

A 160-Year-Old History Lesson

Three courthouse buildings tell the story of The Dalles and Wasco County

By Rodger Nichols

Not every county is as thrifty as Wasco County. While other counties have torn down their old courthouses, Wasco County has its full heritage intact. Three courthouses in The Dalles are in repair and open to the public.

The Oregon Territorial Legislature created Wasco County January 11, 1854, from the parts of Clackamas, Lane, Linn and Marion counties east of the Cascade Range. The county ran more than 130,000 square miles from the crest of the Cascades to the crest of the Rockies. It covered more than half of Oregon, almost two-thirds of Idaho, and chunks of Montana and Wyoming.

When Oregon became a state in 1859, the county retreated on the east to the border of the new state, losing more than half its original area.

The Dalles was chosen as county seat, but for the first five years the county had neither courthouse nor jail. Local saloons were commandeered for court proceedings, and the guardhouse at Fort Dalles served as jail space. Helpful as the Army was, it didn't run the jail for free. As costs mounted, citizens passed a \$2,500 bond to build a courthouse.

Most of the lumber came from the J.H. Mosier mill on Mosier Creek. The framing was hewed out by broadax, and all the materials—including the shingles—were worked by hand. Local builder W.C. Wallace completed construction two months after statehood in April 1859. The county accepted the building after the locks were in place.

This small-frame structure, built at Third and Court streets, where The Dalles City Hall now stands, was the first courthouse between the summit of the



The original Wasco County courthouse building hosts a series of popular historical lectures each February.

Cascades and the summit of the Rockies.

The two-story building housed a sheriff's office and three jail cells on the first floor. An upstairs courtroom could be entered only by an outside staircase. The building was used as a public meeting place and for church services, and was the seat of law for Wasco County.

Although the county used the original courthouse for 24 years, the building served 26 years as The Dalles City Hall until 1909, when the present City Hall was built. That construction forced the first of six moves the former courthouse would make around town.

For 52 years, the building served as a rooming house on the northwest corner of Third and Federal streets until Brady's Market needed the land for a parking lot.

A group of citizens insisted the building be saved, and it was moved to city property near the Lewis and Clark monument on West Second Street. There it languished until the city declared it

a nuisance and proposed to destroy it. One local citizen, Alf Wernmark, stood in front of the bulldozer and simply outwaited it.

Ultimately, the city made a deal with a group of citizens who raised money to restore the building. The courthouse moved several more times before coming to rest at its present location directly behind The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce building. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is designated as a historic landmark by the state of Oregon.

Among the resources the building houses are slide-tape and video programs on diverse subjects, period furniture, jail paraphernalia, pictures, old books and oral history tapes.

Regional history forum programs began in 1980 and have become a mid-winter tradition. Each Saturday in February, the Original Wasco County Courthouse Preservation Corp. invites

local and outside historians to give lectures on some aspect of Wasco County history. Tapes of the lectures have been saved, as have oral history tapes collected by early researchers. They are being converted to a digital format.

One key element in the courthouse preservation has been active, continued participation by a dedicated group of volunteers.

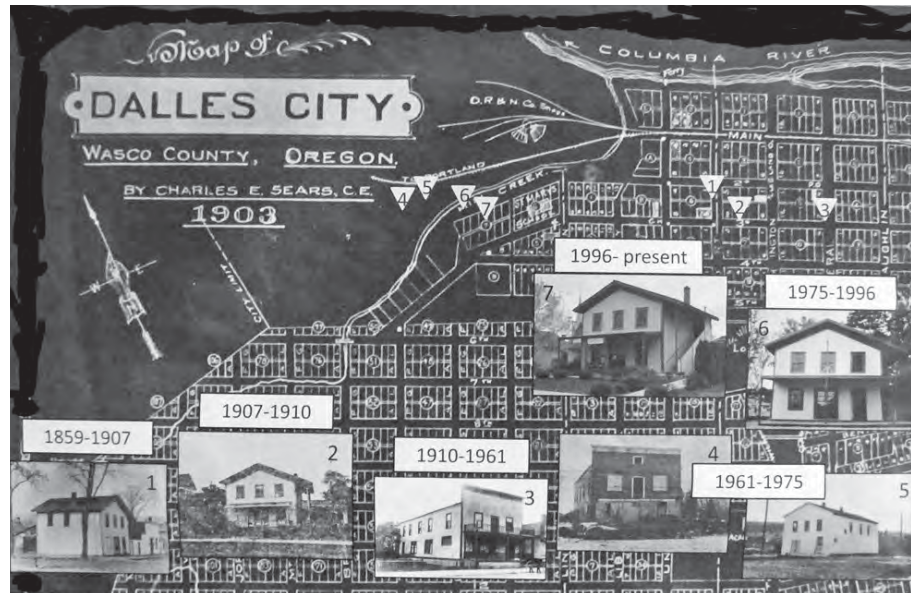
“I joined the courthouse board back in 1977 shortly after arriving in The Dalles,” says resident Karl Vercooteren. “The Congregational Church had held a service in the building commemorating the founding of the congregation in the brand-new courthouse in 1859, and folks were quick to tell that story to me, the new pastor.”

Karl says the early board included some of the town’s major historians.

“Between Fritz Cramer, Jim Weeks, Lew Nichols, Alf Wernmark, and Walt and Marilyn Ericksen, meetings always contained lively and sometimes heated discussions of obscure points of local history,” he says. “We started the Regional History Forum presentations early on, and I’ve been instrumental in rounding up speakers for 40 years of February programs. It’s been a great learning experience that goes on and on.”

Board chairwoman Sandy Bisset has an affection for the courthouse.

“I’ve often asked myself why I have such a passion for this little piece of area history,” she says. “Our historic



The original Wasco County courthouse has existed in seven locations in its 160 years.

Artwork courtesy of Sandy Bisset

courthouse is an unpretentious little stick-built structure—identified as vernacular—which translates as ordinary, no frills and functional. What it lacks in architecture, it makes up for in substance by telling the stories of people, both remembered and forgotten.”

Sandy says each related experience makes the courthouse a more important reminder of the town’s journey.

“I am forever grateful to those who worked so hard to preserve it and that I have the opportunity to be part of it,” she says.

The Dalles Mayor Rich Mays notes

that despite the county’s needs changing with the decades, there is a definite place for preservation.

“The old Wasco County Courthouse is an icon in this community,” he says. “I’m happy to lend whatever assistance I can and whatever support I can to make sure it stays that way.” ■

The original Wasco County Courthouse is open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., May through September. It is also open when the sternwheeler American Empress docks in town, and by appointment by calling Karl Vercooteren at 541-980-6658 or Sandy Bisset at 541-993-9088. For more information, go to www.originalwascocountycourthouse.org.

Courthouses Two and Three

In response to a need for additional space and security, Wasco County built a larger brick courthouse in 1882 at Third and Union streets for \$23,000. The building, which still stands, was a long-time meeting place for the Knights of Pythias, followed by a local Masonic Lodge.

For years, the building housed the Smith-Calloway Chapel funeral parlor on the main floor. That floor was remodeled a few years ago into the Clock Tower

Pub. The Masons still meet upstairs.

The third courthouse, at Fifth and Washington streets, celebrated a century of service in 2014. The land, which sits south of Carnegie Library, was bought from the Baptist church for \$8,000. The final construction cost was \$180,000. Its Corinthian architecture was designed with a granite foundation, white brick, broad picture windows, marble halls and beautiful large oak staircases.

There have been several major

remodels in the building’s 115-year history, including the addition of an elevator, giving access to the three above-ground floors and fully built-out basement.

Today, visitors pose for pictures inside the jail cells at the original courthouse, grab a microbrew at the second courthouse, and take care of business in the many offices of the third and current courthouse, including those of the clerk, assessor and county sheriff.



The new Corvallis museum set to open soon. The larger space will allow for more room to display the collection from the Benton County Historical Society.

New Museum Opens in the Spring

Find historical connections when new Corvallis museum opens

By Danita Cahill

The new Benton County Historical Society Corvallis Museum is slated to open in downtown Corvallis in early spring 2020. The historical society staff, board members and volunteers are elated about the new museum.

The 19,000-square-foot floor plan includes 5,000 square feet of exhibition galleries and an education space big enough to accommodate 100 visitors. The modern U-shaped building has many large windows and a tiled façade. Upstairs, patrons will discover a curated “cabinet of curiosities.”

The museum building was designed by

Allied Works, an architectural firm based out of Portland and New York City. The total budget for the project is just under \$16 million.

“This project has been in development for many years,” says Alice Rampton, chairwoman of the Lead Gifts Committee. “It’s exciting to see our dreams come true.”

History is all about connections, says BCHS Executive Director Irene Zenev, and that is what the new museum will offer—not just connecting with the history of the region, but connections to historical events. For example, in the 1890s when high fashion urged ladies to wear hats with fancy feathers, countless birds were killed to make the hats, which led to the

rise of the Audubon Society.

“Those relationships are things that people aren’t aware of,” Irene says. “We try not to make it a boring history lesson. We like to involve people in the education without the pain.”

The historical society staff and volunteers look forward to presenting “Hats and Chairs Throughout Time” as one of the first exhibits. Included are a shoeshine chair, and Oregon Gov. James Douglas McKay’s hat and saddle. More than 400 chairs and 1,000 hats will shine in the spotlight.

The new museum is at the corner of 2nd Street and Adams Avenue. When it opens, staff and volunteers, along with

museum mascot Bruce the Moose, will be there to greet patrons.

Bruce is a life-size taxidermy bull moose. A likeness of him wearing sunglasses was used in the museum's capital campaign with the caption, "You say museum, I say mooseum."

Bruce has his own local story. When students registered at State Agricultural College, now Oregon State University, they wound their way through Horner Museum, which for decades was housed at the college. In passing, the students gave Bruce a rub or a pat for good luck. Horner Museum closed in 1995.

"We didn't want the collection to leave the community," Irene says.

There was a complex set of rules to follow to transfer the collection. After the long journey down a red-tape highway, the 120,000 objects—a combination of Horner Museum and the historical society collections—are now housed in a secure, climate-controlled vault in Philomath.

"I think preservation of our culture is really important," Irene says. "Preserves the truth, if you will. As society changes, we can go back to the basics. Reflect the time period when the different objects were used."

Irene grew up going to museums in New York City. She wants today's youth to also enjoy the museum experience.

"Museums are becoming a place for contemplation and respite," Irene says. "We want kids to feel like they can come to the museum and spend some time."

Education Curator Laura Young also looks forward to children visiting. She and Irene hope the museum will attract classes. The staff plans to offer educational history trunks filled with items students can look at and touch.

"We hope to have more family days," Irene says. "Story times in the courtyard, for example."

There are plans for interactive activities, such as cranking a handle to generate electricity for a lightbulb, and tables with hands-on activities such as coloring, or building with Lincoln Logs.



Benton County Historical Society Education Curator Laura Young, left, and Executive Director Irene Zenev share a light-hearted moment with Bruce the Moose.

While patrons wait for the Corvallis museum to open, they can take in history and art exhibits at the BCHS Philomath Museum. It's housed inside the historical 1867 Philomath College building at 1101 Main St. and open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is free. History is downstairs. Art is upstairs. According to Exhibition Curator Mark Tolonen, the December

exhibit features art by Rip Cronk, a noted muralist.

After the Corvallis museum is up and running, the Philomath museum will continue to act as administration offices, a curatorial area and a research center.

While the new museum will provide a lot more space for exhibits the full collection won't all be displayed at once.

"Things will be rotated in and out," Irene says.

Besides local history items, there are objects in the collection from around the world. John B. Horner—one of the first graduates of Philomath College, an OSU English and history professor, and the Horner Museum founder—encouraged faculty members to bring back things from their sabbaticals. As a result, 120 countries are represented.

"Museums are a great resource," Irene says. "They're entertainment, as well as a tourist attraction, bringing money into the community."

The staff wants the new museum to be a place children will come back to again and again. Irene hopes a visit sparks an interest in history.

"We can light that fire," Irene says. "We want them to ask questions, come back, learn more. Museums are fun!" ■

Interested in becoming a member? Download a membership application from the website: www.bentoncountymuseum.org.

A Bit of Local History

If you are a veteran, war or political history buff, public servant, farmer, Oregon State University alumni or even if you didn't finish high school, you are likely to find a connection with Gov. James Douglas McKay.

James was born in 1893 to farming parents. He had to quit school to work and help his parents financially. At age 20, James enrolled at OSU as an agricultural student. In 1916, he served as OSU student body president. During World War I, he served in the Army and received a purple heart. When he returned to Oregon, James became a businessman, most notably as the owner of Douglas McKay Chevrolet in Salem. He served on the Salem City Council and as mayor of Salem. In 1934, James was elected to the Oregon State Senate. His four terms were interrupted by his service in WWII as an Army major. James was elected in 1948 as the 25th governor of Oregon. President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed James to his cabinet in 1952 as Secretary of the Interior.



One of four trains rumbles by at John and Karen Pankow's home. The couple started their holiday collection in 1992 and have been sharing it with the public since 2006.

All Aboard the Christmas Train

Couple brings joy to many by sharing their trains and Christmas village every year

By Craig Reed

When visitors walk through John and Karen Pankow's garage doors, their reaction to the extensive model train display is usually "Wow!"

The display, set up on a waist-high platform, is a Christmas tradition the Pankows share with visitors during the holiday season.

Four model trains—engines, cars and

caboose—wind through the display, each on their own track so no switching is necessary. More than a thousand items are dispersed among the tracks, ranging from villages with their houses, churches and stores to people involved in outdoor activities, such as fishing, ice skating and cutting firewood.

"It's a work of love," John says. "A lot of families come in and it's 'Oh my, look at

this' or it's 'Wow!' Somebody might come in with a scowl, but they leave with a smile."

"We want to share it with people who can't afford to go to fancy places," Karen adds. "It may be something they've never seen and it provides them with a family activity that is free."

Although the Pankows know trains don't portray anything religious to visitors, they consider it a blessing to share

the display with the public.

"I just really feel blessed to know that I can bring joy to people, especially children, through the trains," Karen says.

"There's joy and tranquility at the birth of the savior," John explains. "Sharing this is one of the nicest ways I could ever think of with the grace of the holiday upon us to show people there is love in the world."

Their passion for trains



John and Karen used to put away the setup every year, but now they dedicate space in their garage to keep it up year-round. They uncover it in November.

during the Christmas season started when John and Karen were parents of three young children. The family lived in Fremont, California. Many years later, that train set display was given to their son when he had children.

John and Karen went several years without a train display around their Christmas tree. Then, during a visit to Carmel, California, in 1992, Karen saw a train display in a store while window shopping and was drawn to it. John, however, saw only sweaters in the window, so when Karen stopped, his reaction was “Oh no, not another sweater.”

Karen quickly got John to refocus his attention. The couple left the store with the train set—an engine, two cars, a loop track and the transformer. Several months later, they bought three small houses.

“She got her way,” John says. “The next Christmas, we had a train and three small houses set up around the tree.”

That was the start, and the

display has grown each year since. The Pankows attended train shows, their kids bought them pieces for the display and then their grandchildren presented them with more pieces.

“It was growing and growing,” Karen says. “We finally had to move the furniture out of the living room and we set it up there.”

After the Pankows moved to a Christmas tree farm in the Tenmile area in 2006 following John’s retirement, they set up the train display in their new living room during the Christmas season.

“People came to the tree farm, we made friends, they saw the trains and they began to give us things for the display,” Karen says.

The Pankows were given a complete Dickens village with five model houses from a church. Other accessories were given by numerous family members, friends and visitors.

“One lady friend goes to flea markets and when she



How To See the Trains

Beginning the Friday after Thanksgiving through mid-January, the Pankows open the garage door at 551 Lockwood Road and welcome visitors. There is no admission fee, but there is a donation jar to help with the electric bill. Hot chocolate and hot cider are also available.

Hours are 1 to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 to 6 p.m. Sunday, and by appointment Monday through Thursday. Large groups are asked to call ahead and schedule a visit. John and Karen Pankow can be contacted by calling 541-679-1703.

sees anything that reminds her of Christmas, she brings it to us,” Karen says. “One year, she brought us a whole tub of plastic trees.”

From 1992 to 2013, the Pankows set up the growing display prior to Thanksgiving and then took it down and boxed it up in late January. After moving off the tree farm and to their present home near Tenmile, the couple set up the display permanently in a garage.

During the off season, they

cover it with plastic to keep it dust free. During the off season, John must also oil the axles of all the train pieces. It’s a two- to three-hour job, using a toothpick to apply drops of oil.

One of the four trains is the starter set Karen bought in the Carmel store 27 years ago.

“It’s been a labor of love for us, like John said,” Karen says. “We like to bring joy to other people, to share something special. We just thoroughly enjoy it.” ■

A Home Away From Home

By Courtney Cobb



Central Electric Cooperative employees dig a trench for the electrical line to service the Ronald McDonald House built in Bend in 1995.

Photo from CEC archives

Imagine taking your child to see a specialist for a chronic illness. The only doctor is three hours away on a fair-weather day and closer to five hours when the weather is harsh. Your budget is tight, and you can't afford a hotel room for the night. You also don't want to risk driving your family in the early morning hours on snow and ice. Instead, you opt to camp out in your car with your family overnight in the hospital parking lot.

Consider the mother of a premature baby who will need to remain in the neonatal intensive care unit for several weeks. It may be months until the baby can go home. She wants to be near her child, but can't afford a hotel room, and the rest of her family is several hours away on the ranch. What does she do?

These stories are not uncommon. But there is hope and a place families can briefly call home during difficult circumstances. Whether it be for several hours or several weeks, Ronald McDonald House Charities keeps its doors open for those in need.

"Ronald McDonald House Charities is a home away from home for families having to travel to receive medical care," says M. Lauren Olander, the organization's regional director of Central Oregon and Willamette Valley. "It is a house where we provide compassionate hospitality to these families. We do everything we can for them, so they only have to think about caring for their child."

Community Is Key

The Bend Ronald McDonald House was built in 1995 with help from the Central Oregon community. Lauren says Central Electric played an integral role.

"CEC employees volunteered to dig trenches on the property to lay the electrical lines to ensure we had everything we needed to turn the lights on," she says.

Many community businesses and organizations volunteered to lift a hammer or a shovel, or donated building materials. The city of Bend donated

old-growth trees from Drake Park, which were milled in Sisters. The Timber Framers Guild of America used the project as a master class, and timber framers came from around the world to help frame the house.

“This is a house built by the community for the community and with the community’s hands,” Lauren says.

Nestled within the trees and pines on the St. Charles Medical Center campus in Bend, many residents may not realize they drive by the facility every day.

Helping Families in Need

Families with children up to age 22 may seek help from Ronald McDonald Charities.

“Whether they are seeking care for mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, physical therapy, occupational therapy or speech therapy, those families are qualified to stay here with us, too,” Lauren says.

The Bend House, one of the smallest in the country, has six family suites that can sleep up to six adults and include a private bathroom, an iPad and Wi-Fi.

The facility’s general space features a full kitchen with freezer, refrigerator and a fully stocked pantry. There are also laundry facilities, a play room, video room, living room, outdoor cooking and play area, and benches to sit and rest.

“Our goal is to provide these families with everything so they can focus solely on caring for their child,” Lauren says. “Anything these families need, we want to be able to provide so they are in the best state of mind to care for their child.”

Families can stay as long as their child receives medical care.

Volunteers Wrap the Home in Love

Since the first Ronald McDonald House opened in Philadelphia in 1974, the entire McDonald’s system—owners, operators, employees, suppliers and customers—has been by the organization’s side, offering millions of children and families valuable resources and support.



Kristie, Abby and Katelyn prepared a homemade meal for families staying at the Bend House.

Photo courtesy of Ronald McDonald House Charities

In many ways, the community and volunteers keep the house going. Good Samaritans cover everything from preparing nightly home-cooked meals through the Meals from the Heart program—local businesses or service groups cook hot meals for residents—to daily cleaning, maintenance, and winter and spring cleanup.

“We rely 100% on the community for donations to keep our doors open,” Lauren says. “When we talk about our refrigerator, the freezer and the pantry being full, almost all of that comes from donations within the community.”

For example, the Oregon Farm Bureau helps fill a good portion of the pantry, Straw Propeller in Redmond donates oatmeal for the morning, and each Wednesday the house posts its wish list on Facebook.

“We have a lot of families who will swing by the house on their way to the store and ask what we need,” Lauren says. “We are very grateful for the community of Central Oregon. But for their

generosity, we would not be able to provide that special home away from home for families.”

The Future

The Bend House typically runs at a 75% occupancy rate. Lauren would love to see the house full every night.

“The first thing I do every morning is ask our guest services staff if we have any empty rooms,” she says. “When a room is empty, I know there is a family spending hard-earned money on a hotel room, which they don’t need because we are here for them. A family may likely be sleeping in their car because they are unaware we exist. Or it’s a family that chooses not to get medical care because they didn’t think they had a place to stay.”

“For me, any community outreach we can do to make sure these families know we are here for them accomplishes an important goal.” ■

For more information on Ronald McDonald House or to look for volunteer opportunities, go to <https://rmhcoregon.org/houses/bend-house>.



Michael and Kris Norris at Punta Arenas, Chile, the southernmost city in the world.

A South American Bicycle Adventure

Paisley couple's 5-month trip becomes new lifestyle and career choice

By Toni Baillie

In the central plaza of Punta Arenas, Chile, stands the statue of an indigenous Tehuelche tribesman. According to legend, those who touch the toe of the effigy are destined to one day return to the southernmost city in the world. When Michael and Kris Norris lived in Chile from 2005 to 2007, they drove the Carretera Austral Highway to Patagonia, where they touched the statue's toe. Last year they returned, this time on bicycles.

"We always kept that trip on our radar," Kris says.

Kris and Michael took a sabbatical from Paisley School, where Michael was a woodshop instructor while Kris produced and directed plays with the school's drama students. Although they had biked around Lake Tahoe and on Fremont Forest trails, this was their first extended trip. They rode for five months. Beginning in Puerto Varas, Chile, they traveled to Villa O'Higgins on a road connecting some of Chile's most remote communities. Next, they

headed south into Patagonia on the "route to the end of the world," looping back through Argentina and north again to Puerto Varas.

"We spent a year planning the details of where to ride and what equipment to bring," Michael says. "We had to decide what we could take through security at the airport and what had to be shipped as baggage."

They pedaled near glaciers and volcanic peaks, through temperate rain forests and near fjords forcing them to cross on ferries.

"The Carretera Austral is the most scenic bike ride in the world," Kris says. "Day after day, we saw steep, snow-covered mountains, rivers and lakes with intense blue and green water."

The pampas, a treeless plain stretching across Southern Argentina, is an arid environment similar to Oregon's high desert. There they encountered strong winds that at one point blew them off their bicycles.

"Everyone who has been to Patagonia, including the early explorers, described

the wind as a force to be reckoned with," Michael says.

Farther north in the Lake District, they viewed scenery similar to Switzerland. There they stayed one night at San Carlos de Bariloche Hotel, known locally as the gateway to the Llao Llao Nature Preserve.

"Staying in a luxury hotel was a treat after sleeping on the ground so many days," Michael says.

At Puerto Natales in Chile, they reconnected with an old friend from the region, Bill Penhollow, a manager at Erratic Rock who coordinates tours through Torres del Paine National Park.

"We hiked part of the Pacific Crest Trail with Bill in the summer of 2018," Michael says. "This was the first time in 13 years for us to be back to where he lives."

On the southern route, weary and wet from riding in the rain, they rode 10 miles off the Carretera to Caleta Tortel, a fishing village on a fjord.

"It was wonderful to wander and be on the road, but a challenge to find a

place to sleep each night,” Kris says.

Along the route, Michael and Kris found the locals friendly and helpful to cyclists. They often set up their tent in abandoned buildings or slept in wild camps near bodies of water with scenic views. Local residents often provided campgrounds, and they found hostels that were always clean and included breakfast.

In Patagonia, nighttime temperatures dropped to the 40s, with daytime in the 60s. They stayed warm while pedaling, but there were several nights when rain filled their tents or they battled powerful winds.

“The easiest part of the day was once we started pedaling,” Michael says.

For their trek, they rode rigid-frame bicycles with 2½-inch tires designed to traverse pavement, gravel or single track trails. Michael carried a repair kit with extra parts for daily maintenance.

Near Villa Santa Lucia, the pedal on Michael’s bike broke. They tried hitchhiking for two hours, but none of the passing vehicles were large enough to carry their bicycles. Thankfully, a pair of utility workers pulled over, took some washers from some of their own equipment and mended the broken pedal.

“Most of the people in Chile are kind to strangers,” Michael says. “We were lucky that those utility workers were such smart guys.”

With their help, the couple was able to ride for five days over the pass from Chile to Argentina until they located a bicycle repair shop.

The couple says they shared a feeling of camaraderie with cyclists they met from Canada, Germany, Netherlands, France and Spain. One night they set up the tent in an abandoned building. When they woke up the next morning, they discovered eight other cyclists had arrived during the night.

“It was wonderful to meet cyclists

from different countries,” Kris says. “All of them were open-minded and progressive. One family from England was on a one-year tour with their children, 5 and 7 years old. Their adventure was as educational as staying home and going to school.”

“In general, we were older than other cyclists,” Michael says. “We didn’t set huge goals and took the time to view the scenery.”

In addition to the spectacular views of rugged mountains and seacoast, they spotted a variety of wildlife. Whales were swimming in the Straits of Magellan, and wild camels called guanacos were prevalent. Once they saw a giant ostrich with eleven little fluff ball babies.

“On a bike, you see what you miss riding in a car,” Kris says.

Now that their adventure has come to an end, Michael and Kris have started planning similar biking treks across

the Oregon Timber and Desert Trails, Canada and Wyoming.

“We discovered that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” Michael says. “Kris and I learned to inspire each other when things got rough. We are ready for more adventures.”

To share his passion for cycling, Michael is offering guided mountain bike rides through his newly formed business, Paisley Adventures. Cyclists can choose self-supported rides or have their food and supplies dropped off at camping spots.

In August, Michael attended a Pro-Bike Mechanic Class at United Bicycle Institute in Ashland. As a certified mechanic, he can repair bicycles at his shop.

“This is doing something that allows me to live my chosen lifestyle and promote cycling,” Michael says. ■

To book a guided bicycle ride, contact Michael at 541-576-4548.



Michael and Kris with a British family they met at a family-run campsite in El Blanco, Chile.



Lane Electric Supports FFA and 4-H

Lane Electric buys animals at auction every year to ensure the kids raising them get a good price for their work.

By Craig Reed

In 2006, Gary and Sally Foster wanted to support kids and their 4-H and FFA project animals. Lane Electric Cooperative General Manager Rick Crinklaw wanted the co-op to support those young people and their projects.

Together, they made their idea a reality.

Gary was a serviceman for Lane Electric and Sally was a leader at the Fern Ridge Clovers, a 4-H club. The couple had been involved with kids, their animals and the animal auction for many years.

Rick had experience with animal projects and auctions from his youth while attending the Douglas County livestock auction in Roseburg with his father, Howard Crinklaw, the general manager of Douglas Electric Cooperative. Years later as Lane Electric's GM, Rick wanted his co-op involved in the Lane County auction.

It took a couple years of discussion by Lane Electric's board of directors and staff, but

eventually money was approved and the co-op became a bidder at the Lane auction for the 4-H and FFA animals.

"We wanted to be more engaged in member affairs with an emphasis on youth," says Rick who was the co-op's general manager from 1995 to 2014.

The Fosters and Rick represented Lane Electric at the 2006 auction, and the co-op bought two steers, two hogs and a pen of chickens. The co-op has been a bidding participant at the annual auction ever since.

"Any kid who is in a 4-H program or FFA, you won't find them getting into trouble," Gary says. "They don't have time to get in trouble. Those are the kids we want to support."

"The 4-H, FFA programs are positive," Sally says. "We love it for the kids. The end result for the kids is selling their project animals, and we want to support them."

Since 2006, the Fosters have bid on animals for the co-op.

“I knew and recognized that Gary and Sally Foster were already very involved with the kids,” Rick says. “They were the perfect fit to represent the co-op. They know the kids who have worked hard with their animals, who have put in the effort.”

Gary and Sally say the 4-H and FFA programs give the kids an opportunity to learn responsibilities and gain confidence in themselves.

“To raise your own animal, to care for it, to feed it, learning those responsibilities is important for a young person,” Sally says. “It’s not just livestock in these programs, but it can also be raising flowers, photography, cooking, giving a speech. No where else can kids learn these things. It’s all about learning.”

A year after the co-op got involved, its employees could sign up for a whole, half or quarter of a beef, hog or lamb. The co-op buys an animal at auction and the employees pay the buy-back market price for whatever amount was pre-ordered.

An average of five employees sign up for beef, pork or lamb each year.

“With some of the employees involved, it allowed us to spend more dollars, to leverage the contributions we could provide to the program,” Rick says.

In 2010, Rick expanded Lane Electric’s participation in the auction by bidding on and buying a steer for the food pantries in the co-op’s service territory. The animal was cut and wrapped into hamburger packages and evenly distributed to the Oakridge, Veneta, McKenzie, Lowell and Cottage Grove food pantries.

“They are very appreciative of that program,” Rick says. “Having everything made into hamburger, rather than steaks and roasts, made it easier to divvy up.”

After Rick retired in 2014, former General Manager Matt Michael and current GM Debi Wilson have continued the co-op’s support of young people and their animals at auction.

“I’m very impressed with these kids and the work they put into raising their animals,” Debi says. “Gary and Sally are amazing partners. I could not imagine doing this without them. I look forward to continuing to support our youth with our participation.”

Gary retired from his serviceman’s job at the co-op in 2009. He was congratulated by a board member on his retirement, and promptly asked, “Are



you going to continue to bid for us at the auction?”

The answer was “Yes.” The Fosters have bid on behalf of the co-op at each auction since.

“Rick was very, very supportive of the programs and the auction, and each general manager and the board since has been,” Gary says.

Rick says he is pleased to see the co-op continue its support of the 4-H and FFA kids.

“People may complain about the youth of today—their values, that they don’t work hard enough—but when I see the youth involved in programs like this, that is a counter to the negative comments that I sometimes hear,” he says. ■

Above, area students show their animals at the Lane County livestock auction. Lane Electric buys several animals to support the program. Some of the meat is bought by LEC staff or donated to area food banks.



Stella Bounds, right, puts a halter on her horse while staff member Amelia Peterson watches.

A Match Made in Heaven

Wild Ones Youth Ranch rescues horses and teaches responsibility to kids

By Craig Reed

Happy words came from smiling faces as the horses are brushed, petted and loved. Saddle blankets are draped over the animals' backs, saddles are cinched up and bridles are buckled. Finally, it is time for the kids to mount up and go for a ride.

The staff at Wild Ones Youth Ranch have paired kids with horses for the past 20 years, with an average of 2,250 rides taken annually.

But the ranch also offers young people a chance to learn about responsibility. They must do chores around the barn and corrals, make sure the horses have hay and water, clean out stalls and corrals, clean and maintain the tack and help

with any other small jobs.

When Mike and Jeanie Langley established the ranch 20 years ago, their intention was to rescue wild mustangs from Eastern Oregon and kids from homeless or dysfunctional backgrounds. Hence, the name Wild Ones Youth Ranch reflected both the animal and human sides to the Langleys' mission.

Mike worked with homeless people and wanted to provide a getaway for kids who lived in that situation. He picked up kids and gave them chores and horse experiences, but the ranch and its horses quickly gained popularity and other kids showed an interest.

So the Langleys altered their mission to, "A desire to connect any child who

has a hunger to ride, groom, feed or just pet a horse, with the chance to do just that, regardless of his or her circumstances. Wild Ones' services are available to any family regardless of emotional, spiritual, physical or financial abilities. Our goal is to establish a long-term relationship with our kids in hopes of building confidence, leadership skills and character."

In 2011, the ranch became a nonprofit Christian ministry.

"It's the faith of the people involved," Mike says of the ministry. "It's nothing we force. It's best demonstrated in how we treat the people who come here."

"We try to reflect God's love," says Dani Wright, a charter member of the



Above, Sarah Gershom, left takes her horse for a ride under the watchful eye of staff member Maleah Patrick. Left, Kaylee Deless prepares to saddle her horse.



ranch's nine-member board of directors. "It's not forced onto a child, but it guides us in our direction, in the way we treat others."

Jeanie had a horse background—her grandfather was a horse buyer and seller. It wasn't until many years later when she and Mike lived in Walterville, east of Eugene, that she finally got horses. The couple had two sons and a daughter, and the horses were as much for them as for their parents.

At the time, the Langleys heard about

the plight of wild mustangs in Eastern Oregon through Dani, who owned a Kiger mustang stallion. Dani helped the Langleys find a pregnant mustang mare.

"Sahalia, now 26 years old, has given thousands of rides," Mike says.

When the family moved to the present site of Wild Ones Youth Ranch a few miles northwest of Junction City, the horses became popular with friends of the Langley children. Over time, more horses were added. Now there are 22, with 13 from the wild herds and several other offspring from those horses.

"A lot of the horses have come through other people who have given them to us," Mike says. "We've only purchased a couple. This ranch is for both the kids and the horses."

Jeanie says she is blessed to see how the kids interact with the horses and how the kids gain confidence by working with the much larger animals.

Dani says the horses are like a treat or a treasure for kids.

"Kids can hug on them, they can talk to a horse and the horse isn't going to tell

anybody what is said," she says. "To work with and to control something so much bigger, that control gives a child so much self-respect and a feeling of power."

Wes Wright, (no relation to Dani) a Wild Ones board member for the past three years, says his daughter had positive experiences at the ranch. He has remained involved in the ranch even after his daughter got older and moved on to other experiences.

"For my daughter, at about 120 pounds, to take care of a 1,000-pound animal, gave her quite a sense of responsibility," he says. "It shows kids what they can do when they put their minds to it. The kids and horses form a bond, and that gives kids a perspective on life and what they can do. It's a segue into developing great skills for the rest of their lives."

Over the years, many of the kids at the ranch become members of the Wranglers and Junior Wrangler groups that help mentor younger visitors to the ranch. Mike describes the ranch as a co-op with everybody helping out with the chores before and after riding.

To help with finances, the ranch has a donor base, holds an annual banquet and charges \$8 for an hour-long ride. A \$240 annual fee covers all the rides of more advanced riders.

"Sometimes it takes a while for a child to adjust to a huge animal like a horse, but it can be a big emotional help, helping children gain confidence as they spend more time with the horses," Mike says. "We certainly do feel we've been successful in helping kids and the horses."

Dani describes the Langleys as "a shining example of God's love."

"They are making an amazing difference for any youth that gets involved at that ranch," she says.

Wes agrees.

"It is so gratifying to see people invest their lives in something like this," he says. "They see it as a mission to help young people through their horses." ■

A Versatile Breed With a Perpetual Smile

By Dianna Troyer

The sheep at the Grush farm south of Malta look more like adorable miniature stuffed animals than livestock. Originating in southern England several centuries ago, they were bred for farmers with small acreage who needed a small, easygoing dual-purpose sheep that would produce quality meat as well as wool.

“At the fair, people kept telling us they look like they’re always smiling,” says Tevin Grush, 13, of his family’s Babydoll Southdown sheep—a breed the Grush family introduced to the area.

“They’re common in the Midwest but not so much in Idaho yet,” says his mother, Natalie. “We learned about them while we were doing an internet search trying to find livestock projects for our kids. We found a breeder in South Dakota who raises and sells them because they’re hardy, docile, easy-keepers.”

Standing 18 to 24 inches tall at the shoulder, they withstand the cold well and are not susceptible to hoof disease. They are popular in orchards for keeping grass and weeds in check without harming the bark of the trees.

“We let them graze our lawn in the summer,” Natalie says.

Their wool generally is cream-colored, although it is occasionally black.

“Their wool has both crimp, referring to the waviness or curl of fiber, and also barb,

meaning it aligns fibers and makes the fibers tight and ideal for spinning,” Natalie explains. “Both those traits make it an ideal blending fiber with Angora or alpaca.”

Four years ago, the Grushes bought a ram and six ewes, which the children cared for. They felt confident enough to show them two years ago at the Cassia County Fair.

Unsure of how to groom them for the show ring, Natalie called the breeder for advice and was told not to slick-shear them—a cut that leaves them with little fleece.

“With that cut, they’ll look like bowling balls with legs,” Natalie says. “Instead, we were told to trim them so a little fleece is left and to shape it to make them look a little longer and taller than they really are.”

At the fair, the Grush children realized the judges were unfamiliar with the breed and were uncertain how to score their sheep.

“There isn’t a class for Babydoll Southdowns as market animals, so the kids showed them as a breeding project,” Natalie says.

Last year, Teegan, 17, won reserve champion ram at the fair. In August, Tenny, 15, won reserve champion breeding ram.

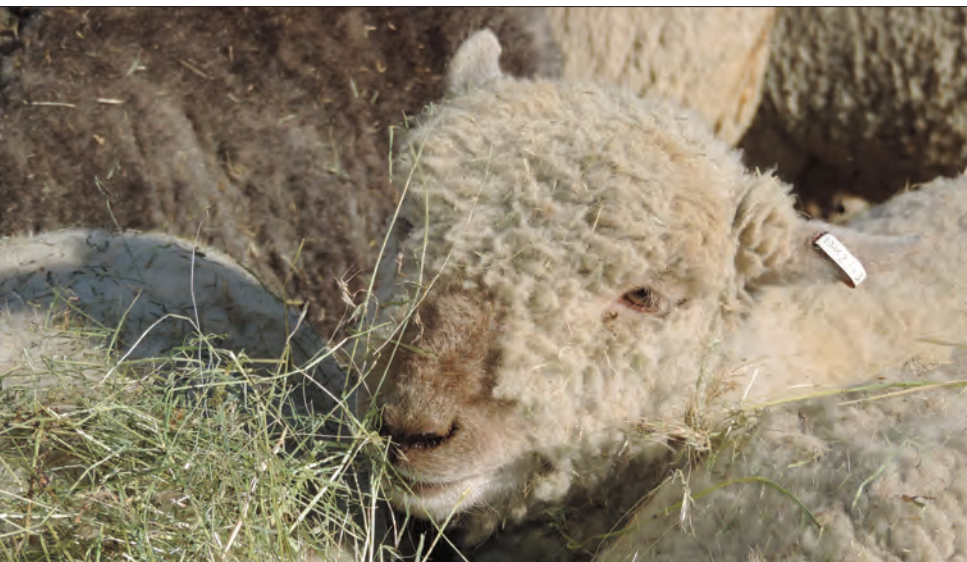
Tevin and his sister, Shandi, 11, have also shown them.

“I like them because they don’t get agitated in the show ring and are easy to handle at home, too,” says Shandi.

As a joke, she named the ewe she showed this past summer Bad to the Bone.

“They gain weight quickly and eat any type of hay,” Tevin says.

To learn to harvest their fleece, the Grushes took the advice of Malta resident LeGrand Dilworth. Taylen, 19, and his brother, Teegan, learned to cut fleeces that can eventually be used for spinning.



The Grushes’ Babydoll Southdown sheep are easygoing.



Clockwise from top, Babydoll Southdown sheep stand about 18 to 24 inches at the shoulder. Shandi and Tevin Grush store items they need for shows so they are ready for next year's Cassia County Fair. Shandi says she likes how easygoing the sheep are in a show ring. Natalie plans to wash and card the fleece so it can be spun.

"They've been a family project and fun learning experience for all of us," Natalie says. "Owning livestock has taught the kids responsibility."

Besides feeding and watering them daily, the Grush children trained the

sheep to be ready for the fair.

"We put a halter on them and walked them twice a day for several months," Shandi says.

While the Grushes have mastered showing and shearing their Babydoll

Southdown sheep, the next project will be processing the fleece.

"I'd like to wash and card the wool for spinners and weavers in the region," Natalie says, "and maybe even learn to spin." ■



By Katelin Davidson

Help Through Horsemanship

Set among the backdrop of wheat fields and farmland, the new Iron Legacy Ranch facility beckons horse lovers to enjoy the peaceful oasis.

The facility is a labor of love for owners Ryan and Heidi Tracy, and the newly opened indoor riding arena gets them closer to achieving their dreams. Located 9 miles outside of Ritzville near Ralston, the remoteness of the property adds to the business' success.

The property boasts an indoor and outdoor riding arena. A full kitchen, office, tack room and social room are attached to the indoor arena. The facility offers year-round classes and memberships for horse enthusiasts.

Memberships are available for individuals who own a horse but need to use facilities that may not be available for them on their property or

where they board their horses.

Iron Legacy Ranch focuses primarily on riding lessons, which are available for all ages in a variety of disciplines. Lessons are centered around a variety of riding styles.

"Lessons are available for all ages, but they are the most popular with school-aged children right now," Heidi says. "We don't offer competitive riding lessons. Our focus here is on the development of the kid and the horse."

Heidi and Ryan live on the property with their four sons, and a house is being built on the front of the property for Heidi's parents, Phil and Lisa Peterson. Their values revolve around family, faith and creating a positive foundation in life

for those around them.

Iron Horse Legacy's motto is, "Serving others as we ourselves would like to be served," and the message is evident with every member of staff. Most staff members are family or long-time friends, but also include two young people who work alongside the Tracys to build their foundation and make a mark on the world.

"It's about more than horses," Heidi says. "It's about the kids and the connections they make."

Brianna Kin Kade and Jessa Hoeft are the newest additions to the team. The duo graduated from neighboring Lind-Ritzville High School and have the same values as the Tracy family.

Brianna and Jessa give riding lessons. They both spent their formative years learning from Heidi about ways to improve and perfect their horsemanship.

"Both girls bought horses and started them," Heidi says. "That process really helped improve their horsemanship."

Heidi and Ryan are dedicated to youth outreach. Even while balancing home life and businesses, the couple makes sure to find time to mentor area youth.

"Three years ago, I started a mentorship program with girls, which started as Bible study," Heidi says. "It was actually started from Jessa's idea."

Heidi spends time mentoring young women in the community through faith, but is also fortunate to also offer mentorship opportunities at Iron Legacy Ranch.

Ryan began a mentorship program of his own, working with young men who are trying to find their path in life. The men help with Ryan's cattle operation, M2 Cattle Co., and work cattle in the mountains.

“We are trying to contribute to whatever their life is,” Ryan says. “Not to say they are misguided, but it is to help provide guidance in their life and build character.”

The Tracys work closely with family friends Jerry and Megan Herold, who operate Double Milliron Ranch Services. They buy horses from them for kids to start, finish and sell as part of the mentorship program.

“From our tiny students to our interns, our goal is supporting families,” Heidi says. “Part of the reason for the facility was for parents to watch their kids practice and also have a space to relax.”

Family and building connections are important to the Tracy family. The couple’s four sons—Gus, Colby, Wesley and Brock—all work on the ranch.

“This place wouldn’t be what it is without our kids,” Ryan says.

The indoor facility opened at the beginning of May, and



the couple is already looking toward the future. Within the next year, they would like to build a 12-stall boarding barn on the property.

“The boarding will probably be the most popular in the winter months when it is harder to transport horses in and out of here,” Heidi says.

As the Tracys move

forward in their first year of business, they say they are excited to see how the students progress and find additional opportunities to provide youth outreach in the area communities. ■

For more information about Iron Legacy Ranch, go to their website at www.ironlegacyranch.com.

Above, Brianna Kin Kade works with a young student at the ranch. Below, Heidi and Ryan Tracy started mentorship programs for local youth. Opposite page, Brianna, left, and Jessa Hoeft are horse riding instructors at Iron Legacy Ranch.



Swish!

Ten-year-old Kaitlyn Siegner steps up to the free throw line in Chicago

By Lauren Brown

Kaitlyn Siegner, 10, has played basketball for as long as she can remember.

“She spends most of her time in the gym,” says Kaitlyn’s mother, Jamie Siegner, who is the athletic director for Crane schools as well as a coach.

Kaitlyn attends Crane Elementary School. In January, she entered the local Elks Hoop Shoot free throw contest in Burns.

The Hoop Shoot is an annual event for kids ages 8 to 13. Youngsters compete in gender and age divisions to see who can make the most free throws.

Kaitlyn won her division and moved on to the district competition in Prineville. After winning there, she went on to the state competition in Silverton. After winning that contest, she headed to the regional competition in Vancouver, Washington. She conquered the regional and earned a place at the national competition in Chicago.

To prepare for the national competition, Kaitlyn made a goal to shoot 100 free throws a day.

“Sometimes it’d get dark, and I’d have to go in because I wouldn’t be able to see where I was shooting,” Kaitlyn says.

The Burns Elks Lodge No. 1680 raised money to help send Kaitlyn and her parents to Chicago April 25-28 for the national competition. The Siegners made a family vacation out of the trip and brought their other two children as well. The trip to Chicago was Kaitlyn’s first plane ride.

Upon arrival in Chicago, the check-in process for the competition included a binder full of congratulatory and encouraging messages from Kaitlyn’s friends and family back home. The Elks, through an e-greetings program, provided links to people in Kaitlyn’s hometown so they could send messages to her.

Kaitlyn also received a box of trading cards with her picture and a binder with clear pockets in which to place trading cards collected from other players in the competition. In addition to the free-throw contest, there were other events and activities at which the competitors could mingle and meet one another.

On Thursday night of the competition weekend, the youth and parents participated in a service project tying blankets. The



Kaitlyn Siegner won four contests to earn her place at the Elks’ National Hoop Shoot free throw contest in Chicago last April.

Photos courtesy of the Siegner family

Elks give those blankets to veterans at Christmastime.

Friday, the Elks held a practice by region. Competitors practiced their skills and met other contestants. Friday night, the Elks took everyone to a White Sox baseball game.

Throughout the weekend, families took trolleys to tourist attractions around Chicago. The Siegners toured Navy Pier and the Elks national memorial.

Kaitlyn made friends from Colorado and Utah during the long weekend.

“We were all in the same hotel, so all the families really got to know each other and visit,” Jamie says. “We got to spend time with people from New York and Rhode Island. It was really great meeting people from all over.”

The competition was April 27. There were six divisions, with 12 shooters in each. Kaitlyn’s division was girls ages 8-9. She was sixth in the rotation and made eight out of 10 shots in the first round. She made 12 of 15 in the second round, for a total of 20 out of 25 shots and a fifth-place finish overall. The top finisher in her age category made 22 out of 25 shots.

“It was very close,” Jamie says. “Two girls tied at 22, and two

girls tied at 21, so they had shoot-offs.”

During the competition the gym is quiet, and contestants must follow several rules. They get a predetermined number of practice shots and can only dribble up to four times before they shoot. Officials stand around the key, and judges sit on the three-point line to ensure everything remains fair.

Experiencing the pressure of the moment is part of the process, Jamie says. But while there is pressure to perform, the overall environment is supportive of the participants. The Elks organization pulled out all the stops for the kids and their families.

“They just catered to us, and they come from all over just to be with us and be with the kids,” Jamie says. “They made it an entire family experience the whole time we were there. It was really a cool experience.”

After the competition, the Elks held a banquet to honor the competitors and their families. The keynote speaker was Kendall Coyne, a gold medalist women’s hockey player. Past hoop shoot participants spoke as well.

Jamie says none of the hoop shoot speakers were past champions.

“They emphasized how their experience with the hoop shoot has carried over into other aspects of their lives as they entered

into their college and adult life, and shared how beneficial the experience was for them,” she says. “I loved that the Elks didn’t just focus on the champions. From the Elks’ perspective, every kid there is a champion, and they treated them like that.”

Kaitlyn says her favorite part of the weekend was practicing with the other competitors and meeting new people.

“I made one really good friend,” she says. “After the shoot, we all went swimming in the pool of our hotel and that was pretty fun.”

She encourages others to compete in the Burns Elks Lodge Hoop Shoot contest.

“It took me to Chicago, and it’s fun to try new things and meet new people,” she says.

Kaitlyn has big basketball aspirations. She wants to improve her skills so she can eventually play for the University of Oregon, where her father, Mitch, attended school and was an athlete.

She also has a goal for the Elks Hoop Shoot, which she plans to participate in again this year. This time, she says with a big grin, she wants “to win it.” ■

The Burns Elks Lodge No. 1680 Hoop Shoot free throw contest is Saturday, January 4, at Burns High School. Participants should arrive at 9 a.m. The competition begins at 10 a.m. All kids ages 8 to 13 are encouraged to participate.



Rules are strict during the national competition. Officials monitor from various angles to make sure all is fair.



Walt Hamby in his Santa suit driving his customized go-kart emblazoned with the Shriners emblem to promote the charitable organization.

Santa's Holiday Wish for Children's Hospitals

By Dianna Troyer

Sometimes even Santa has a Christmas wish. Whenever people try to pay Walt Hamby for dressing up in a Santa Claus suit to visit children and senior citizens, he deflects their gratitude.

"I tell people to write a check to the Shriners Hospitals for Children instead," says the 75-year-old Mackay resident and Shriners International member. "I don't expect anything except a smile and a thank you."

To be ready for the holiday season,

Walt lets his white whiskers grow into a fluffy beard and prepares a pair of Santa suits left to him from late friends and Shriners Dick Machamer and Paul Remaley.

"Dick was my mentor and sponsor for joining the Shriners," Walt says. "Wearing it is a way to honor him and what he did. Paul always volunteered to be Santa at the mall in Twin Falls."

Walt became a Shriner in 2002 while living in Hollister.

"I wanted to join because I believe in what they stand for: family, fraternity,

fun and philanthropy," he says. "Plus, many of their members are asked to be Santa."

To become a Shriner, applicants must first be Freemasons—members of a fraternal organization dedicated to service—and complete several requirements, including community service projects.

Walt says volunteering to be Santa is one of his most cherished ways to serve.

"I got started in 2012 when my daughter told me Santa was needed at an elementary school in Twin Falls where she

was a PTO member,” he says.

Since then, Walt visits students at elementary schools in nearby Hollister and Castleford every Christmas season.

Whenever Walt suggests a donation to the Shriners Hospitals, he demonstrates his support for the nonprofit organization’s 22 medical centers in North America.

“Shriners Hospitals have made an amazing difference in more than 1 million children’s lives,” Walt says.

During the county fair, Walt gave rides to children in his go-kart, customized to look like a white Peterbilt semi-truck and emblazoned with the Shriners emblem. He met Shriners’ patient 13-year-old McKlyn Thomas, and her father, Levi.

Since 2013, McKlyn has had six surgeries at the Shriners’ Hospitals for Children in Salt Lake City after breaking her growth plate in her left knee during a car accident and breaking other bones a few years later while playing.

“I can’t ever express my gratitude for the Shriners Hospitals and the staff’s professionalism in treating McKlyn,” Levi says. “They’re respectful, positive, knowledgeable and take pride in what they do.”

After recovering from that accident, McKlyn broke other bones while playing.

“The family joke is that she’s accident-prone but only on the left side,” Levi says.

“It’s a blessing she’s still with us, thanks to doctors there who want to make sure kids live successful lives. She’ll have to keep getting plates in her knee until she stops growing. Despite everything that’s happened, she’s going at 110 percent—doing gymnastics and performing on a competitive cheer team doing cartwheels and flips.”

In addition to supporting Shriners’ Hospitals, Walt works on several local philanthropic projects, such as raising funds to reroof the Masonic Lodge in Mackay, where he is a member, and he takes part in a Masons-sponsored local bicycle giveaway to encourage elementary school students to read.

“We like to do for others,” he says.



Walt Hamby met Shriners’ Hospitals patient McKlyn Thomas at the county fair. McKlyn has undergone multiple surgeries after a car accident broke several bones. She continues to receive care at Shriners’ Hospitals.

“Doing service projects and being Santa helps me stay optimistic, especially with losing loved ones.”

Walt’s wife, Peggy, died in 2009 after a five-year battle with colon cancer. His younger brother, John, never recovered from heart surgery and died in May. His mother, Julia, passed away in July 2018.

As a tribute to his mother, Walt becomes Santa and visits residents at the assisted living center where she lived in Twin Falls. He recalls her reaction when she was 92 and saw him for the

first time in his Santa suit at a church program. “After that, she always called me Santa,” he says. “She told me, ‘I never thought I’d get to be Santa’s mom.’ When I saw her the day before she passed away at age 95, she looked right at me and asked, ‘Santa, are you running the streets?’”

Walt says he is happy to run the streets and be Santa for anyone who asks him.

“As we age, we learn what giving really means,” Walt says. “All people—regardless of gender—can be Santa.” ■

Generate Safely

Portable generators are great tools, but they can prove fatal if used improperly

By Christina Sawyer

When storms hit and knock out power, linemen rush to your aid. As soon as weather conditions allow, lineworkers travel to the devastated areas and safely make repairs.

Mt. Wheeler Power line crews make safety a top priority and take precautions before working on downed power lines.

First, they verify the circuit is de-energized and proper switches are opened and tagged to isolate the circuit from the system. They place ground chains on the circuit to make sure the line cannot be energized while they repair the equipment.

Even with these precautions, workers' lives remain in your hands.

Portable generators are internal combustion engines used to generate electricity. They are useful when temporary or remote power is needed and are widely used when power lines are down.

Unfortunately, they can prove fatal to lineworkers, your neighbors and you when used improperly.

A generator connected to a home's wiring or plugged into a regular household outlet can cause back feeding along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes in contact with them, even if the line seems dead.

The electricity created by generators has the same hazards as normal utility-supplied electricity. It also has some additional hazards because generator users often bypass the safety devices, such as circuit breakers, that are built into electrical systems.

Line crews are not the only ones in danger when a portable generator is used improperly. Generator owners may be at risk of fire injury.

Generators become hot while running and remain hot for long periods after they are stopped. Generator fuels, such as gasoline and kerosene, can ignite when spilled on hot engine parts. Before refueling, shut down the generator and allow it to cool.

Gasoline and other generator fuels should be stored and

transported in approved and ventilated containers. Keep fuel containers away from flame-producing and heat-generating devices, such as the generator itself, water heaters, cigarettes, lighters and matches. Do not smoke around fuel containers. Do not store generator fuels in your home. Store fuels away from living areas.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a common hazard. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas. Many people have died from CO poisoning because their generator was not adequately ventilated.

Never use a generator indoors or in enclosed spaces such as garages, crawl spaces and basements. Open windows and doors may not prevent CO from building up when a generator is located in an enclosed space. Make sure a generator has three to four feet of clear space on all sides and above it to ensure adequate ventilation.

Do not use a generator outside near doors, windows or vents, which could allow CO to enter the home and build to toxic levels in occupied spaces.

If you or others show symptoms of CO



poisoning—dizziness, headaches, nausea, tiredness—get to fresh air immediately and seek medical attention. Do not re-enter the area until it is determined to be safe by trained personnel.

Mt. Wheeler Power crews never cut corners when it comes to safety and neither should you. Protect the wellbeing and safety of your family during outages, and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations.

When we work together for safety and the good of our communities, everyone benefits. ■



Portable generators can be helpful during outages, but consumers need to use them safely to protect homeowners and line crews.

Generator Safety Guidelines

- ▶ Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home is wired for generator use. Have a licensed electrician install a transfer switch to prevent back feeding.
- ▶ Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords. Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears and the plug has three prongs. Overloaded cords can cause fires or equipment damage.
- ▶ Make sure a generator is properly grounded and the grounding connections are tight. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for proper grounding methods.
- ▶ Use ground fault circuit interrupters, especially where electrical equipment is used in or around wet or damp locations. GFCIs shut off power when an electrical current is detected outside normal paths. GFCIs and extension cords with built-in GFCI protection can be purchased at hardware stores, do-it-yourself centers and other locations that sell electrical equipment.
- ▶ Never overload a generator. A portable generator should only be used when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances.
- ▶ Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.
- ▶ Keep the generator dry. Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.
- ▶ Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.
- ▶ Never fuel a generator while it is operating.
- ▶ Read and adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation.

Giving

Is the Joy of the Season

Christmas is about opening our hearts

By Christina Sawyer

The holidays can be overwhelming. You may be filling your grocery cart with all the trimmings for the big family meal, rushing around trying to find your child the right color bicycle or deciding which pair of name-brand boots to buy for your spouse. Children are beaming with anticipation for what the jolly man in the red suit will leave under the tree for them this year. We tend to call this “the most wonderful time of the year,” but it’s easy to forget that for a lot of people and families in our community, it’s not.

It’s easy to get caught up in the busy season and forget those who may not be so fortunate. Many families go without gifts during the holiday season, and sometimes even without a hot meal or a

warm place to sleep.

It’s easy to fall victim to the commercial nature of the season, but the true spirit of the holiday comes from giving back, giving thanks and lending a hand to those in need.

Not only does giving back make you feel amazing, giving back to your community is a huge part of how our society functions.

For those struggling to put food on the table and pay the bills, the holidays can be a burden. Pressure to keep up with the joy of the season can cause stress.

Whether it’s through monetary donations or volunteering your time, giving helps people in our communities. Donating a toy or coat to a program such as Mt. Wheeler Power’s Santa’s Elves allows a less fortunate child to experience the joy of Christmas. Donating to a food bank can make all the difference to a family by putting food on their table.

According to Dr. Scott Bea, a

psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic, giving to others is beneficial to our mental and physical health. Bea says studies find myriad health benefits associated with giving, including lower blood pressure, increased self-esteem, less depression, lower stress levels, longer life and greater happiness.

Bea says giving promotes social connection and trust, and there is evidence that during gift-giving behaviors our brains secrete the mood-mediating chemical serotonin, the feel-good chemical dopamine and oxytocin, which promotes compassion and bonding.

Donating our time or resources to others can literally help us live a longer, healthier life, according to Bea. He says a University of California—Berkeley study found that people over 55 who volunteered for two or more organizations were 44% less likely to die over a five-year period than those who didn’t volunteer. A University of Michigan study of elderly people who helped friends,



Romolo Tavani/stock.adobe.com

relatives and neighbors—or gave emotional support to their spouses—found similar results.

Human beings modify behaviors and make decisions based on what we see around us. When someone uses their time or resources to help others, we see how helping others brings us closer together. Benevolent acts make the world a happier place.

Instead of laying on your horn in traffic or pushing your way to the front of a line, take the time to make others a bit happier. Share a warm smile, a “please” or “thank you,” and maybe a nice hug. You’ll find you’ve given yourself the gift of happiness too.

While the holiday season is filled with joy and happiness, it’s important to remember to be thankful and grateful for what you have. There are so many people out there who are less fortunate. Make it a priority during the whole year, not just during holidays, to keep those people in mind. ■



Donating gifts to a program such as Mt. Wheeler Power’s Santa’s Elves allows less fortunate children to experience the joy of Christmas.

dglimages/stock.adobe.com

Craft Bazaar and Light Parade Dazzle in West Wendover

By Dianna Troyer

After moving to town in the fall of 2016, Brenda Claiborne decided something was missing from West Wendover's holiday celebrations.

There was the festival of Christmas trees, the city's tree-lighting ceremony and an appearance by Santa on the city's fire trucks, but Brenda felt one more dazzling event was needed to brighten the season.

"In Missouri where I grew up, many little towns had Christmas parades that were held in the evening, so I hoped the community here would enjoy one too," she says. "Whatever the holiday, I've loved parades my entire life, especially seeing the community spirit that goes into each and every parade entry."

In 2017, Brenda teamed up with West Wendover Elementary School's Parent Teacher Organization and hosted West Wendover's first Craft Bazaar and Winter Lights Parade.

"Wherever we've lived, I've always been passionate about volunteering, mentoring and connecting with the community," Brenda says.

Brenda is a real estate agent and the community manager at Santiago Wendover Estates—a manufactured housing community in West Wendover that provides new



Frank Sharp with Brenda Claiborne.

affordable housing.

"This has become my favorite event of the year," she says. "Our community gets super excited. In early fall, people start asking our planning committee when we are having it."

When naming this year's celebration, the planning committee was inspired by Olaf—the comical snowman from Pixar's "Frozen." They settled on "Olaf's Adventures in Wendover—Annual Craft Bazaar & Light Parade."

The bazaar will be at the elementary school the evening of December 4. The parade begins at 6 p.m. December 13 at the West Wendover Welcome Center.

"At the bazaar, vendors sell all types of handcrafted items along with food and drinks in the school gymnasium," Brenda says.

Parade entries are as varied as participants' imaginations.

"We have floats, decorated cars and trucks, firetrucks and

horses," Brenda says. "We get more entries every year, and we should have about 20 this year."

Wells Rural Electric Co. will showcase its neon green Ford C-Max Energi plug-in hybrid car. Last year, WREC Community Outreach Director Layla Walz dressed up like a Who from Dr. Seuss's "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" and rode in the car.

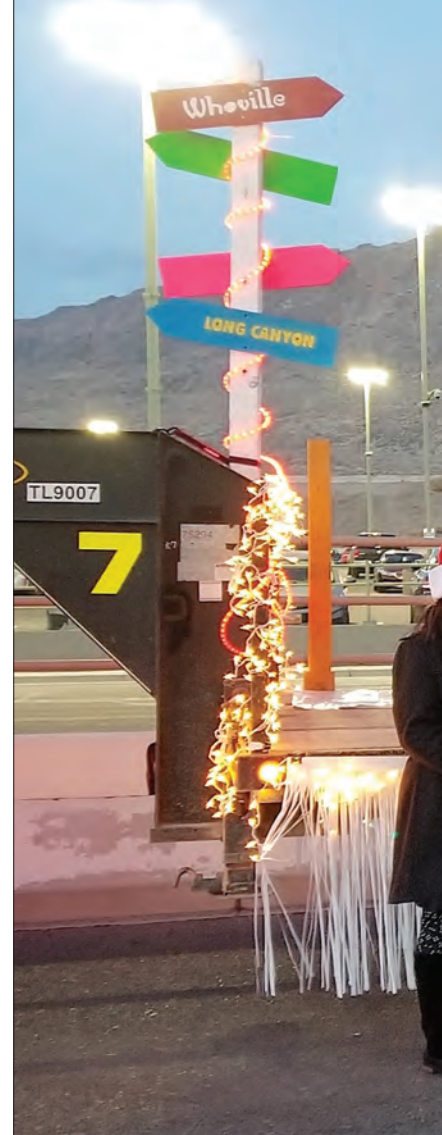
"I love to see the kids' faces light up as we drive by and toss candy," she says.

Brenda says business support is key to hosting community events. Each year, a business volunteers to sponsor the celebration, enabling the committee to buy trophies for first, second and third place parade entries, banners and other items needed for the parade.

The business' employees are spotlighted as the parade's grand marshals. This year's sponsor will be The Resorts at Wendover, which includes the Rainbow, Peppermill and Montego Bay.

"There are some amazing people in our community," Brenda says. "Frank Sharp was one of the first people I met here. He's so big-hearted and has a genuine love for helping the unfortunate and forgotten."

Frank established the non-profit JAS Foundation to



honor his late wife. It supports a senior center, a food bank, and a thrift store and resource center.

Brenda says seeing the community come together is a holiday gift for her.

"It's a chance for us to build stronger bonds with each other," she says.

Along with organizing the event, Brenda cannot resist being in the parade too.

"There'll be a few surprises this year, so come and see for yourself what they will be," she says. ■

To become a vendor at the bazaar, contact Gala Salgado at 435-919-7482. The parade lineup begins at 5 p.m. at the West Wendover Welcome Center, and the parade starts at 6. The parade will head west on Florence Way and end at West Wendover Elementary.



Northern Nevada Christmas Events

- ▶ The Wells Tree Festival is scheduled for 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. December 2-5 at the town's swimming pool complex.
- ▶ The Community Christmas Walk in Wells is slated for December 3. Participants will meet at 6 p.m. at Elton Pavilion in the city park and visit local churches to hear short programs. Holiday refreshments will be at the last church.
- ▶ Carlin will host Sugar Plum Square and a light parade at 6 p.m. December 7. It starts at Scott's Market and goes to the senior center where Santa awaits. Mini trees and wreaths will be sold to raise money for the senior center, the library and The Center for Healthy Families.
- ▶ Starr Valley children will perform a holiday program at the Progressive Club at 6:30 p.m. December 21. The younger children will present the nativity. Older kids will perform an original play titled "Christmas Gifts."



Above, a float celebrating Dr. Seuss's "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" was a popular attraction at last year's parade. Left, WREC Community Outreach Director Layla Walz and daughter Evelyn at last year's parade with WREC's plug-in hybrid car.

Photos courtesy of Brenda Claiborne

Co-op Connects with Students at Career Fair

Juniors, seniors discuss future with professionals

By Candace Perkins

Valley Electric Association staff members from across the Co-op participated in the Pahrump Valley High School College and Career Fair in October. Approximately 600 high school students, comprised mostly of 11th and 12th graders, attended the event. According to Lisa Hamrick, Work-Based Learning Coordinator for Nye County Schools, the Fair hosted approximately 30 businesses and military entities as well as eight colleges.

The Career Fair was an opportunity for high school students in the VEA service area to speak with staff from across VEA, to gain first-hand knowledge of the wide range of careers at Valley Electric, skilled trades, degrees relevant to the positions, apprenticeships and more.

Stacy Pung, VEA Human Resources Business Partner, said the High School's College and Career Fair is an important community event for Valley Electric, particularly for the student internship program. "The VEA Student Internship Program is an important part of our Cooperative," said Pung. "This program not only cultivates the next generation of Cooperative members, but it also introduces local students to potential career opportunities within their community."

According to Pung, the student internship program serves as an introduction to the Seven Cooperative Principles. It provides opportunities for students to learn about their Cooperative, gain work experience, build networking relationships and instill a sense of awareness for their community. "The children are our future, and the Student Internship Program is a great opportunity for the sustainability of VEA and the Community. The College and Career Fair helps us recruit future student interns."



VEA staffers engaged students about potential careers at a Recent College and Career Day at Pahrump Valley High School.

Valley Electric photos

Team members visited with students about potential careers and income potential compared to potential educational costs, student debt and training/certification costs.

Several Pahrump Valley High School alumni who are now VEA employees participated in the fair and were able to give their personal accounts of their path to working at VEA.

"College isn't for everybody and it wasn't for me," said Allan McClard, Apprentice Metering Technician, "but there are other options out there for people like me that didn't want to go to college, like getting an apprenticeship started. The apprenticeship isn't easy, but

it's very rewarding. What better way to start your forever job than going to work every day and learning your trade and getting paid while you learn that trade? Now, there is still a lot of schooling involved with the apprenticeship, but it's a job that I literally learn something new every day and that makes me feel good going home every day.

"I told them that also a lot of our training is on safety because all it takes is one mistake and you won't be going home to your family. So pay attention to detail and take the training serious."

VEA staff had multiple displays and vehicles outside of the high school, including a bucket truck, field service truck,

scale models and safety gear. Journeyman Lineman Butch Davies built the two models and used them as tools to interact with students. “The purpose of the models is a visual representation to show students what a utility system looks like, which gives them a better idea of what linemen, meter techs and other utility employees do and what direction they might want to take for their education and their career.”

VEA also had a table inside of the gym, with staff members sharing information about the six scholarships available and the intern program. VEA student intern Sebastian Fronk was at the VEA table and answered student’s questions regarding what it is like to be a VEA intern.

“I told students that the VEA internship is a good opportunity for a real-world experience that opens up a lot of doors to future careers,” said Fronk. “One student asked me what people in the company (VEA) are like to work with. I told him that everyone at VEA has been very helpful and the company (VEA) is full of friendships and family.”

VEA Planning Engineer, Darell Holmes, was also at the VEA table handing out scholarship and internship information. He took the opportunity to share his experience with students as a VEA employee and Engineer. Utilities like VEA hire a variety of employees with experience ranging from straight out of high school to trade school or college graduates, said Holmes. He suggested students compare wages and benefits from VEA to that of other potential employees and to have a plan to develop skills the marketplace will pay you for.

“If you become a cooperative employee then you will develop skills to work in almost any place in the nation – see touchstoneenergy.com for electric cooperative jobs at VEA and across the nation.”

As a member owned co-op, Valley Electric strives to follow the Seven Cooperative Principles, and participation in the College and Career Fair supports Principles No. 5 Concern for Community and No. 7 Education, Training, and Information. As we move forward, we continue our focus on our members and our communities that we serve. ■



Allan McClard, Apprentice Metering Technician, talks with students about apprentice programs at Valley Electric.



The VEA team included Intern Sebastian Fronk, Stacy Pung, Human Resources Business Partner, and Darell Holmes, Planning Engineer.

Members Reflect on the Early Days

Everyone depended on each other

By John M. Glionna

The next time you flip a switch for a bedroom light or heavenly blast of air-conditioning, consider this: The earliest rural residents here lived for decades without electricity.

It was a tough minimalist life, when many early pioneers in the Pahrump Valley and its environs hauled their water, cooked on wood-burning stoves, and did most everything else off the grid.

Because there was no grid.

Electricity did not arrive until 1963, the year John F. Kennedy was assassinated, months before the Beatles first appeared on the Ed Sullivan show, when people talked about landing on the moon.

But Tim Hafen, Sheila Rau and others lived without refrigerators, bathed in streams and drove along primitive, tire-piercing dirt roads.

They did not complain.

“We did what we had to do, and didn’t think about it,” says Tim, now 87.

When Tim arrived in Nye County, in 1951, the desolate Pahrump Valley might as well have been the moon. Without batting an eye, he got to work homesteading 840 acres. “I was a 19-year-old cowboy,” he recalls. “There was nothing I couldn’t do.”

At night, when stars littered

the sky, he used a Coleman white-gas lantern for guidance. He went years without refrigerating his food before buying a propane-powered model. “I don’t know how; all I knew is that it worked. That’s all I cared about.”

Shiela Rau also remembers those early years with a mix of exasperation and nostalgia. She landed near Scotty’s Junction at age of 14, years before the first power lines marched across the landscape.

“Nowadays, that life would be a real pain – and it was difficult,” she says. “But I was a farm girl born and raised – I lived the first seven years of my life on a peach ranch in Colorado – so it wasn’t a big deal to me.”

Back then, the desert was empty, which worked out well for a shy teenage girl. Rau recalls how her mother installed a gravity-feed irrigation pump that sprung a leak. Rau and her younger sister took their towels and soap out there for a shower.

“I’d stand outside and bathe in the middle of nowhere,” said Rau, 76, whose family made its living as well-diggers. “One of our managers once said to me, ‘No wonder you’re so tough.’”

Shiela recalls using a generator for power, but only when the family needed it. They usually turned off the device at night – saving more trips to



Before VEA came along, “everything required physical labor,” says Shiela Rau of Amargosa Valley.

Jeff Scheid photo

haul the expensive fuel to run the thing.

They lived many hours from Las Vegas, and even visiting the small grocery in Beatty was an ordeal, so the family planned ahead. “Nothing was automated,” Shiela says. “Everything you did required physical labor, even hanging your clothes outdoors on the line.”

Tim drilled his first well in 1951, and was prepared to walk away from his homestead if he came up empty. Instead, he struck liquid gold.

“We drilled to 800 feet and struck an artesian well that gushed 1,000 gallons a minute,” he recalls. “Back then,

that was unheard of.”

The well was located a half-mile from his growing fields, so Tim ran his water through an open ditch. For cooking and cleaning, he’d just walk out of his 25-foot house trailer and fill up a water bucket.

Bathing was also done in that ditch. Until Tim “modernized.”

He recalls getting a good deal on some two-inch black pipe that had been used in some nearby Death Valley mine and ran it up to the trailer from the well discharge. After that, he finally had running water and later built a corrugated-iron shower to bathe in privacy.

“The water was a cool 72 degrees, but we had a shower,” he says. “Even if it was colder than hell in the wintertime, it was better than washing in an open ditch.”

Eventually, more folks moved in. Back then, both Tim and Shiela say, people were just more neighborly. “You got to know your neighbors,” says Tim. “You’d go visit and socialize, play canasta.”

Shiela recalls the time her family’s trailer in the Amargosa Valley burned down in 1960, and local residents staged a benefit to help them recover. “There was none of this attitude of building higher fences like we have now,” she says.

It’s funny, she says, to look back at a time when you essentially had nothing and remember nothing but the happy times. “We were a working family – sometimes we had more money than we could spend, and times when we didn’t know where our next meal was coming from – but we didn’t mind,” recalls Shiela.

“I wouldn’t want to do it again, but there was something about that life that made me grow as a person. It makes you self-sufficient.”

Today, when the power goes off, she does not panic.

“I know enough to immediately fill up the bathtub so I’ll have water to wash my face and hands,” she says. “It’s just a fact of life – you can survive without things like electricity.”

For these hardy settlers, living without electricity was just a way of the times, like driving on rocky, pitted gravel roads, not worrying about



“We did what we had to do and didn’t think about it,” says Tim Hafen, who settled in Pahrump in the early 1950s.

John Glionna photo

what your neighbors thought, because there were not many of them, and those who were there usually had your back with whatever you decided to do.

Electricity? Didn’t miss it, Tim says.

You took what the rural life dished out, buying an old station wagon and letting the handful of valley teenagers pile in and drive themselves to the nearest high school in Las Vegas – trusting that they attended classes instead of playing hooky.

If your pickup truck broke a fan belt, well, you hopped atop your tractor and drove around to the neighbors’ spreads to see if anyone could spare one.

But like the days without electricity, most of the people who survived those hard times are gone: They either moved on or met their maker.

Recalls Tim: “There ain’t many of us left.”

Gary Hollis got to Pahrump in the late 1960s, when electricity was already here. But life was still tough. He was 22, just out of the Army, and his family opened an auto parts store. He loved it.

“I liked the rural life,” says Hollis, 72, who went on to serve two terms as county commissioner and time as a deputy sheriff. “I didn’t like a bunch of people around me all the time.”

But there were hardships. Like getting enough fresh

meat to feed a family of five. There were a few small markets but the pickings weren’t great.

“We had to go to Las Vegas to get our food,” Hollis recalls. “We’d have two or three ice chests in the truck, with dry ice and real ice. We bought all our meat as frozen as possible to get it back. We’d do all our shopping and then get the food last and then head right for home.”

Back then, Route 160 was paved but without fences, you had to watch out for wandering burros and wild horses.

“But you could drive all the way to Las Vegas and not see another car,” Hollis recalled. “Those were the good old days. And I miss ’em.” ■



Cougars, Wolves and Bears ... Oh My!

Northwest Trek provides educational trails and more

By Rick Stedman

As Pierce County's wildlife park edges closer to its 45th anniversary next summer, it continues to reinvent itself with two goals in mind: Providing extraordinary care to its animals and protecting native wildlife.

Eatonville's Northwest Trek Wildlife Park opened July 1975. The 725-acre zoological park provides education and recreation services and serves the community through its Northwest-wildlife research. Today, the park cares for 50 species and more than 200 animals as part of its conservation efforts.

Exploring The Park

According to NWT Marketing and Communications Manager Whitney DalBalcon, their 40-minute Discovery Tram Tour is one of the most popular ways to experience everything the park has to offer. During the tours, experience animals running wild in their natural habitat from the safety of a large vehicle, with staff on hand to deal with the animals if necessary.

"Our guests can get up close to view Roosevelt elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and more as they explore our 435-acre free-roaming area," she says.

Another way to explore is by using the Animal Walking Paths, which are also wheelchair and stroller-friendly. Throughout the trails, guests can see

large predators, such as bears, wolves and cougars all living in their natural habitats with smaller forest and wetland creatures, such as beavers and otters swimming in their pools or snuggling in their dens.

While walking the paths, animal keepers share “Keeper Chats,” educational demonstrations about how these species coexist in the wild, and what they eat, while parkgoers get to observe some of the park’s less dangerous critters up close. Keeper Chats are offered throughout the year, and their schedule can be found on the reader board just inside of the park gates.

At the Cheney Discovery Center, children can interact with some of the park’s smaller critters, such as banana slugs, red-legged frogs, newts and several species of native snakes. Animatronic puppet shows are also performed to entertain the park’s younger guests.

Brave youngsters who want to meet a wolf up close can visit the E.H. Baker Cabin where naturalists answer questions

for the children, provide wolf pelts for them to experience the softness and thickness of real fur and finally introduce them to the animals.

A visit to Northwest Trek Wildlife Park would not be complete without experiencing Zip Wild. There, parkgoers can choose from five different zip lines and obstacle experiences. The Aerial Runway offers a 512-foot long zip line. All five zip line courses offer exhilarating tree canopy adventures, but are not available during the winter.

The Eagles Have Landed

One of the park’s newest attractions is Eagle Passage, an enclosed habitat featuring three once-endangered American bald eagles.

“We’ve been working on this since 2016, saving plants and picking out logs,” says Jake Pool, staff horticulturist with the Eagle Passage project. “My goal was to make this look and feel as much like where you’d find bald eagles in the wild

like a rainforest up at Mount Rainier or the Olympics.”

In addition, the park offers ecological summaries about the animals and what humans can do to protect their environment, such as using reusable bottles, bags and straws to reduce carbon emissions and protect indigenous wildlife.

According to park officials, the trio will soon be joined by a fourth eagle.

Spreading Holiday Cheer

NWT’s staff go the extra mile for their furry friends. During the park’s annual Winter Wildland event, the staff offers holiday-themed gifts, or “enrichments,” to the animals. Enrichments are often filled with meatballs, vegetables, chopped fruit and other treats designed to entice skunks, lynx, beavers and others to explore and investigate.

This year’s Winter Wildland is December 28-29. ■

For a complete list of events visit www.nwtrek.org.



Left, a gray wolf finds a frozen treat during the 2018 Winter Wildland event. Park staff create holiday-themed gifts for the animals in the form of foods they don’t normally have access to. Above, park guests watch a porcupine during a Keeper Chat.



New Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association President Bob Durham, left, thanks Ben Asquith of Dayton, Oregon, for his service on D-Day. Asquith was an honored guest at ORECA's annual meeting in November. Photos by Mike Teegarden

A Wave of Oregon Electric Leaders

ORECA's 2019 annual meeting highlighted the importance of passing the RURAL Act, while honoring those who kept Americans free.

The Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association held its 77th annual meeting by exploring global energy issues, breaking down partisan barriers and honoring those who fought to defeat tyranny on D-Day 75 years ago.

The meeting also focused attention on the Revitalizing Underdeveloped Rural Areas and Lands Act—landmark legislation in Congress that would protect electric cooperatives from losing their tax-exempt status because of an unintended consequence of recent tax legislation.

“It’s imperative we let Sen. Ron Wyden know of the importance of this legislation to rural Oregon,” said ORECA Executive Director Ted Case. “No one is better positioned to help us protect our tax-exempt status so we can help bring broadband

to his constituents.”

Read more about the RURAL Act on page 32.

The annual meeting also included a legislative panel featuring two of the Oregon Legislature’s brightest stars: Democratic Rep. Karin Power of Milwaukee and Republican Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis of Albany. The two legislators, who were at opposite ends of the bitter cap-and-trade debate in the 2019 legislative assembly, engaged in a constructive and upbeat discussion that impressed the 200 rural leaders in the crowd.

“These legislators give me hope we can find common ground on the big issues,” one participant noted.

Central Electric Cooperative director Bev Clarno, who is also Oregon’s secretary of state, concluded the



See page 8 for more photos from the annual meeting.

State Reps. Shelly Boshart Davis, second from left, and Karin Power, far right, impressed co-op leaders with their affability despite sharp policy differences.

morning session with an overview of the roles and responsibilities of her office.

During the luncheon, ORECA celebrated the 75th anniversary of D-Day with Alex Kershaw, author of “The First Wave: The D-Day Warriors Who Led the Way to Victory in World War II.”

Kershaw recounted the harrowing assault on Omaha Beach and acknowledged the efforts of Ben Asquith of Dayton, Oregon. The 94-year-old Asquith attended the luncheon and was greeted with a standing ovation for his pre-dawn role in clearing obstacles at Omaha Beach.

“Mr. Asquith was the first wave of the first wave,” Kershaw said.

During the afternoon session, Midstate Electric CEO Dave Schneider was presented with an award for his two-year stint as ORECA president.

“This has been one of the highlights of my career,” Schneider said.

Three other electric co-op leaders—longtime West Oregon Electric Cooperative Director Robert Van Natta, Umatilla Electric Cooperative Director Bryan Wolfe and Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative Manager Tommy Wolff—were presented with ORECA’s Distinguished Service Award, the association’s highest honor.

“These three men have made an impact on electric co-ops far beyond Oregon,” Case said. ■



Oregon co-op leaders rallied behind passage of the RURAL Act—vital legislation to protect electric co-op’s tax-exempt status.

Honoring Outstanding Leaders

Scenes from the November Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual meeting at the Salem Conference Center



Clockwise from top left: Longtime West Oregon Electric Cooperative Director Robert VanNatta received ORECA's Distinguished Service Award. "Robert VanNatta is one of a kind," said ORECA Executive Director Ted Case. Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative Manager Tommy Wolff, second from right, received ORECA's Distinguished Service Award for his role in promoting rural economic development and broadband in the Columbia Basin. Case, left, presented Midstate Electric Cooperative CEO Dave Schneider with the ORECA President's Award for leading the board for two years. "It's been one of the highlights of my career," Schneider said. Umatilla Electric Cooperative Director Bryan Wolfe was recognized with ORECA's Distinguished Service Award for representing Oregon at the national level with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Photos by Mike Teegarden