

Ruralite/Currents magazine 2020

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Lyrical Teacher

Musician shares his deep-rooted love for rhythm

By Jody Foss

Seth Brewster gently picks up his banjo and starts to play.

“Shady Grove, my little love, Shady Grove, I say,” he sings. “Shady Grove, my little love, I’m bound to go away.”

After graduating from college in 2010, Seth worked on a farm in his rural hometown of Meadville, Pennsylvania. After feeding cows in the early morning, he and his boss dug water mains, electrical conduit and ditches with a directional drill.

After a 14-hour workday, he would arrive home to feed again.

“I was working myself ragged,” he says.

In 2012, Seth came across a webpage for the nonprofit Ethos.

“Do you want to teach music?” he read.

Ethos provides music lessons, group classes and multicultural performances to more than 7,000 students across Oregon.

“I had a lot of musical background,” Seth says. “I ended up getting an interview. It was on Skype, which was convenient. I was at a wedding, so I was already dressed up!”

In the interview, he was asked how he does living in a rural environment.

“I answered, ‘Honestly, pretty well,’” he says. “They were more worried about that than whether or not I could play an instrument.”

Seth quit his job on the farm and drove to Portland.

“I couldn’t even tell my family where I was going,” he says.

After a week of training at Ethos headquarters in Portland, he was assigned to Fossil, population 400. Other teachers were sent to Warm Springs, Monument, Madras and The Dalles.

Seth stayed with Ethos for the

maximum allowable time of four years, and taught music at the schools in Condon and Fossil. During summers, he worked the wheat harvest, had a job on the Gilliam County road crew and bartended at Round Up in Condon. He played drums in Dan Robinson’s local band, The Wheeler County Ramblers, at various venues.

When his Ethos contract expired, both Condon and Fossil schools hired Seth as a private contractor.

“I have put roots down here,” he says.

This year, Seth is teaching solely in Fossil. He is a licensed teacher at Wheeler Elementary and High School.

In addition to music, he teaches typing 101, and Spanish to fifth through eighth graders.

“I’m wherever they need me,” he says. “I wear many hats.”

Seth met his girlfriend, Katelyn Eisenhooth, in Pennsylvania while they both worked on their degrees at different colleges. After two years of dating, Seth left for Oregon. Katelyn works as assistant director in international programs at Pacific University in Forest Grove. A few years ago, the couple decided to play music together.

They named their duo “Buffalo Kin.”

The couple didn’t plan to make a footprint musically, but people started asking them to perform.

“We have been playing bluegrass standards, and we have our own stuff, too,” Seth says. “It’s mostly Appalachia meets bluegrass meets old country meets our own flavor.”

Starting out at the Fossil Bluegrass Festival, Buffalo Kin has played at the Bend Roots Festival, a festival in Stevenson, Washington, and several other regional venues.



Why the name Buffalo Kin?

“I am from a military family,” Seth says. “I can trace my family back to the Buffalo Soldiers.”

The Buffalo Soldiers were cavalry soldiers who served on the Western frontier following the Civil War. Their main tasks were to help control the Native Americans on the Plains, capture cattle rustlers and thieves, and protect stagecoaches, wagon trains and railroad crews.

“They were called Buffalo Soldiers because like a cornered buffalo, they were really hard to kill,” Seth says. “They were tough. That part of my family history



fascinated me.”

Seth’s family is Choctaw Indian from the TexArkana region of the U.S.

“Everything I am today is in an effort to live up to the man my grandfather was,” Seth says. “My fondest memories of him were running the wood splitter and watching spaghetti Westerns together. He was a master woodworker and a top-tier mechanic.”

Asked what music means to him, he takes a moment to answer.

“What music means to me is so deep and so intense,” he says. “It’s one of those things that would be hard for me to put into words. It’s my life’s blood. It’s how I

am able to live here alone. When I teach, I am trying to share with my students what it means to me.”

Seth is fascinated with “no technology movement-based teaching” called the Kodaly method. It is a way of developing musical skills and teaching musical concepts using folk songs, hand signs and movement.

“I don’t like to sit for more than five or 10 minutes either,” he says. “We do dances from all over the world. We sing, dance and play old Oregon Trail games. It’s a folk-driven method. We learn old folk tunes that have history and tell stories.”

Seth’s youngest students are

Seth Brewster has put down roots in the high desert country. He says the landscape inspires his music and songs.

PHOTO BY ANDREW STANBRIDGE

preschoolers. He is creating a banjo-building workshop for his older students. At the end of the sessions, they leave with a simple instrument they built themselves.

“Music is the universal language,” Seth says. “How else can you explain a child who has no grasp of spoken language yet, moving innately to the rhythm and the beat? It’s beyond what I can comprehend. It’s effortless for me because we just have a good time. I am exactly where I want to be.” ■



Happy Workers Club Board members by the Alder Grove Schoolhouse. From left are Treasurer Carol Vierra, President Lisa Sizemore, Vice President Nick Hazelton, Correspondence Secretary Shelley Olson and Buzz Sizemore.

Vintage Club Reinvents Itself

CPI Charitable Trust grant helps Happy Workers Club continue working

By Danita Cahill

[The Happy Workers Club \(HWC\) began in 1940 as a ladies' club in Hoskins and Upper Luckiamute Valley, northwest of Philomath. The club name was chosen via a naming contest, even though the ladies didn't work outside the home.](#)

Farmhouses are scattered with large distances between people. With no co-workers of their own to fellowship with, their husbands at work, and later off to

serve in World War II—the women were isolated. They craved the friendship of other women. It also gave their children a chance to gather and play together.

During the first decade, the women held monthly club meetings in members' homes or inside one of the area's one-room schoolhouses. The circa-1900 Alder Grove Schoolhouse on Luckiamute Road served its last students in 1950. In 1951, HWC leased the building for \$1 a year, and later bought the schoolhouse.

The focus of the club evolved into community outreach. The women invited men to join. Thoughts of changing the name were tossed about, but the group

decided to keep its name.

The little schoolhouse became a community hub—a meeting place for neighbors, a place for baby and wedding showers, a place to gather for potlucks and pie-auction fundraisers. Recently, it's become a venue for budding musicians to test their chops performing in front of an audience.

As gregarious as all that is, there are several challenges with the old building. There is no running water. The bathroom is an outhouse. There is no internet. Cellphone service is spotty at best. The kitchen was an afterthought—a shed moved onto the property years back and

attached to the schoolhouse. The kitchen has no foundation. It's now sagging and needs to be replaced. The windows are original, single-pane glass. The heat source is a wood stove, and the building wiring is a fire-hazard—original knob and tube with only two outlets.

The group decided to tackle the electrical issues first. It applied for, and received, a CPI Charitable Trust grant of \$5,000 to upgrade the electrical system.

The grant funding is in keeping with the cooperative principle “Concern for Community,” or, more specifically, CPI members helping other members. Funding comes from donations and monthly pledges through the Operation Round Up program on electric bills.

With the \$5,000 grant in hand, plus some seed money from community members, board members received a matching grant from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. That gave them enough to get the electrical updated and 20 outlets installed. Superior Electric completed the work in mid-November.

Even with remaining challenges on their little schoolhouse in the woods, neighbors continue to gather there to attend emergency preparedness meetings, watershed meetings and meetings about Medicare enrollment.

HWC President Lisa Sizemore has directed meetings there for three years. She and her husband, Buzz, moved to the area six years ago.

Vice President Nick Hazelton, a lifelong resident, coordinates the musicians and hosts the music shows. Fifteen to 35 people attend each event.

Treasurer Carol Vierra keeps the books. She is a lifelong generational resident and is keen on the regions history.

Shelley Olson, a fairly recent transplant to the area, is the correspondent secretary.

Although Buzz doesn't have an official title, he is a jack-of-all-trades and helps out with whatever needs to be done: mowing



ABOVE: A chalkboard sign and Little Free Library is in front of the Alder Grove Schoolhouse on Luckiamute Road.

MIDDLE: There is no running water or plumbing inside the Alder Grove Schoolhouse, but there is an outhouse.

TOP: Carol holds an old insulator that was attached to the outside of the Alder Grove schoolhouse before recent electrical upgrades.

the lawn or making repairs.

Why do the board members pour their time into the little nonprofit club? They offer several reasons.

“It’s a way to be closer to the community and get to know the neighbors,” Shelley says.

“It’s a meeting and gathering place for the community, to eliminate that sense of isolation,” Lisa says of the 40 households in the Hoskins/Upper Luckiamute Valley area.

Nick enjoys sharing music. He knows many musicians and saw a unique opportunity to use the building to put on monthly shows.

“Music sounds good in here,” Carol says.

There’s also music during the St Patrick’s Day potluck.

“Different community members bring their music, bring their voice,” Lisa says.

In the spring, there’s a work party to clean and do yardwork. In the summer, there’s a community potluck buffet. Other events—such as parties, yoga classes, church and 4-H meetings—pop up throughout the year.

Looking back to the club’s beginning in the 1940s, it was a big effort for the ladies to travel on the muddy backcountry roads to make the meetings, especially with children in tow. With that legacy, HWC continues to support the community and serve as a meeting place for all to enjoy. ■

To learn about upcoming HWC events or join the club, email Shelley Olson at solson8@peak.org to get on the events list.

Want to help other CPI members do good things with grants?

You can give a one-time donation of any amount at any time, or give in small increments through Operation Round Up, which rounds up your CPI electric bill to the nearest dollar. The average cost is \$6 a year. Register online at www.cpi.coop, or call 541-929-3124 or at 800-872-9036 ext. 8520 and ask about Operation Round Up.

Matt Hallman created and set into myrtlewood a colored epoxy to create a river effect on this table. Twelve feet long, he is building several of them for Seven Feathers Casino & Resort in Canyonville.



Stress *and* Relief

Lookingglass Valley man has two jobs, both reliant on the other for success

By Craig Reed

Trauma and therapy have been and will continue to be prominent aspects of Matt Hallman's life.

Although only 32 years old, Matt has already had numerous highs and lows in his life.

He was an emergency medical technician while serving in the U.S. Air Force and had to deal with a couple of on-base suicides of military members. He's now a paramedic and cares for people in critical condition.

But Matt has another side to his life that is much different. He is the owner of Hallman Woodworks. At his woodshop in the Lookingglass Valley, he creates custom furniture and cabinets provides him with the therapy he needs to counter the trauma he deals with as a paramedic.

"I like both jobs equally for very different reasons," Matt says. "Whether it's my country or my community, I want to serve. I can do that as a paramedic. It's who I am. And my woodshop is my outlet. It calms me. I enjoy the creativity of woodworking and building custom pieces."

Since realizing in early 2016 that he suffers from infrequent bouts of PTSD, Matt has learned to anticipate anxiety or anger.

Matt adds that occasional counseling sessions at the Roseburg Veterans Affairs Medical Center, exercising and his religious faith are also important in helping him deal with the post-traumatic stress disorder that occasionally flares up for him because of the trauma situations he deals with as an EMT and paramedic.

"That is something that is real and necessary for him," says Danielle, Matt's

wife. "It's very evident when he needs that release. You can see the cathartic release in him after he's had time."

Although Matt has seen death up close several times, he also has been part of lifesaving medical rescue and recovery experiences on many more occasions.

"That is obviously extremely satisfying," he says. "I have multiple certificates for critical care transport. I love it. I would never want to do anything else."

Matt entered the Air Force shortly after graduating from Roseburg High School in 2005. He was initially a mechanic, but switched to firefighting and took EMT classes and then paramedic classes. He was inspired to take these classes by his younger brother Robbie, who suffered from cerebral palsy and died from a seizure at age 12. Matt was 14 at that time.

"Robbie was the biggest influence on



Matt sands the underside of his river table.

me wanting to be an EMT and paramedic,” Matt says, adding that his grandfather, Bob Taylor, was an Air Force veteran influenced Matt to joining that branch of the military.

Matt was stationed at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho and at March Air Reserve Base near Riverside, California, during his nearly 10 years in the service.

He had an eight-month deployment to South Korea in 2009 and was en route to Saudia Arabia for a second deployment when his orders were changed, returning him to his home base.

After leaving the Air Force in 2014 and moving back to the Roseburg area, Matt worked with an ambulance service. In 2015, he helped provide medical care at several tragic situations, the final one being a deadly shooting at Umpqua Community College.

He wasn’t on duty that day, but was called in to provide care to victims outside the classroom where the shooting occurred.

“That was awful and terrible,” Matt says. “It just added to the stack of events I had dealt with that year.”

Although Danielle noticed Matt’s PTSD

symptoms first, it took him a bit longer to accept his situation and look for help. He was familiar with woodworking, having spent time in Grandpa Bob’s shop as a youth, so he turned to that activity to help balance his life.

“I was struggling with PTSD and needed an outlet,” Matt says. “I started working in his shop, working in my garage and collecting tools. People asked me to build things and they liked my work.”

Matt and Danielle moved to Lookingglass early in 2017 and had a woodshop built on their property. Matt did most of the interior work on the building.

Orders for custom furniture and cabinets quickly increased, and Trenton Morrow became a partner with Matt in Hallman Woodworks. Royce Chambers, another EMT, also helps at in the shop.

A year ago, Matt left the ambulance job and accepted a paramedic position with REACH Air Medical Services. He works two 24-hour shifts a week, either with a helicopter based in Roseburg or with an airplane based in North Bend.

“We care for critical patients with

very, very complex medical issues during transport,” Matt says. “We’re certified for the highest level of medical care pre-hospital setting. It’s very satisfying to help these patients.”

Matt says Danielle is “very, very understanding” of the time he needs to decompress from certain experiences. She also helps out by doing the bookkeeping for the woodworking business.

“He needs one to do the other,” Danielle says of the woodworking therapy that counters the medical traumas for her husband. “It’s part of supporting one another, understanding your spouse. He has two dreams that he wants to continue doing. As his spouse, I want to support him.

“I think that God also plays a big part in helping him and helping us work through this together—finding that balance and putting each other’s needs above our own.”

Matt describes his woodshop as a “therapy shop.” He finds it soothing to build custom furniture and cabinets for people. At the same time, he gets the breaks he needs to continue providing people with critical medical care. ■

CEC Raises Rates to Meet Increasing BPA Costs and Invest in the Future

By Brent ten Pas

Central Electric Cooperative residential members will see a rate increase of 5.2% reflected on their February bill. Two major cost drivers created the need for this action: The Bonneville Power Administration's increase in rates, and CEC's ongoing investment in its electric system to continue delivering members clean, affordable and reliable power.

Last summer, BPA announced to its 127 public utility customers—including Central Electric—it would raise transmission costs for its 2020-2021 power contract beginning October 1, 2019. These increased costs are outside of the cooperative's control. CEC, which relies on BPA for nearly all its wholesale electricity plus its high-voltage transmission lines to deliver the power to Central Oregon, received a 5.97% hike in transmission costs. BPA also imposed a 1.5% surcharge on its power customers to ensure the federal agency retains levels of financial reserves above the minimum required to remain solvent.

Since 2011, biennial BPA rate increases have become the norm. Yet CEC has largely succeeded in not increasing its rates at the same time due to its continuous efforts to operate more efficiently without risking safety or reliability. When BPA raised its wholesale electricity rate by nearly 5.5% in 2017, CEC absorbed these costs without increasing members' rates. This time, however, in light of BPA's increased charges and the co-op's commitment to fortifying its electric system for the future, CEC had to raise rates for only the fourth time in the past 20 years.

Considering Central Electric's system

encompasses 5,300 square miles served by nearly 4,000 miles of power lines and 24 substations, the work never ends. To build on ongoing efforts, CEC will spend approximately \$147 million from 2019 to 2028 to accelerate the replacement of underground cables and power poles, and upgrade its transmission lines and substations. In addition to strengthening the existing electric system, CEC will be positioned to serve Central Oregon's rapid growth.

"Collectively, member feedback consistently points to dependable and reliable service as their top priority," says CEO Dave Markham. "Our ongoing commitment toward maintaining and upgrading our electric system is in alignment with that desire. Central Electric is dedicated to ensuring its system can meet the current and growing energy demand without compromising safety, efficiency and reliability."

Since 2017, CEC has replaced more than 1,100 poles on 2,264 miles of existing distribution lines within its service territory. Most of these poles, erected before 1950, have reached the end of their service life. The work will continue in 2020, with more than 350 poles targeted for replacement and another 1,100 poles by 2024.

Additionally, efforts to replace underground distribution cables continue. When the cooperative started installing underground cable in the late 1960s, industry standards allowed power lines to be placed directly in the ground. Moisture, heat, rocks and other disturbances over time causes underground cables to short—a key contributor to power outages.

To improve reliability, CEC embarked



on an ambitious program three years ago to replace these cables. CEC now places underground cables inside conduits. It's more expensive, but the long-term result ensures reliability. In the past three years, CEC has replaced nearly 13 miles of underground power cables.

The co-op is strategically expanding substations to add capacity to ensure long-term safe and reliable service to meet the region's growing power needs. Substations play critical roles as the key interface between the transmission and distribution systems, which ultimately deliver the power to members' homes. Increasing a substation's capacity allows for more electricity to be delivered throughout CEC's service territory. CEC substations are in various stages of being upgraded to enhance capacity and improve reliability,



ABOVE: CEC crews work on the expansion of the Sisters Substation. RIGHT: Crews replace underground cables to ensure longterm reliability.

including in Bend and Powell Butte.

In this effort, Central Electric seeks to repurpose equipment where and when possible. For example, equipment from the recently upgraded Sisters Substation will, once installed, increase the Tumalo Substation's energy capacity. The Lone Pine Substation's capacity will double, benefitting from a transformer coming from the Bend Substation. Both projects are in the queue for 2020.

While a rate increase is never welcome, it is necessary to offset BPA's rising costs, and enhance CEC's electrical infrastructure to ensure a safe, resilient and reliable system for years to come. ■





1,000 Quilts

The goal is near for Orie Roth

By Miranda Thompson

In 1939, when Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative was founded, it wasn't uncommon for people to make their own clothing and other everyday household necessities.

For most people today, it's more convenient to go to a

store or shop online. Handmade goods are rare and special, which is what makes Orie Roth's handcrafted quilt-like comforters so extraordinary.

At 96, Orie, a Brookings resident, walks around with a joyful exuberance, kind eyes and a genuine smile that belies his age. He has a lifetime

of achievement and public service but now dedicates his time to crafting comforters. As of December 2019, he has completed a jaw-dropping, 978 coverings. He expects to reach his goal of 1,000 quilts by the middle of 2020.

Orie's late wife of 73 years, Ina, began making bedding

and children's clothing with their church group when they first married. That group of women was one of many in the Mennonite community that makes blankets and donates them for disaster relief, families, refugees, elderly and the homeless. Last year, the community shipped 53,198



blankets to people in need around the world.

“Around 12 to 13 years ago my wife became disabled, making it difficult to complete the comforters by herself,” Orie says.

That’s when he decided he could conquer comforter making.



LEFT: Jacob Knudsen presents Orie Roth with a check for \$200 from the Coos-Curry Charitable Foundation to help with the cost of materials for his quilts.

BELOW: Orie, also a gifted woodworker, made this inlaid chest.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A quilting frame holds one of Orie’s works.



“What could be so hard?” he wondered.

His first completed comforter was a gift to his grandson Adrian.

Orie and Ina continued making comforters together. His wife did his least favorite part, the binding work. This was their joint labor of love while living in Fresno, California, conveniently near a Mennonite drop-off station for comforters and supply kits.

After his wife died earlier this year, Orie moved to Brookings to be near family.

His son, Karl, and daughter, Dawn, gather materials

wherever they can find them. Virginia, his daughter-in-law, delivers the completed comforters to a drop-off location in Hubbard.

In addition to sewing, Orie is a skilled woodworker. He has made tables with inlays, wooden toys and games and dozens of dressers, which he also donates. He also makes quilt racks to place the comforters on and gives them away periodically to others who may need them.

When motivated, Orie can complete a comforter in a couple of days. He prefers to use 5-inch squares of

non-stretchable fabric. He stays away from silks or satin, if possible, to ensure the quality of the finished product. He now completes the dreaded binding himself.

Whenever he feels discouraged about being able to reach the goal of 1,000 quilts, Orie says he remembers his wife, their humble beginnings and her words, “Don’t give up!” ■

Orie is always looking for more: fabric, thread and binding for his quilts. Coos-Curry Electric Charitable Foundation hopes its modest donation helps get him closer to his goal of fulfilling the mission of giving hope, warmth and comfort to those in need.

Service Beyond 911

Paramedicine program offers health care and peace of mind

Story and photos by Scott Laird

The Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District introduced an innovative new health program to its community. The Community Health Integrated Paramedicine Program provides a new way for professional and volunteer emergency medical services personnel to interact with, and provide care to, their patients.

CHIPP is designed to help improve the health of Mist-Birkenfeld residents through home visits to participants identified as needing some type of medical assistance. EMS personnel work with participants to assess their health status and help determine their unmet health care needs.

EMS providers receive specialized training to help navigate between the participant's needs and their health care services and resources that might be difficult to access due to living in a rural setting. The program uses staff already on duty when they are not running emergency calls.

The program is free to all residents who live in the Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD.

"Health care reform has been happening for years," says Larry Boxman, EMS director at Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD and CHIPP coordinator. "EMS personnel are now working outside of emergency medicine—in places like industrial settings, in hospitals—and now making home visits and being involved in preventative care,

not just responding to emergency calls."

A longtime resident of the Mist-Birkenfeld Fire District, Larry has been a vice president at Metro West Ambulance in Hillsboro, where he remains a part-time internal consultant. While at Metro West, Larry introduced mobile integrated health care, also known as community paramedicine. He developed a program Metro West EMS personnel has implemented for the past three years in their urban setting in Washington County.

The mobile integrated health care concept uses EMS providers to visit patients in their homes and attend to their health, environmental and social needs by assisting participants with a variety of concerns. These include post-surgery follow-up, managing prescription and over-the-counter medications, mobility within the home, wound care and chronic illness management.

Metro West's program, called Mobile Health Partners, has quickly grown into one of the largest in the country, with eight full-time members of a division solely devoted to community paramedicine.

"Metro West is really on the cutting edge of this nationally," Larry says.

Larry is a former board director at Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD, and in July became a full-time paid paramedic there. He's adapted the Metro West MIH program to fit the needs of Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD and its more rural members.

"Each MIH program is unique and is created to meet the needs of the community they are serving," he explains.

Larry says Mist-Birkenfeld's CHIPP is not intended to replace a participant's primary health care resource, but instead



Larry Boxman, a paramedic at Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District, has introduced a program designed to allow EMS personnel to visit district members in their homes to help with health care.

help augment their care.

"What we're really trying to do is keep people at home, reduce their 911 emergency calls and hospitalizations, and do it in a proactive way," he explains. "We're here to help close the gap between them and their physician and their other medical resources, which is what we really need in this rural environment."

According to Larry, MIH has been a quickly growing segment of the EMS industry across the country in recent years, but has mostly been implemented in urban settings.

"I designed our program here to meet the needs of our residents," he says. "Out here we don't have any doctors' offices or clinics. Our EMS department is it."



CHIPP consists of an initial screening to determine a participant's suitability for the program, followed by the first CHIPP visit. During that visit, the EMS provider conducts a health history and intake interview, inspects the home for environmental concerns to prevent falls and injuries, and develops a care plan and schedules subsequent visits.

During visits, EMS personnel may make referrals to other medical or social service resources. Once a participant's needs are met, they "graduate" from the program, although the program conducts follow-up phone calls for the next several months to ensure the participant's condition remains stable. Re-enrollment may be considered if the participant needs continued care.

The program uses a technique called motivational interviewing, which is designed to encourage health promotion, positive health behavior and wellness,

and preventive and health maintenance practices, as well as embrace self-care in order to minimize relapses and future 911 calls. CHIPP can help participants look at diet and exercise, and provide social interaction for those living alone.

"Being enrolled in this program can really give our residents and their families some peace of mind that they aren't going to have complications," Larry says.

The program makes sense for the rural setting of the Mist-Birkenfeld district, which has more than 1,300 resident members and covers 135 square miles. The emergency call volume at Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD is low, which gives staff the ability to spend time and visit district members in their homes and provide a variety of services.

When people in the district need to call 911, the wait time for a response can be long, which is another reason a proactive program like CHIPP makes

sense. The program also hopes to reduce overall health care costs through better coordination of care and the use of prevention and wellness strategies.

Larry says 911 emergency response will still be the primary responsibility of Mist-Birkenfeld EMS personnel.

The CHIPP program has been approved by, has protocols established by and is overseen by a medical director, just as all other EMS services in Oregon. Larry is looking to partner with Columbia Pacific CCO, the coordinated health care organization for the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid) in Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook counties.

"We want to help people live healthier lives," Larry says. "It's about helping people engage in wanting to be healthier and take control of their own health care." ■

For more information about CHIPP, contact coordinator Larry Boxman at 503-755-2710.



Carrie Lorenz, operations director and bird trainer with Cascades Raptor Center, with 3-year-old Guapo, a Swainson's hawk.

Education for the Whole Family

Nature center rehabilitates 300 birds a year

By Craig Reed

A hawk, an owl and a falcon are part of the welcoming committee at the Cascades Raptor Center. Guapo, a 3-year-old Swainson's hawk, Ravi, a 14-year-old Western screech owl, Pip, a 6-year-old Peregrine falcon along with 50 other birds are permanent residents at Cascades Raptor Center, a nature center and a wildlife hospital that specializes in raptor rehabilitation.

The center features one of the largest

collections of native raptor species in the Pacific Northwest. There are eagles, falcons, hawks, owls, ospreys, vultures and much more.

Visitors can view the birds of prey in large outdoor aviaries at the center off Fox Hollow Road on the southeast side of Spencer Butte.

"We have some amazing ambassadors here," says Kit Lacy, a bird curator at the center. "I believe the birds help people see the world in a different view."

The center's avian residents also serve as

education ambassadors. They can be seen in their aviaries or they make road trips with staff members to visit classrooms and special events.

Workers at the center rehabilitate 300 birds on average, per year. The emphasis is getting baby birds back to their nest and into the wild.

Raptors end up at the center for rehabilitation for a variety of reasons: sickness, starvation, being hit by cars, flying into windows, getting tangled in fences, being shot, electric shock or

suffering from lead or rodent poisoning.

“We pride ourselves on individualized care for every bird that comes in,” says Louise Shimmel, founder and executive director for the center. “Sometimes the kindest thing we can do is to euthanize the bird, but that decision is based on 30 years of experience.”

Louise says the center and its staff are able to rehab and save about half of the injured or sick raptors that come to the facility.

“When a person finds an injured bird, we’re here to tell them it matters,” Kit says. “We’ll care for the birds. Sometimes it’s a tough decision. We never want that to be the outcome, but sometimes for the individual bird, you have to believe that with euthanasia you’re providing mercy for that animal.”

The center is open to the public year-round. Educational programs can be scheduled for on-site and off-site for groups of all ages.

“Our mission is to foster a connection between people and the birds of prey,” Louise says. “We want to promote an appreciation, respect and stewardship of the natural world.”

Kit says it is important for people to see the birds up close.

“People can see that the birds have personalities,” she says. “They provide an opportunity to open people’s eyes to what is going on with their species around the world. I can sum up our mission in one word: connection. We want to help people connect with the wild world. We feel we do that very well here.”

The center averages 30,000 visitors a year.

“The visitors represent many cultures,” Louise says. “Most cultures in the world have raptor myths and legends. The raptors just really speak to people, and they have for years.”

Louise was a wildlife rehabilitator for Willamette Wildlife Rescue in the 1980s. She soon became the raptor rehabilitation specialist for the group. Because of her love for the birds and experience, she



Ravi, a 14-year-old female Western screech owl, has lived at the center since 2005.

founded the raptor center in 1987. It was incorporated in 1990 and moved to its present 8-acre forested site in 1994 after the city of Eugene bought the property.

“The city thought it would be great to have a nature facility here, so it created a deal for us,” Louise says. “Travel Lane County considers us a primary attraction that brings people to the area, keeps them overnight and benefits the economy of the area.”

The center is not government-funded but is supervised by state and federal wildlife services agencies. Donations, memberships, financial adoptions of the birds, admission fees, grants, the gift shop and fundraising events all contribute to the center’s operating costs.

Twelve year-round paid staff members and about 120 volunteers care for the raptors. Volunteers contribute more than 20,000 hours a year. The success of the center resulted in a development plan,

which includes more aviaries, more trails through the property, better access and improved parking areas.

“We’re pleased we’re in a position to grow,” Louise says. “We’re forced to grow because of our own success. I have a tendency as the founder to look over what has been accomplished to what hasn’t been accomplished. Our feeling is that we can continue to make a positive impact for the raptors.”

Kit says Louise deserves a lot of credit for the success of the center.

“In 30 years, Louise created something out of nothing,” Kit says. “Now we have an organization that is respected not only in Oregon for its work with raptors, but across the U.S. She’s created an organization that is a leader in working with raptors.” ■

Find information on the center at www.cascadesraptorcenter.org.



The Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative board meets monthly to discuss co-op business with the management team.

FRESH *Faces*

Two new board members join Blachly-Lane's leadership

By Craig Reed

When Eric Imbler was elected to the Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative board of directors in April, he became the youngest member on the five-member board.

Eric, 46, represents District 5.

He discovered during the past several months when attending meetings with board members from other co-ops that he was usually the youngest. He says most of the attendees at those meetings are

older retirees.

“Some of my peers told me I’d be good for this job,” Eric says. “They said it would be good to have some youth on the board. I thought I could help. I’m bringing the youth movement.”

Eric admits he had little previous experience in the electric industry, but as the owner of a construction business, he has worked alongside electricians.

During that same April election, Beverly Matteisen won

the seat for District 3.

Beverly, 69, brings her unique vision and ideas to the position. She says she is invested in the co-op because she worked for Blachly-Lane for 20 years before retiring in 2013.

Dating back to her grandparents, her family has been co-op members since it was founded in 1937.

Other district representatives on the board are Chairman Curtis Short, Marlene Northrup and Ernie Jacksch.



Eric Imbler

Greg Gardner, Blachly-Lane's general manager, is happy to have new faces and viewpoints on the board, as well as a younger perspective. He encourages co-op members to consider running for board seats.

"It's healthy to have fresh perspective, fresh outlooks on the board," Greg says. "Eric is from a different generation and brings a perspective of the younger generation. He challenges some of the traditional thinking. People his age have lived with the internet for their lifetimes. They're more comfortable with modern technology compared to the older generations, who are more traditional in their transactions."

A 1991 Elmira High School graduate, Eric earned his Credential Cooperative Director certificate in August. Beverly, a retiree, earned her certification in December.

Both plan to take additional classes to better educate themselves in the electric cooperative industry and in their leadership roles.

"Once you get elected, your responsibilities as a director are way different than being



Beverly Matteisen

a member or an employee," Beverly says. "You have to study. You need to know the bylaws, the policies. You have to look at it from a different perspective. You have to do the best you can for the membership."

Greg says he is impressed with how quickly Beverly and Eric accepted the responsibility of learning the role of the board, its directors and the co-op.

"I think they are asking the right questions," Greg says. "I think they're bringing fresh blood to the board while representing the members."

Greg says board members might not like to see rate increases for their own properties, but sometimes a rate increase is in the best interest of the cooperative.

"You are tugged both ways," he says. "You must be careful not putting self-interest against the interest of the whole cooperative. As a board member, you must keep the co-op viable. You have to think about the longevity and the health of the cooperative in the long run."

Beverly says sometimes you have to have thick skin when

Be a Fresh Face

Blachly-Lane's Board of Directors meet the fourth Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. Co-op members are invited to attend.

Blachly-Lane's Aware Committee—members dedicated to grassroots advocacy and support of the cooperative—meet at 1 p.m. January 20, March 16 and May 18 at the co-op office. Co-op members are invited to attend. Please check www.blachlylane.coop in advance to confirm meeting dates.

making decisions that benefit the co-op, but not necessarily the individual members. She says she has received some suggestions from members, but has had to explain the co-op's bylaws won't allow such changes.

"Before I make a decision, I should research the issue," she says. "You hope for the benefit of the co-op and the next generation you make the best decision with the guidance of the bylaws."

Eric says he is confident he will make the best decisions.

"I'm able to reason," he says. "I'm able to see different options. I don't have tunnel vision. I'm level headed, but I can still argue about an issue. I'm learning every day on how to make the best choices for the members and the co-op."

Eric describes his role as a district director as being the voice for the district's members. He says he's accepted the challenge.

"I think we came onto a good board," he says. "We have a good staff and that's a good thing in making informative decisions and passing the co-op onto the next generations." ■

BLEC BY THE Numbers

2,835
members

3,621
meters

21
employees

380
square miles of
service area

518
miles of
distribution line

7
customers per
mile of line



Fruits of Labor

Colorful mural honors orchard workers

By Drew Myron

A mural in Odell stretching 200 feet tells local history that spans 200 years.

Against an industrial backdrop, the colorful mural is a vivid thank you to the fruit workers of the Hood River Valley, says Maija Yasui, the area's longtime



“The mural honors the migrant workers who are the backbone of our fruit industry,” says project organizer Maija Yasui. PHOTO BY DREW MYRON

historian and project organizer.

“The mural honors the migrant workers who are the backbone of our fruit industry,” says Maija, whose family has owned and operated orchards for several generations. “This is a way to say ‘You are an important part of this community.’”

In a series of three panels, each measuring 16-foot-by-64-foot, the mural stretches across the west side of the Diamond Fruit Growers warehouse facing Odell Highway. Viewing from north to south, each panel illustrates the evolution of the fruit industry.

The first panel depicts the arrival of Europeans in the 1900s as they established apple orchards. The mural illustrates the harvest of towering apple trees, ladder scaffolding and horse-drawn wagons for delivery of the apples from orchard to packing house to rail station. Apples were the area's most popular fruit in the late 1800s and helped establish the Hood River Valley as the premier fruit growing area on the West Coast. However, a few harsh winters and the rush for apples was soon replaced with pears, which could survive better in winter.

The second panel shows the transition from the 1920s to 1960s when apple trees were replaced by pears and cherries, and the rise of Japanese immigrants working as farm laborers, before and after the government seizure of land, rights and internment during World War II.

The third panel features the valley's bounty of pears for which the area is now known. This section features Latino farmworkers and owners who have been the backbone of the industry for the last 40 years—including a large portrait of Guadalupe Balderrama, 82, who works as foreman at the Yasui farm.

“It's meant to highlight the industry's success in diversifying its products as conditions change, and to celebrate the diverse workforce that has made our community such a great place to live,” Maija says. “The strength of the fruit industry today, although initially founded on the backs of immigrants in a valley where discrimination was rampant, has transitioned to one that has helped farmworker and farm owner thrive by understanding the value of diversity.”

Initiated by Maija and friend and colleague Patrick Rawson, the massive art project began nearly two years ago when the two were searching for a way to celebrate the fruit industry while also addressing what they experienced as a rise in fear and racial intimidation.

Maija has worked for decades as a community organizer, writing grants and bringing people together to tackle issues impacting the community including education, child care, poverty, drug abuse and hunger. The daughter of Finnish parents who immigrated to Hood River Valley, she is married to Flip



The 200-foot mural in Odell is a series of three panels illustrating the evolution of the fruit industry. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ODELL MURAL PROJECT

Yasui, a Japanese man whose family survived internment and loss of land.

“My philosophy is social justice,” Maija says.

In the past three years, that philosophy has been challenged as she noticed an uncomfortable change. In Odell, where 68% of the population is Latino, she began to see immigration status questioned and insults hurled.

“All the work this community has done collectively since 1990 to be a welcome community for all, 30 years of work—to see it erode so fast was crushing,” she says.

Maija and Patrick looked for a way to slow the unraveling and help make Odell open and welcome again. Looking at a town of fruit packing factories, Maija said, “There are a lot of blank canvasses here.”

A mural was born.

The project involved local artists Allison Bell and Michelle Yamamoto who, in partnership with Arts in Education of the Gorge, created sketches from historical photos. Last summer the refined drawings were enlarged and projected onto the warehouse “canvas” and painted by Allison and Michelle.

“I felt like we are giving the community a big hug with this mural,” says Michelle, who lives in Hood River.

Like the people she painted, her own father experienced the tragedy of internment.

“It was an honor to use art to convey my gratitude to all of those who came



Local artist Michelle Yamamoto paints a large-scale version of Guadalupe Balderrama, 82, who has worked decades in Hood River Valley orchards. PHOTO BY ROBIN DICKINSON

on treacherous journeys from their homelands to simply seek a safer and happier life here in the Hood River Valley over the past 100 years,” she says.

More than \$20,000 has been raised to produce the mural, all from individual donations and local business contributions. Diamond Fruit Growers provided space for the mural, but the project is not funded by the company.

With the mural complete, the project continues. Phase two includes a viewing kiosk with portraits

and stories of Hood River Valley orchardists and immigrants instrumental in developing the industry. Fundraising is underway.

“This is a way to restore and uplift the community,” Maija says. “This is our ‘I love you’ card to the community that’s made it.” ■

To make donations to the Odell Mural Project, mail a check to: Arts in Education of the Gorge, 1009 Eugene St., Hood River, Oregon 97031. Donate online at gorgeartsined.org and designate Odell Mural Project.

The Highs and Lows of the Job

Harney Electric is installing automated meters across its territory, replacing the need for boots on the ground

By Lauren Brown

Irrigators and power consumers in Harney Electric Cooperative's territory have come to expect the familiar face or vehicle of their meter reader once a month from April to October. However, as the co-op has phased in new automated meters, HEC's handful of meter readers are finishing out their meter reading days.

As of the end of 2019, 80% of the co-op's meters will be automated. The co-op is working to complete the upgrade in the next two years.

"Automated meters create efficiencies," says General Manager Fred Flippence.

The meters communicate with the substations via the power line, so when the power goes out, the co-op will know almost instantly there is a problem.

"We're probably going to know that you're out of power before you do," Fred says. "Which is a big help to us,



Meter Reader Laurie Draper saw a lot of weather on her route and witnessed some stunning rainbows as well as sunsets. PHOTO BY LAURIE DRAPER

because we can get out there quicker and respond to get the power back on."

The technology has been out there for decades, but Harney Electric has relied on meter readers for many years. Reaching the end of this era, the recognition of these folks is long overdue. Among several of HEC's meter readers, there was a consensus and appreciation for getting out and seeing the natural beauty of the territory. But some days were more challenging than others.

Darla Scott, who read meters for six years and covered the territory around Crane, Princeton and Riverside, says spring storms could be a real problem.

"This last spring, there was a storm that came through and washed out the road," she says. "I had to cross the river a couple of times to get to meters and it was like, 'Nope, I'll be

back next month.'"

Cellphone service is also an issue in much of Harney Electric territory. Darla's jeep has broken down several times where her cellphone was rendered useless.

Even so, she really enjoyed the work.

"What I liked about it was just seeing the scenery," she says. "It's beautiful."

Kathy Gourley, who worked in the HEC Orovada office for 24 years before retiring last year, also read meters, as did her husband, Dave, in the Kings River, Nevada, area. She liked getting to visit with the farmers and ranchers on her route.

"In the springtime, the antelope and deer were always dropping their babies and seeing that was pretty cool," Kathy says.

Kathy's biggest obstacle was accessing certain meters.

"Sometimes the farmers would flood their fields, and rather than drive in you'd have to walk into them," she says.

One meter was difficult because the landowner put a pipe across the road, which required Kathy to hike around to the meter's location.

"I was in hay up to my armpits," she says. "The farmers have their jobs to do, and they like to do it the most efficient way they see fit. But sometimes it does make getting into places challenging."

Tammy Wilkinson read meters in McDermitt, Nevada, and took on the route when she was pregnant. Throughout the years, she continued the route with three kids in tow, and at one point doing the job while recovering from a broken neck.

Tammy read both residential and irrigation meters. Her biggest challenge was



Harney Electric meter readers, from left: Laurie and Rex Draper, Ginny Dufurrena and Tammy Wilkinson.

remembering to bring her waders. One spring, the whole backside of the reservation flooded, and she was due with her son in May.

“I walked to all of those houses through the mud and water, pregnant,” she says. “That was a challenge with dogs chasing you.”

Two meter readers are still active until the change out is complete: Gussie Dorian, who covers the Orovida area, and Ginny Dufurrena who covers Bottle Creek.

Ginny enjoys the wildlife along her route.

“It’s just nice to see the evolution of everything through the seasons,” she says.

However, finding alternative routes can be hard when weather makes them impassable. One time, cows had knocked over a sign saying the road was closed, so Ginny didn’t see it.

“I got through, and I was so proud of myself,” she says. “I just had to do shovel work and scout it out.”

However, Ginny didn’t make it home until after dark, which

worried her family.

“You only make the mistake of going the wrong way once, and you learn from that,” she says.

A topic that almost surely comes up when talking to a meter reader in Harney Electric’s territory is the creativity, strength and agility needed to open some of the gates. A former meter reader once tossed around the idea of a coffee table book titled “Gates of Harney County.”

John Hodges, who covered the north end of Catlow Valley to Knott Creek in Nevada, and Laurie Draper, who covered areas closer to Burns and Hines, both had wrestling matches with opening and closing gates.

“Many of the gates are a pain,” John says. “There’s a whole lot of them that I could barely open. I’ve opened gates my whole damn life, and some of those gates were almost impossible.”

Laurie, who read meters for 22 years with her husband, Rex, agrees.

“There is an amazing

assortment of gates,” she says. “My dad actually invented a portable bar that I could take for gates that didn’t have a bar.”

While gates could be tricky, getting stuck in the mud was also a concern. Laurie and Rex would start on opposite ends of their route and meet in the middle. Together they covered 500 to 550 miles of road. Rex finally convinced Laurie to carry a cellphone with her, which came in handy when she got her truck stuck.

“I’d buried it,” she says. “I got a hold of Rex, and he came and got me pulled out of the mudhole.”

It was their anniversary, and they had a plan to get done early to celebrate.

“By the time we finally got to town, McDonald’s was the only place that was open,” Laurie says. “So, we had our anniversary dinner at McDonalds, and that’s the one we always remember.”

In addition to witnessing incredible sunsets, wildflowers and wildlife—including one incident involving Rex and a menacing badger—Laurie

recalls her youngest daughter helping on the route and learning how to drive on certain portions of it.

“We had a lot of adventures,” she says.

Laurie and Rex were officially retired from their route last October. Laurie wasn’t sad when the automated meters were installed, yet she looks back on her meter-reading days fondly.

“I often had sun, rain, dust, snow, hail, sometimes all in the same day,” she says. “But I still miss it some now. I miss getting out on the ranches.”

The co-op appreciates all the work the meter readers have done throughout the years to help the co-op obtain necessary data and run smoothly. If you see one of our retired—or nearly retired—meter readers, please join us in thanking them for their years of service to the cooperative: Laurie and Rex Draper, Gussie Dorian, Ginny Dufurrena, John Hodges, Tammy Wilkinson, Darla Scott, Kathy and Dave Gourley, and several others during the past 50 years. ■



Five valuable PUD employees retired at the end of 2019. From left are Jim Dentel, Wayne Greeson, Wade Scott, Shirley Scott and Jim Martin.

Tillamook PUD Says Goodbye to 156 Years of Experience

Late last year, Tillamook PUD said a heartfelt goodbye to five outstanding employees as they retired after a combined 156 years of work experience at the district.

Colleagues, family and friends gathered to recognize the retirees in November. Many laughs—and a few tears—were shared as they fondly reminisced about their time at Tillamook PUD. Each retiree has a unique story.

Wayne Greeson

Of the retirees, Wayne is the most senior.

Wayne began working for the district in 1979 while still in high school. He took on the role of educational employee as he

pursued higher education.

Wayne continued to work for the district, starting out as a groundman, then taking on many roles through his 40-year career, including meter reader, heavy equipment operator, apprentice lineman, warehouse person and warehouse supervisor.

Wayne's extensive time at the district, in combination with the variety of roles he held, were incredibly helpful as he advanced throughout the years.

His historical knowledge will be missed.

Jim Martin

Long-time Finance Manager Jim Martin was a pillar in the finance department for

more than 37 years.

Beginning his career at Tillamook PUD in April 1982, Jim started as a bookkeeper, then quickly advanced to an accountant and accounting supervisor. Jim became the district's finance manager in 1988, a position he held until retirement.

Through the decades, Jim's precise attention to detail, experience and institutional knowledge helped build a solid foundation in sound fiscal practices at Tillamook PUD.

Wade Scott

Friendly and always helpful, Operations Manager Wade Scott began his career at the district in 1987 as a utility worker.



Wayne Greeson



Jim Martin



Wade Scott

Wade advanced to an apprentice lineman position and became a lineman in 1991. A few years later, he took on a leadership role as a crew foreman. In the early 2000s, Wade became the operations department supervisor and retired as operations manager.

During his years at Tillamook PUD, Wade gained a vast amount of experience and knowledge, to which he used to inspire and lead others around him, helping them learn more and grow in their own professions.

Jim Dentel

Jim Dentel began his career at Tillamook PUD as a utility worker in January 1990.

A few years later, Jim transitioned into equipment operation. He first took a role as an equipment operator and then a heavy equipment operator. He began his apprenticeship to become a lineman in 1997. He worked as a lineman and lineman foreman.

In 2007, Jim became the operations coordinator, and was later promoted to assistant operations supervisor. In 2017, he became operations supervisor.

During his time at Tillamook PUD, Jim's hardworking spirit, resourcefulness and can-do attitude helped the operations department thrive. Jim's 30 years of



Jim Dentel

institutional knowledge also helped!

Shirley Scott

Shirley joined the Tillamook PUD team in 2000. With her diverse background in finance and technical expertise, she quickly became an asset in the finance department.

During her career at Tillamook PUD, Shirley worked in a variety of roles, including bookkeeping assistant, customer services aid and accountant. In 2008,



Shirley Scott

Shirley became accounting supervisor. She held this role until her retirement.

Shirley continually went above and beyond in her role and within the utility. She enjoyed volunteering her time and expertise with the many PUD community outreach groups, including Relay for Life and Light Brigade groups.

As a leader, Shirley instilled knowledge in others and encouraged them to advance professionally. ■



Nenana Fire Chief Joe Forness with the department's SNOWbulance. The new rescue equipment was funded by a grant from Golden Valley Electric Association's Goodcents Program and a donation from Ruby Marine.

SNOWbulance to the Rescue

Volunteer fire department upgrades rescue equipment

By Kris Capps

That new, bright red plastic contraption at the Nenana Fire Department looks like a big toy, but it's really a piece of rescue equipment that can save lives.

It's a SNOWbulance, a unique ambulance that can be towed by a snowmachine or an all-terrain vehicle and provide a more comfortable rescue for patients who are injured far from the road system.

"Ever since I became chief, we've had a need for a better means of extricating injured people from the wilderness in the wintertime," says Nenana Fire Chief Joe Forness. "I looked around for the last few years for a solution to that problem."

He found the solution at Equinox Industries in Winnipeg, Manitoba. With the help of a grant from Golden Valley Electric Association's Goodcents Program and a donation from Ruby Marine to help

with shipping, the SNOWbulance arrived in Nenana at the end of September.

The equipment is an enclosed plastic sled, big enough to hold a patient lying down and a seated emergency medical technician. Inside is a heater, light and windows on all sides. It's not insulated, but full enclosure protects the patient from wind, snow and rain. The SNOWbulance is a little more than 10 feet long, 4 feet wide and about 5 feet tall.

The department already owns a rescue toboggan, but this new option appears much more comfortable for the patient. The toboggan has no shock absorption.

“When you hit a bump, everybody feels it,” Joe says.

The SNOWbalance has a gas shock suspension, travels on big tundra wheels or skis, and has a hitch that allows it to be pulled by a four-wheeler, another all-terrain vehicle or a snowmachine.

“Late last winter, we got called for a snowmachiner around the Wood River,” Joe says. “He wrecked the snowmachine and had bilateral femur fractures. Both were broken. We had no means of getting that person out without possible further injury. We just didn’t have the equipment.”

“With a femur fracture, the less movement the better,” he adds. “You don’t want to bounce it around, and pulling him in a toboggan with no suspension would be cruel and unusual punishment.”

Alaska State Troopers took over that rescue and used a helicopter to medivac the patient. The SNOWbalance would have been a great alternative.

“Anytime you get a piece of equipment that betters your ability to effect a rescue or provide better care, it’s good,” Joe says.

He also notes the new piece of rescue equipment is available to share with neighboring communities such as Anderson, Healy and Clear Air Force Station.

Mutual aid is an important part of fire department duties. The Nenana Fire Department covers an area from Mile 326 Parks Highway to Mile 292 Parks Highway and all the area off the highway, down to Old Minto on the Parks Highway and upriver 10 or 15 miles.

It’s not unusual for the department to get calls for help from someone in the wilderness, reachable only by boat, all-terrain vehicle or snowmachine. That is when the SNOWbalance will come in handy.

The Nenana Fire Department is no longer under the umbrella of the city of Nenana. In July 2018, it became a

volunteer department and runs completely through volunteer efforts.

“We’re holding our own,” Joe says. “Sometimes by the skin of our teeth. Fundraisers and donations certainly are key in us keeping the doors open.”

Joe is also on the hunt for a new building to house the fire department office and all firefighting/rescue equipment. The current building is a former maintenance shop.

“As a maintenance shop, it’s fine,” Joe says. “For a fire department, not so much.”

Improving infrastructure is critical as the department’s area of responsibility grows, Joe says. He sees Nenana growing and the department’s responsibilities growing along with it. That includes adding rescue equipment such as the SNOWbalance.

“To meet the demands of the district, we need more equipment, and that takes up more floor space,” he says.

At the end of 2019, the city of



The SNOWbalance features a patient carrier, a seat for a medical technician and a small heater.

Nenana agreed to turn over all the fire trucks, equipment and apparatus to the volunteer fire department, which already maintained them through volunteer efforts. ■



The Goodcents Program

Goodcents is a voluntary roundup program funded by Golden Valley Electric Association members. It began March 1, 2011.

Goodcents rounds up a monthly electric bill to the next highest dollar. For example, a monthly bill of \$97.65 would round up to \$98, with the additional 35 cents going to the Goodcents fund. This small change, on average about 50 cents per month, raises thousands of dollars every year that go to building a stronger community.

Nonprofit organizations that meet the criteria can apply for Goodcents grants. A six-member volunteer board of trustees reviews applications quarterly and selects projects or programs within GVEA’s service area to be a grant recipient.

The next application deadline is January 31, 2020. Applications and more information about the program can be found at www.gvea.com/inside/goodcents.

Home Automation Gives Consumers Control

By Derrill Holly

Home automation systems are placing the power of control in the hands of cooperative members, but many questions remain about the best ways to use them to save money and energy.

“Most smart home technology is about comfort and convenience,” says Brian Sloboda, program and product line manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. “Consumers interested in saving money on monthly energy purchases should look at internet-connected thermostats first.

“Around half of all thermostats sold today are smart thermostats. These devices can learn your preferences and adjust the thermostat when you are not home. These devices have the potential to reduce air conditioning energy consumption by 10 percent. During winter months, the thermostats could

save 7 percent on energy used to heat the home.”

Brian has watched home automation systems evolve. He is particularly interested in identifying ways to enhance efficiency and potential savings for co-op members.

“Laundry, dishwashing and water heating can be set to occur outside of your co-op’s peak demand periods, which typically are during weekday business hours,” says Brian.

NRECA is working with one of the Department of Energy’s national laboratories on a demonstration project examining energy-saving options that could time shift some activities, but actual cost savings for the consumer is likely to be limited, Brian says.

“Pool pumps, dishwashers, thermostats and car chargers can learn their owners’ behavior and then communicate with the utility so the data can be used for demand response,” Brian explains. “The goal of the work by the

lab is to determine if a system like this can be implemented without inconveniencing the consumer, providing energy demand savings to the utility.”

Finding Value in Energy Savings

Security system notifications and thermostat controls that adapt to home automation are among the most popular options. But some consumers are tackling other tasks in ways that could help them save or manage energy use.

“There are different kinds of smart when it comes to smart appliances and devices,” says Peter May-Ostendorp, an energy technology consultant to NRECA and principal researcher at Xergy Consulting, which specializes in emerging technologies for energy savings in buildings, including homes. “For some, smart simply means ‘we connected this thing to the network,’ which adds minimal value to the consumer. In other products, smart means there is some intelligence either built into the product or connected via the cloud that enables a taste of artificial intelligence.”

Not every product using artificial intelligence is designed to save energy. In many instances, energy use is secondary to convenience or connectivity features.

“Most smart devices have nothing to do with energy use, grid management or other resource conservation, like saving water,” says Peter. “Generally, the benefits—dollar

savings to the consumer—have not been proven, with the exception of smart thermostats, grid-connected water heaters and similar devices.”

Making Connections

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, interest in connected or smart appliances is trending upward among consumers. Manufacturers are responding with a growing list of products.

“If you are thinking of purchasing a smart appliance or thermostat, look for one that is Energy Star-certified with connected functionality,” EPA officials suggest. “Those that meet our criteria are designed to encourage interoperability and offer the following features: low energy use, energy use reporting and consumer ownership of all data.”

Besides smart thermostats, available products include room air conditioners, refrigerators and freezers, laundry equipment, lightbulbs and fixtures, and power strips.

“While owning a smart product doesn’t automatically save you energy, if you are smart about using them, they can make a significant difference in your home,” EPA officials say.

Making the investment pay off could require lifestyle changes. Dashboards accessible from computers or tablets, and apps available for smartphones can help.

“I don’t think many people want infinite control over dozens of appliances and



Today, more than **4,000 smart devices** are available to consumers.

A recent international survey asked people how they are using smart home assistants.

65% check weather and news, and play music
6% control lighting, televisions and other appliances



GET SMART ABOUT ENERGY SAVINGS

“Smart” devices and appliances save time and offer convenience – but not all save energy. The guide below shows how several trendy smart home technologies stack up when it comes to energy savings.

Smart Energy Savers



- Thermostats
- Washing machines and dryers
- Dishwashers
- EV charging stations
- Pool pumps
- Air conditioners
- Light bulbs and fixtures
- Power strips



Just Smart

- Virtual assistants (like Amazon’s Alexa or Apple HomeKit)
- Smart locks
- Smart alarms
- Smart video security cameras

systems in their homes,” says Spencer Sator, president and CEO of Crimson Consulting, another NRECA energy-efficiency adviser. “What we really want is ‘set it and forget it’ features that we don’t have to actively manage. The best

devices get installed, adjusted and the consumer can walk away and still potentially save some energy.”

Spencer says consumers are looking for simplicity, which is feeding the popularity of virtual assistant technologies,

such as Amazon’s Alexa and Echo, Google Assistant and Apple HomeKit. Other companies—including Samsung, Logitech and Wink—offer home-management hubs and platforms designed to help manage connected technology.

Convenience and programming simplicity are among the most important factors fueling consumer acceptance of what Spencer describes as “home ecosystem” products. Home security controls—including locks, alarm systems and lighting—are also popular features.

“We’re seeing adoption of the technology not necessarily for energy-saving reasons, but for life-enhancing applications, including some that help elderly consumers maintain independence in their homes,” says Spencer.

Energy advisers universally agree that controlling devices from various manufacturers that perform different functions with a single system enhances the value of home automation systems.

Command and Control

The challenge for consumers: deciding which features meet their expectations and justify the added investment in automation, and how well various products work together under management of a particular hub device or app.

“This is still the Wild West, from a technology value perspective,” Spencer says. “When you consider available options and actual performance of the devices available, some gadgets perform well and can save

consumers money and energy, while others don’t measure up to the hype.”

With more than 900 manufacturers marketing about 4,100 connected devices, voice command technology is seen as one way to avoid collections of various remotes that typically wind up cast aside in favor of multifunction control devices.

“The Jetsons-like experience—where your Fitbit recognizes you’re awake, tells the coffee to brew, queues up your morning news on a smart speaker, ramps up the heating setpoint—isn’t really happening,” says Peter, of Exergy Consulting. “People have thought that Alexa or Google Home might be the answer, but do we all really want to talk to our home, Star Trek style, to accomplish basic tasks?”

Smart speaker technology is primarily used to answer questions, check the weather, get news updates or play music. According to a survey conducted in five major industrialized nations, including the United States, 65 percent of those asked cited those functions, while only 6 percent reported using the technology to control lighting, televisions or other connected devices.

“No one wants a hodgepodge of technologies that can’t communicate with each other,” Spencer says, adding that the necessary hubs and powered interfaces to connect the devices could actually boost overall energy use. “The technology isn’t very smart if devices can’t work together.” ■



Northern Nevada's Indispensable Icebreakers

Snowplow drivers work day and night to keep roads clear

By Dianna Troyer

Sometimes without warning, snowplow drivers in Northern Nevada confront near zero visibility. The road disappears as the ground and sky blur into an indistinct wall of whiteness.

“When you can’t see the road, you look to hazy shapes that you know are sagebrush growing on either side of the road, so you know where to drive,” says Bill Hylton, an Elko County Road Department

employee based in Wells. “It helps that we’re familiar with the roads from working on them during summer.”

To relieve tension while driving, he thinks about a humorous catchphrase coined by the crew he leads: “Keep it upright.”

Bill and his three co-workers tease and remind each other to keep their trucks and road graders—equipped with massive plows—upright whenever they head out to clear snow on more

than 150 miles of slick road in Northeast Elko County.

Snowplow drivers work day and night—whether for Elko County on mostly gravel and dirt roads or the Nevada Department of Transportation on paved roads—and are invaluable to those living in remote areas, such as Contact, Ruby Valley, Emigrant Pass and O’Neil Basin.

County residents—especially ranchers with their nearest neighbors several miles

away—ambulance drivers, linemen and school bus drivers depend on them to keep roads open during the winter through early spring when storms can dump a heavy snowpack.

“Some years, spring is worse than winter,” says Terry Lister, the county’s road department supervisor. “If we have a rough winter, sometimes we’ll have a mild spring and vice versa. From working here 21 years, people ask me what kind of winter to expect. I tell them,

Elko County Road Department employees Bill Hylton, Dell “Dugan” Sorenson and Gary Pollock with their snow plows.
PHOTOS BY CAROLLEE EGBERT

“Doing what we do in all kinds of weather, we’ve become like family.”

—BILL HYLTON, ELKO COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT



I’ll let them know at the end of spring.”

County road department employees have a daunting mission: maintaining 1,100 miles of roads, of which only 42 are paved. During winter, only the most frequently used roads are plowed.

“Roads in Wells are spread out, so it’s really time-consuming for the crew to keep them open,” Terry says.

In the area surrounding Wells, Bill plows roads for the county. While working for NDOT for seven years, he

was assigned the graveyard shift from midnight to 6 a.m. during the winter. Five years ago, he started working for the county in Wells, where he grew up.

“Driving for the state has its own challenges because there’s more traffic on the paved roads than there is with the county’s backroads,” he says.

Whatever the challenges, it is reassuring to know “we have each other’s backs,” Bill says of himself and co-workers Dell Sorenson, Gary Pollock and Andy Stewart.

“Doing what we do in all kinds of weather, we’ve become like family,” Bill says. “In the really remote areas, we go out in pairs with someone in a pickup, driving behind with tools in case of a breakdown.”

They never know what they will encounter and have rescued stranded motorists and even Wells Rural Electric Co. lineworkers. The lineworker’s snow track vehicle had broken down while they were fixing an outage in the O’Neil Basin 70 miles north of Wells.

“I felt bad that we couldn’t get to them at night because of high winds, and they had to spend the night in their vehicle,” Bill says. “We got them

the next morning.”

When a storm strikes, Bill’s crew heads out at 6 a.m. to plow school bus routes near Metropolis northwest of Wells, Starr Valley to the west and Pilot Valley to the east. By the time the bus drivers leave school at 7 a.m., the roads are passable.

“Sometimes the superintendent calls us to see if school should be canceled,” he says.

Next, they focus on roads leading to remote ranches, many of them 70 miles north of Wells.

“With some routes, it takes most of the day to get out and back,” Bill says. “We’ll get some roads cleared so ranchers can get to town for supplies, then they blow shut again.”

One of the most challenging areas is O’Neil Basin, where the wind often blows snow into solidly compacted 8- to 10-foot-tall drifts.

“It takes a while to bust through those with the grader,” Bill says.

To gain better traction driving the massive grader, Bill chains its 4-foot-tall tires.

During winter, snow is not the only precipitation the Wells crew confronts.

“I’ll never forget three years



Dell “Dugan” Sorenson positions chains on a snow plow’s tire.

ago when there was flooding in February,” says Dell, who is starting his 13th season with the department.

A freak rainstorm pounded Northeast Nevada for several days. With the ground still frozen, floods began washing away paved and graveled roads and even railroad tracks.

“As best we could, we diverted water, hauled gravel to rebuild roads and made sandbags available,” Dell says. “It took everybody—crews from the county, city and state—to get the roads in shape again.”

The Wells crew accepts the unpredictability of their jobs.

“I’ve lived here most of my life,” Bill says. “And every winter is different. Whatever happens, we’re ready to deal with it.” ■

The Shifting Sands of Big Dune

Nye County gem continuously reinvents itself

By John M. Glionna

For years, while on trips along Interstate-95 into the wilds of Nevada's outback, I would see it there, shimmering, beckoning in the distance, just a few miles west of the tarmac highway in the vast and barely-tamed Amargosa Valley.

A place called Big Dune.

Always in a rush to get somewhere else, I never stopped to explore this exotic expanse of drifting sand that looks like a swath of the Sahara itself got blown into the middle of North America's high-desert.

But I could pass by no more.

I wanted to impersonate a Bedouin and make my camel-less way across terrain that sank beneath my feet like quicksand, the wind making my tracks quickly vanish, as though I'd never even set foot there.

Forget Lawrence. I'd be Glionna of Arabia.

On a recent Sunday afternoon, I guided my four-wheel-drive pickup off asphalt Mojave Road and onto the soft sand, past a Bureau of Land Management sign that read "Big Dune Recreation Area" 65 miles north of Pahrump, just west of Amargosa Valley.

I was not alone.

The guide books had recommended taking a truck with high clearance because cars quickly get stuck, sucked down into the tenuous landscape. My little Nissan pickup, called a Frontier (which seemed fitting, considering where I was) slalomed along tracks fashioned by those who had arrived before me, their imaginations also leading them to this unlikely place.

For ages, these dunes have been sacred to Native Americans who colonized the Mojave Desert. They figure prominently in the songs and legends of the Southern Paiute, who believe the dunes are living beings who move and even sing songs.

And they are right.

Five-square-miles in size, Big Dune is among several formations in the Mojave Desert and elsewhere that are known as “booming dunes,” that constantly reinvent themselves. They also make two very different musical sounds — described as a bass-like boom and higher-pitched whistle — when the sand is sheared by the wind.

I now know what the earliest Aborigines felt when they encountered Uluru, also known as Ayer’s Rock, a massive sandstone monolith in the heart of Australia’s red center.

This place felt spiritual.

I passed several camps of off-roaders, goggle-wearing mosquitos who buzzed around on ATVs, amid the creosote bushes and sandpaper plants. Many crisscrossed in front of my track, or stopped to stare at this ill-prepared invader.

I must have looked to them like a skier who had arrived at the slopes sans skies.

I mean, who walks these mammoth sand mountains on foot?

Um, me.

I drove on toward the dunes, which glimmered mirage-like in the midday sun, my truck wheels spinning. Finally, fearing I would definitely get stuck if I went any farther, I stopped and turned off the engine.

I slowly swung open the door, only to be greeted by the silence. The roar of the ATVs, was now a distant hum, and I figured I better hurry or I’d soon be surrounded and perhaps pillaged by the buzzing hoards in a scene straight out of Mad Max.

Ahead of me loomed the biggest bad-boy of Big Dune, hovering at an Everest-like 500 feet, surrounded by numerous young-adult, teenaged and baby dunes.

And I’ll admit it: this Bedouin wore goat-skinned diapers, intimidated by that biggest, colossal mountain of sand.

So, instead, I turned my attention toward a smaller, humbler challenge and set out.

LEFT: North of Pahrump and West of Amargosa Valley, the 5-square-mile Big Dune is among several formations in the Mojave Desert known as “booming dunes.”

JOHN GLIONNA PHOTOS



LEFT: Big Dune presents a unique challenge for off-road motorcyclists.

The first thing you notice walking on a dune is that your feet sink with each step, like traversing powdered snow or soft sand at the beach. The difference here was that I was going up, on an increasingly-steeper incline, that tended to make me want to fall forward, or over to the side.

The crest of the dune formed a razor-back and my steps created sandy avalanches that cascaded down both sides. Here in the desert, far from the bitter cold, it felt as though I was tramping along the Devil’s snow.

After a bit, I turned to examine my wispy tracks which, with my bowlegged gait, looked like the work of a duck, or a cane-twirling Charlie Chaplin. But the markings mostly reminded me of those lizards that fly across the Saharan sand, barely touching the granules, which are scorching hot in the midday.

Rather than Saharan lizards, Big Dune is home to creatures found nowhere else on the planet, such as the endangered Giuliani’s big dune scarab beetle and its cousin, the aphodius scarab beetle, whose legacy is listed as “sensitive.”

But I didn’t see any of those little fellas either. The only living thing on this huge hill of sand, it seemed, was me. I felt the strange but wonderful solitude, that gift of the desert, I suppose.

There’s an ethereal beauty out here quite unlike any other landscape I’ve ever witnessed. I felt like a ship adrift at sea, waiting for the next big breaker in a storm, because the sand all around me

seemed like it was formed in waves, frozen in time.

My junior peak, while not king of the hills, still presented a challenge. Breathing hard, I took a sip of water, thankful for a relatively cool autumn afternoon, without the searing heat of a Nevada summer, let alone that of the Sahara.

Without the overbearing temperatures, the dunes took on a softer, more sensual quality. But the conditions that created them were indeed harsh; they were formed over time — one spec at a time, eon after eon — by the dirt blown off a bend in the Amargosa River as it winds its way toward what is now Death Valley.

As I finished my walk, I watched the two motorcyclists come.

Their machine engines roaring, each standing on their foot stands, the riders charged straight at the biggest dune as if issuing a challenge. I thought they would veer off at the last minute but instead, they full-throttled their way up the sandy flanks to the neck of the beast and, angling to the side, plunged back down again.

They looked like snow skiers propelled by engines, or sand surfers catching a wave, this one the Big Kahuna.

I watched, wondering what the Native American spirits would think of the escapade.

Still, it did look like a lot of fun.

Then I got back inside my truck and, wheels spinning, I turned my back on these timeless pyramids of sand and eased my way back toward the tarmac. ■

Veteran Co-op Executive Mark Stallons Takes Over as Valley Electric CEO

Good strategy, accountability will be the keys to success at VEA



Mark Stallons

Mark Stallons says he felt a connection with members of the Valley Electric Board of Directors almost as soon as he began talking with them about the possibility of becoming VEA's next Chief Executive Officer.

"Their openness and honesty was refreshing," says Mark, a veteran of three decades of cooperative management in the Midwest – most recently in Kentucky – who took the reins as VEA's CEO in early January. "I was drawn to their transparency and honesty. I believe in that. You build trust by being open. Look at the (VEA) website, and you can see how real that commitment is."

An organization's success depends on more than transparency, however, and Mark is a believer in the adage that what gets measured gets managed. "Accountability equals measurement."

For their part, VEA Board



"Every organization has challenges," says Stallons, "which I view as opportunities."



Mark Stallons' first official day as CEO was not until Jan. 6, but in early December, he was at the Co-op visiting with employees. Here he inspects spools of cable in inventory. VALLEY ELECTRIC PHOTOS

members were excited to announce on Nov. 22 that Mark had accepted the position of CEO, ending a months-long process. They were looking for someone who not only had experience as a CEO but also cooperative management.

"We are thrilled to have Mark as CEO of Valley Electric Association," says Terrie D'Antonio, Interim CEO and a member of the VEA Board of Directors from District 5 (Sandy Valley). "Mark comes from a larger co-op than we are, and he brings tremendous experience. I believe he is just the right person to lead our Co-op working with our members and employees."

Board President Kathleen Keyes of District 4 (Fish Lake Valley) says Mark checked all

the right boxes.

"Mark has the strong leadership skills, extensive cooperative knowledge and the experience that we were looking for, but his personality sealed the deal," says Kathy. "The Board of Directors chose Mark because we believe that he is a good fit with our employees, will communicate very well with our members and has the ability to lead VEA to a sound financial future."

Mark believes in an organization's ability to solve challenges by acting strategically. "The formula for success revolves around strategy, teamwork and accountability."

Mark comes to Pahrump from Owenton, KY, where since 2009 he served as

President and CEO of Owen Electric Cooperative. Owen is located between Lexington and Cincinnati and has 62,500 members, a \$180 million operating budget and 135 employees.

“Every organization has challenges, which I view as opportunities,” says Mark. “In times of difficult challenges, leadership, teamwork, development and problem solving are necessary. In the last few days, I have met employees who are eager to work together and build an electric cooperative that is member focused, looking ahead and leading by example. I see huge potential in Valley Electric.”

Mark considers himself a student of leadership and management. He lists James C. Collins, co-author of “Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies” and “Good to Great” among his favorite authors.

VEA will be the fourth co-op Mark has worked at since the early 1990s. Though there are similarities among them, every Co-op is different, says Mark, and he was attracted by Valley’s investment in high-speed broadband. There will be a learning curve, he says, “and I need to learn as much about Valley as fast as I can.”

Mark has served on several leadership committees for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), including the Legislative Committee, where he was Vice Chairman; the Resolutions Committee; the Energy Innovation Task Force and the Regulatory Committee. In Kentucky, he was a member of the Governor’s Energy Efficiency Task Force. He is



“I have met employees who are eager to work together and build an electric cooperative that is member focused, looking ahead and leading by example,” says Stallons, who spent time with managers during a recent house-hunting trip to Pahrump.

a member of the Touchstone Energy Board of Directors.

“Mark was an outstanding leader and person for our co-op for 10 years,” says Robert True, Board Chairman for Owen Electric. “He is very intelligent and very capable, and we benefitted from his skills and knowledge of the industry.”

Before joining Owen Electric in 2009, Mark spent six years as Executive VP and General Manager at Egyptian Electric Cooperative in Steelville, Ill. From 1994 to 2002, he was Vice President of Operations and Power Supply at Midwest Energy Cooperative in Cassopolis, Mich.

Mark and his wife, Judy, are outdoor enthusiasts, both enjoying hiking and kayaking. They also enjoy travel as time permits and have been to 44 states, Israel (twice) and Egypt. They hope to one day to visit Alaska and Europe.

Mark says he enjoys listening to contemporary gospel music

and classic rock. The Stallons are Methodists, and Judy is a United Methodist minister. They have two sons, Jason (Vicky), a physical therapist for FC Cincinnati, the MLS soccer team and Benjamin (Samohya), a high school biology teacher in St. Louis. The Stallons have five grandchildren and another on the way.

A native of East St. Louis, Ill., Mark, 62, is a sports fan who follows the St. Louis Cardinals in baseball, the University of Kentucky in basketball, Ohio State in Football and FC Cincinnati in soccer. An avid reader, he also enjoys reading adventure novels and historical biographies. He will pick up anything written by John Grisham, Clive Cussler, David Baldacci, Vince Flynn or Patric Lencioni.

Mark has a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from Ohio Northern University and an MBA from the University of Dayton. ■

Cold Weather Survival Skills

How to recognize frostbite and how to treat it

By Amy Murphy

Subzero temperatures, strong winds, blizzards and wind chill warnings are phrases Alaskans hear frequently during our long, cold winter months.

The National Weather Service issues weather advisories on a regular basis, warning residents of temperatures dropping to 45 below to 55 below zero. Blizzard warnings frequently advise of strong winds producing limited visibility and windchills as low as 80 below.

These exceedingly severe, frigid weather conditions disrupt normal lifestyles, resulting in inconveniences, such as vehicles that won't

start, canceled plane flights, broken water pipes and power outages. Cold temperatures can also cause human injury due to frostbite and hypothermia.

Frostbite is an injury to the skin and/or tissues underneath the skin caused by freezing. It occurs when the body's mechanisms for maintaining warmth fail. Hypothermia occurs when the body's temperature drops below 95 F.

Unfortunately, both conditions can lead to permanent injury or even death, making prevention important.

Who is at Risk?

Everyone who spends time outdoors is susceptible

to developing symptoms related to exposure to cold temperatures. Individuals at a greater risk include the elderly, people with circulatory disorders, people from tropical climates, smokers, homeless people and alcoholics. Children are also at a greater risk than adults because their loss of heat is faster. Children often play long and hard, ignoring how uncomfortable or cold they are.

AVEC's field employees have a high degree of risk because their job requires them to work outside in extreme winter conditions, especially during power outages. Our employees climb power poles, work on transformers or shovel

snow away from the power plant exhaust vents and radiator fans, even when temperatures drop to minus 40 or 50. Strong winter winds occasionally create severe windchills down to minus 80.

Temperatures this cold limit the amount of time employees can spend working outdoors without developing frostbite or becoming hypothermic.

Safety is extremely important, which means our employees continually monitor the amount of time they spend outdoors and take frequent breaks to go inside and warm up.

Tips for Prevention

The brain is a person's best defense against the cold.



Linemen sit on ATVs, snow machines and sleds, which are the line trucks our linemen use. They were heading out to work on the tieline between Toksook Bay and Tununak. From left, Cody Cadman, Chase Westberg and Matt Hastings. PHOTO BY DAVE JOHNSON

BACKGROUND PHOTO COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK

Exposure to injury can be reduced by making good decisions. Usually people can either stay indoors or take precautions and bundle up warmly to go outside for a limited amount of time.

Here are some suggestions on how to avoid frostbite and hypothermia.

- Nutrition and hydration play a large part in the body's ability to deal with cold temperatures. Drink large amounts of liquid and eat plenty of good food to keep your body's internal fires stoked.

- Be sure to have plenty of dry, loose-fitting clothing to insulate your body by trapping warm, dry air inside. Clothing that is too loose results in air

leaks that create excess space to be heated. Clothing that is too tight restricts blood flow.

- Blood flow can also be restricted by mechanical pressure such as gripping a pole or tool too tightly. Do NOT ever touch bare metal!

- The head and neck lose heat faster than any other part of the body. Your cheeks, ears and nose are the most prone to frostbite. Wear a hat, scarf and turtleneck sweater to protect these areas. Avoid becoming wet as wet clothing loses 90% of its insulating value.

- Use of alcohol, drugs and nicotine should be avoided. Alcohol dilates your blood vessels, increasing the rate at which you lose heat.

Nicotine constricts your blood vessels and causes premature cooling of your extremities.

Furthermore, alcohol, drug use and low blood sugar can affect decisions a person makes to protect themselves from the cold.

- Be aware of anticipated weather conditions before you set out on a trip. Look at long-range forecasts.

Recognizing Symptoms of Frostbite

Skin freezes at about 28 F. The first symptoms are a "pins-and-needles" sensation followed by numbness. As frostbite develops, the skin becomes numb and turns to a gray or waxy-white color, and the area will be cold to

the touch and may feel stiff or woody. With frostbite, ice crystal formation and lack of blood flow to the frozen area damages the tissues. After thawing, large blisters may develop and swelling may occur, worsening the injury. Frostbite is classified in the following degrees:

- First degree: Often called frostnip, first-degree frostbite appears as numbed, white skin that feels stiff to the touch. With frostnip, the underlying tissue is warm and soft. If properly treated, the blistering, scarring and infection risk are minimal.

- Second degree: This superficial frostbite appears

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Recognizing Frostbite

Continues from page 5

as white to blue skin that feels hard and frozen. Underlying tissue is still unharmed. However the risk of blistering and permanent damage is greatly increased. It is this increased risk that mandates proper medical attention by trained professionals.

- Third degree: Deep frostbite appears as white, blotchy and/or blue skin. The tissue underneath is damaged and feels hard and cold. Immediate medical attention is a must, as this is a life-threatening situation.

- Fourth degree: This is the most severe state and is usually full-thickness, involving muscle, tendons and bones. There is minimal swelling, but gangrene can set in, resulting in dead skin and tissues and possible amputation.

Treating Frostbite

- Get the victim out of the cold and to a warm place immediately. Look for signs of hypothermia and treat accordingly. Remove any wet or constrictive clothing items that could impair circulation. If you notice signs of frostbite, seek medical attention immediately.

- Place dry, sterile gauze between toes and fingers to absorb moisture and to keep them from sticking together. Check the dressings periodically to make sure they don't become too tight after swelling occurs. Slightly

elevate the affected part to reduce pain and swelling.

- If you are more than 1 hour from a medical facility and you have warm water, place the frostbitten part in water (104 to 108 F) or apply warm cloths to the affected areas. If you do not have a thermometer, test the water first to see if it is warm, not hot. Rewarming usually takes 20 to 40 minutes or until the tissue softens. Keep adding warm water to ensure the temperature remains consistent. Severe burning pain, swelling and color changes may occur during warming. Be supportive and, if appropriate, medicate the patient.

- If you cannot rewarm the body part in a water bath, a second option is to place it against your body, preferably an armpit or groin. This technique is much less effective at reducing the extent of the injury, but can be used in an emergency.

- Move thawed areas as little as possible. If the frostbite is extensive, give warm drinks to the victim to replace lost fluids.

- Re-freezing thawed extremities can cause more severe damage. Prevent re-freezing by wrapping the thawed areas and keeping the victim warm. If re-freezing cannot be prevented, it is best to delay the initial re-warming process until a warm, safe location is reached.

Treatment for frostbite goes far beyond the initial emergency room visit in severe cases. It usually occurs over a few weeks to months.



From left, linemen Cody, Matt and Chase are bundled up in extreme arctic wear clothing. PHOTO BY DAVE JOHNSON

Tissue damage and repair may not be apparent immediately, resulting in surgery 6 months later. Lasting effects include chronic pain, sensitivity to cold and sensory loss.

What Not To Do

Do not use water hotter than 108 F or colder than 100 F. The water will not thaw frostbite quickly enough. Do not rub or massage the frostbite area and DO NOT rub with ice or snow.

Recognizing and Treating Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the body loses more heat than it produces and the body temperature drops below 95 F. Symptoms include change in mental status, uncontrollable shivering, cool abdomen and a low-core body temperature. Severe hypothermia may cause rigid muscles, dark and puffy skin, irregular heartbeat and respiration and unconsciousness.

Treat hypothermia by

protecting the victim from further heat loss and seeking immediate medical attention. Get the victim out of the cold. Add insulation such as blankets, pillows, towels or newspapers beneath and around the victim. Be sure to cover the victim's head. Replace wet clothing with dry clothing. Handle the victim gently because rough handling can cause cardiac arrest. Keep the victim in a horizontal position. Give artificial respiration or CPR—if you are trained—as necessary.

Enjoy Winter!

Even though exposure to extremely frigid temperatures can lead to injury, it doesn't mean you have to always play it safe and stay inside where it's warm and cozy. By exercising caution and using good sense, you can bundle up warmly enough to get out and safely enjoy the many wonderful activities we can only do in the winter. ■

At 101, Ruby Perkins Radiates Fiery Wit, Kindness

By Dianna Troyer

After cooking her favorite breakfast of sausages and pancakes, Alamo centenarian Ruby Perkins clips a motto from a magazine and tacks it to her fridge.

She usually chooses something inspirational, such as “Get better, not bitter.” A recent clipping, however, reveals her appreciation for caustic humor. “You’re still alive because it’s against the law to shoot you,” it reads.

What does Ruby look forward to in 2020—besides celebrating her 102nd birthday with family and friends?

“At my age ... the next day,” she says. “There should be plenty because there’s no quit in my gene pool.”

Ruby has never quit doing what she loves, but she admits she is slowing down a bit. An avid reader, her most beloved book is the Bible, and her favorite authors are Louis L’Amour and Zane Grey. A seamstress, she still makes quilts for family and friends. Her record was sewing 150 quilts as gifts in one year. She also loves music of all genres and cherishes the song, “I Come to the Garden Alone.”

With Ruby’s love of humor in mind, her granddaughters gave her a badge they knew she would love. It reads, “I survived damn near everything!”

Ruby proudly wore it when she presided over Alamo’s Fourth of July parade as grand marshal in 2018. An Alamo resident for a half century, she grew up throughout Lincoln County and is renowned for her fiery wit, firm handshake and love for Nevada’s vast public lands and wildlife.

“I was surprised and humbled to be picked,” Ruby says. “It was wonderful, seeing the crowd, waving to friends and family, and thinking about what a great country we live in, especially because our leaders set aside land for the public.”

She has wandered Lincoln County’s deserts and mountains since childhood.



Ruby served as grand marshal in the 2018 Fourth of July parade in Alamo. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RUBY PERKINS

Born in 1918, she lived with her family wherever her dad could find work as a miner or laborer. When she finished her chores with the livestock, garden and kitchen, she explored nearby trails.

After marrying Dale Perkins, a heavy equipment operator who worked for the Clark County Road Department, they raised their six children mainly in Moapa Valley. In 1971, they moved to Alamo, where he worked for the Lincoln County Road Department and she waitressed.

They took their kids camping at different locations in Lincoln County as often as possible.

“She could walk 10 miles and never get tired,” says her daughter Gena Wilson,

who lives next door. “She loves seeing the Indian rock art and whatever wildlife is out there from bighorn sheep to horny toads. Once, on the way back from a hike, she noticed mountain lion tracks on top of her footprints.”

Ruby quips, “It was just curious.”

She reconnects with the land every Memorial Day and Labor Day when her grandchildren take her camping.

“I’m happy going wherever they want to go,” she says.

Nevada wilderness offers her solace.

“Out there, you see things clearly—like religion and politics—because you’re closest to Heavenly Father,” Ruby says.

She tempers her caustic humor with kindness.

“I always hope the kids at church remember what I taught them about God’s love,” she says. “We should love each other and help people whenever we can.”

Along with love, laughter matters.

“She’s kept us laughing all our lives—wherever we went—even a hospital,” Gena says. “Her mom was a hoot too.”

When Ruby’s octogenarian son, Clint, was hospitalized for heart arrhythmia in 2018, she and Gena went to visit him in St. George, Utah.

“When I asked a nurse what room my son was in, she caused a commotion,” Ruby recalls. “She said he was 80 and couldn’t believe his mother was still alive. When I told her my age, she acted like I was a medical emergency.”

Stories like that keep Jenn Bailey dropping by to visit regularly.

“Ruby’s a local treasure with her funny storytelling and talking about a bygone lifestyle,” says Jenn, a friend of Ruby’s granddaughter.

If the electrical grid malfunctions, Ruby jokes it will not be a hardship because she lived without power for the first decades of her life.

“I survived just fine,” she says.



Ruby camps with grandchildren Andrew Vande Sluis and Rachel Wilson on Panaca Summit in 2018.

Her family used a desert cooler, a precursor to an ice box. Pieces of burlap were draped over a box with shelves, and water was poured over it to keep butter and eggs inside cool. Her mother sliced apples and dried them outside on a white tablecloth. They washed and rinsed dinnerware in tubs of hot water.

For entertainment, they went to community dances, pulled taffy and wrote poems. Ruby recently wrote one about aging. The final lines are, “My legs are wobbly. I can hardly walk. What a blessing it would be if I could control my talk.”

On a serious note, she offers advice.

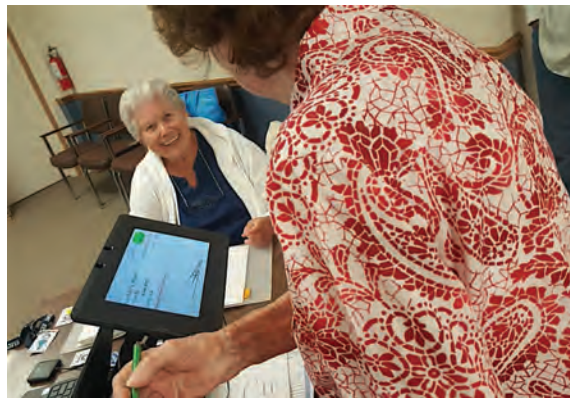
“Be your own best friend and be as comfortable alone as you are with friends in a crowd,” Ruby says. “Accept your stage in life. You can’t stop time.”

As for her 102nd birthday, she would love to get cards from her 35 grandchildren and many great- and great-great-grandchildren.

“Forget the sentimental mushy cards, though,” Ruby says. “Just send the funny ones.” ■



Ruby celebrates her 101st birthday with her children, from left, Andrea Perkins, Dennis Perkins, Regena Wilson, Mike Perkins and Clint Perkins.



Sandy Higbee greets Ruby at the polling station in 2018.



Ruby made a Sunbonnet Girl quilt for her granddaughters and great-granddaughters.



Grandson David Wilson gives Ruby a ride at Muleshoe Valley in 2017.



On the Cusp of a New Way of Life: **ORECA's Guatemala Project**

By Ted Case

In November 2019, a planning team led by Roger Meader, the project leader for the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Guatemala initiative, spent four days in the country in preparation for electrifying homes and buildings in the village of Aldea Montañita de la Virgen.

The project is funded by money raised by Oregon's electric cooperatives, and the infrastructure will be built by Oregon electric cooperative linemen. The planning team also consisted of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association rural electrification experts, and information specialists from Pioneer Utilities Resources and Golden Shovel. The following are excerpts from Meader's trip summary.

When our group landed in Guatemala, we met NRECA's contracted field engineer and continued its trip to the community of Aldea Montañita de la Virgen in the District of Jalapa, Guatemala, where it has been assigned to bring electricity.

The community is settled in an area of steep hillsides. The center of the community consists of three structures: a church, a community center/health center and a three-room schoolhouse. There are 60 homes with typically two to three rooms each: a family room, a bedroom and a kitchen.

The homes are in a rural setting and all consist of either cement, cinder blocks, adobe bricks or a combination



LEFT: Project Manager Roger Meader, an engineer and retired electric co-op CEO, surveys a school in Aldea Montanita De La Virgen.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A mother does her laundry in a spring, much as American women did in the 1930s before electricity. PHOTOS BY MIKE TEEGARDEN

of these materials.

The community gets its water from two springs: one for washing laundry and the other for drinking. Both springs are downhill, with the drinking water spring about a half mile down a steep hill. All the water must be hauled by hand.

Members of the community also collect rainwater.

There is a lot of vegetation in the area with pine trees and many species of deciduous trees. The community is truly a subsistence community. They live on what they grow, including corn, beans, bananas, watermelons, squash, fruits, chickens, turkeys and game hens. They grow coffee to sell for income.

The ORECA group will have three community buildings and 60 homes to wire for electricity. The primary network will entail 32 poles with an average span length of 325 feet. Three transformers will serve the entire community.

Each home and building will need a meter base and a small breaker box, for future expansion. The walls on some of the homes are 12-inches to 15-inches thick. The goal for each home is one light fixture



Grinding corn for tortillas is a time-consuming process, and the cooking fire in the home creates an unhealthy environment. Electricity will have a dramatic effect on locals' lives.

and wall plugs in each room.

We have nothing but positive feelings about our path so far and where we are going with this project. Our new friends are gracious, and several families invited

us into their homes and proudly showed us where they live.

We have a great opportunity to make a dramatic effect on the lives of the families that live here. ■

By Colette Boehm

Tammany Trace: More Than a Walk in the Woods

Though only 31 miles long and, at times, just steps from downtown activities, the Tammany Trace gives guests the feeling of being a world away.

Originally a corridor for the Illinois Central Railroad, Tammany Trace is now a popular hiking and biking trail stretching from downtown Covington through Abita Springs, Mandeville and Lacombe and into Slidell. In some sections, an equestrian trail is a part of the route.

What was an abandoned railroad corridor in 1992 has become an integral part of the north shore communities of St. Tammany Parish. Parish government, municipalities and nonprofit efforts have combined to create a recreational treasure.

The 31 miles of asphalt, remodeled railroad trestles and repurposed depots have connected communities to each other in new ways. They've also given residents new opportunities to enjoy and get involved in those communities. Travelers also have new reasons to visit and, in turn, businesses have new avenues for success.

Tammany Trace is part of the nationwide Rails-to-Trails network, which encourages creating trails from out-of-service rail corridors. The trace was named a Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Hall of Fame trail in 2017. The honor came after a popular vote pushed the trail to the top among fellow nominees.

"The trace is a five-star trail that attracts more than 300,000 visitors from around the world," says Keith Laughlin, RTC president. "Clearly, the public showed overwhelming support for their love of this treasured community resource, and we are pleased to honor it as part of the Hall of Fame."

RTC notes that hall-of-fame trails are recognized for their "outstanding scenic value, use, amenities, historical significance and community value."

The trail's value and popularity continue to increase. No matter the season, locals and visitors alike enjoy it. Near downtown areas, baby strollers and skateboards join cyclists and hikers more commonly seen on remote portions of the trail.

For locals, easy access makes the trail an obvious choice for enjoying the outdoors. For visitors, the combination of the scenic route with a host of farmers markets, playgrounds, a wildlife refuge, breweries, nearby Lake Pontchartrain's beaches and other fun features makes it a choose-your-own-adventure experience.

"It's safe to say it's our No. 1 tourist attraction for our parish," says Lisa Maddox, operations manager for Tammany Trace.

It's estimated more than 400,000 people used the trace in 2019. Lisa is one of many locals proud of what the trail has become.

"I've been here 18 years and I've seen a lot of it take shape," she explains. "It's been a dream come true, with a lot of volunteers, a lot of hard work and some grant money."

Each town along the trace has found ways to make it its own. Trailheads have become gathering places, local businesses cater to cyclists and neighboring attractions promote the trace.

"We encourage everyone to build something of their own," Lisa says of the communities along the route. "The trace is a way to connect us all. We're all good neighbors."

In Covington, a converted depot serves as a trailhead and visitor center, as does one in Mandeville. Each location has a park, including covered areas that host weekly community markets as well as interpretive displays and comfort



stations, with easy access to downtown restaurants and shops.

Also in Mandeville, at the Koop Drive Trailhead, is the Kids Konnection Playground. A green caboose, which serves as the trail's headquarters, sits on



a preserved piece of railroad track and is surrounded by a playground built with inclusion in mind. Special features allow children of all abilities to play together (see page 16).

The remote trailhead in nearby Lacombe provides one of the trail's most scenic locales. A converted railroad trestle—complete with drawbridge to

accommodate boat traffic below—spans Lacombe Bayou. The comfort station—with its covered picnic areas on the bayou— offers a picturesque spot for a relaxing break. Travelers should note that bridge traffic is limited to daylight hours, which change seasonally.

The terminus of the trail is the Slidell-Carollo Trailhead in Slidell. Plans are underway for new facilities to be added, with the trail stretching to the city's downtown Heritage Park.

“The trace will continue to evolve,” Lisa says. “We’re never going to stop growing. The parish, they are the ones that had the vision to acquire the land. A lot of the amenities aren’t built with public funds.”

Instead, amenities are built through a cooperative effort with the nonprofit Tammany Trace Foundation—an active partner along the trace.

Through fundraising efforts of the

Continues on page 16



A Special Place to Play

When traveling Tammany Trace, Kids Konnection Playground in Mandeville is a site to remember.

It's also an amazing place to play.

This specially designed area is the result of the efforts of a group of mothers of children with disabilities. They had a vision of children of all abilities playing safely together.

In 2004, the women formalized their group as Kids Konnection, with the intent of building an inclusive playground. In 2007, their vision was realized when Kids Konnection Playground became Louisiana's first totally inclusive playground.

The fenced play area sits on a piece of donated land adjacent to the trace. Features include soft, latex-free surfaces; slides made for adults and children to use together, "sway fun," which allows children in wheelchairs to experience the feel of swinging; a "roller slide" sensitive to cochlear implant issues; a sand play area; and other calming sensory experiences.

The playground was built with more than \$400,000 in cash and in-kind donations. More than 500 volunteers gathered for three weekends to build this playground, now valued at \$1 million.

**21490 Koop Drive, Mandeville, LA 70471
985-867-9490**

Hours of operation:

Monday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday through Sunday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Continued from page 7

foundation and the parish's commitment to providing dedicated maintenance personnel, the trail is noted as one of the most well-kept trails in the rails-to-trails system, Lisa says proudly.

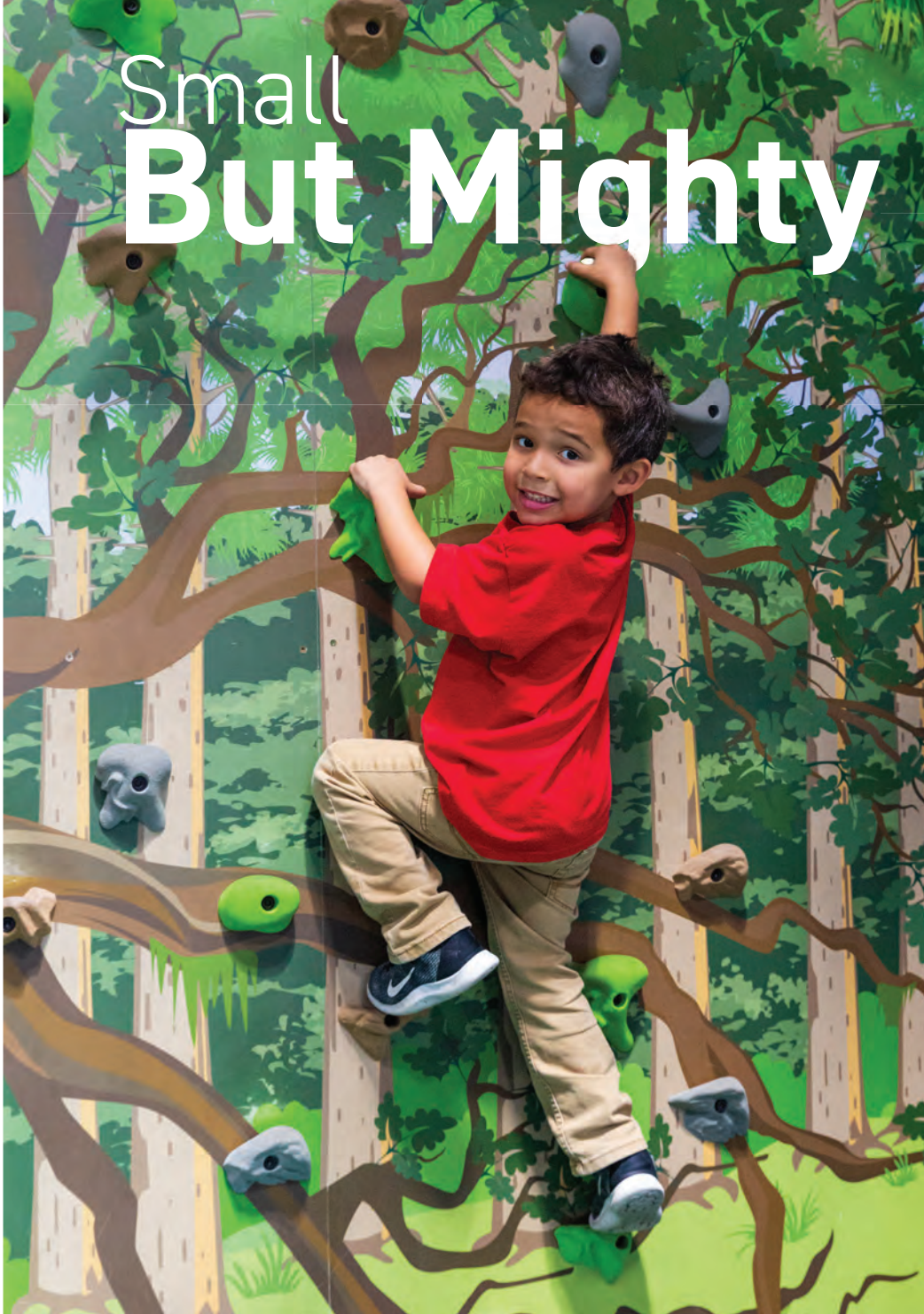
Whether as a cycling destination or a morning stroll, the trace is a great place to explore the north shore. Manicured parks and natural habitats, downtown breweries and remote bayous, lively playgrounds and quiet spaces each have a spot on the trail. And each are part of the Tammany Trace. ■

Tammany Trace offers more than bike trails. Riders, walkers and guests can stop to enjoy the view, play games and relax with friends.

Before You Go

When planning a trip to the trace be sure to check the out the annual events list for St. Tammany at louisiananorthshore.com. There is always a reason to celebrate, whether its Slidell's all-you-can-eat Crawfish Cookoff in April, the eclectic Louisiana Bike Festival in Abita Springs each summer or the Covington Three Rivers Art Festival in November. Events such as these give visitors plenty of reasons to stop and stay a while along the trail.

Small But Mighty



Visitors of all ages enjoy activities at the Children's Museum of St. Tammany.

PHOTOS BY COLETTE BOEHM

interactive galleries and activities that encourage play and nurture creativity. In the process, they have disguised learning as a whole lot of fun.

The moment they enter, children are challenged by the St. Tammany Oak, a climbing wall with allure for the adventurous types. The nearby ARTworks Gallery features a performance stage complete with costumes, musical instruments and hand puppets. The staging and costumes change with the seasons and range from castles with dragons and princesses to spaceships with astronauts.

There is also an art studio where tables and bins are filled with art materials. Paint, clay, crafts supplies and more give young artists an opportunity to choose their medium of expression.

"On all the tables you'll see manipulatives," says Gillian Rabalais, director of education and programming. "We try to get the brains working. Then they take off with it"

The River Landing Gallery is a play area designed as a diner and grocery. There, children find recipes and can shop for needed ingredients. They learn to choose and buy groceries and add the cost of the items. They can prepare the meals in the diner, either to eat or to serve to friends.

"A lot of times, they'll go grocery shopping, then they'll come cook for us," Gillian explains. "I've sat for some interesting meals."

It shows the amount of imagination and creativity the children have.

"One of our main focuses is on early learning literacy," Gillian says. We host a story telling on Fridays."

Staff members or volunteers read a book to their guests, she adds.

"We follow that with a related activity," Gillian says. "They just role play. They are in the zone."

Little Lake Tots has a lighthouse, fishing pier and boat dock. The How and Why Gallery features a wind tunnel, WATERworks and an area to build a roller coaster. (Account number 1001633400)

The Children's Museum of St. Tammany leaves a lasting impression on young minds

By Colette Boehm

You could say it caters to a small customer base. Small in size, not numbers. What they lack in stature, visitors to the Children's Museum of St. Tammany make up for in imagination, creativity and energy.

Each year, thousands of visitors enjoy wide-eyed creativity at this facility,

jam-packed with ways for toddlers and young children to engage and learn. The activities challenge and entertain in areas from art to performing arts, dexterity to mathematics, environmental to engineering. An estimated 30,000 children will experience the museum this year alone.

Opened in January 2018, the museum fulfills its mission of "inspiring children to imagine, explore and create" with



People come from throughout the state to enjoy crafts, toys and imaginative play at the children's museum.

New this year is the How and Why Outdoor STEM Lab Gallery. This new area on a covered patio at the museum includes activities and programming that focus on a variety of areas of the natural world, from archaeology to butterfly habitats.

"We're small, so we try to use up every space that we have," Gillian explains, noting the outdoor gallery's artwork, painted on a functional garage door. "We like to say, 'We are small, but we are mighty.'"

The museum is so mighty, in fact, that it can't be contained. Each year, the museum hosts STEM Quest on the surrounding grounds. NASA's Astro Camp, the New Orleans Geological Society, high school robotics teams and industry leaders in science and technology fields and numerous others who share displays and activities for children of all ages.

"We have people come from all over the state," Gillian says.

The museum also has regularly scheduled special programming for older students at CMST and takes its Museum



Without Walls programs on the road to schools and special events.

Gillian is the only full-time staff member at this small but mighty museum. She is joined by nearly two dozen others, some part-time employees—mostly volunteers—who create and share this slate of learning opportunities. Sometimes their efforts result not only in children learning, but also in adults playing.

"I encourage the staff to play with the kids," Gillian says. "Our motto is, 'Play to learn.' And for the adults, sometimes it's 'Learn to play.'"

The museum, about to celebrate its second anniversary, has plans for more learning opportunities. Those plans, as

well as everyday operations, are directed by a nonprofit board and funded by grants, donations and approximately 200 memberships.

Gillian credits the museum's early success not only to its staff and volunteers, but to this broader community of supporters.

"It's local support and it's bringing in the right people," she says. "It's that drive to invest in our kids." ■

The Children's Museum of St. Tammany is at 21404 Koop Drive, Mandeville, LA 70471. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Call 985-888-1555 or go to www.cmstkids.org for more information.

Three Life-Changing Resolutions

By Robin Howard

When faced with the blank canvas of a new year, most of us resolve to eat better or save more money to make the next 12 months better than the last. However, there's evidence to the contrary that more money will make us happier, and little evidence losing inches is a magic bullet.

One reason New Year's good intentions tend to sputter out in the first weeks is that many of our resolutions have to do with eliminating the symptoms of negative behaviors instead of changing behaviors that lead to more of what we don't want. We don't take time to get to know ourselves—or our real motivations—to make a lasting change.

What kind of resolutions could we make this year that would truly make 2020 the year of positive change?

Check Something Off Your Bucket List

Having a bucket list helps you become aware of what's really important to you. It ensures you put your time, money, and effort into doing things that energize you and make life more enjoyable. Having a bucket list also gives you a channel for spending money on experiences instead of things, which research shows make us happier, more grateful and content.

Let's say you find some spare cash under your sofa cushions and you're trying to decide whether to spend the windfall on a new TV or check parasailing off your bucket list. If you want to be happier, Thomas Gilovich, a happiness researcher at Cornell University, says to skip the TV and go on the adventure. Choosing experiences over things may seem counterintuitive: You'll be able to enjoy a new TV for years while your parasailing experience will be over in an afternoon.

However, that's not how long-term happiness works. If you buy the TV, it will give you an emotional boost for about two weeks. Then a hardwired process called adaptation takes over, and your new TV becomes part of the landscape of everything else you take for granted. If you go parasailing, the experience becomes part of who you are. You'll have a story to remember, enjoy, and tell over and over again.

Experiences also help us feel more engaged, content and grateful.

"When you come home from a vacation, you are likely to say 'I feel so blessed I got to go,'" Gilovich says.

Using money for experiences rather than stuff can also help you challenge yourself, expand your horizons and skills, and connect with new people.

Create Tech-free Time

On average, Americans spend 11 hours a day watching, reading, interacting with or listening to media on a device. In a survey by the American Psychological Association, 18% of adults said ever-present technology is a significant source of stress in their lives. Another study found that heavy tech use is linked to sleep disruption, loneliness, depression and increased anxiety.

If your aim is to reduce fatigue, stress and anxiety in the coming year, you may not need to work less, exercise more or start meditating. Merely carving out tech-free time may be the best resolution you can make to reduce stress and anxiety.

Consider setting aside one day a week as a tech-free day or reserving a few hours in the evening as device-free. If you have a hard time going no-tech for several hours at a time, at least set limits on device use during meals, at bedtime, when you're trying to focus on a project or when spending time with friends and family.

"Not having technology allowed me to think about life priorities instead of always thinking about work or what other people were doing," says Andrea Collins, a writer who gave up technology as an experiment.

Collins says in her first week without tech, she found herself naturally drawn to taking long walks, reconnecting with her family, trying new recipes and getting more sleep.

In other words, instead of relying on self-discipline to force yourself to exercise, spend time with loved ones or learn new things. You may need to create space for those things to happen naturally.

Get Your Finances in Order

Saving more and spending less are noble goals, but improving your money flow—and reducing financial stress—may be a matter of getting organized. Disorganization, including not having a budget, not knowing how much debt you have and not having specific savings or debt reduction goals, can lead to constant anxiety.

A better resolution than "save more" is to take time to complete an honest and thorough evaluation of your real expenses, debts and assets, then create a realistic budget.

"I am a big believer that orderliness begets wealth," says financial guru Suze Orman.

If staying within a budget is your resolution, user-friendly apps make it easier than ever to monitor spending, save money automatically and determine what you need to change to live within your means. Getting in the habit of using a mobile