include an operator presence switch in the seat, which means it won't work if no one is sitting on it, similar to a riding lawnmower. A turn predictor alerts the operator that the end of the row is approaching, and he or she needs to make a turn.

Jess predicts more advanced technology, but says safety regulations have to catch up.

"The technology is there for driverless tractors," he says. "The liability is the issue."

In Harney County, Steve Rickman has seen changes during his years of raising cattle and hay.

He is an electrician as well, and says advances in technology have affected how water is pumped to crops.

"That's the big power user," he says.

Using variable frequency drives, the pump no longer has to run at full speed to transport water to the field. This helps conserve electricity.

"The pump is only delivering what's needed," Steve says. "We deliver the right gallonage at the right pressure."

Changes in irrigation have also moved from sprinklers on top of pivots to drop tubes that deliver water directly to the crop, greatly reducing the evaporation rate.

Pivots also can have GPS technology, which can help farmers give the right amount of water where it is needed.

Fields can contain three to four soil types, each with different water needs.

"Some take water better than others," Steve says.

The GPS can track the pivot around the circle, slowing down or speeding up to help deliver the right amount of moisture.

"There again, that's water conservation," Steve says. "Efficiency is where it's at. There's not a big margin in agriculture."

An Electric Option?

Charlie Tracy, director of engineering at Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, says he wouldn't be surprised to see electric-powered farm implements in the future.

"There's a lot of possibility there," he says.

Electric motors are powerful, and electric technology would save fuel.

"We have high fuel costs in Oregon, but low-cost electricity," he says. "Fuel is a really big cost of doing business." ■

Board Member Enjoys Challenges



Mark Mulder and a group of Pacific Lutheran University students went to Nicaragua five years ago to help a villagers dig a new well to help locals.

By Rick Stedman

Parkland Light and Water Co.'s newest board member is Mark Mulder, a professor at Pacific Lutheran University. Mark teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the school of business. He was selected for the PL&W post after longtime board member Chuck Nelson died earlier this year.

"Parkland Light and Water had several qualified applicants for the vacant board seat and interviewed six of those applicants," says PL&W Board President Gary Hauenstein. "The board of directors felt Mark's educational background, extensive leadership and service to community blended with his years of service to a nonprofit entity, along with his marketing background, made him an ideal candidate for the PL&W Board of Directors. We feel Mark's skill set blended with the skill sets of the existing board. This will provide a

well-rounded diverse set of knowledge to better serve our members."

The board of directors and Mark were on the same page.

"I decided to apply for the open board position for three reasons," Mark says. "First, I believe strongly in the democratic leadership structure of cooperatives. I love that our utility was the first cooperative in the United States back in 1914, and that it was a group of community members and neighbors who decided to collaborate to bring a system of electricity and water to our community. Ever since, the leadership has been local Parkland residents who live in our community.

"Second, I have a lot of respect for our cooperative. From its inception to the decision to put the utilities underground, and from the low rate structure to the continuing operations without the utilization of debt, this co-op is unique. While there are potential challenges



Clockwise from top, with support from Parkland Light & Water Co., Mark and PLU students helped a community in Nicaragua dig a well. The community now has easy access to clean water. Mark with his wife, Amy; daughter, Jana; and son, Luke. Mark is proud of his efforts to help provide clean water to a Nicaraguan community.

Photos courtesy of Mark Mulder

ahead, including our infrastructure that was installed 30 to 70 years ago to the ongoing necessity of monitoring water quality and the health of our aquifer, I look forward to working with the board and our community to keep PL&W a great utility.

“Finally, I decided to apply because I knew and respected Chuck Nelson. He was a dedicated community servant and had a real heart for Parkland and for Pacific Lutheran University. Over the years, I spoke with Chuck about our utility system, and I could see his pride for PL&W. I have the same type of dedication for our Parkland community, and look forward to serving our members and utility customers.”

In his new position as a PL&W board member, Mark notes that his service is as an individual and a Parkland resident. As a PLU professor, however, he sees a connection between the top-tier school and Parkland Light and Water. PLU’s mission is, “Seek to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership, and care—for other people, for their communities and for the earth.”

“My service with the board is certainly in alignment with this mission,” Mark says.

Five years ago, when PL&W celebrated its 100th anniversary, Mark and a group of PLU students partnered with the PL&W board for a clean water project in Nicaragua. Consumers were invited to donate to the project.

PLU students were involved in a semester-long project to learn about nonprofits, global operations, fundraising and working collaboratively with communities. Students raised funds in collaboration with PL&W, other organizations and individual donors and worked with the leadership of a Nicaraguan community to dig a well and teach health classes to the community.

“We were able to dig to a deep aquifer, protected by clay and rock, at a depth of around 150 feet,” Mark says. “Clean water flows each day in the community thanks to collaboration—the same type of collaboration amongst a group of people that first brought clean water to Parkland more than 100 years ago.”

Since then, Mark has spearheaded

several additional water projects. He has worked with the PL&W board on local water projects. His daughter was awarded a grant for a water bottle refilling station at Keithley Middle School, and her Girl Scout troop donated a filling station to Washington High School.

“PL&W is a cooperative for a reason,” Mark says. “It takes all of our members to serve our co-op. Thankfully, we have a wonderful team of staff who provide 99.98% reliability, and work diligently and safely to support our power and water infrastructure. As a democratically operated cooperative, cooperation is built into our name and our decision making.”

Though the board of directors appointed Mark to fill a vacancy, he will run for election at the next annual meeting, set for March 24, 2020, at Keithley Middle School.

“I appreciate Mark being appointed,” says PL&W General Manager Susan Cutrell. “He will be an asset to our board, and his values are well-aligned with our mission and the membership.” ■



Four students at Clatskanie Elementary won bicycles earlier this year as part of the Clatskanie Masons' Bikes 4 Books program.

Masons' Work Is No Secret

Members focus efforts on assisting Clatskanie youth

By Scott Laird

The Freemasons are a worldwide fraternity, with a history of keeping their activities and rituals a secret. But Jim Morgan of the Clatskanie Masonic Lodge says the Masons are no longer so tight-lipped. They want people to know more about their philanthropic work.

"We're not real secretive when we have large buildings with our square and compass symbol on display," Jim says. "We don't hide. We used to be more secretive than we are

today. Now we wear shirts, hats and rings with the square and compass. We're trying to be more visible in our communities than we used to be."

Jim knows a lot about local and regional Masonic work. Originally from Rainier and now retired from Wauna Mill, he is a past master of the Clatskanie Lodge, serving twice in 1988 and 2008. He finished serving as the grand master of the state of Oregon in June.

He also knows a lot about service in the community. He has served on the Clatskanie City Council for 29 years, as a volunteer firefighter and EMT for 18 years, and has coached Little League baseball and girls softball.

"Service to others was not uncommon for me," Jim says.

The Masons are not a service club, but a club that focuses on the self-improvement of its members.

"The Masonic Lodge has been great for me, and it's made a big difference in my life," Jim says. "One of the old sayings in Freemasonry is, 'We take good men and we make them better.' We give them the tools and lessons, and if they use those they can become better people."

The grand master of the state lodge—the role Jim just completed—serves a one-year term, after serving for one year in each of three other officer positions leading up to grand master: deputy grand

master, senior grand warden and junior grand warden.

Jim says the Oregon Grand Lodge has been focusing on youth outreach across the state as a way to give back to their communities through their local lodges.

The Clatskanie Masons have three programs they sponsor in the Clatskanie School District. One is their Bikes 4 Books program for elementary students. Kids receive raffle tickets for books they read, which go into a drawing to win a bicycle.

Jim says about 70% of elementary students in Clatskanie participated in the program this past school year, with four students receiving new bikes and all participants

receiving certificates.

“The idea is to encourage our students to read, especially early reading, because reading is the most important thing you can learn,” Jim says.

The Masons host a lunch for honor students in middle school and high school. Students with a 3.5 GPA or better are invited to the lodge. Students with a 4.0 GPA get special recognition.

“We had close to 100 students this year,” Jim says. “It’s great to see how excited the kids get about coming to the lodge for a luncheon of ham, scalloped potatoes, a roll, and ice cream for dessert.”

The Oregon Masonic Charitable Foundation also provides funding for The Masonic Model Student Assistance Program, which instructs teachers and other school staff to help identify at-risk students and develop plans to assist with health, behavior and attendance.

“The idea is to identify what is right about these kids, not what is wrong with them, and build on those positives,” says Jim.

Masonic lodges across the state help schools and communities with robotics programs, school athletic teams and activities, and backpack programs that provide weekend meals for students.

“We want people to know that we are here and we want to help, especially kids and schools,” Jim says. “Our hope is that, as people see us out there doing these kinds of things, they’ll want to be



The Clatskanie Masonic Lodge celebrated its centennial with installation of a plaque and a corn, wine and oil ceremony.

associated with us and our organization.”

The Oregon Masons maintain a retirement home in Forest Grove through the Home Board, which takes care of members needs in old age and serves as a major charity through financial assistance, benefit coordination and other services.

Shriner hospitals are also a part of Masonic philanthropy. To become a Shiner, you have to first be a Mason. Masons around the world give \$3 million a day to charitable causes.

Jim joined the Clatskanie Lodge in 1982 and later joined the Rainier Lodge, where his father was a member. A Mason can belong to as many lodges as they would like, as long as they pay their annual dues.

The Masons were chartered in the Oregon Territory in 1851, eight years before Oregon became a state. The Clatskanie Masonic Lodge was established in 1908. It celebrated its centennial in 2008 with officers of the Grand Lodge, who performed a corn, wine and oil ceremony, along with installation of a plaque.

“It’s a ceremony for new

buildings, rededicated buildings, or major anniversaries,” Jim says. “The Masons will make sure the plaque is plum, square and level, like any good building should be, and then they do the dedication, with corn for nourishment, wine for refreshment and oil for joy, followed by a dinner and program.”

The Rainier Masons at Lodge #24 celebrated their 150th anniversary in 2008, after being chartered in 1858 as the last territorial lodge before Oregon became a state.

But Mason Lodges date back much further than that. The first Grand Lodge was formed in England in 1717. It recently celebrated its 300th anniversary in London with grand masters from 138 countries in attendance.

The Masons started as a fraternity of builders and stone masons.

“The original Freemasons were the cathedral builders, and the legend goes all the way back to the building of King Solomon’s Temple,” Jim says. “The stone masons’ building secrets were highly prized and highly guarded—how to build a cathedral that

would stand for hundreds of years and the geometry of how to build things. Those masons would meet in what were called lodges and make their plans, and as those trades started dwindling other tradespeople started joining.”

Jim says members who are not an actual trade mason or operative mason are known as speculative masons in the organization.

Ties to early stone masons led to the use of the square and compass as the symbols to identify lodges and members.

“They took those tools of the trade and created moral and life lessons for each tool,” Jim says. “The square teaches us to square our actions with all people and to meet all people on the level and treat them equally and fairly in all that we do. We meet on the level and we part on the square. The compass reminds us to circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds.”

The Clatskanie Lodge has about 65 members, with about half of them still living locally. The Clatskanie Lodge meets once a month.

There are about 6,500 Masons across Oregon at approximately 105 lodges.

“I just spent the last year as the Oregon Grand Master, traveling the state and encouraging people to go out and find ways to get involved in their communities,” Jim says. “What each of us can give as a volunteer in our communities is far greater than the Masonic Lodge giving some money.” ■

From ambition to tradition

Darlington Raceway

By Vanessa Wolf

While NASCAR is often associated with good times, tailgating and adult beverages, many folks don't realize stock car racing is a result of Prohibition.

During the 1920s, Appalachian bootleggers needed a way to distribute their product, and soon found that small, speedy cars were best for outrunning the authorities. As the penalties for bootlegging increased, many runners began modifying their vehicles with respect to speed, handling and cargo room.

While the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 put an end to the illegal whiskey-running business, there was still a market for moonshine. Now the enemy became the tax collectors. As moonshine runners continued to improve their cars' speed and performance, they also began to hold races, which soon became popular spectator events, especially in the South.

The Beginning

A few years later, former stock car racer Harold Brasington attended the 1948 Indianapolis 500 and concluded that his

hometown of Darlington would make another good spot for a speedway, somewhat akin to returning the sport to its roots.

Filled with ambition, Harold returned to Darlington and began gathering tools and materials for the project. While most questioned the validity of his vision, luck struck when he found himself at a poker table with Sherman Ramsey, a local plywood magnate. In his 1999 book, "Darlington Raceway: 50th Anniversary," author Jim Hunter cites the recollections of Sherman's grandson, Anthony Brown,



of the events that followed:

“It was about 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 4, 1948, and my grandfather and I walked to the Center Brick Tobacco Warehouse on South Main Street to join five other men, making a table of six players for poker. They sat down at a well-lighted round table near the warehouse entrance while I went off to play on some empty tobacco skids.

“At about 10 p.m., near my bedtime, I came to the table. Standing behind my grandfather, I heard the following conversation between hands in the poker game.

“‘Mr. Ramsey,’ asked Mr. Brasington, ‘What do you plan to do with your land out on Hartsville road?’”

This was State Road 151-34. My grandfather’s 600-acre farm lay 4 miles from central Darlington at that time.

“‘There are some tenant farmers at the west end,’ my grandfather replied. ‘I use the rest of the property for bird hunting.’ Almost as an afterthought, my grandfather said, ‘Why do you ask?’”

“Brasington continued, ‘Let’s build a racetrack on the east end, near the Hartsville road.’”

“Preoccupied with the poker game, my grandfather gave Brasington a cursory, ‘Sure,’ and then added, ‘Now deal the cards!’”

While the landowner didn’t at first remember this vague verbal contract, he eventually honored it after learning Harold had already proceeded to break ground on his land as requested. Ultimately, nearly 70 acres of former cotton and peanut fields were traded in exchange for stock in the proposed raceway. That deal also included a single, notable restriction: Harold could design the track however he wished, as long as it didn’t disturb Sherman’s minnow pond, set on the far west side of the parcel.

As a result of this stipulation, the 1.25-mile track took on an egg-like, oval shape. Harold, the hardworking owner of a heavy equipment company, rolled up his sleeves and began working the land, day and night. Almost a year later, he had almost single-handedly built the raceway himself.

Once completed, Harold reached out to friend Bill France, Sr., another former racecar driver. Two years earlier,

France had founded NASCAR to bring organized rules, scheduling and a championship to the sport. Harold convinced France to run a 500-mile NASCAR-sanctioned race on the new track.

Held on Labor Day 1950, the first Southern 500 was also the first 500-mile, strictly stock automobile race, as well as the only paved event NASCAR had at the time. It came with an unprecedented \$25,000 purse, a sum that attracted more than 80 drivers.

In the end, the first Southern 500 was won by the slowest qualifier in the race. After fitting his Plymouth with long-wearing truck tires, driver Johnny Mantz was able to continue driving while others made multiple pit stops to replace their tires. With an average speed of 75.25 mph, that inaugural race lasted more than six hours.

1950 Through 2016

Through the years, the Darlington venue has made its mark on racing, and the list of drivers who have competed there could double as a veritable who’s who of NASCAR.

The course itself has secured its place

The pace car leads racers during the pace lap of the 1953 Southern 500.

Photo by Frank Wells





in racing history as “the track too tough to tame.” Although the flat and forgiving east side of the raceway is wide and sweeping, the tight, steeply banked section on the other end of the track—originally designed to preserve the long-gone minnow pond—is not so benevolent.

Although originally intended to be driven at roughly 85 mph, current NASCAR speeds often exceed 200 mph. Still, the track’s hazards have become something of a badge of honor, and drivers with telltale damage to the right side of their car are said to have earned their “Darlington stripe.”

In 1965, the raceway opened the Joe Weatherly Stock Car Museum. It was named in honor of the racing legend who had died a year earlier in a stock car accident in Riverside, California. At the time, the exhibits at the museum included a



Left, Darlington Raceway’s first race was in 1950. Above, Driver Tim Flock in the pits at the 1955 Southern 500.

Above photo by Frank Wells

pair of Bermuda shorts belonging to an unnamed competitor, and a mounted, 55-pound rockfish caught by driver Tony Lund.

In 2003, the museum was renovated, expanded and renamed the National Stock Car Museum and National Motorsports Press Association Hall of Fame. It now boasts the largest collection of race cars in the world, including the vehicle that won the first-ever Southern 500—Johnny Mantz’s 1950 Plymouth—as well as what’s left of Darrell Waltrip’s 1991 Chevy Lumina, after being torn to pieces in a wreck at Daytona that same year.

There are videos of famous races, as well as exhibits tracking the history of the stock car circuit and Dale Earnhardt Sr.’s handprints, preserved in concrete. Dale won nine times at Darlington—second only to 10-time winner David Pearson—and quite memorably blacked out and crashed into a wall during a warmup lap before the 1997 Southern 500. He later blamed it on the heat.

Meanwhile, due to poor ticket sales and the impact of the 2002 Ferko v. NASCAR lawsuit, the 2004 Southern 500—despite having been held over Labor Day weekend at Darlington for the previous 53 years—was moved to November, and the coveted Labor Day slot was given to California Speedway. For the following decade, the Southern 500 continued to undergo changes to both name and venue, eventually returning to its Labor Day weekend home at Darlington in 2015.

2016 Through Present

Current track president Kerry Tharp joined the raceway team in July 2016. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Kerry worked for NASCAR as director of communications from 2005 through 2016. While he was certainly familiar with the sport of stock car racing, overseeing an entire event posed unique challenges.

“My first Labor Day race was in 2016, and I’d been on the job maybe six weeks,” he recalls. “In my previous role, I’d only



Racers make their way around Darlington Raceway at a race in 1990.

been concerned with the communication side of things. I didn't really have to worry about all the details that go into making sure your property is fully prepared to host a three-day event with a crowd of nearly 60,000 people.

"It's the little things that get you," he continues. "Things like the concessions or making sure there are enough paper products and supplies. There is an enormous amount of detailed work that goes into this, but those details are what set you apart and take you from being good to being excellent."

If keeping track of so many specifics wasn't enough, the Southern 500 is also an effort that restarts the moment it ends.

"All the preparation that must be put into an event like this is more or less a yearlong process," Kerry says. "The minute the weekend ends, we get started on preparations for next time."

Tackling this annual feat is Darlington's modest team of roughly 14 full-time employees. "I believe we are likely the smallest staff of any NASCAR-style track," Kerry says. "We're like the

little engine that could, and I'm very fortunate to be surrounded by great people that put a lot of pride and passion into hosting this event."

This year's Southern 500 is shaping up to be no exception, beginning with the 2019 Sport Clips Haircuts VFW 200 on Saturday, August 31, at 3:30 p.m. Originally commenced in 1982, the race spans 147 laps, and covers 200.8 miles. Fittingly, the race's longtime sponsor is Sherman Ramsey's Diamond Hill Plywood, now owned and operated by his grandsons.

The Bojangles Southern 500, part of the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup, is Sunday, September 1 at 6 p.m. With a distance of 501 miles—or 367 laps—it will be broadcast on the Motor Racing Network, as well as SiriusXM Channel 90.

Considering Darlington Raceway's storied past, it seems fitting the event is also NASCAR's only official throwback event.

"It's the only race weekend in which we officially celebrate the history of the sport," Kerry says. "Every year we have a retro theme. This year we're celebrating

1990 through 1994. Next year we'll be remembering the 1950s."

As part of the early '90s time capsule, Better Than Ezra—a band whose hit song "Good" peaked at 30 on the Billboard charts in 1995—will perform, along with South Carolina native Edwin McCain, who will sing the National Anthem. In addition, the official apparel line will sport a bright, color-blocked look, in keeping with the fashion trends of the era.

"This is our fifth year of the throwback weekend," Kerry says. "In addition to the '90s-themed music and merchandise, we're going to bring back a lot of the legends, the heroes of the sport that haven't been around for a while. It's kind of like a reunion."

Even if racing isn't your thing, Kerry is adamant that attendees don't have to be true car enthusiasts to enjoy a NASCAR event.

"We try to be as involved in the community as we possibly can, and we want to make it feel like it's the people's race-track, because it is," he says. ■