



Lisa Snyder cuddles with her standard poodle, Data. Lisa has a condition that causes seizures, and Data is trained to detect them before they happen.

Photo courtesy of Lisa Snyder

Program Trains Dogs to Serve

Dogs for Invisible Disabilities helps people train their own service dogs

By Craig Reed

When a dog licks its owner, there can be more to it than just affection. Service dogs are trained to alert their owner to a health issue that may soon impact them. The canine may do that by nudging a hand or leg, rubbing or leaning against them, putting a paw on a leg, arm or shoulder, or pulling on its leash to let

them know it's best to leave an area.

Learning to anticipate a health issue and then giving the alert takes training and patience by both dog and owner. Suzanne Brean of Lebanon discovered several years ago there wasn't appropriate instruction for that kind of training in Oregon.

Suzanne has a seizure disorder and wanted to train a dog to alert her to it.

Her only option was to send her black Labrador, Wyatt, to a Southern California professional facility for training that cost \$10,000.

Wyatt graduated as a service dog and provided Suzanne with seizure alerts for four years before he retired from service.

While Suzanne had the money to pay for Wyatt's training, she realized that wasn't the case for many people in

her hometown. Seeing a need, Suzanne became a professional certified dog trainer after a few years of instruction.

Suzanne studied through seminars, bookwork and a 20-day course taught by John Rogerson, a world-renowned dog trainer and behaviorist who pioneered most of the techniques that have become standard practice in dog behavior therapy. She recorded a mandated 300 hours of working with dogs and earned her certificate through the Certification Council of Professional Dog Trainers.

In 2011, Suzanne established Dogs for Invisible Disabilities and soon had it certified as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit program. She also owns My Little Dog Training Academy and Day Care.

An invisible disability can be, but isn't limited to, autism, dissociative identity disorder, seizures, diabetes, hearing loss, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and mobility issues. If a dog can sense an issue through smell, it can be trained to alert a person.

Suzanne admits it is not always easy to match a person and a dog. There must be a connection. In most cases, the dog must pick the person by showing an affection and a willingness to care for the owner. This is important because the dog and owner go through the DID training together.

"If a person doesn't have a dog, we can help them find one," Suzanne says. "But it's not the first one interviewed or from the first litter. It usually takes months to find the right dog for a person. People have to realize this is a process. Sometimes after you start the process, the dog and the owner don't work out. Not every dog has the personality to be a service dog. It's probably one or two dogs out of 100."

The first test a potential service dog must pass is showing it can remain calm rather than be nervous or aggressive in strange or sudden situations. Once found, the weekly DID classes focus on teaching owners how to train their canine companions.

"Because there are many distractions



Above, Cloud Walker with Boots, a brown Irish wolfhound/golden retriever mix, and General Patton, a black standard poodle. Top, Suzanne Brean learned to train service dogs after needing one herself and discovering how expensive it was.

during class that inhibit a dog's ability to learn, "the owner and dog must do much of the work at home so they learn together," Suzanne says.

If a person starts with a puppy, going through the program can take 18 to 24 months. An older dog with prior obedience training can make it through the program in six months if they stay focused on the instruction and their weekly homework assignments.

Those assignments include supervised trips to an airport, going through security, a ride on a train, visiting an amusement park and going to a movie. The dog must show a calmness and continued support for its owner despite the distractions and noises of those places.

"The dog must stay calm through everything, even if it's kids pulling

their tails or running up behind them," Suzanne says.

Thirty dogs and their owners participated in the program's first year. Suzanne says a variety of dog breeds have been in the program, but poodle mixes are the most popular candidates to become service dogs.

Cloud Walker, a military veteran, went through the DID program with Boots, an Irish wolfhound/golden retriever mix. He says that a dog that responds to "sit," "come," and "stay" is a grammar school graduate. A well-trained, good citizen dog is a high school graduate, but a service dog has earned a PhD.

Lisa Snyder of Salem completed the course in April with her poodle, Data. Lisa's disability is seizures from a head trauma.

"He alerts me before I know a seizure is coming on, or will remove me from a situation that is triggering a seizure," she says. "He'll sense it and pull me away, avoiding a seizure altogether. It's been life changing for me."

Data also alerts Lisa's caregiver, who has diabetes, of a low blood sugar level.

"You can't take the program lightly," Lisa says. "It took about 18 months for Data and I, driving to Lebanon every Monday for over a year for training. Suzanne trains us and then we work with our dogs."

Lisa and Data have made three flights since their DID graduation earlier this year. The dog laid on the floor at her feet during the flights.

"I was nervous, but the training prepared us perfectly," she says.

The DID program works with Caringcrowd—a crowdfunding platform dedicated to improving public health—and Tribute To Honor, an Oregon nonprofit created to help and honor first responders and military veterans. Through these organizations, there are funds to help pay for this expert training. ■

For more information, go to Dogs for Invisible Disabilities' website at www.diddogs.com.



Ben Simons led his first Yoncalla City Council meeting as mayor in January.

18-Year-Old Mayor Leads by Listening

Ben Simons likes to be involved and has a history of volunteering in the community



Ben was a Washington Youth Tour participant through Douglas Electric Cooperative in 2017.

By Craig Reed

Age didn't deter Ben Simons from his ambitious goal. He was only 18 years old and had graduated from Yoncalla High School just a few months earlier when he decided he was going to run for mayor of Yoncalla, a community with a population of just over 1,000.

He didn't disappoint himself, winning the volunteer position over two other candidates with 46 percent of the vote. He picked up the gavel and conducted his first Yoncalla City Council meeting in January.

"I'm glad to be here," Ben says. "I sure hope I'm not doing the wrong things in anybody's eyes. I'm not here for me; I'm here for Yoncalla. It's important

for people to know that. I'm doing this to help make this community the best it can be with what we have."

When not dealing with community issues, Ben, now 19, is a student at Umpqua Community College. He finished his freshman year in June and plans to attend UCC for one more year before transferring to the University of Oregon, where he will major in business administration.

Despite Ben's youth, family and friends are not surprised by his willingness to serve. He served as president of the Yoncalla High School student body during both his junior and senior years. He attended some school board meetings during that time, was a member of the school's Future Business Leaders of America chapter and was appointed to the city

council last summer to fill a vacant seat. During the school year, he volunteers with the North Douglas County Fire & EMS, and he is a paid employee during the summer.

Prior to making his decision to run for mayor, he asked for advice. Some suggested he run for the city council seat that he held and gain some more experience.

“I took some of their advice, and that was that I really needed to think about how to be a compelling mayoral candidate for the people of Yoncalla,” Ben says.

The son of Cheryl and Todd Simons did so by walking some streets, knocking on people’s doors and introducing himself, talking to more people when out in the community and asking residents about their concerns and listening to the responses.

“It was good to talk to people, to hear what they wanted,” Ben says. “I knew I was fighting the 18-year-old stereotype—that I was too young to be this involved—but I like being involved, and I made myself aware of what was going on.

“It was pretty cool seeing the results posted on the website. It was reassuring to know the people I was out there talking to voted for me.”

Cheryl says she is proud of her son and the way he went about his election campaign. She set a foundation for him, having taken him to numerous activities where the family volunteered during her many years as a high school teacher, athletic director and coach.

“A lot of people are pretty proud of him,” Cheryl says. “I think people feel comfortable talking to him about different stuff. He’s willing to listen and to investigate their concerns. They appreciate that.

“I was amazed with the knowledge he had when he was running. He’s willing to find out about whatever the subject is.”

Eight months into his two-year term, people seem pleased with his leadership.

“He’s doing a good job,” says Dan Wagoner, president of the city council. “His age has nothing to do with it. He looks at both sides of issues. He’s pretty thorough. I think he looks out for the people here and their best interests.”

Rhonda Rasmussen, Yoncalla’s city administrator, says Ben has the respect of the city council members, all of whom are at least twice his age.

“He’s always talking to people, he’s very willing to listen,” Rhonda says. “It’s nice to have a new vision on the city council. If he doesn’t know something,



he’ll look into it and find out information about it. For his age, he’s very smart.”

During the major snow storm earlier this year, Ben was the lead coordinator on setting up a shelter where people could get warm and sleep until power was restored to their homes.

Looking ahead, Ben wants to see continued improvements to the city’s water and street systems, such as upgrading the drinking water system, replacing water lines and paving more streets. He would also like to see improvements at the Yoncalla Veterans Park, including the installation of a monument to area veterans.

Ben and Justin Cobb, the mayor of nearby Drain, are also working together to improve relations between the two communities and are discussing possible projects that would benefit both communities.

“Age is not holding him back,” says Rhonda. “He’s always been community oriented. All through high school, he volunteered at activities that helped the community.”

Ben says he hopes to be part of the solution for Yoncalla, not part of a problem.

“I’ve grown up here,” he says. “I have a sense of pride in my community. I’ve lived here for 19 years and I’ve enjoyed them all. I’m glad to be of service here, to help make it a better place for people to live.” ■

Ben volunteers at North Douglas County Fire and EMS during the school year and is a paid employee in the summer.



Through a partnership with Oregon Energy Fund, West Oregon Electric Cooperative supports its members in financial need.

WOEC Leads the Way in Member Assistance

PowerUp and other cooperative-supported programs help members pay utility bills

By Scott Laird

Two years ago, West Oregon Electric Cooperative developed a way for members to help each other through an innovative program. WOEC has been a leader in providing energy assistance to their members for the past decade, and the PowerUp Program is proving to be a success.

PowerUp, which allows members to help others in the WOEC community who may be struggling to pay their bill, is the only program of its kind in Oregon. Power Up funnels money to the Oregon Energy Fund—a statewide nonprofit that assists Oregonians in times of unexpected financial crisis.

“WOEC is a great community member, and

they’ve been a great partner with us,” says Brian Albritton, executive director of Oregon Energy Fund. “Out of 36 co-ops and PUDs across Oregon, WOEC is the one that continues to lead the way in working with us to raise funds to help their members. WOEC is really taking the extra step to meet the needs of their members.”

The PowerUp program is simple. Members round up the payment to the nearest dollar on their monthly bill. Those funds come back to the community as energy assistance. Members also may create a standing gift each month or make a one-time gift to the program.

The Oregon Energy Fund handles collection of the funds and provides notification to WOEC

members for their tax-deductible donations.

“Our fundraising model is really very community based,” Brian says. “We call it ‘neighbor helping neighbor,’ and that means that all the funds that come in in one county stay in that county.”

WOEC members in need can apply for assistance, which is distributed through third-party St. Vincent DePaul.

“Our entire model for this program is collaborative,” Brian explains. “We work with WOEC as our local utility partner, and then we work collaboratively with our on-the-ground partners across the state. Here, it’s St. Vincent DePaul.”

Oregon Energy Fund has four full-time employees and a presence in all 36 Oregon counties as it works through collaboratives with local partnerships, such as the one at WOEC.

St. Vincent DePaul is an all-volunteer-run organization, meaning all the funds coming into WOEC’s PowerUp program goes back into the community to help members.

According to Oregon Energy Fund, more than 400,000 families across Oregon—or one in four—struggle to pay their utility bills each month, and 150,000 households are on the brink of homelessness. According to a recent study, “affordable utility bills” was the top priority for people in poverty.

“Everyone recognizes just how expensive electricity is in the WOEC service district,” Brian says. “The people that live there, particularly in Vernonia, have chosen to live there. It’s a community that has come back from several floods and is a thriving place. But it’s not the easiest place to live. And WOEC recognizes that occasionally their members might need some extra help.”

This year, the organization has made assistance for senior citizens a priority.

“We’re here for all Oregonians,” Brian says. “A lot of people in Oregon are having a hard time with the rising cost of living and rising medical costs, particularly seniors on a fixed income. I say this a lot, but it’s really hard to be in financial crisis. Struggling to pay your utility bills is a widespread issue. If you think about your neighbors, one in four of them are struggling to pay their bills.”

Brian calls the PowerUp program at WOEC a moderate success, with a large share of members participating and donating about \$1,000 to the program during the past two years.



“We’re really happy with the participation rates,” he says. “It’s great to have that sort of engagement.”

Brian asks members who are already participating in PowerUp, or who are thinking about joining, to consider moving up to a \$1 donation each month.

“It really could be much more impactful overall for the program, without breaking the bank for individual members,” he says.

Oregon Energy Fund is known for its innovative programs. This year, it was recognized with a national award by the National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition for its Senior Discount Pilot Program—a groundbreaking collaboration with Meals on Wheels People and Portland General Electric—which provides recurring energy assistance to homebound seniors. Oregon Energy Fund also won the award 11 years ago for its oil recycling program.

WOEC has made extra efforts to bring external funds into the community to help its members in need. Every year for the past 10 years, WOEC has applied for and received a \$5,000 grant from CoBank, which WOEC has then matched.

“Finding those external grants to bring funding back into the community is one of the only ways to get assistance in a rural community, especially in a rural community that is already struggling,” Brian says. “WOEC has really led the way in finding other solutions and funding streams.” ■

Oregon Energy Fund celebrates its 30th anniversary this year with Power Gala, a fundraising event in Portland on Saturday, October 12. The event includes dinner, dancing and an auction. For tickets, or to donate an item for the auction, go to www.OregonEnergyFund.org/PowerGala.



Lane County Emergency Program Coordinator Patence Winningham wants everyone to be prepared for a major emergency by having a complete emergency kit accessible.

Get Ready for the Next Disaster

Gather the supplies needed to survive on your own for at least two weeks

By Craig Reed

Are you prepared? Do you have a plan? Patence Winningham has been asking those questions for years, previously as the emergency program coordinator for the city of Eugene and more recently as the Lane County emergency program manager.

She's been in the latter position since mid-February and has attended numerous meetings and events throughout the county, informing people about how to prepare and plan for emergency situations. Those include catastrophic storms, wildfires and earthquakes resulting in extended power and communication outages, road blockages, broken bridges and water and fuel shortages.

"I like the idea of building a more resilient community," Patence says. "I've been doing public presentations, going to rural areas and talking to groups

that are establishing emergency planning teams. It's important to establish caches of food, to identify warming centers or shelters for displaced people, to organize what skills and resources are available. Places like McKenzie Bridge and Oakridge could be shut off during an event, and they need a plan in such a situation."

The potential disaster that's gotten the most attention in recent decades is the Cascadia earthquake that would happen in the Pacific Ocean and would impact the West Coast.

"It's not if, it is when," Patence says of that earthquake eventually happening. "You better have a plan when it does. That's where we need to start."

Zechariah English, the energy services representative at Lane Electric Cooperative, has been making a similar pitch to the co-op's members when attending different events. He says the snow event that

occurred earlier this year and impacted several rural communities was an eye opener for many.

“It was sort of a slap in the face—a reality check,” he says. “People saw what really happens when they lose power and they’re stranded.

“We can all remember times of crisis when you wished you were more prepared—you wished you had a flashlight, you wished you had jumper cables. It’s important to be prepared, to have a plan and to know what to do in case of an emergency.”

Patence agrees the snowstorm showed that most people and most areas are not prepared for a Cascadia event. She says people should be prepared so they can be part of a solution, not part of a problem.

“Whether it’s snow, floods, wildfires, the little incidents will test us and should prepare us for the bigger event like Cascadia,” she says. “With that event, we’re not going to have water, we’re not going to have sewer, we’re not going to have fuel.”

People should also not expect immediate help because first responders will have to deal with their own individual and family issues before being available to provide any services.

Patence says when she makes presentations, 50 or more people usually attend. But she doesn’t know how many actually continue to prepare or begin preparations.

She says those preparations for a family should start with a plan. Then an emergency kit should be assembled. It should include items such as food that has an extended shelf life, medical supplies, solar lantern, whistle, emergency radio that is battery powered or solar powered, fire starter, a life straw and a headlight.

Those kits can be assembled for under \$100, according to Patence. She suggests that birthday and Christmas gifts can include items for the kits, especially for children.

“It’s important to build a culture of preparedness, starting with children,” she says. “Let them know the importance of being aware. Making it important for you makes it important for them.”

Zechariah says the standard message is to have two weeks of emergency goods, but he has taken that to four weeks for his family. He explains that the supplies can be rotated and the older ones used in daily life so nothing is outdated or wasted.

Zechariah encourages people to know their neighbors so they can help each other, especially if there are those who are disabled or elderly.



Damage from the February snowstorm was a wake-up call for many who got a taste of life without power.

“My feeling is more people are becoming aware. They’re starting to take steps, but there is a long way to go,” he says. “People get complacent when things are running smooth because they have other day-to-day problems. But it is best to keep this in the back of your mind so you can continue to be prepared.”

Patence says Eugene and Springfield have taken steps and are moving in the right direction to deal with a catastrophe. It’s the rural, more remote communities that will have to survive on their own longer.

Since the snowstorm, there have been numerous inquiries about generators and how to have them ready to go in case of an emergency. An electrician can hook up a generator to a house panel, a Generlink can be installed by Lane Electric free of charge or an automatic transfer switch to a sub-panel can be installed. The key to using a generator for power is having enough fuel on hand to run the generator.

“Prepare yourself so you can be an active citizen in your neighborhood when a disaster hits rather than a victim,” Patence says. “Be prepared and be a survivor, or maybe be a first responder and help somebody else.” ■



Riders jump off the starting line at a Territorial Motocross Park race. Photo by Mike Van De Walker

GET DIRTY

Territorial Motocross Park offers challenges for riders of all levels

By Craig Reed

Whether 5 years old or 75, motorcycle riders are thrilled by the challenges offered at the Eugene Territorial Motocross Park: tight hairpin turns, high banked corners and several bumps and jumps.

“The course lends itself to all levels of riders from beginners to pros,” says Brian Van De Walker, president of the park facility and a 23-year rider. “It’s a traditional style motocross course with a lot of table-top jumps, and uphill and downhill runs.”

“The pros have a great time here because they can fly as far as they want to off the jumps,” says

63-year-old Skeet Hise, a 50-year rider at the park. “But then for guys like me, the older guys, we can go a little slower and don’t have to fly as far.”

The pros race on their 450cc four-stroke or 250cc two-stroke motorcycles and can reach speeds up to 65 mph, depending on the layout of the track. The average rider finishes one lap of the course in about 2 minutes.

For the youngest riders on their mini bikes, there is a short, flat, oval course that offers more of a learning experience than a thrill-a-second ride. But some of those kids can get their bikes up to 30 mph.

The park’s season opened Sunday, September 1,



Left, Brian Van De Walker is president of Territorial Motocross Park, and Skeet Hise, who has been a rider there for 50 years.

Photo by Craig Reed

with the fourth annual Race for the Cure. Donations made during the first three Cure races totaled \$9,000. Contributions have been made to the Willamette Valley Cancer Institute and to the American Cancer Society.

Races and/or practices will continue at the park on every other Sunday through mid-May.

Riding at the park is limited to just twice a month from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. as a courtesy to the neighbors because traffic and noise do increase on those days.

The property was a hay field until it was developed into a park and motorcycle course in 1968 by a group of friends who also enjoyed riding and racing their dirt bikes. Those friends had a flat track south of Monroe that they rode on during the summer. They developed the Territorial site for winter racing. Gradually, the Territorial course became a year-round facility. But the additional use led to complaints by neighbors. After an evaluation by Lane County in 2002, the site was required to return to a winter schedule open every other Sunday.

Those changes led to a loss of interest by some motorcycle enthusiasts. The park struggled along for a few years before it was put up for sale.

A week before the for sale sign went up, Brian and friend Mike Miller came to the park for some practice runs. When Brian returned a week later and saw the park was up for sale, he immediately called Mike, who was in Eastern Oregon on an elk hunting trip. Mike made some calls and bought the park.

Mike has owned the property for nine years, but he leaves the management and maintenance of the park and course up to Brian and any bike enthusiasts who want to volunteer. The main layout of the course is the same as the original design, but Brian makes small changes to give it a different look for

each race day.

“It went from being an eyesore to a place where people would want to come,” Brian says. “I want to bring families and their kids back to Territorial Park.”

“Motocross is just like playing T-ball, playing basketball, where a lot of families come out to watch, to cheer the kids on,” Skeet says. “It keeps kids out of trouble. It’s a good clean sport.”

While the park is open to the public and most of the racers are males 10 to 30 years old, there are classes for older riders and for women. On a good weather race day, the park will draw up to 200 riders.

Some of the scheduled races are national qualifiers for such major events as the Mammoth Motocross Race in California and the Loretta Lynn Motocross National Championships in Tennessee.

Skeet raced as a professional in the 1970s. He describes dirt bike racing as “the most physical, demanding sport in the world. The top motocross racers’ heartbeat gets to 190 beats per minute. That’s a fact. That would be like sitting on a bucking Brahma bull for 15 minutes.”

Brian, whose full-time profession is being a high line recreational vehicle technician, and Skeet, who is a Christmas tree farmer, agree that one appealing aspect of the sport is its individuality.

“It’s only about you,” Brian says. “All you have to worry about is you and how fast you want to go. You can apply as much power as you want to your bike and go as fast as you want.”

“It’s not a team sport,” Skeet says. “It’s either I win or I lose. It’s just a free time in life. You don’t have to worry about whether the bills are paid, whether the house is cleaned, it’s just the guy in front of you and whether you want to pass him. Racing is a good time away from life’s daily grind.” ■

Artist Works With Limitless Canvas

Drawing and painting are as natural as breathing for Braylee Heaton

By Dianna Troyer

A sidewalk, walls at school or in her home, and even her forearm are canvasses to artist Braylee Heaton.

“To me, anything can be a canvas,” says the 16-year-old Raft River High School junior. “I paint and draw on everything. If I don’t have paper nearby, sometimes I’ll draw on my arm. I can’t remember ever not drawing. It’s always been a big part of my life.”

She uses a variety of media, impressing her appreciative classmates, parents and teachers with her paintings and drawings.

“I must have over 300 Sharpies in all colors, plus colored pencils, oils and acrylics, wall paint, and chalk,” she says.

While her canvasses are limitless, so are her studios. She sketches and paints anywhere—on a shady lawn, in a classroom, in her room at home, or lying on her stomach on her bed.

This summer, when she went with



Braylee Heaton sketches in many places and enjoys showing friends how to do a quick draw on a white board.

friends to a camp at Murtaugh Lake Park west of Burley, she used chalk to sketch Disney characters on a sidewalk. One half of a dog’s face was Lady while the other half was Tramp.

At her high school, the home economics teacher asked her to paint something blowing in the wind on her classroom walls. Braylee painted dandelions with some seeds drifting away.

Braylee sketches and paints in her spare time, whenever she has a break from attending basketball camps and working on the family ranch south of Malta.

“I help with whatever needs to be done—swathing and raking hay,

moving cows, loading and unloading equipment.”

While many parents would discourage their kids from drawing and painting on the walls at home, Braylee’s parents, Jed and Meshia, encourage her.

“Mom asks me to paint quotes on a wall,” Braylee says. “My dad painted when he was young, so he understands.”

During springtime, Braylee started a mural in her bedroom.

“I’ve always liked Western scenes, so I painted a Western town on one wall and am working on an Indian on his horse standing near a cliff on another wall.”

Neighbors and family members ask Braylee to draw a portrait for a gift. Last Christmas, Jed told her he would buy her a new set of tires for her car if she would draw a pencil sketch he could give to Meshia.

“He gave her a photo of me holding her when she was a baby,” Meshia says. “In about 15 minutes, she had finished the sketch. That sketch brought tears to my eyes. It’s so fun to have a daughter



Braylee often draws for friends and families.



From left, Braylee did a chalk sketch on a sidewalk of *Lady and the Tramp*. She used a photograph to sketch her mother holding her as a baby. Friends and family often ask her to do a sketch for a gift they can give.

who can take the most ordinary things and turn them into beautiful art.”

Impressed with her drawings, classmates have often asked Braylee how she learned.

“They think it’s really hard and you have to have natural talent,” she says. “They don’t realize how long I’ve been doing this. I think anyone can draw – it’s just a matter of practicing and applying certain principles.”

She learned techniques from several teachers. Her grandmother, oil painter Carolyn Heaton, gave her a few lessons as a youngster. She soon began teaching herself, relying on books and the internet. In high school, she took an independent online class with an art teacher at Burley High School because Raft River doesn’t offer art classes.

“We worked on color schemes based on the color wheel and different styles of

drawing,” she says.

Braylee has countless subjects.

“I like drawing animals and people the most,” she says. “For ideas, I’ll go to Pinterest and sometimes combine subjects from a couple of different posts there.”

Neighbors who knew of her talent asked for a special Valentine’s Day gift.

“They gave me some photos of them when they were young, so I made pencil sketches from the photos to celebrate,” she says. “I’m happy to paint whatever someone asks me to.” ■



How BPA Addresses Wildfire Risk

By Kevin Wingert

Wildfires are nothing new. However, a rekindled interest in the origins of these fires following a devastating 2018 fire season has led the Bonneville Power Administration to reexamine its existing preventive measures and consider what additional mitigation can be implemented to ensure public safety and grid reliability.

For years, BPA has largely relied on a robust and proactive vegetation management program for its transmission corridors. That paradigm was informed, in part, by the perspective of how to protect BPA's grid of high voltage lines from fire and ensure dependable service to customers with minimal interruptions.

As the wildfire season across the West grabbed headlines and national attention in the fall of 2018, leadership in BPA's transmission organization ordered a top-to-bottom review of all transmission assets, vegetation management, and training of field crews and operators to better understand potential risks associated with a piece of BPA equipment or the actions of an employee.

BPA has always taken a proactive stance on managing transmission assets. With heightened awareness in the utility industry of the potential for equipment to be a source of fire ignition, BPA actively reduces that risk by repairing or replacing transmission components identified as having the highest potential for igniting a fire.

This effort cannot be addressed just once and considered complete. BPA's understanding of risk constantly evolves. Its asset management program actively weighs fire risks when determining the priority of work to be completed on transmission equipment and facilities.



Bonneville Power Administration crews clear the right-of-way along a transmission corridor. Keeping the corridor free of trees and vegetation reduces the risk of outages and reduces fire danger.

Photos courtesy of the Bonneville Power Administration

BPA also uses real-time data to help inform operational changes. Its weather and streamflow forecasting group monitors conditions throughout the Columbia and Snake River basins. This group sends alerts to BPA's transmission field services and transmission

operations organizations, highlighting geographic areas in its service territory that are experiencing an elevated fire risk based on existing conditions and current weather forecasts. That environmental data, coupled with risk analysis of transmission assets, helps inform the agency's

operational decisions.

One example is a change in protocol for BPA dispatchers when a BPA transmission line relays out of service.

The BPA transmission system is built to automatically test or attempt to reclose a line and maintain service along a corridor. Previously, if that initial automatic test failed to reclose the line, dispatchers would, in some instances, have attempted to manually test the line one more time. This is because in many instances, whatever caused the line to relay out of service is a temporary occurrence, such as a lightning strike or a falling tree or branch that briefly contacted the line or came close enough to cause an electrical arc, but is no longer impeding the safe flow of electricity.

Under the new protocol, if the line in question has components identified as having a higher risk of fire ignition, dispatchers will not attempt to reclose the line until a transmission line crew has visually inspected it to ensure it is safe to test and bring back into service.

It is important to note that this new protocol will likely result in longer outages, particularly with transmission lines that may be in remote and hard-to-access areas. However, BPA believes the inconvenience is well worth reducing wildfire risk, and the safety of its field crews and the public.

There is substantial interest from the media and the public regarding the practice of utilities deenergizing lines as a preventive measure to address potential wildfires. BPA has evaluated this practice. It is not an action taken to date, but BPA does not preclude the possibility of deenergizing lines if conditions indicate a clear and imminent threat to life, safety or system reliability.

In more than eight decades, BPA's transmission infrastructure has never been associated with either the start of or contribution to a major wildfire. BPA works every day to preserve this legacy as it powers the Northwest. ■



A BPA transmission line crew replaces components on a 230-kilovolt line that was identified as having a high potential for igniting a fire if the equipment failed.

Benefits of Tree Trimming for Co-op Members

Clearing trees and vegetation growing near our power lines is vital to our ability to provide you with safe, reliable power. Our linemen work year-round to clear rights of way around our power lines to:

- ▶ Keep our line crews and community members safe.
- ▶ Reduce the risk of vegetation contacting the power lines and catching fire.
- ▶ Reduce unexpected costs for repairs.
- ▶ Restore power outages more quickly.

Tree Trimming Near Individual Service Lines

If your home is connected to co-op lines by an overhead wire—called a service line—please check periodically to ensure trees are not growing into the path of the wire. Trees can cause problems for service lines.

Tree limbs that occasionally brush a service line won't damage it. But a tree limb or trunk that is pushing a service line out of its normal path should be trimmed or removed. This kind of interference can damage the electrical equipment in your home or cause an outage for you and your neighbors.

Is it Time to Trim?

If you see trees growing into your service line, please let us know. We will inspect your serviceline and trim or remove trees that are growing too close.

Let us Trim or Remove Trees Near Service Lines

Never trim or remove trees that are growing near your service line. Doing so puts you at risk for deadly electrical shock. To request trimming, call 541-354-1233 and provide your name, service address, phone number and a description of the needed work.

Bulldog for Life

Longtime McDermitt coach encourages player and community involvement

By Lauren Brown

When McDermitt High School football coach Richard Egan was contacted by a reporter in the late summer/early fall of 2018 to do a story on the football team, he agreed but wasn't sure what to expect. The school had just enough players to field an eight-man team. Despite winning state titles in the past, the school had struggled to get enough players to keep the program going.

The story ran as a feature in the Las Vegas Review-Journal on October 14, 2018—complete with color photos in a prominent feature section. It captured the quintessential nature of what it's like to coach at a small, rural school in the middle of a vast desert. It addressed the heart and hope of a coach and his players, as well as the struggles they face in a small, supportive community.

"I was really excited about it," Richard says. "It was kind of like the highlight of the year for these kids."

Soon after it ran, Richard got a call from someone in Las Vegas. A man named Bob Ellis had read the story and wanted to donate \$10,000 to the school's football program. Two more families made donations—one for \$500 and one for \$100.

"I was kind of shocked, but I was happy at the same time," Richard says. "I couldn't wait to get back here to the kids and fill them in on the news."

The school spent the donations on new equipment, primarily a new five-man sled, which will be instrumental for football practice. The one they had been working with came from Lowry High School in Winnemucca.

"I believe it was an eight-man sled, but in order for them to get it up here, they



Richard Egan, center, with his grandchildren. From left are Maddie Tagle, Laila Egan and Andres Egan.

Photo courtesy of Richard Egan

had to chop the last three off to get it on the trailer," Richard says. "We've had this one 15 years, so it has seen its days."

Richard grew up in Owyhee, Nevada, on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation and is a member of the Shoshone-Paiute

Tribe. He attended McDermitt High School and was on the team that won a state championship in 1982.

After graduating from high school, Richard hired on as a bus driver and groundskeeper for the district. He picked

up coaching jobs along the way.

Richard started as an assistant coach under John Moddrell, who coached football, basketball and track at McDermitt High, in addition to being the principal.

“John was my coach back in high school,” Richard says. “I’m doing a lot of things that I learned from him, and that’s what I’ve pretty much carried on here.”

Throughout the years, the school has won five state football championships. More recently, however, numbers have dwindled and it has gotten harder to field a team for the league in which they play. Richard says when he was in high school, a little league football program helped encourage kids to play. When that program went away in the 1990s, so did the number of kids wanting to play football at the high school level.

In 2009, there weren’t enough kids to field a team, and McDermitt cut the program. The team came back the next year but had to spend the season on probation before reentering the league.

Sports were an integral part of Richard’s school experience, and he sees football as a way to help keep students motivated in their classes. As with any rural school, sports teams have to travel long distances to play against other schools. Road trips are simply a part of life. The furthest school they travel to is six-and-half hours away. The closest is three hours away.

“I’ve always told the kids, ‘You get to play and compete, and you meet friends along the way that you’re going to talk about 20 years from now,’” Richard says. “Coaching is teaching a lot of life values.”

Richard is a descendent of Chief Egan, a renowned Native American who was chief of four bands of Northern Paiute Wadatokas and who played a prominent role in the Bannock-Paiute War of 1878 as chronicled in the book “The Rocks Are Ringing” by Greg Hodgen and Larry Purchase. Richard takes a lot of pride in his heritage.

“I’m the sixth generation of the Egan



Richard was pleasantly surprised when, after a story about McDermitt football ran in the Las Vegas Review-Journal, readers donated money to the program.

family,” he says. “I tell my own kids, ‘There are just a few of us with the last name Egan. You guys have got to carry this name.’”

As he helms the football program in McDermitt, Richard thinks a way to encourage player and community involvement would be to outfit the field with lights so they could play Friday nights.

“If we ever did get the lights here, this place would probably be packed,” he says.

“People like the sporting events, and they come to support them.”

Richard’s enthusiasm and hope for the future of the sports programs and students who attend McDermitt High School is evident in the way he speaks of his own experience as a student athlete.

“I played three sports, so I feel like I’m a part of it,” he says. “I came from the Owyhee reservation to the McDermitt Bulldogs, and I feel like I’m a Bulldog for life. Bleeding the blue.” ■

The Wonders of Woodworking

Lonnie Olson's fine furniture and keepsake boxes often preserve memories

By Dianna Troyer

Boards of elm have a sentimental backstory for Lonnie Olson in his woodworking shop south of Mackay. Unable to withstand wind, an aged elm tree had toppled, yet he refused to allow it to be chopped into firewood.

The distinguished tree had grown on his family farm near Peerless in north-eastern Montana, where he grew up.

"That tree triggers a lot of happy memories for our family," says Lonnie, 64, who had it milled into boards.

He transformed the elm into a keepsake box and plans to craft more for family and friends.

Meticulous and self-taught, Lonnie turns rough wood into fine furniture, keepsake boxes, necklace holders, picture frames and whatever else he envisions.

When a friend's large maple tree in Idaho Falls blew over, he took a log from it to a sawmill in Arco and had it cut into slabs. The blonde wood became a desk-top in his home office and seems to radiate a soft glow.

"It's amazing how many types of wood there are, each with distinct and attractive colors and grains," Lonnie says. "You can get just about anything at Intermountain Wood Products in Idaho Falls or online."

His keepsake boxes range in size from 8-by-12-inches to 3-by-6-inches. He picks combinations of woods, blending colors and grains.

"Most of what I make, I give to friends and family for gifts," Lonnie says. "I don't seem to ever have a large enough inventory to do craft shows in the area."

Of all the woods he has worked with, he prefers red oak and walnut.

"They're by far my favorite woods for their color, grain and ease of workability,"

Lonnie says.

He has crafted some commissioned pieces, too. The most memorable was an end table with the top made of nine hand-painted tiles from Chile.

"When the tiles were put together, they created a beautiful scene of butterflies and birds, which I covered with a glass top," Lonnie says. "It was so nerve-wracking to make because I worried about accidentally breaking one. Once it was done, it looked great."

Clients and friends describe whatever Lonnie makes as "flawless and beautiful with a silky smooth finish," his wife, Susan, says. "He's a perfectionist with whatever he does."

To achieve such a smooth finish on his projects, he relies on a customized mixture of spar varnish, mineral spirits and boiled linseed oil.

"I don't like the plastic look of polyurethanes and don't use them unless the

piece will see very heavy use," Lonnie says. "The wiping varnish is easy to apply, and the linseed oil in the mixture really enhances the grain while the spar varnish adds some durability."

Lonnie's fascination for crafting furniture began about 15 years ago.

"I'd dabbled with wood projects growing up but was never serious about making complex pieces like furniture," he says. "When we needed a new bedroom set, we looked in stores, and the quality was so poor. It's not built to last because we live in a throwaway society."

He bought books and watched online classes about making furniture. After he and Susan chose red oak, he built a bed with headboard and footboard, an armoire, two night stands and a dresser.

"I really enjoyed working on it," says Lonnie, who was an engineering technician at nearby Idaho National Laboratory at the time. "It took me about two years



Lonnie Olson concentrates while operating his SawStop table saw at his home shop.



Top, Lonnie and Susan get project ideas from books, magazines and online. Above, furniture becomes more than just functional when Lonnie gets to work.

to finish it on weekends because I was working full time.”

When he retired in 2018 and had more time for woodworking, Susan insisted he invest in a SawStop table saw, which stops automatically when it comes in contact with skin. Susan, a retired registered nurse, recalls seeing table saw injuries and finger loss during her years of practice.

Despite knowing the risks of woodworking, Susan encourages Lonnie.

One of their favorite joint projects is a walnut end table in their living room. The table top is made of more than 100



Above and right, each project takes many stages.

wine bottle corks, each emblazoned with the name of the winery or wine, arranged in neat rows and covered with glass.

They get ideas for his projects from books in his shop, magazines, online and in stores.

“Whatever he sees, he can come home and make,” Susan says. “When I needed a necklace holder, I looked online for ideas and showed him one. It’s wonderful.”

The holder is a thin 4-inch-wide, 10-inch-tall piece of walnut with small



slots for the necklace chains.

Whatever Lonnie makes, he burnishes his name on it.

“I had a small branding iron made with his name on it as a way for him to sign and personalize each piece,” Susan says.

On a table in Lonnie’s workshop, the pieces of a keepsake box await assembly.

“Whatever I make out here, I seem to lose track of time,” he says, smiling. ■

Frontier Chic

Rancher mom juggles three boys and volunteerism while running a popular, eclectic boutique

By Dianna Troyer

Since launching Buckaroo Boutique in 2007, Thaysha Groves' business has taken her for a wild, unpredictable and entertaining ride.

With an eclectic and, some might say, eccentric take on fashion from the American West, Thaysha's small boutique operation has attracted loyal customers from Canada to Australia and everywhere in between.

"I ship all over the world to clients who have become friends," says the 35-year-old mother of three.

Thaysha runs her business while working on a ranch with her husband, Grant, in Starr Valley west of Wells. She says her boutique isn't just about selling merchandise.

"It's about building relationships and showcasing a ranching lifestyle," she says. "I want to empower women to feel good about themselves just the way they are. Forget any

fashion rules. If you like it, wear it—whether it's mellow or wild leopard prints and camo. I have eclectic tastes and like Western, bohemian and chic styles."

Thaysha says wherever and however she meets clients—whether face-to-face or online—her message resonates.

Buckaroo Boutique has earned accolades from Boutique Hub—an online network for small businesses dealing with fashion. Among Nevada boutiques in 2017, it received Best Overall and Best Online awards. In 2018, it won Best Overall and Best Storefront awards.

"I never imagined it taking off like it has, and I always give God the glory for its success," Thaysha says. "All that I am and what I have is due to the Lord blessing my work."

Thaysha kicked off her boutique in 2007 with small home parties and a few purses and belts. When her customer



Thaysha Groves at her store in Elko. Photos courtesy of Thaysha Groves

base grew, she began buying clothes, accessories and jewelry from small U.S. designers.

In 2014, with sales increasing steadily, she leased space in the Shabby Shanty in Elko. Two years later, Thaysha launched her internet store, buckaroboutique.net.

In 2017, she moved to a historic hotel at 236 Silver St. in Elko. This summer, she expanded yet again, making her boutique mobile. She invested in a trailer, nicknaming it Gypsy, so she can set up at fairs and rodeos.

"Last month, I was excited to do my first road show at the county fair in my hometown of Craig, Colorado," she says.

When Thaysha returned home, she began transitioning to her fall line and working on her annual photo shoot. She photographs local models wearing her latest fashions to update her website and Facebook pages.

As if it's not enough to wrangle three young sons and run a business, Thaysha has been leading the Starr Valley 4-H Club since October 2018.



Clockwise from top left, Thaysha and her husband, Grant, with the mobile boutique—nicknamed Gypsy—at a fair in Colorado. Thaysha shows off several purses at her boutique. Local models display Thaysha's fashions.

"I thought, 'Why not put one more thing on my plate?'" she says, laughing.

When Thaysha's 9-year-old son, Raleigh, enrolled in 4-H, she wanted to get involved.

"It's such a great program," Thaysha says. "Kids are always learning, achieving goals and growing. I was in 4-H as a kid, showing sheep, competing with horses, and doing vet science and fashion revue."

Thaysha says she plans to enroll her other sons Rhett, 7,

and Dirk, 4, in Clover Buds, a 4-H program for children ages 5 to 7.

Thaysha describes her life as a business owner, mom, and ranch wife as a crazy balance.

"I'm not sure how I juggle all the things I do," she says. "I take each day as it comes and try to stay as organized as I can, which isn't always possible."

While her schedule might exhaust some people, she says

it energizes her and makes her feel grateful.

"I rely on one of my favorite Bible verses—Psalms 9:1: 'I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. I give praise to the Lord for the struggles, too, because they help me learn and grow.'"

Driven by a desire to pay forward the blessings in her life, Thaysha sponsors two young women annually, providing clothing for their rodeo

activities. She has also provided clothes and accessories for Silver State International Rodeo Queen contestants.

She shares insights about her unique fashions and love of ranch life on her blog, buckaroboutique.blogspot.com.

"A lot of people like to wear Western clothing but have no experience with a ranching lifestyle and have no idea what it's like to raise livestock," she says. "I hope the blog helps them understand what it's all about."

Although Thaysha grew up helping her father run a guest ranch in Colorado, she was a newcomer to doing chores on a cow-calf ranch when she met her husband. They met in Oregon, where he worked on a ranch and she was a U.S. Forest Service employee.

"Grant grew up on the TS Ranch near Battle Mountain, so we wanted to come back to northern Nevada to start our family," Thaysha says.

In 2017, a friend of Grant's asked him to manage the Schaad Ranches in Starr Valley.

"I love to help him and get dirty, but I also like to get wild and dress up," says Thaysha, who often spikes and colors her hair with rainbow hues.

"I like crazy hairstyles to keep it fresh and express myself in a fun way," she says. "I can't wait to see where Buckaroo Boutique will go." ■

Sshhh. Don't Let the Secret Out

A dash of the Bronx makes Gold Point a gem in the desert

By John M. Glionna

GOLD POINT, Nev. – Walt Kremin awakens early, always before dawn, when the sun spreads its slanting light across the Lida Valley and flat-topped Jackson Mountain. Those nagging leg cramps keep him up; that and the fact there's so much to do.

At age 73, Kremin is many things: He's a Bronx Cowboy raised in New York City before he headed west to California and Nevada, where he wears his craggy, sweat-stained cowboy hat like it's always been there.

For 50 years, he's been among a few stubborn outliers staking out a life in this mining ghost-town, a rugged place sprawled across a mountain foothill with sweeping godly vistas, that had its



Walt Kremin came to Gold Point more than 40 years ago, and he never left.

Jeff Scheid photos

heyday more than a century ago and where the spirits of long-dead inhabitants still make themselves known to the living.

Kremin is also something of an irascible innkeeper who has single-handedly run a

rustic bed-and-breakfast after the second of two partners dropped out a few years back. That left him and his creaky legs to keep up a handful of old mining shacks converted into comfortable lodging, cook the meals and run the rustic saloon that he helped create as an authentic relic of the Old West.

But the old codger can't be everywhere at once. So he installed a sensor that trips when anyone approaches the saloon, his queue to roll down and open the place up for business, with the Bronx Cowboy serving as the story-telling bartender.

And here's the irascible part: The lifelong bachelor revels in being his own boss, running his hide-away in the hills, far from the madness

and scrutiny of the outside world.

He insists that he is no tour guide, but show a passing interest in mining, and he'll spring up on those wobbly legs for a tour of the rusting relics hauled down from distant mining camps, along with the long-shuttered post office with its gathering dust and "most-wanted" posters.

Kremin loves how the European tourists and leather-clad motorcycle groups marvel at the sheer wonder of such an unlikely place, still stuck on the past, an old historic town with a present population of just six, including Kremin.

Newspapers have called the one-man operation at the end of the paved road between Beatty and Goldfield in



Originally settled in the 1880s, Gold Point was once known as Lime Point, then Horn Silver.



The setting sun over nearby hills left an impression on the ex-New Yorker.

Esmeralda County one of the best-kept secrets in Nevada.

And Walt Kremin hopes it stays that way.

He wants success on his own terms, to handle just enough visitors to make his life interesting. “I’ve always enjoyed the fact that I could live my life out here on the edge of society without anyone to look over my shoulder,” he says.

He gestures to a .9 mm Smith & Wesson handgun he wears on his hip, one he only draws on bobcats that prey on his domestic cats. “There’s no law enforcement here but us,” he says. “That’s what I call being in charge of your own life.”

Kremin has a homespun style that was developed in Nevada’s frontier days. His card reads, “Gold Point Ghost Town: The Friendly Ghost Town.” On a cold winter evening, he’ll light a fire and turn on the heat for a single visitor.

He operates a website but doesn’t advertise. The saloon doesn’t have a liquor license. That would mean too much



government intrusion. So Kremin accepts payment for the rooms, food and drinks through donation only, money he puts right back into the refurbishment of his beloved ghost town.

He accepts only cash, and since there isn’t an ATM within 100 miles of here, many visitors send along checks only after they’ve completed their stay.

And Kremin has not been stiffed, not once.

He first came to Gold Point in the 1970s, while he worked for a firm that sold hospital medical supplies in California and Utah. Originally settled in 1880, first known as Lime

Point and later Horn Silver, the settlement was always more of a silver mining camp than a verified town. Kremin fell for how the hills turned pink at dusk and how the light played off the fog banks that settled in the valley below.

Along with his brother, Chuck, and another partner, Herb Robbins, he began to buy buildings in the old town and now, along with Robbins, owns 60% of the place.

In 1997, after Robbins, a Las Vegas wallpaper hanger, hit a \$223,000 slot machine jackpot, the partners started a bed-and-breakfast, and Kremin moved here full-time.

His brother, Chuck, left town in 2006 due to his diabetes and because his wife was afraid of the ghosts and the prospect of being so vulnerable out there.

But Kremin stayed on. He didn’t have a partner to worry about, a woman who “wanted the luxury of a Walmart.” He goes to nearby Bishop, just over the California line, for supplies or when he gets

“cabin fever.”

For years, the remaining partners worked out a division of duties: Robbins played tour guide and cooked meals with his girlfriend, Sandy, who also did the house-cleaning. Kremin helped convert a real-estate office into a saloon, scouring Nevada’s outback for knick-knacks to fill its walls.

Not long ago, Robbins quit the daily chores after the pain from a year-old scaffolding accident became too much. Sandy went along with him. The two still live in town.

Kremin’s friends help out when things get too crazy. A long-running dispute with the federal Bureau of Land Management over a cloudy title of the 221-acre town site is on its way to being resolved, a development path would give the partners legal title.

In the meantime, Walt says he’ll die out here in his adopted ghost town, leaving “it up to God whether I make it to any hospital.”

That’s Bronx Cowboy style. ■

OTEC Sends Four Students to Youth Rally

Students learn leadership and team-building skills at weeklong camp

By Susan Parrish

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative provided scholarships to send four local high school students to a weeklong leadership camp on the campus of College of Idaho in July.

OTEC paid all student expenses. As with all other OTEC scholarships, the program is funded from interest earned on unclaimed capital credits.

OTEC sent the following students to the 32nd annual Idaho Consumer-Owned Utilities Association's Youth Rally in Caldwell:

- Averie Wenger, Grant Union High School, John Day, John Day district.
- Michael "Chaz" McCall, North Powder, Powder Valley High School, Baker district.
- Brody Sharpe, Island City, La Grande High School, La Grande district.
- Brenna Strand, Summerville, La Grande High School, La Grande district.

The 2019 youth rally was attended by a record 99 students who represented utilities from Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Washington, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Alaska. Students participated in activities and classes to build skills in leadership, teamwork and perseverance, and to learn about electricity/the energy industry, government and drug awareness.

Students also toured the Idaho State Capitol. They met representatives from the Bonneville Power Administration, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Cooperative Finance Corporation and Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems.

For fun, students performed in a talent show, danced and visited Roaring



Students attending the 32nd annual Idaho Consumer-Owned Utilities Association's Youth Rally gather on the College of Idaho campus in Caldwell.

Photos by Joy Van Cleave

Springs Water Park in Meridian, Idaho.

Getting the Best Out of Each Person

Jeff Marshall of Clearwater Power Co. in Lewiston, Idaho, is the rally's lead organizer. He says ICUA Youth Rally is different from other camps students attend. It's not band camp or basketball camp. The commonality is that students

are from small towns and ranches.

"The purpose of this camp is not to get the best basketball team," Jeff says. "It's to get the best out of each person. It's an opportunity to show students what they can accomplish when they work together and let go of some of their inhibitions, step outside their comfort zone and work with new people in a new environment."

Students talk a lot about how electricity is made and what constitutes clean or renewable energy.

“These kids are going to be our leaders tomorrow,” Jeff says. “They’re smart. They’re ambitious. We’ve helped them along that journey to be great leaders. It doesn’t hurt that they have an understanding of cooperatives and public power as they go out and become those leaders.”

Joy Van Cleave, OTEC’s member services supervisor, southern division, served on the planning committee and as chaperone to the four OTEC students.

“OTEC hadn’t sent students to the Idaho Youth Rally for a few years, so it was somewhat of a test year to determine the level of interest from sophomore students across our service territory,” she says. “It was a very positive experience. All the messages at the youth rally were impactful and what the students needed to hear at this age. It was great to start introducing them to the electrical industry, and it was apparent that our students got a lot out of the new experience.”

Students vied for a dozen college scholarships. During the week, students they were observed and evaluated on engaging in activities, demonstrating leadership, asking questions, interacting with others, random acts of kindness and overcoming obstacles.

Meet the OTEC Students

Michael “Chaz” McCall from North Powder received a \$300 scholarship and was chosen to attend the camp next year as OTEC’s student director. He is unsure what career he wants to pursue. After completing a two-year mission for his church, Michael plans to attend community college for two years, followed by either university or trade school.

Brody Sharpe, a junior at La Grande High School, plans to attend lineman school and pursue a career as a lineman. He says he applied for the camp because



OTEC-sponsored students meet with the youth rally’s motivational speaker. From left are Brody Sharpe, Averie Wenger, USA gold medalist and author Mike Schlappi, Chaz McCall and Brenna Strand.

“I heard it’s a good way to get introduced to the electrical industry.”

Brody says his most memorable camp experience was hearing motivational speaker Mike Schlappi, a talented basketball player whose NBA dreams ended at age 14 when he was accidentally shot by his friend and he became paralyzed. Relegated to a wheelchair, Mike learned to play wheelchair basketball, represented the U.S. in four Paralympic Games and earned two gold medals.

“Mike asked us, ‘What’s preventing you from doing something great?’” Brody says. “It was very eye-opening.”

Brenna Strand, a junior at La Grande High School, says, “You get to know people from all different states,” she says. “It was really cool to be able to go to the

Idaho State Capitol and to learn about electric cooperatives—and to learn about becoming a leader.”

Averie Wenger of John Day attended Burnt River Charter School last year and will attend Grant Union High School in the fall. Averie will graduate a year early because she has been taking extra classes. She is pursuing a nursing degree at Treasure Valley Community College and plans to transfer to Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls to pursue her goal of becoming a flight nurse.

Averie says she appreciated ICUA Youth Rally’s leadership training and opportunities to befriend rural students from many states.

“I want to thank Oregon Trail Electric for this opportunity and Joy for everything she did,” she says. ■

It's Not Just a Dam

By Lisa Jacoby

Mountains in the Pacific Northwest are barely white as the summer heat beats down, but snow will soon fall to build up moisture needed to generate electricity.

The source of that electricity is hydropower. Through a series of dams along major rivers, melting snow and rainfall is stored in reservoirs. To generate electricity, the water is released through turbines. According to cleanhydro.com, hydropower converts 90% of the available energy into electricity. By comparison, coal or natural gas plants are 50% efficient. Wind turbines rate at about 33% efficiency.

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative buys power from the Bonneville Power Administration, which was created by Congress in 1937 to deliver and sell power from Bonneville Dam. Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams were built in the 1930s and 1940s, and are managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Concerns about carbon emissions have dominated headlines in recent years, including the cap-and-trade legislature that didn't pass in this year's legislative cycle in Oregon.

Hydropower does not produce emissions like fossil-fuel burning resources, and is one of the most efficient forms of generating electricity.

"Most of BPA's energy it produces is hydropower," says Abigail Rhoads, BPA public affairs specialist.

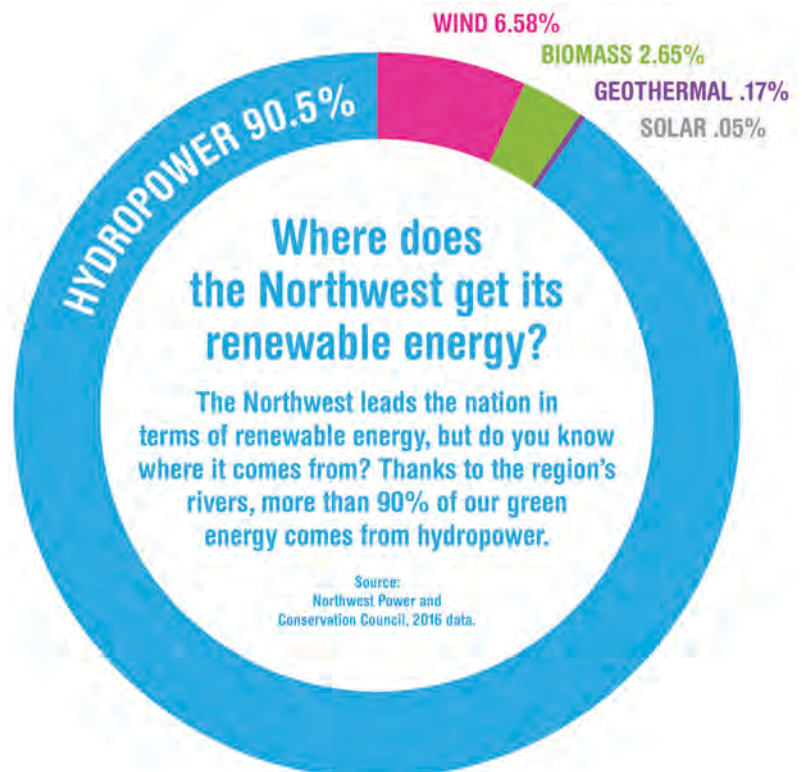
There is a lot of available water.

"The Northwest is already blessed with the abundant carbon-free resource," says Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners—an alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and businesses.

Because of the dams and hydropower systems along the rivers, the region has access to an abundance of clean, low-cost energy to fuel businesses and homes.

There are two types of hydropower plants. Run-of-river dams allow water to flow through to generate power. Storage dams create a reservoir behind the structure to hold water, which can be released as needed to meet the demand for electricity. Storage reservoirs are often drawn down in the winter to ensure room for the spring runoff, and to prevent flooding downstream.

Hydropower is a renewable resource thanks to the water cycle. The sun evaporates water, which rises into the



atmosphere. It cools and condenses to form clouds. When enough water condenses, it turns into precipitation and falls back to Earth.

That precipitation—especially melting ice and snow—fills the reservoirs behind dams. Energy is created when the water flows through the dam's turbines.

"That process happens over and over again," Miller says. "That same water creates energy again and again. And it's completely carbon-free."

Hydropower Is a Renewable Resource

In its "Hydropower 101" information, BPA explains the value of hydropower.

"Unlike coal, oil and natural gas that must be burned to be used, or nuclear energy that is depleted as it's used, hydropower plants do not consume their fuel," BPA states. "The water simply spins a turbine as it passes downstream, unchanged. Every drop of water produces electricity as it flows through the turbines at each dam on its path to the ocean."

Wind and solar are also renewable resources. However,

they depend on Mother Nature. When the wind doesn't blow or the sun doesn't shine, these technologies do not produce electricity.

Thanks to dams—and the reservoirs they create—hydropower is always online for power generation, operating much like batteries.

“They can store water and release it on demand,” Miller says. “That allows you to balance out what’s happening with solar and wind power. You can ramp hydropower up for extended periods of time over multiple days.”

Hydropower is also a load-following resource, which means it can increase or decrease depending on the demand: more when people start their day and less at night.

According to Clean Hydro, which is part of Northwest RiverPartners, Northwest dams provide nearly 60% of the region’s electricity, producing an average of 14,000 megawatts of electricity every year. That is enough to power 11 cities the size of Seattle.

The nature of electricity is that it must be used when it is produced because it has limited ability to be stored. Reservoirs, however, provide a way to store potential energy in the form of water that can be sent through turbines when power is needed.

What About the Fish?

Northwest RiverPartners has developed a reference guide to some of the most common questions regarding dams and hydropower. One concern is about the salmon that move up and down the rivers on the way to and from the ocean.

Miller says fish survival rates are similar through dammed and undammed rivers.

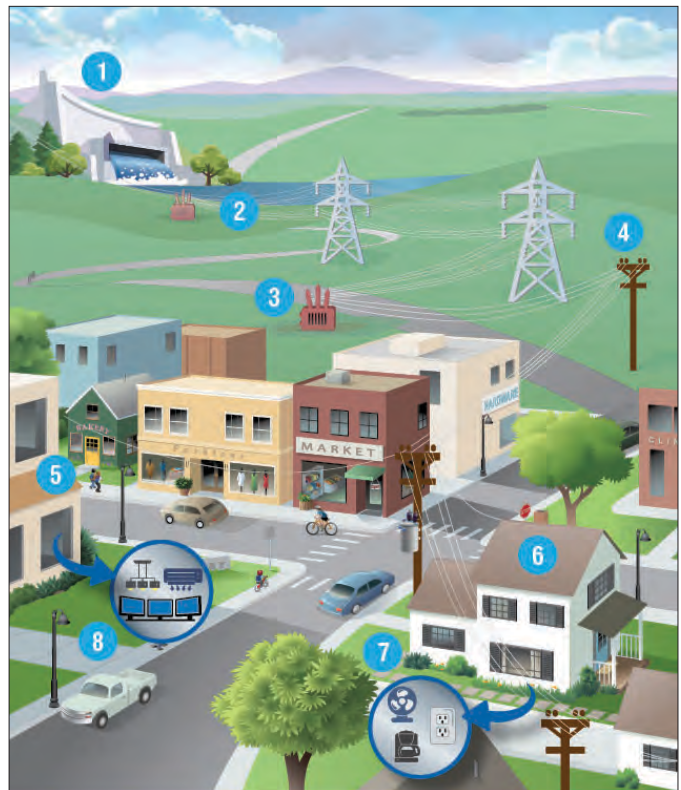
“Billions have been invested in making the dams more fish-friendly,” he says.

In 2018, BPA spent more than \$123 million on habitat restoration and protection programs. BPA has spent close to \$17 billion since 1981 on fish and wildlife-related activities. Since 2001, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has invested close to \$2 billion in new fish-passage technology at these dams.

Research by NOAA Fisheries shows that with improvements that have been made, the survival of juvenile fish past the eight dams on the lower Columbia and lower Snake rivers is better now than when the Snake River was free flowing.

It isn't just a dam, it is a valuable resource for the entire Pacific Northwest that must be protected. Carbon-free hydroelectric generation is, in part, the answer to environmental concerns about carbon-filled skies.

OTEC, along with NW RiverPartners and BPA, are confident the dams, hydropower generation and salmon can, for the long term, coexist through balanced and thoughtful management of the Columbia Basin river systems. ■



BPA captures the electricity created at

1 DAMS and sends it across transmission lines.

The **2 TRANSMISSION LINES** move the electricity to **3 SUBSTATIONS** and then transformers, which

reduce the voltage of the electricity so it can be used.

The lower voltage electricity travels across more

4 LINES to **5 BUSINESSES** and **6 HOMES**.

Some of these lines are strung on metal and wood poles, some are underground. They carry the electricity to your house and through smaller wires in between the floors, ceilings and walls, all the way to the

7 ELECTRIC outlets and switches that power your

8 LIGHTS, computers, televisions and household appliances.



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Michael Anderson and Lincoln High Principal Marty Soderborg reminisce about some of Michael's iconic calls. Photo by Gretchen Soderborg

A YEAR TO REMEMBER

Longtime Lynx announcer Michael Anderson celebrates a half century of play-by-play and 80th birthday

By Dianna Troyer

Taking a job no one wanted as a sports announcer, Michael Anderson created a lexicon of quirky quips as comforting and familiar to Lincoln County High School Lynx football fans as a beloved bedtime story.

“Welcome to beautiful downtown Panaca in the heart of Lincoln County.”

This fall marks the 50th season Michael has boomed that customary remark into a microphone to kick off football games.

“It still makes fans laugh,” says the 79-year-old Panaca resident who is known as the

Voice of Lincoln County.

With his dry humor, Michael coined the phrase in 1969 when he moved to town to teach high school math and

was asked to announce football games.

“They let me say whatever I felt like because no one else wanted the job,” Michael says.

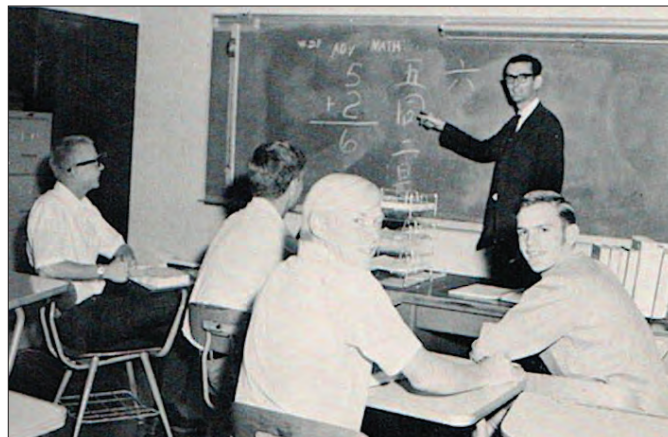
“I always try to encourage the team and make fans laugh.”

When opponents would slip and fall on the field with no Lynx players nearby, Michael would quip, “Tackle by Lincoln lawn.”

“He motivated us to play harder and make those tackles so he wouldn’t need to say, “Tackle by the Lincoln lawn,” says Regan Clark, a former player. “We appreciated it.”

Michael’s son, Michael Roy Anderson, says his dad’s signature call of “Way to go, Lynx!” whenever they score is a crowd favorite.

“It drove the other teams crazy,” Michael Roy says. “I’ve been in other towns and have



In this old yearbook photo, Michael teaches advanced math.

talked to people who said it was so annoying to hear that because he was so loud. They laugh when I tell them my dad is the one they're talking about."

"I like to scream that phrase into the microphone," says the beloved announcer.

Before a game starts, Michael makes sure the audio system is working correctly. Bored with saying the traditional, "Testing, testing, one, two, three, four," he created his own catch-phrase.

"When I was an electronic technician in the Navy and sent messages, someone suggested we change it to, 'Tasty, tasty, tasty, yum, yum, yum, yum,'" Michael says. "I remembered how much it amused me, so I started saying it at the games here. I still get laughs for it."

Lincoln County High School Principal Marty Soderborg remembers what Michael did when the scoreboard horn stopped working.

"When a quarter ended, Michael would say ... 'Bang, Bang, Bang ... That's the end of the first quarter,'" Marty says. "Or, he'd say, 'That's the end of the third quarter. It's time to switch ends of the field. Hold up your feet while we swap ends of the field.'"

When Michael was recruited to announce football games, he says he was unqualified and had no training from the previous announcer.

"The only time I'd been at a microphone before was in the Navy," he says. "Plus, I'm not an athlete and never even

played sports in high school."

His willingness mattered more than having any expertise.

"The person who did it before me moved away, so the principal was desperate and asked me to give it a try," Michael says. "At a small school like ours, you sometimes do several jobs."

The first few seasons, Michael—slender and 6 feet tall—perched on scaffolding along the sidelines with a microphone and amplifiers.

"The wind blew right through me on those cold fall nights," Michael says.

After a few years, a shed was built on the sidelines.

"It was only big enough for an announcer and scorekeeper, but it was a big improvement because we had a heater," Michael says.

Eventually an announcer's booth was built with a cement block foundation.

With the announcer's sound system and the natural amplification provided by a white monolith known as Courthouse Rock that's adjacent to the football field, Michael's play-by-play carries into surrounding neighborhoods.

"We live a couple of blocks away, and I can still hear the game," says Michael's wife, Carma.

Before moving to Panaca, Michael had never heard of the tiny town in eastern Nevada. After completing his six-year tour of duty in the Navy, the San Bernadino, California, native graduated

from Brigham Young University with a degree in mathematics education.

"The superintendent here found me after contacting BYU to recruit a math teacher," he says. "Carma and I thought we'd be here a few years before moving on, but we stayed because it was a great place to raise a family."

Their six children were active in sports, band, drama, cheerleading and the marching team.

"We've enjoyed it here," Michael says. "It doesn't seem like 50 years have passed."

Their son, Michael Roy, says students appreciated his dad as a teacher and announcer.

"They dedicated yearbooks to him in 1975, 1987 and 2005," he says. "He has a knack for still remembering their names and recognizing them even if they look different with age."

Wanting to be near his parents and allow his children to have a positive academic and athletic experience like he did, Michael Roy moved his family to Panaca in 2011. Like his dad, he works at the high school.

"They needed a maintenance director," says Michael Roy, who retired as an engineering officer from the Navy after serving from 1989 to 2011. "I'd worked along the West Coast on cruisers and destroyers, so we laugh about moving from the ocean to the desert."

To honor Michael when he retired in 2005, the football

field was named the Michael S. Anderson Field.

"When I retired, I cut back on announcing," he says. "They still count on me to do a few games and always the homecoming game. I'll keep announcing as long as they'll let me." ■

To celebrate Michael's 80th birthday October 4 and to honor his decades of dedication as the football announcer, his family will host an open house. It is scheduled October 11 at Lincoln County High School in Panaca to coincide with homecoming week.



Michael in the announcer's booth.

Photo by Doug Hunt