"First Light" oil on linen canvas by Daniel Robinson.

Light, Shadow, Color

Daniel Robinson delivers timelessness on canvas

By Jody Foss

It was the summer of 1991. After graduating with a fine arts degree from Portland State University, Daniel Robinson was working at a tire store in Gladstone.

"It was light until 9," he says. "I took my easel and a couple of canvasses over to Oregon City Falls to paint after work. It was really exciting and terrifying. I thought to myself, 'No professor is guiding me. There will be no critique after this. What are you going to paint? You've learned something, but now what?'"

There was a paper mill, an electrical generating station and locks along the western side of the falls.

"I walked down the pathway and set up and thought to myself, 'This is absolutely beautiful! There's a waterfall right next to all this industry.' It was like a magnet to me. It had this strange, brutal beauty."

At age 6, Daniel saw a show on TV about the life of Leonardo da Vinci. He decided then he would be an artist.

"It's the only thing I have ever really wanted to be," he says. "Mom bought me these wonderful how-to-draw books. They were big and full color and came with a set of pastels. They would tell you how to draw a winding road with a split rail fence, with a wisp of smoke coming out of a chimney.

"I loved the smell of the pastels and all the materials. When you fall in love with something, you kind of fall in love with everything about it. You love the way it feels. Everything about it is exciting."

Born in Buffalo, New York, in 1963, Daniel and his family moved to Colorado when he was 7. His father was an itinerant preacher, and the family moved to Pennsylvania, Georgia, Idaho and finally Oregon, where Daniel attended high

Daniel Robinson was only 6 years old when he decided he would be an artist. Art remained a constant in his life as he frequently moved around the country. PHOTO BY JODY FOSS

"Woman and Elevators" oil on linen canvas by Daniel Robinson.

school and college. He has lived in Fossil for 20 years.

"I attended eight elementary schools," he says. "Art was always my thing, everywhere we went."

Fascinated with art history, Daniel studied the masters of Europe, America and Japan.

"I love the American artists who were trying to express what it felt like to live on a new continent, and the vitality and energy that Europe no longer offered," Daniel says. "There's a lot of emotional bigness to the paintings."

Daniel's work was first featured in galleries in Seattle and on the Oregon Coast, and then in an exclusive Boston gallery. These days, he is represented exclusively by the Charles A.Hartman Fine Art in Portland.

Living in Fossil has grown on Daniel. He and his wife, Melanie; son, Triston; and daughter, Sierra; live in a Craftsman-style home next to his art studio.

"I like the kind of desolation, the quiet and the aridity, and that you can see the sky," he says. "I like those moments when I go on a walk with my dog, suck in the beauty and come back to the studio to paint. I am always thinking, 'What am I going to do next?'"

Daniel's work is showing at the Concourse Connector at Portland International Airport.

"Daniel is a wildly talented man on so many levels, and the work itself is something people can relate to and appreciate," says Wendy Givens, curator of the Rotating Art Project. "His skies are magnificent, his landscapes iconic. From his work, people get a sense of what Oregon is and the love that people have for Oregon, the landscape and how diverse it is. Each one of his works is exquisite. They bring so many people so much joy."

Finishing a piece is a labor of love.

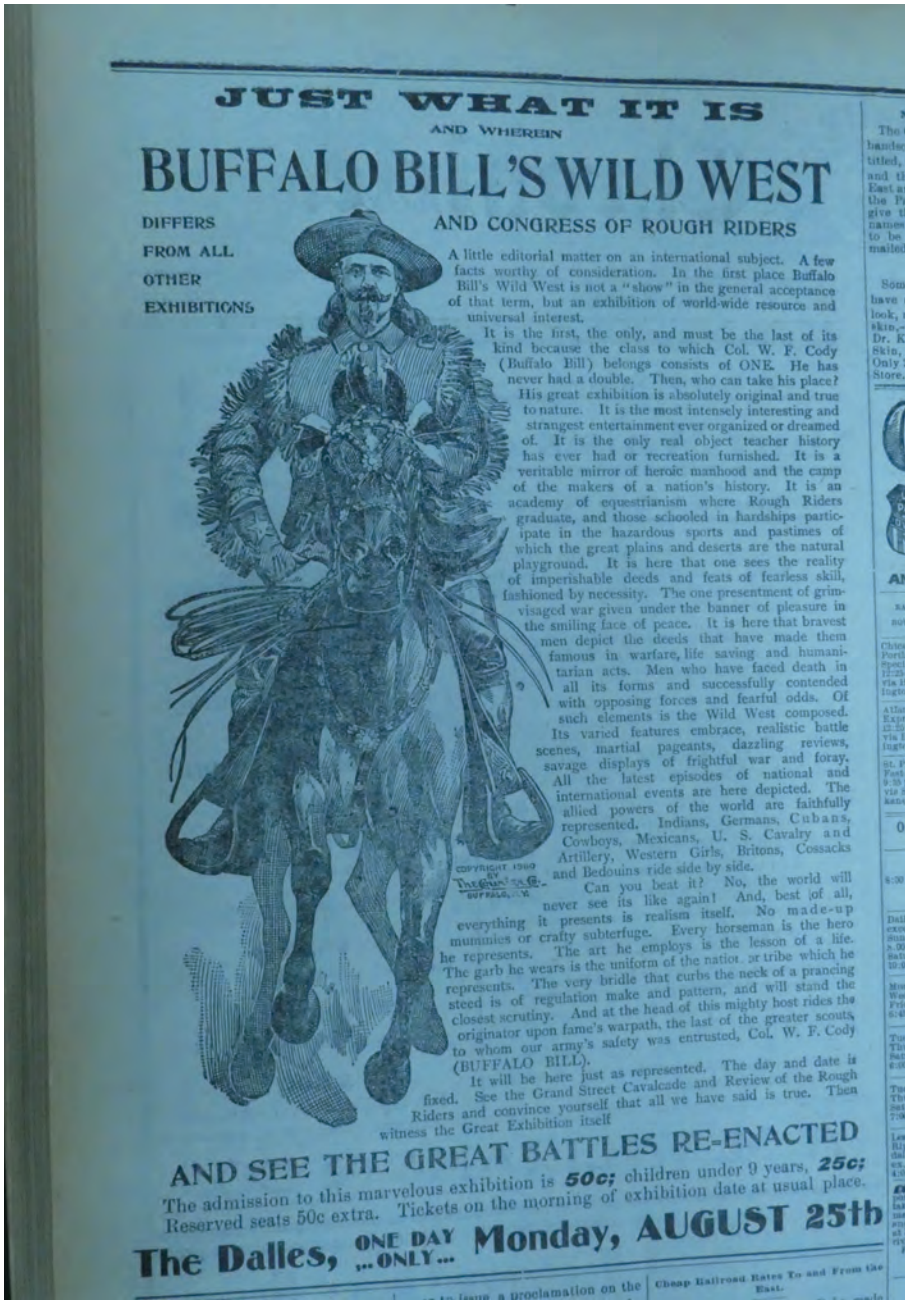
"Painting a painting is usually a couple hundred hours of fiddling and fussing, sometimes putting the finishing touches on a piece on the tailgate of my truck before delivering it to the gallery," he says.

Daniel prepares his own canvasses, using the same techniques as Rembrandt. He stretches the highest-quality Belgian linen canvas to the frame, attaching it with upholstery tacks. He coats the canvas with rabbit skin glue and two coats of oil base primer. Starting with a brown canvas, he makes a monochromatic sketch. After that, it's just oil paint.

"The emulsion you do on top of the canvas is almost imperishable if you use good pigments," he says. "A painting can last for hundreds of years. Your hope is that your paintings have a timeless quality and will be around for a long time." ■

For more information on Daniel Robinson, go to www.hartmanfineart.net.

Bigger Than the Circus



JUST WHAT IT IS
AND WHEREIN
BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST
AND CONGRESS OF ROUGH RIDERS
DIFFERS FROM ALL OTHER EXHIBITIONS

A little editorial matter on an international subject. A few facts worthy of consideration. In the first place Buffalo Bill's Wild West is not a "show" in the general acceptance of that term, but an exhibition of world-wide resource and universal interest.

It is the first, the only, and must be the last of its kind because the class to which Col. W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) belongs consists of ONE. He has never had a double. Then, who can take his place? His great exhibition is absolutely original and true to nature. It is the most intensely interesting and strangest entertainment ever organized or dreamed of. It is the only real object teacher history has ever had or recreation furnished. It is a veritable mirror of heroic manhood and the camp of the makers of a nation's history. It is an academy of equestrianism where Rough Riders graduate, and those schooled in hardships participate in the hazardous sports and pastimes of which the great plains and deserts are the natural playground. It is here that one sees the reality of imperishable deeds and feats of fearless skill, fashioned by necessity. The one presentment of grim-visaged war given under the banner of pleasure in the smiling face of peace. It is here that bravest men depict the deeds that have made them famous in warfare, life saving and humanitarian acts. Men who have faced death in all its forms and successfully contended with opposing forces and fearful odds. Of such elements is the Wild West composed.

Its varied features embrace, realistic battle scenes, martial pageants, dazzling reviews, savage displays of frightful war and foray. All the latest episodes of national and international events are here depicted. The allied powers of the world are faithfully represented. Indians, Germans, Cubans, Cowboys, Mexicans, U. S. Cavalry and Artillery, Western Girls, Britons, Cossacks and Bedouins ride side by side.

Can you beat it? No, the world will never see its like again! And, best of all, everything it presents is realism itself. No made-up mummies or crafty subterfuge. Every horseman is the hero he represents. The art he employs is the lesson of a life. The garb he wears is the uniform of the nation or tribe which he represents. The very bridle that curbs the neck of a prancing steed is of regulation make and pattern, and will stand the closest scrutiny. And at the head of this mighty host rides the originator upon fame's warpath, the last of the greater scouts, to whom our army's safety was entrusted, Col. W. F. Cody (BUFFALO BILL).

It will be here just as represented. The day and date is fixed. See the Grand Street Cavalcade and Review of the Rough Riders and convince yourself that all we have said is true. Then witness the Great Exhibition itself

AND SEE THE GREAT BATTLES RE-ENACTED

The admission to this marvelous exhibition is 50c; children under 9 years, 25c; Reserved seats 50c extra. Tickets on the morning of exhibition date at usual place.

The Dalles, ONE DAY ...ONLY... Monday, AUGUST 25th

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show
THE DALLES, OR., MONDAY, AUGUST, 25, 1902.
For the above occasion the O. R. & N. company will sell tickets, from Hood River to The Dalles and return, at the rate of ... for the round trip. Tickets on sale August 25, with return limit, August 26.
A. N. HOAR, Agent.

ABOVE: An ad for the show ran in The Dalles Chronicle in August 1902. COURTESY OF THE DALLES CHRONICLE. **UPPER RIGHT: Buffalo Bill.** COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. **The Hood River Glacier advertised Buffalo Bill's show. RIGHT: A promotional poster for the show mentions the role power played in small print on the right.** COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Buffalo Bill brought the Wild West to The Dalles in 1902

By Rodger Nichols

Electricity first came to The Dalles in July 1888 when The Dalles Electric Light Co., a private corporation, built a wood-burning power generation plant at Seventh and Union streets. It was a limited operation, covering only part of the town and operating only in the evenings.

Electricity wasn't new to The Dalles in 1902, but the town was exceptionally well lit by two steam-powered generators for one night that August.

The story begins with a buffalo hunter.

Modern understanding of the Wild West—real and imaginary—would not be the same without William Frederick Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill." Bill himself was both real and imaginary.

Bill's father died in 1857, when Bill was 11. He took a job with a freight carrier and rode up and down the length of a wagon train on horseback, delivering messages between drivers and workmen. He later served as a scout for the 7th Cavalry during the Civil War and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery.

Bill's nickname came from his exploits as a hunter under contract to supply meat for workers on the Pacific Railway. In 18 months, he killed 4,270 buffalo.

All this caught the attention of writer Ned Buntline, who wrote the book "Buffalo Bill, King of the Bordermen," glamorizing some of Bill's accomplishments and inventing others. The book sold so well that Ned and other writers spent the 1870s writing sequels, and the character of Buffalo Bill became larger than life.

In 1883, Bill formed Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World. It was set up like a circus, but there were no trapeze artists and trained elephants. Visitors found real cowboys fighting stage battles with real Indians, plus real horsemen of South American, Turkish, Arabic and Mongolian backgrounds demonstrating their cultures' equestrian styles.

The attraction was a huge success. It toured both the U.S. and Europe, appearing at the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria and the dedication of the Eiffel Tower, and met with Pope Leo XIII.

On August 25, 1902, Buffalo Bill brought his show to The Dalles.

By that time, the show was down to a science, with covered bleachers and two shows a day: one in the afternoon and the other in the evening. Light for the evening show was provided by two mobile steam-powered generators.

"The enormous double electric dynamos used to illuminate the Wild West performances are well worth inspecting, as a scientific and mechanical triumph," trumpeted an 1898 show program. "They are the largest portable ones ever made."

Managers arranged tours of the electrical equipment—followed by performances—for visiting groups of electrical engineers and utility company officers at each stop.

An article in The Dalles Chronicle on August 22, 1902, described the setup:

"Seventy-six arc lamps are strung around the enclosure, making it as light as day. The electric power is furnished by Buffalo Bill's own plant, the engine being shown in the parade. These are double dynamos of 250,000 candle power. It is the largest entertainment arena in the world. Its seating capacity can provide for 16,000 people."

The same article called arrangements for the show "the most perfect imaginable," and added, "There is a good deal of wholesome instruction in it, and many a man would never have known who and what the real characters of the Wild West were in the old days had it not been for the experience, energy and industry of Buffalo Bill."

But all that candlepower wasn't put to use. The day of the performance, The Chronicle sang a far less flattering tune.

"When a man with a reputation of an Indian fighter comes to town and has the extreme nerve to tell us that this is no 'two-show town' and springs it on us at a late hour that there'll be but one performance, and demands that The Chronicle force be on hand or they won't show at all, that settles it," wrote the editor. "We don't dare to dispute his word nor even to hint gently that it's a low-down trick to disappoint our working people when they fully expected to attend in the evening and many of them will be unable to attend the show at all. It may not be a 'two-show,' town, but we'll just say that if he visits us again, it won't even be a one-show town."

Despite the single performance, the show was a raging success. The population of The Dalles was more than 3,500 people at the time, and 10,000 people attended the show. The Chronicle reported that many of them stood from 8 to 11 a.m. along the downtown streets, awaiting the parade that preceded the show.

The wait was worth it, according to the newspaper, which listed entries that included a fife and drum corps, a brass band and a cowboy band on horseback.

Also present was a squad of German Hussars, Cossacks from Russia, English cavalry that had served in South Africa, vaqueros from the plains of Mexico, a squad of American rough riders, a detachment of Cubans, a string of Bengal lancers, a big crowd of typical cowboys, a corps of American cavalry and artillery to bring up the rear.

If the single performance didn't light up the sky with its candlepower, the acts of the show were dazzling enough that the cranky editor was moved to write this assessment:

"In quick succession the audience witnessed exhibitions of daring horse-manship, scenes of early pioneer life, the storming of San Juan Hill, work of a lifesaving crew, some of the finest tumbling and acrobatic feats they have ever seen, and many other thrilling numbers. In short, the performance, which lasted over two hours, gave perfect satisfaction to the majority of the audience, who appreciate the opportunity of witnessing such a famous show in a place the size of The Dalles." ■

In the Community

Filling a Need

Food bank strives for a positive client experience

By Danita Cahill

The Coast Range Food Bank and Trading Post is nestled in the Oregon Coast Range, west of Corvallis, across the Benton/Lincoln County border. After winding through the mossy rainforest edging Nashville Road, the road narrows to one lane under a train trestle before widening again. The food bank soon appears, as if out of nowhere, welcoming locals and travelers alike.

The food bank is lodged inside the old Nashville General Store building. Open Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., the food bank serves between 225 to 300 people a year. Founder and board chairwoman Carol Adams started the food bank in 1999 in the nearby grange hall in Summit, later relocating it to Nashville.

"It just kind of found its own way," Carol says.

The need for a food bank in the area is serious. The average annual income in Lincoln County is $24,799 per person. A single-person household with annual earnings of $23,107 qualifies for emergency food boxes. Of the county's population, 16.2% live below the poverty line.

Unfortunately, there's a stigma attached to receiving food assistance, but Carol and business manager Randy Ricks are working to alleviate that.

LEFT: Volunteers help with boxes of food on delivery day.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Food bank volunteers Edna and Bruce Hrabko fill a shopping cart for a family of three.

To lessen any embarrassment that might come with accepting free food, several policies are in place. Clients sign in confidentially. Visitors use regular shopping carts instead of food boxes, so clients enjoy a shopping experience as they pick out their family's favorite foods. There is even a miniature shopping cart for children to use. Kids are encouraged to pick out a free plush toy during each visit.

"Kids come bouncing in now, not with their heads hung in shame," Carol says.

The food bank is set up like a small grocery store: canned food, rice, pasta and beans along one section, produce in another area, shelves of bread skirting the produce. Each family also receives eggs, frozen food and a generous amount of meat. Most clients come once a month to help extend their food budget, but bread and produce is given out on a weekly basis.

In the same building, customers stop in to shop for bargains and treasures at the trading post, a thrift store.

"The thrift store takes away the shame of having your car parked out front," Carol says. "Who doesn't love a thrift store? In the summer, there are motorcycles and cars parked all over."

The thrift store is cleared out and restocked with fresh merchandise every few months. Some items that originated in the small rural community help people not only near but far.

One shopper buys clothing and gives it away in Mexico. Food bank volunteers Bruce and Edna Hrabko ship clothes and other items to the Philippines. A suit and a wedding dress bought from the thrift store went to a Philippine couple who celebrated their 60th anniversary by renewing their wedding vows. A commercial sewing machine, bought for $5, went to a family of tailors in the Philippines to help them earn a living.

The thrift store was added because locals kept dropping off boxes of clothes and household items on the front patio of the food bank. Carol admits a food bank/thrift store is an unusual business model, but it works.

"We make enough money now to cover our base overhead," Carol says of the business, which is run strictly by volunteers. "No one gets a paycheck. In time, the business will support itself and we won't have to ask for money or grants for food."

CPI's Charitable Trust has awarded grants to Coast Range Food Bank, thanks to support from co-op members through the Operation Round Up program on their electricity bills.

According to Linn Benton Food Share—where Coast Range Food Bank buys the bulk of its food—even though the economy is doing well, the number of households receiving emergency food boxes has risen 16.1% since the 2009 financial crisis. LBFS emergency food pantries gave out 16,138 food boxes from July to October 2019.

Some Coast Range Food Bank clients live on their grandparents' land and get by on as little as $700 a month. Employment opportunities are limited in such a secluded area, but on meager incomes, families can't afford to move or rent anyplace else.

The food bank has no website and no social media presence. It serves a community that has no other social services, not even a fire department.

"We're just here," Carol says. "One of my favorite things about this place is it's privately owned, not state or federally run."

Carol and Randy believe in empowering people, especially women. They've seen positive changes take place in clients' lives through the years. Sometimes the changes begin small but evolve with time. One woman who started out as a food bank client decided to go to college. After graduating, she landed a job as a pharmacist.

The mission of the volunteers who run the food bank is to reduce barriers to healthy food and treat clients with dignity and respect. If someone in the area is ill, a shut-in or is severely socially withdrawn, volunteers will deliver food to their door.

Most clients prefer to shop for themselves. Not only can they choose exactly what they want, but the Coast Food Bank and Trading Post is also a pleasant gathering place to catch up on area happenings.

"A lot of people come here that could go to other food banks," Carol says. "It's a positive place where everyone is welcome." ■

To help organizations such as the Coast Range Food Bank, please consider joining CPI's Operation Round Up by rounding up your monthly electric bill to the nearest whole dollar. The average cost per member is $6 a year. To join, call us, sign up online, indicate on your bill or stop by our Philomath office.

Tim Stewart's collection of patches tell stories from 43 years of firefighting. PHOTO BY BRIAN HENDERSON

Chasing Fires

From house fires to wildfires, Americans depend on volunteers

By Brian Henderson

After more than 40 years and countless fires, volunteer firefighter Tim Stewart says lots of things change as the years go by.

"The one thing that never changes is the shovel," though Tim says with a wide grin. "From GPS to other equipment upgrades, we have gone from stuff we threw together at the firehouse to gear designed specifically to fight fires."

But the firefighter's best tool is still the shovel, Tim explains as he describes fighting wildfires in Benton County and across the country.

Joining the Prosser Fire Department as a volunteer in 1976 and fighting wildfires across Washington state and beyond since the 1980s—Tim has done a lot of shoveling.

Currently a volunteer firefighter for the Grandview firehouse, Tim works for his lifelong friend, Chief Pat Mason.

"We met in EMT class when we were kids," Pat says, walking in between the two ambulance rigs at the station. "We've been friends ever since. Heck, we might have even met on a call before that."

There are two rows of rigs in the firehouse's garage: one red and one white.

"Which color rig you take depends on if it's a city call or for the Yakima Fire District," Tim explains. "If you're in a red rig, you're working for the city."

Pat agrees the equipment in the firehouse has drastically changed for the better.

"The volunteer ambulance equipment is all-around better," he says. "But training never stops, so even when you're not on calls, you're around the same guys year after year."

Those decades of experience and training are highly sought after as regional state and federal agencies battle wildfires. That experience often includes fighting some of the most infamous fires in American history.

Longer fire seasons along the West Coast have spawned many large, devastating fires. Fires have progressed from inching close to populated areas to completely overcoming entire neighborhoods and communities.

"On the Kincade Fire, we had 38 rigs," Tim says about a wildfire that burned in Sonoma County, California, in 2019.

The year before, Tim says he thought he might get by with an easy year.

"I hadn't gone out in a while that

year," he says. "In 2018, it was real slow. Toward the end of the season, I spent three weeks near Los Angeles doing a short professional work stint."

In his professional life, his fire experience lead him to do inspections for insurance companies.

"After doing a home inspection, I went up the coast to San Francisco to take the scenic route back home to Prosser," Tim says. "I had just got home to blow out the sprinklers and get ready for colder weather when November 8 hit and the winds in Southern California began to pick up."

Tim went to his phone and started looking at smoke checks—reports from spotters if they see any smoke across certain check points when the Santa Anna winds start kicking up. It was 7 a.m.

"An hour later, my phone rang," Tim says.

His gear was still in the rig from the drive up the day before.

As he drove south down the highway and across the California border, Tim says CalFire radio was buzzing with alarming reports and orders.

"I could tell right away this was something like I had never seen," Tim says. "The fire was going to this town, so when I stopped for gas, I looked up how many people lived there."

He thought it was a small town of 1,500 people.

"When I saw it had over 27,000 people, I thought, 'Holy cow. This is not going to be good.' It gives me chills just thinking about that moment."

Tim was driving into Paradise, California's Camp Fire—the deadliest wildfire in California history.

"The call came out that cars were blocking the road, and there were definitely casualties," Tim says.

He says the fire was indeed the most destructive fire he's ever seen. It was also the most expensive natural disaster in the world that year.

"The next call said no one could get in or out," Tim continues. "The commander gave the order to just plow your rigs through and push them out of the way. I've never heard that order given before."

At home was his worried wife, Berti.

Reflective gear hangs ready to be worn whenever city of Grandview and Yakima Fire District No. 5 volunteers need them. PHOTO BY BRIAN HENDERSON

The city of Prosser and Benton County #3 volunteer and staff firefighters gather for a group photo in 1981. The departments have since merged into West Benton Fire Rescue. PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM STEWART

"The love and support of my wife is the only reason I have been able to turn my hobby into a lifetime of work," Tim says.

Tim recalls starting this line of volunteer work at 18 years old.

"When the City of Prosser said they needed volunteers, about 15 of us showed up," he says. "We sat around this big wooden table and they asked us why we were there."

After 43 years, Tim says the answer is still the same.

"I just wanted to help people that were having a bad day," he says. ■

Matt Lyda, a Journeyman Lineman, and Pendleton resident has been with UEC since 2015. He is one of two volunteers heading to Central America.

Matt Ellis will be traveling to Guatemala with the construction team in April. A Journeyman Lineman at UEC, and a resident of Stanfield, he has been with the cooperative since 2018.

Volunteers Selected for Oregon Empowers Guatemala Project

Two volunteers from Umatilla Electric will journey to Central America and assist the construction team.

The Oregon Rural Cooperative Association (ORECA) is embarking on an ambitious and noble project to electrify a remote village in the mountains of Guatemala. **A team of more than a dozen volunteer linemen and other electrical experts from cooperatives across Oregon will travel to the Central American nation this April,** to bring power to an area that has none and to help set up the residents and community for future economic prosperity and improved quality of life.

This electrification project, called Oregon Empowers Guatemala is coordinated through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) philanthropic arm, NRECA International.

The volunteers will build power lines and will establish electricity in the village of Aldea Montanita de la Virgen, in the district of Jalapa, a mountainous region the southeastern part of the country. The village has 60 homes with typically two to three rooms each. The center of the village consists of three structures: a church, a community/health center and a three-room schoolhouse – all without access to reliable and affordable electricity. The locals live in humble means without running water, food refrigeration, or the ability to use electronic appliances for house chores or to aid in their economic growth. 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 Oregon Empowers team will have the three community buildings and the 60 homes to wire for electricity. **The primary network will entail 32 poles and four transformers on 3.1 miles of primary line and two and a half miles of secondary line.** Most of the terrain consists of steep hillsides.

The Oregon Empowers committee, comprised of cooperative leaders and trustees from the statewide association selected a team of 13 volunteers for the upcoming trip.

Of those thirteen volunteers, two come from Umatilla Electric.

Matt Lyda trained at the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee of the Northwest Line Construction Industry, or NW Line JATC. He began his career at a tree trimming company where he worked for more than 10 years, eventually serving as foreman. In 2015,

During the advance trip, team members observed a mother doing her laundry in a spring, much as American women did in the 1930s before electricity. PHOTO BY MIKE TEEGARDEN

he was hired by UEC as a groundman and by 2018 he was working for the cooperative as a Journeyman Lineman.

Matt Ellis attended Northwest Lineman College and began his career as apprentice lineman in 2014 before being hired by UEC as a Journeyman Lineman in August of 2018.

Both men expressed pride in their day-to-day activities at UEC, including restoring power when needed. "It's not something everyone can do," Lyda said. "I enjoy it."

The trip will offer a rigorous work schedule during their two weeks in Guatemala and both had a similar reason for why they volunteered to spend time away from home and family.

For Matt Lyda, "Volunteering in general - doing something more than for just yourself," he said. "It's pretty easy to get self-absorbed."

Matt Ellis, who will be making his first trip south of the U.S. border, looks forward to a community making a step forward in improving their quality of life. **"It's a chance to help people," he said. "It will be a humbling experience to be able to help."**

"We are grateful for the overwhelming response of Oregon cooperative linemen who are willing to leave their homes for an extended period of time to empower far-away communities", says Les Penning, CEO of Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative and Oregon Empowers Committee Chairman, "Access to electricity will bring economic empowerment, better access to health care and enhanced safety for these villagers."

"The work will be arduous, and they will be spending time away from home and family, so I applaud Matt and Matt for stepping forward for what will be a life-changing experience for all involved." says Robert Echenrode, General Manager and CEO of Umatilla Electric.

Oregon's electric cooperatives have established a 501(c)3 not-for profit Oregon Empowers Foundation, to support this cause. All contributions are tax-deductible.

To learn how to contribute and for information on the project, **visit www.oregonempowers.com.**

OREGON EMPOWERS GUATEMALA 2020

Quick Facts About Oregon Empowers Guatemala 2020

The Oregon Empowers Guatemala project supports several Cooperative Principles, including Cooperation Among Cooperatives, working together to help other people who need it, and Concern For Community, improving the quality of life of local communities at home and abroad. A quick timeline of the Project:

November 2019 A small advance team visited Guatemala to survey the area around the village and take initial photos.

January 2020 Oregon's electric cooperatives establish a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, called Oregon Empowers Foundation, to support this cause allowing all contributions to be tax-deductible.

February 2020 Out of the many applications received, 13 crew members were selected to be part of the construction team.

Mid-April 2020 The delegation of linemen and engineers from different Oregon co-ops will spend two weeks bringing power to the small village of Aldea Montanita de la Virgen.

Renovating History

Local thespian group takes on challenge of breathing new life into Maupin Legion Hall

Story and photo by Andrew Cutler

Nestled in the shadows of Mount Hood, Maupin is undergoing a bit of a renaissance.

Once a bustling timber town, closures of Mountain Fir Lumber Co. mills in neighboring Tygh Valley and in Maupin itself left the city struggling with how to overcome those losses. After about a decade without direction, the bulk of the community's economy is linked to the nearby Deschutes River and the tourism it brings with it.

"The city has had a reinvention," says resident Dennis Beechler.

Now, as the community continues to move away from its timber roots, new projects are helping to renovate the community.

A new civic center sits on the main street through town. The center will soon be the home of Maupin City Hall and Southern Wasco County Library.

The school district is exploring building a new track and athletic facility and doing some considerable upgrades on existing facilities.

The community's lone medical provider—White River Health District, which operates the Deschutes Rim Clinic—is considering the possibility of a new building.

With the recent installation of a fiber-optic line that provides the fastest internet speeds commercially available in the Pacific Northwest, it's easy to see why residents in this small community are excited about the future of their community.

"There's a lot of things happening in south Wasco County," Dennis says.

Another project on main street is moving the community forward, while also tying the city to its rich past.

The Project

Maupin Legion Hall, built in 1925, fell into disrepair. Throughout the years, membership in American Legion Post No. 73 aged. With no younger members lining up to take their place and hold fundraisers or pay membership dues, there were limited funds to pay utilities and do necessary maintenance. Post 73 asked the city of Maupin to help. In January 2008, the city signed a 30-year lease with Post 73.

In 2010, Town & Country Players—a local thespian group—sold its hall in

Local residents are breathing new life into Maupin Legion Hall.

Wapinitia, about 12 miles outside of Maupin, and relocated into Legion Hall. One thing was obvious from the start.

"It needed a lot of work," says Karletta Carrithers, a member of the hall's restoration committee and a member of the theater group.

After Town & Country Players signed a memorandum of understanding with the city for use of the hall, a list of needed improvements was started. When South Wasco County High School student Zoe Morelli made replacing the hall windows a senior year project in 2012, the restoration project picked up momentum.

"I think she was also trying to do dance lessons and whatnot in the hall, and it just seemed like it needed to happen," says Sara Morelli, Zoe's mother and a member of the hall's restoration committee. "It was a worthy project."

In 2017, the Legion Hall Restoration Committee was formed with members from the city council, residents and Town & Country Players.

Sara, Karletta, Dennis, Jerri Parman, Rich Sutliff, Marge Gustafson, Jon Helquist and Dennis Ross head the committee.

"We started with projects requiring immediate attention," Karletta says.

Topping the list was repairing the undercarriage of the hall to shore up the floor due to water damage, and to find and repair the water source.

"We started having fundraisers," Karletta says. "We obtained donations and small local grants. We finally had enough money to prioritize our list and start on our first big project: replacing four of five exterior doors."

The focus then shifted to insulating the hall's attic, floor and walls.

An early inspection of the building showed its bones were sound. It just needed some TLC.

"What we were worried about wasn't so much the walls," Dennis says. "We were worried about the floor and the ceiling. We didn't want to put a lot of stuff into the building if the roof and the ceiling or the roof was trashed. We had an engineer crawl up in there, and it's all straight grain Douglas fir two-by-sixes all the way down. And it's complete, totally solid."

The History

Through the years, the building has primarily been used as a meeting place for Post 73. But it's had colorful periods in its history.

"Probably the most colorful stories would be from the smokers—boxing matches—which started in the 1920s and went on for many, many years," Karletta says. "Young local men were star attractions in boxing matches, fighting against each other or against visiting opponents."

Throughout the years, the Legion Hall also hosted dances, movies—a projectionist room, complete with a metal floor, remains—and plays.

"Eventually, Americanism programs, concerts, weddings, funerals and memorials, bingo, hunter safety classes—even a skating rink—and fundraisers of all kinds were added into the mix," Karletta says.

Preserving the building's history is a focus of the restoration committee.

"You think back to when they built it," Jerri says. "It was volunteer labor. I'm sure that they maybe got a little bit of funds from the American Legion, but maybe not. They probably had fundraisers. They had dances. They had dinners. They made money and put it into this hall and did the labor themselves. And that is part of what this hall is, is carrying on that tradition of volunteerism."

The Cost

The committee has spent more than $30,100 on improvements to the Legion Hall, raising the bulk of the money through donations, fundraisers, local small grants and Wasco Electric Cooperative.

The funds through the cooperative have come in the form of energy savings rebates from installation of doors, windows and building insulation. The cooperative has issued $5,957 in rebates and awarded the project a $2,500 economic grant.

"Wasco Electric has been really good with us as far as rebates go," Dennis says. "We couldn't have done what we've done up to now without their help."

Looking Forward

Renovations aren't complete. Major projects remain, such as moving the bathroom off the stage, installing a ductless heating and cooling system, and moving the kitchen. All of this to make the building a place people want to be.

"It'd be nice to get it prettied up or to a place where it is a pleasure to be here," Sara says. "Whether it's a wedding reception or a memorial, it would just be nice to get it finished up to where it's a pleasure." ■

To donate to the restoration of Maupin Legion Hall, send a check made out to Town & Country Players, P.O. Box 62, Maupin, OR, 97037. Include "Legion Hall Restoration" in the check memo. Donations are tax deductible.

Central Electric Locks it Down

By Courtney Cobb

Mention the word cybersecurity and ears perk up. Headlines today are filled with breaches of companies' databases, the latest viruses and potential identity theft threats. Central Electric Cooperative takes extra measures to ensure members' private information and confidential data stay protected.

Zero Tolerance

CEC takes numerous precautions to protect customer data from external security threats. Access controls, encryption, firewalls, system monitoring and antivirus tools are some of the many layers of defense.

"We have zero tolerance for sensitive data exposure, and are continually assessing our current security environment for ways to prevent inadvertent or intentional data loss," says Lisa Cutter, CEC corporate information officer. "Before we acquire any new system, we evaluate the security and ensure the system meets up to our high standards."

Employee Training

Beyond secure software and encryption, CEC's employees are the next step in the defense against cyberattacks.

While external threats to breach CEC's network are commonplace, hackers and criminals are getting savvier and turning to social engineering tactics. This is when an adversary sends a deceptive email message—known as phishing—to employees to lure the reader to visit unsafe sites or click on links that could download viruses.

"We perform regular employee security awareness training so employees stay on top of the most current threats and social engineering tactics," Lisa says.

Employees are trained to question suspicious emails, links and attachments. Lisa says she often receives calls from staff about questionable emails.

"Social engineering emails appear more authentic all the time, so we have to train our employees to look for key indicators regularly," she says. "Our employees have developed a strong skepticism of dubious emails, and follow a set protocol for reporting scam emails."

Connections

CEC connects with other cooperatives and with co-op-centric vendors to share information about different types of attacks or vulnerabilities.

"We receive and share information so everyone is informed about what remedies worked," Lisa says.

CEC also maintains information-sharing relationships with the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center to stay apprised of ongoing cyberthreats. E-ISAC is a federal entity created to share critical information with the electric industry on infrastructure protection.

Customer Information/Scams

With the members' best interest at the forefront of every security measure CEC undertakes, customer data is not only encrypted, but CEC goes the extra mile on its smart meter readings.

With the installation of smart meters, which transmit members' use data over power lines, CEC implemented extended physical security controls and safeguards. Lisa says data passed to and from the advanced metering infrastructure system must go through highly secure protocols, as well as encryption.

With more scams in the world today, CEC wants members to know it will never send an email asking for credit card numbers, bank account information or Social Security numbers. If you receive a suspicious phone call requesting payment with a prepaid credit card or Green Dot card, call local authorities.

"We never demand payments by prepaid card or ask customers to meet us somewhere with cash," says Ryan Davies, CEC director of customer and energy services. "We tell members if they are ever in doubt of the identity of the caller, hang up and call us directly to verify."

CEC goes a step further to protect members by not storing customers' bank account or credit card numbers in its database.

Equipment Management

Management of the company's hardware goes hand in hand with cybersecurity.

"We don't throw away or donate our old hard drives," Lisa says. "We physically destroy them so they can never be reconstructed."

Just because you delete a file, that doesn't mean the information is no longer stored on the hard drive, Lisa says. Many years ago, a utility in Idaho gave dozens of obsolete hard drives to a third party to be scrubbed and recycled. Somehow those drives ended up on eBay with proprietary data intact.

"We are extremely vigilant about destroying old, obsolete hardware so that data can never be reconstituted," Lisa says.

CEC members should rest assured the company is doing everything it can to protect members and represent their best interests. ■

Guard Against Identity Theft

While companies such as Central Electric Cooperative work to protect your data, you can take other steps to prevent your identity from being stolen. These simple steps can help keep your identity safe:

Keep It on the Down Low

▶ Don't give personal information such as credit card numbers over the phone unless you have initiated the phone call to a trusted company.

▶ Limit what you carry. When you go out, take only the identification, credit and debit cards you need. Leave your Social Security and Medicare cards at home or in a secure place.

▶ Keep photocopies of your credit cards, debit card and driver's license in a secure place.

▶ Check with your card's issuing bank to find out what kind of protection you have.

▶ Report the loss or theft of any credit cards to the issuers immediately.

▶ Shred sensitive documents before you put them in your trash.

▶ Use anti-virus software, anti-spyware software and a firewall on your home computer.

▶ Don't overshare on social networking sites. If you post too much information, identity thieves can find information about your life and use it to gain access to your accounts.

Safeguard Your Computer

You have a role to play in ensuring the security of your personal and professional data.

▶ Keep all software on internet-connected devices—including PCs, tablets, and smartphones—up to date to reduce the risk of infection from malware.

▶ Create long passwords that only you will remember and change them every six months. Remember, a strong password is at least 12 characters long. Don't use the same password on multiple accounts.

▶ Avoid the use of thumb drives and other portable memory devices.

▶ Don't click on web links or attached files in emails when you're not certain of the sender.

▶ Keep pace with new ways to stay safe online. Check trusted websites for the latest information. Share security tips with friends, family and colleagues, and encourage them to be web-wise.

For more tips and information, visit www.staysafeonline.org.

Randi Schuyler talks with her son Lebn Lovejoy about the installation of her energy-saving heat pump water heater.

Energy-Efficiency Champions

Save energy one tank at a time with a heat pump water heater

Heat Pump Water Heater Placement

CEC's energy specialists often receive questions from members about the placement of their heat pump water heater. Depending on the model, they can work well inside the home or in the garage.

HPWHs can be larger than an old electric water heater and need more room to operate. The HPWH needs to have sufficient space around it so it can extract heat from the surrounding air. Placing your new unit in a small closet might not be feasible without the addition of air vents or a louvered door.

Story and photo by Courtney Cobb

Central Electric Cooperative member Randi Schuyler understands the savings she earns with energy-efficient products, like a heat pump water heater.

In late 2019, Randi needed to replace her nearly 30-year-old conventional electric water heater. Her son, Lebn Lovejoy, suggested switching to a HPWH.

"I saw CEC offered a good incentive for HPWH," he says. "It was working well at our house, and I saw that it was saving us money. Plus with CEC's incentives, it seemed like a no-brainer to install one because it uses less power."

CEC offers a $500 incentive to switch to a HPWH. Senior Energy Specialist Jody Howe points out that manufacturers or

Does Size or Brand Matter?

Some members question if a HPWH can keep up with their hot water needs. HPWHs come in various sizes to accommodate small to large houses.

There are three classes of heat pump water heaters: tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3. The higher the tier, the more efficient, but at a higher purchase price. The most commonly purchased HPWHs on the market are in the tier 3 class. Various companies make HPWHs, including AO Smith and Rheem. For a list of qualifying products, visit www.cec.coop.

If you have questions about what size would be best for your home, contact a CEC energy specialist.

dealers sometimes also offer rebates.

Lebn says with the incentives, the entire project cost only a few hundred dollars.

"The savings will quickly offset the costs, so it made sense to do it," he says.

Did you know water heating typically accounts for 25% of the overall electric bill for a total electric home? Jody says if a member is interested in switching to a HPWH, they should make plans now.

"It is good to make a plan and know what you want to do before your water heater breaks down," she says.

Some members want to start saving and make the switch immediately.

Randi says the project to switch to a HPWH aligned with her goal to consume less power.

"My other son and I have Teslas, we have solar panels on our roof, and we have energy-efficient washers and dryers," she says. "It's nice to feel like you are contributing."

Working With CEC

Members interested in the HPWH program can find information on the cooperative's website, www.cec.coop, under the Energy Efficiency tab.

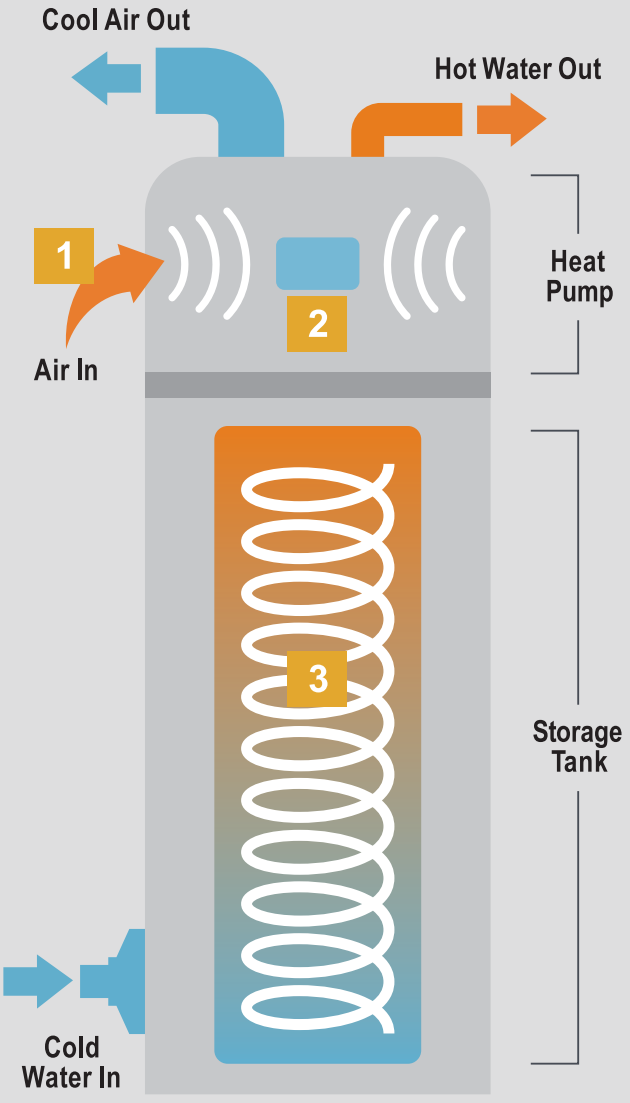
Lebn, who installed the unit in his mother's house, says the entire process went smoothly, including working with CEC.

For a member to receive the CEC credit, they must complete a form, including information about the new unit and its cost, accompanied by proof of purchase. CEC then verifies its installation.

"It was easy," Lebn says. ■

For more information about installing a heat pump water heater, call a Central Electric Cooperative energy specialist at 541-548-2144.

How Does a Heat Pump Water Heater Work?



Heat pump water heaters transfer heat rather than create it and, thereby, can deliver hot water up to three times more efficiently than conventional electric water heaters.

1. The heat pump pulls warmth from the air, even if the air is cool.
2. Warm air is compressed, increasing its temperature.
3. Heat flows through condenser coils that transfer heat to the water.

A Visit to Jewell Meadows

Wildlife area offers unique up-close opportunity to feed and observe elk

Story and photos by Scott Laird

Russ and Ann Kastberg lead winter elk feeding tours and share their knowledge of the elks' habits at Jewell Meadows.

If you've ever driven Highway 202 toward the Coast Range, you've driven through the Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area, managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and home to several herds of resident Roosevelt elk.

The Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area was established in 1969 with ODFW's purchase of a 183-acre tract of land. ODFW bought the land because farmers were having a tough time managing their crops because of local resident elk populations. Several more properties were added in the early 1970s.

Today, Jewell Meadows encompasses 1,140 acres in three separate tracts. A portion of the area is set up as a wildlife refuge to protect the animals from disturbance, but limited hunting is allowed. The area is surrounded by about 1,800 acres of land owned by the Oregon Department of Forestry and several private timber companies. That property is held in wildlife refuge status through cooperative land use agreements with the owners, and provides ODFW with almost 3,000 acres of prime Roosevelt elk habitat.

The area is managed with three goals in mind: protect adjacent landowners by providing a place for the elk to congregate; provide recreational opportunities through educational programs and viewing; and provide wildlife habitat and protection to a wide array of species, including the featured resident elk herds.

The area is not fenced, so elk can move around the region at will—and they do, often traveling outside the area boundaries and across Highway 202 when the mood strikes them.

One of the most unique and popular programs at Jewell Meadows is the winter elk feeding tour. Groups of up to 15 visitors can ride in an open wagon into the fields and feed the elk from alfalfa bales. The feeding program operates from December to the end of February, Thursdays through Tuesdays at 9 a.m. Wednesdays are a management day, which allows staff to count and observe the herds.

Anyone who wants to go on this fun adventure needs to plan ahead. Every year, ODFW starts taking reservations the morning of December 1 and is fully booked by 2 p.m. the same day.

Volunteer hosts Ann and Russ Kastberg lead feeding tours. Retired from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Ann and Russ hail from Castle Rock, Washington, and spend their days traveling the country and serving as volunteer park hosts at numerous locations. This year was their sixth season at Jewell Meadows, where they share their accumulated knowledge of the elk and answer visitors' questions.

Ann says in addition to the elk, the healthy Jewell Meadows ecosystem is home to bobcats, coyotes, bears, cougars, black-tailed deer, bald eagles, bandtail pigeons, a variety of songbirds and several species of frogs, salamanders and other amphibians, some of them endangered.

Jewell Meadows is home to about 270 elk. Herds are led by a female cow. The largest main heard has about 100 cows, calves and some juvenile males up to 2 years old.

Another herd of around 50 to 60, called the Barn Herd, spends time in the fields near the highway, as does a smaller herd of about 25, called the West Herd, which Russ says was a wild herd just a few years ago,

Visitors can view elk at Jewell Meadows from Highway 202. Elk are often visible from the road during the winter. Another good time to visit is early morning or the evening during the summer to see the new calves.

but has recently moved onto the refuge. A bull herd of about 15 mature males also hangs around the area. A herd of about 80 elk with seven bulls are on the Beneke Creek tract of land on the opposite side of Highway 202. A wild herd lives on another 155-acre tract, called Humbug, on part of the refuge off Highway 26.

During their first year, males are called spikes and are identified by their straight, pointy antlers. As they age, the bulls' antlers begin to branch out into several points. The older the bull, the more branches and points it will have. Males shed their antlers every spring and regrow them each summer. The larger bulls tend to mate early in the season. The younger, less mature will breed toward the end.

Roosevelt elk cows typically give birth every other year between late May and early August. This year, Jewell Meadows counted 55 calves per 100 cows, which Ann says is a relatively high number.

When calves are born, they weigh 30 to 50 pounds. By the fall, they can weigh as much as 250 pounds.

Roosevelt elk at Jewell Meadows have a life span of about 12 to 15 years and only travel in about a 5-square-mile area. The elk here are not tagged, but are observed and studied to learn about their behavior and signs of disease.

Bryan Swearingen came to the Jewell area in 1993 as a wildlife biologist and became the Jewell Meadows manager in 1998. Originally from Cottage Grove, Bryan graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in wildlife science before joining ODFW.

"I really like the work I do here and I care about the area," Bryan says. "It's a nice place to live and raise a family. As the manager, I deal with the administrative stuff, but I can also step out the door and I'm back into why I got into the profession: to be out managing land and managing animals."

Bryan says about 900 people visit Jewell Meadows each year to participate in the winter elk feeding program. Management estimates another 120,000 visitor-use-days each year by people who stop at the wildlife area. The area is used by regional Boy Scouts for an annual camp.

In the past, Jewell Meadow elk have been relocated to suitable Roosevelt elk habitat in the Oregon Coast Range, the North Oregon Cascade Range, to Northwest California and to Southeast Alaska. They are transferred to help supplement existing herds or reestablish historical populations. In Alaska, they were moved to introduce a species where they were not previously established. Since 1972, about 2,000 elk from the area have been relocated, although no significant number has been moved since 2007.

Bryan says the elk herds mostly stay in the wildlife area year-round. The best time to view them is the winter, although they may be visible any time of year.

If you miss winter feeding, another good time to visit is after June when the cows are giving birth, to see the new calves and the new growth on the bulls' antlers. During late spring and summer, the best time of day is early in the mornings and toward the end of the day. ■

The Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area is at 79878 Hwy. 202, Seaside. For more information, call 503-755-2264.

Stories Delivered From the Road

Story and photos by Jean Bilodeaux

For 27 years and 1.8 million miles, Ernie Givan has delivered packages for UPS in Surprise Valley.

Every workday, Ernie has sat high in the drivers seat as he and his brown UPS truck traverse the region. He may always travel the same tracks, but there's always new stories along the road of repetition. Chance interactions and unexpected events can make an impact on many a life.

Deliveries Big and Little

Cedar Pass, in northeastern California, is a remote 18-mile stretch of two-lane road that connects Alturas and Cedarville. It winds over a 6,300 foot-high mountain pass, hugging steep cliffs with arguably not enough guard rails before dropping into Surprise Valley. In 27 years, Ernie has driven this treacherous pass more than 24,000 times. He has only had to chain up eight times, and he praises the California Department of Transportation for its excellent work in maintaining the road year-round. He has never had an accident on the pass himself. He's only had a few incidents.

Ernie makes many friends on his deliveries. Last, year a mother asked her 2-year-old son, Bradley Keough, what he wanted to be for Halloween. Without hesitation, he replied, "Ernie. I want to be Ernie." On Halloween, the newly uniformed youngster went into a local restaurant and a customer asked if he was the new UPS man. He looked indignantly at the person and yelled, "No, I'm Ernie!"

Later that day, the real Ernie knocked on the door to deliver a package to the Bradley's home. Little Ernie answered the door and big Ernie let him peek inside his UPS truck, scan the package and deliver it to the child's father.

The Winds of Fortune

In his nearly three decades delivering packages in Surprise Valley, Ernie says he has had just one accident. It was among the windiest of windy days. Gusts in excess of 100 mph were later reported. Ernie had just delivered a package to a home south of Cedarville. As he recalls, he was on County Road 1, the main road in Surprise Valley. He was gaining speed when a gust of wind hit his truck.

"I could feel the right front end of the truck lifting and I knew it was going over," Ernie says. "My truck landed on its left side, but my momentum caused me to slide down the road until I hit a snowbank. The windshield blew open, filling the truck with snow and causing the truck to flip over from its left side to its right side. I ended up hanging from my seat belt. When I opened my eyes, I could see that the truck's frame was bent with a sharp piece of metal aimed inches from me. My seat belt saved me from being impaled, and most likely killed."

Ernie was trapped in his truck. He kicked out the remaining windshield and left the car. Bleeding from shards of glass embedded in his hands and arms, he needed help. Winds had just helped flip a truck. With the wind slamming Ernie, he had to walk at an incredibly steep angle

OPPOSITE: Ernie Givan and his UPS truck have delivered packages in Surprise Valley for 27 years.
LEFT: Big Ernie celebrated Halloween by meeting Little Ernie, Bradley Keough, a local 2-year-old who dressed as the his favorite UPS driver.

to remain upright. He started walking to the nearest ranch. It wasn't long before a school district truck stopped for him. They had been checking to see if it would be safe to drive buses in the wind.

"They took me to the hospital," Ernie says. "UPS sent two men to transfer the packages to another truck and to deliver the remaining packages. I went to work the next day."

"It's been a pleasure to make deliveries in the valley," Ernie says. "It's a challenge physically and mentally. Plus being a test of my driving skills."

A Turn for the Worst

Early one winter morning, Ernie was driving down the east side of the mountain when he saw a man walking along the road. Recognizing the man, Ernie stopped his truck and asked if everything was OK. The man replied that a friend of his was driving to work earlier and thought he saw tire tracks going over the edge of the cliff. The man was checking for that car.

UPS workers are timed for how long it takes to make deliveries. Ernie was running early on his route and offered to help look. The two men walked for about 15 minutes without seeing signs of an accident, so Ernie went back to his deliveries. With this delay his average 10-hour workday was likely to stretch to the maximum allowable 14 hours.

"I climbed into my truck and started toward Cedarville," Ernie says. "I sit higher than a regular vehicle and had only gone a few feet when I saw a body in the canyon."

"I stopped and put on my flashers," Ernie says. "Sliding down the steep slope, I got to a woman. She was white, cold and had no pulse."

She was dead.

Ernie yelled to his friend that he had found someone and to call for help. No one had seen the car yet. While he could not help the lifeless woman, Ernie realized there may have been more than one person in the still missing car.

He started walking upstream. It was quite a distance before he saw a car, smashed, upside-down. Its interior was covered in blood.

Nobody was inside the car. Nobody was under the car either. Any surviving passengers would likely have left the car and looked for help. Ernie started walking the perimeter in ever-increasing circles. He found blood on a rock, and followed the traces of blood toward the road. Help had arrived by this time, and a rope was lowered so Ernie could climb up the mountainside.

Authorities recovered the body of the sole victim. It was later speculated that the woman was making the same drive Ernie did daily when she careened off the road. She likely survived the crash and struggled up the cliff, walking down the highway for help. Likely, she fell back into the canyon, down to where she laid when Ernie found her body some time later.

"That day I realized that little things can unexpectedly happen that can change your life," said Ernie. ■

Active Membership Is a Family Tradition

Story and photos by Craig Reed

Chris Seubert was introduced to Lane Electric Cooperative at an early age.

Fred and Mary Lou Seubert moved their family into Lane's service area when Chris was 7. The Seubert family attended many of the co-op's annual meetings, seeing the board in action.

"My dad was fascinated with the co-op model," Chris says.

Chris is carrying on the family tradition of being a Lane co-op member. The meetings of his youth have grown into board meetings that he helps lead. Chris has served the district on local, state and national boards.

Now 65 years old, Chris, his wife, Stephanie, and their teenage children are residents of the co-op's Central District. Chris has represented that district as a member of the Lane Electric Board of Directors since 2004.

Chris was a long-time employee of Pacific Northwest Bell and had experience in several operations and network positions for that company. He retired in

OPPOSITE: Hiking is a favorite activity for Chris Seubert, especially with his dog, Tucker. LEFT: Indoors, Chris enjoys listening to his daughter, Hannah play the piano.

2011 after 35 years. He brings his telecom experience to the Lane Electric board and enjoys every second.

"I use the word fun," Chris says. "People might mistake that as not working hard, but I've immersed myself 100% into the co-op. I look forward to the monthly meetings, the conferences, the workshops. It's been 16 years of learning, of education and staying current with what is going on in the co-op and power industries."

Chris is certified as a Credentialed Cooperative Director through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. He is a past president of Lane Electric's board. His continuing interest led him to serve as a board member and president of the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, an organization that represents and promotes the interests of electric cooperatives and their members. He was chairman of ORECA's Technology Committee for five years.

The ORECA experience sparked Chris' interest in the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative. Encouraged to run because of his telecom background and interest in high-speed internet, he campaigned and was elected to a three-year term on that co-op's board in 2018. He represents co-ops in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

As a member of local, state and national boards, Chris says it is difficult at times to speak out about issues, "but I'm not afraid to challenge the status quo."

Debi Wilson, Lane Electric's general manager, says it is important for a board member to speak up.

"The best boards are diverse in their points of view," she says. "If everyone thinks alike too much, the board is bound to miss something important. Chris challenges us to consider the alternatives. He is very passionate about the co-op and doing what is best for our members."

Chris says electricity rates continue to be the most important concern for members. As a co-op member, he's all for lower rates, but as a co-op district director, he understands the rate must cover labor and maintenance of the co-op's infrastructure.

"There is a cost to getting power to your house," he says. "The reality is you have to spread the cost across the system. You have to create a rate structure that is fair for everyone. There is a fixed cost to running a co-op. Our job as a board is to figure what is the best way to handle those costs. It is something we're always looking at as we go forward."

Lane Electric has approximately 10,000 members and 13,000 meters. Chris says that because of more energy-efficient products such as appliances, windows and doors, power use has slowly dropped in each of the past six years in Lane Electric's service territory that consists mostly of residential meters.

"While usage drops, Lane Electric still has expenses," Chris says.

Other issues facing the co-op, according to Chris, are continual preparation for the forecasted Cascadia earthquake or any other natural disaster and the possibility of getting high-speed internet to its members. NRTC is in the midst of an internet feasibility study for Lane Electric.

"We know getting high-speed internet out to the rural areas is a problem," Chris says. "We just don't know yet how it's going to get solved. If our members can't get legitimate high-speed internet, we're not going to attract new younger people to move into our area. Somehow, co-ops have to be part of that grassroots effort, to help facilitate or be part of that process. We know we have a responsibility to be at the table, to assist in the process."

Natural disaster preparedness and readiness for subsequent power outages is a topic of discussion at Lane Electric's district meetings, and the focus of articles in Ruralite magazine. Chris says that planning in advance can help limit the effects of surprise events.

Chris says he continues to find these co-op issues intriguing and interesting.

When his positions on both the Lane Electric and NRTC boards come up for election, he plans to run for reelection. ■

Leon Birky and Chloe Hess lead livestock such as these Angus calves through the ring at the Eugene Livestock Auction.

Love Is the Winning Bid

Leon Birky and Chloe Hess met at the Eugene Livestock Auction and fell in love with each other and the business

Story and photo by Craig Reed

Amidst the dust, mud and manure of the Eugene Livestock Auction yard, Chloe Hess and Leon Birky discovered a couple of common interests.

They liked hanging around the auction yard and its livestock during Saturday sales, and they liked each other.

The results from those interests were a marriage in 2011 and the purchase of the Eugene Livestock Auction in 2018.

"Auctions can almost be an addiction," Chloe says. "We just like auctions."

Both Chloe and Leon came to the auctions in their youth with their parents. They were drawn to the cattle, sheep, horses, mules, donkeys, goats, pigs, chickens and rabbits that went through the auction ring and the cadence of the auctioneer as buyers made their bids.

In 2009, while a student at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Chloe worked at the Eugene auction yard. Leon worked there as a ringman.

The two spent many hours at the Eugene auction when they were dating. Now as owners and operators of the business, they are at the yard full time. Chloe works in the office and Leon hauls livestock to the yard, organizes a variety of animals in the back pens and directs those animals through the auction ring.

The couple has four young children. Like their parents, the kids will grow up around the business. When they're older they may have chores and part-time jobs in the family business.

The Eugene Livestock Auction celebrates its 61st anniversary this year. Despite its Eugene name, the yard is in Junction City, just off Highway 99. Ownership of the yard changed multiple times before it settled in the hands of Bruce Anderson and Kate Garvey, who owned it from 1995 to 2018.

"They're young and exuberant like I was when I bought it," Bruce says. "They grew up here, they have a sense of the work ethic that is needed to make the business run. As long as there is a livestock industry, the auction yard needs to be here."

Prior to the couple's purchase, two pending sales for the business fell through. The rumor was that if either of those sales had been completed, the auction yard buildings and pens were going to be demolished and replaced by a different industry. With Chloe and Leon there, drab ties and khakis don't show up to the yard for Monday-to-Friday jobs at some new business park. Livestock auctions are still held every Saturday. Horse sales are the second Sunday of each month.

The Eugene Livestock Auction is the only livestock auction remaining in Western Oregon between Junction City and the state's southwestern border. Livestock owners were pleased to see the Leon and Chloe maintain this last refuge. Paul Massey and Ben Kokkeler, Junction City-based cattle and sheep ranchers, say the business is important to livestock producers, especially for smaller livestock producers who don't have enough animals to sell and ship as a truck load.

"It's a key marketing spot for the valley, for buyers and sellers in Western Oregon to meet," Paul says. "They care deeply about everybody they're doing business with. It doesn't matter if it is one goat or 1,000 head of cattle. They try to keep both the buyer and the seller happy. That can be a thankless job, but somehow they do it."

Auction yards are essential for livestock producers because they create a centralized market that connects buyers and sellers who otherwise wouldn't find each other. Ben praises Leon and Chloe for attracting more sellers and their animals because it means more buyers.

"They're friendly and they're as honest as you can get," Ben says. "They're very helpful, and if you don't know what you're doing, they're more than willing to show you the ropes."

The Eugene Livestock Auction earns its main revenue by getting a percentage of each sale. The percentage depends on the species. Along with the auction yard and ring, the business features the Stockmen's Café, open daily for breakfast and lunch. In addition to Chloe and Leon working full time at the business, the yard has a full-time employee and the café has two full-time employees. On sale days, the business has 20 to 25 part-time employees, almost half of them local high school kids. On a typical Saturday, 350 to 450 head of cattle, 300 sheep and goats, and a variety of other animals are walked through the auction ring

"This is a service to southwestern Oregon," Leon says.

Since buying the business 18 months ago, Leon and Chloe have added new pens in the yard and have upgraded other pens, gates and water troughs. They also have updated the computer system and have added a TV monitor on the wall above the auctioneer. There is now audio and video of every sale. Having those helps decide any disputes that might arise in the ring.

The café was given a face-lift, which includes new paneling on the bar front, a new door at the front entrance, new chair rail trim and new décor. Outside, there is a new business sign and more efficient, brighter lighting. In the future, Leon and Chloe plan to build a small arena in the back so horses can be ridden prior to the monthly horse sale.

"We want to keep the auction around for a long time," Chloe says.

"If one of our kids want to keep it going, that would be ideal." ■

Brewing Innovative Beers

Brewmaster Tonya Cornett has earned respect in the craft beer industry

By Craig Reed

When Tonya Cornett became a brewmaster almost 20 years ago, women in the craft beer industry were rare. But she wasn't deterred from getting into the beer business.

After earning a bachelor's degree in psychology from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, Tonya pursued a full-time career in brewing. She graduated from the World Brewing Academy, then moved to Central Oregon.

She was the brewmaster at Bend Brewing Co. for 10 years and has been the innovation brewmaster for 10 Barrel Brewing Co. in Bend the past eight years.

Tonya's determination and brewing skills were recognized in 2008 when she was the first woman to win the title of Small Brewpub Brewmaster of the Year at the World Beer Cup—the world's largest commercial beer competition.

In 2016, 1859 Magazine—a publication focused on culture, travel and lifestyle in Oregon—included Tonya on its list of 16 women who have made Oregon history. It credited her with helping bring Oregon beer into the national spotlight and for "breaking the pint glass ceiling for women in the craft brewing industry."

"Brewing is a good marriage between chemistry and art," Tonya says. "It's a super-detailed process. It's a process that has a lot of moving parts, but you can chunk it into smaller bits, and that makes it easier to grasp."

Tonya Cornett enjoys her work as innovation brewmaster for 10 Barrel Brewing Co. in Bend. The work involves creating and tasting many types of beers, including the Raspberry Crush in her hand. PHOTOS COURTESY OF REILLY GOLDBERG/10 BARREL BREWING CO.

Tonya is most well-known for sour beers. She has created and produced a line labeled Crush.

"That's been one of the beer highlights for me," she says. "It has done very well."

At 10 Barrel Brewing, Tonya gets to do what she likes best: work on the production floor, trying new recipes and producing new beers. She works with a team of three other brewmasters to come up with new and innovative products.

Tonya pours a sample at 10 Barrel Brewing Co.

Tonya says when she started creating and brewing beer 25 years ago as a home brewer, she never imagined the products and flavors now used to make beer.

One of her innovative beers is Cucumber Crush. She says it is slightly sour and tart. Another beer Tonya created uses rose petals, pureed rose hips and rose water.

She says she gets a lot of her ideas for new beers from the flavors found in candy, vegetable and fruit aisles in grocery stores.

"I write a recipe, brew it, taste it, tweak it, rebrew it, tweak it, rebrew it until I have what I want," she says. "A new beer is always somebody's favorite."

Tonya's beers have had plenty of success in competitions. In 2006, her HopHead beer in the American IPA category—typically the largest category—won a gold medal at the Great American Beer Festival. During her 10 years at Bend Brewing, her beers earned eight Great American Beer Festival medals and four gold medals at the World Beer Cup.

She traveled to England and was a guest brewer at four breweries for the JD Wetherspoon Pub chain. In 2011, she was one of the main brewmasters in the documentary "The Love of Beer."

Tonya took the innovation brewmaster position at 10 Barrel because it gave her the chance to be more creative in developing beer recipes.

"That position centered on research and development, so it was hard to refuse," Tonya says.

Since then, she has traveled to China to collaborate with a brewery on sour beer. More recently, she has teamed with a coworker and a Belgium brewery to produce a Belle Fraise sour beer.

Tonya's 10 Barrel beers have won six Great American Beer Festival medals and three World Beer Cup medals.

Because of her brewing success and longevity in the business, Tonya has earned respect and been a judge in many competitions. She does not judge in the categories her beers are entered.

"I love judging because I'm able to try more beers," she says. "You never know where you're going to gain insight and inspiration."

The second "Beers of Joy" documentary in 2018 focused on Tonya in Germany, where she learned about traditional Berliner Weisse beers—a nearly extinct style.

In 2019, 10 Barrel produced 42 different products. 10 Barrel tests its beers on a small scale with consumers by serving them at its pub. If a beer passes the public test, it is produced on a much larger scale for the commercial market.

Tonya says her favorite is usually whatever she is working on at the time.

"We taste a lot of beer," she says of her team. "It's part of the job, to make sure the beer I'm making is equivalent or better than beer from other breweries. I love this job. There's always something new to learn."

To help promote the craft beer industry in Central Oregon, Tonya and her husband, Mark, opened The Mountain Jug—a beer shop in Sunriver—a few years ago. The shop rotates local craft beers through its 12 taps. ■

Lady Fern Cultivates Creativity

Parkdale shop features local artists

Story and photos by Drew Myron

Parkdale's only retail shop represents more than 25 area artists and offers handcrafted pottery, paintings, jewelry, furniture, clothing, woodwork and more.

What's growing in Parkdale? The answer is Lady Fern. Not the common leafy plant, but the one-of-a-kind shop.

Lady Fern is the town's only retail shop, operating with a mission to bring people together by shining a light on local creativity.

Located in downtown Parkdale, Lady Fern features a rotating collection of wares crafted by artists from the Columbia Gorge.

"Everything is local," says Brooke Yokers, the art-loving entrepreneur who opened Lady Fern in June 2019. "Most everything is from Hood River and Parkdale artists. There's so much creativity here!"

A combination gift shop, art boutique and artist cooperative, Lady Fern represents more than 25 professional artists working in a variety of forms: from painting to pottery, jewelry to furniture, clothing to coffee and woodwork to books.

Thanks to Brooke's artful curation, each piece is in constant rotation and artistically displayed in the shop's bright and airy setting. Necklaces drape from vintage books, irreverent undies fill a shelf, a stained-glass skull hangs in a bright window and twinkle lights line the walls.

"I like creating spaces," Brooke says. "This space is my art. I think artists have the tendency to not recognize their worth, and a lot of times they are not good salespeople. I like talking and getting to know people, and I make people comfortable. I felt like we needed a place in Parkdale that allowed an outlet for creativity."

Housed in the historic Parkdale Grange, tucked between Solera Brewery and the Hutson Museum, the space previously hosted a bike shop, a snowboard shop, a grocery store and pool hall.

In the summer, this hamlet of 300 residents is flush with tourists visiting the Columbia River Gorge.

"We get this crazy amount of traffic, and there was no little shop to walk around and admire," Brooke says.

She says the real traffic comes from year-round locals and those with second homes in the Hood River Valley.

"It's a nice way for people to connect to the area," she says. "Shopping here is like buying from your friends and neighbors. It's a nice hub."

Brooke, 30, is from Kent, Washington. She attended Seattle Pacific University as a soccer star. In 2014, she moved to the

Brooke Yokers opened Lady Fern in 2019. Everything she sells is locally made, mostly by Hood River and Parkdale artists.

Columbia Gorge and met her soon-to-be partner, Paul Spaulding. The two traveled for a bit before returning to Parkdale in 2016, where they now raise their 4-year-old daughter, Mable.

The hardworking couple juggle a full life. Along with running Lady Fern, Brooke works as bartender at Solera Brewery in Parkdale and at Double Mountain Brewery in Hood River. Paul works as a cook at Broder Ost in Hood River.

"I like being busy," says Brooke. "I like having all these micro-communities that I can gather together."

To that end, Lady Fern has established itself as a hub, hosting events such as Meet the Makers—an artist meet-and-greet—and Mommomsocial, a Parkdale mom meetup.

Brooke hopes to offer workshops and art events, and locals seem eager to take part.

"I have seen several businesses come and go," says Jordan Kim, an artist who has lived in Parkdale 15 years. "Like any small town, it can be hard to survive the ebbs and flows of the seasons and traffic flow. Lady Fern hasn't even been in Parkdale a year, and already it's become a staple. Because it is a beautifully curated mix of regional artisans' products, locals feel a lot of buy-in and ownership in the shop. Brooke has added creative touches and aesthetic senses to the space which has beautified the community as well. She has brought love, charisma and a breath of creative energy to our sweet little town." ■

Lady Fern is in downtown Parkdale at 4959 Baseline Drive. Winter hours are Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Summer hours are Thursday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 253-486-9366 or look for Lady Fern Parkdale on Instagram and Facebook.

Enhanced Education

From left, Crane Elementary students Bear Doman, Anita Peila and Amaya Ballard enjoy the school's newly remodeled library.

A new library, computers and curriculum boost learning opportunities

Story and photos by Lauren Brown

With a dramatic increase in students the past four years, Crane schools have made improvements to keep up with the population growth.

In those four years, the elementary school has grown from 42 to 126 students, and the high school has gone from 48 to 90 kids. Eighty-eight students ride the bus from Burns to Crane each day, although that number includes Crane students who live on Highway 78 as well.

Harney County School District 1J also sponsors the Silvies River Charter School locally and Oregon Family Schools out of Bend.

To better serve students, the district had to make changes, including moving the library to the old Sodhouse building.

"We needed some more classroom space—and one of our classrooms was the library—so we had to get creative with where we were going to move our library," says Crane Schools Superintendent Matt Hawley.

The Sodhouse building was brought in years ago from the Narrows, where it served as a one-room schoolhouse and teacherage. The district had used the building for storage.

"It was an eyesore," Matt says. "It was just dirt and filth and spiders."

Everything needed to be replaced and updated.

"We just jumped in with both feet and said this is what we're going to do," Matt says. "We made that decision toward the end of May and had it done by the time

school started. It turned out really well."

The old schoolhouse has been transformed with new windows, flooring, counters, paint, lighting, heating and air conditioning. The side of the building that used to be the one-room school now houses shelf after shelf of books with attractive signage and vibrant displays. An automatic book checkout system makes it easy for students to take books home.

The other side of the building—which was the teacher's living quarters when it was a school—is a quiet space for the district's speech and language program. It may also become an educational game room.

The district kept the bell tower on top of the building intact, and Matt has plans to make it operational again.

"I'm going to have a goal next year that once a kid reaches their reading goal, they get to come out and ring the bell," Matt says. "That way the kids will be able to share with the community that someone met their reading goal."

Teachers walk their classes to the library to check out books, and retired teacher Diane Paul volunteers once a week to teach 30-minute sessions on library skills.

Matt says the library transition would not have happened without the dedication of kindergarten/first grade teacher Angelia Sanchez and fifth grade teacher Celeste Owens, who gave up two weeks of their summer to move, sort and catalog books in time for the first day of school.

In addition to the library, Matt is excited about the Paxton Patterson curriculum the district bought this year. Paxton Patterson career labs provide high school students with hands-on learning that introduces them to careers in a variety of disciplines. Crane bought health services and construction career labs.

For the construction lab, the district converted a large shed into a building where students receive hands-on lessons in plumbing, framing, drywall, concrete and electrical work. As the students become adept at the various aspects of construction, the goal is to build a small house on a trailer.

"They'll take all the skills they've learned through this program and implement it into a culminating project, so they see how it really works," he says. "We'll try and build a small house every year with the kids who have gone through the program."

Crane Elementary teachers Angelia Sanchez and Celeste Owens took two weeks in the summer to sort, move and catalog books to ensure the library was ready for the first day of school.

In addition to gaining skills handy for any homeowner, Matt hopes these students realize such skills can translate into a career in a community such as Burns, which needs tradespeople.

Other educational improvements included buying 150 new Chromebooks—and all the technology and infrastructure that goes along with running them—and new reading and math curriculum.

The custodial staff was kept during the summer with projects to be completed before school started. New asphalt for the entire Crane Schools complex cost $283,000. New striping was painted with parking spaces for buses and visitors.

"This was all gravel," Matt says, pointing to the streets and parking lot. "We redid the whole thing. That was probably the biggest project we did."

The district also remodeled three teacherages that hadn't been updated since the 1950s and converted the chapel into a wrestling room. The district put in a sand volleyball court and installed underground sprinklers under the football complex, along with new fencing. The bus barn was completed, new fuel tanks were bought, and a new districtwide security system was installed.

Looking ahead to next summer, Matt says the dorms, cafeteria and part of the elementary school will get new roofing. Bleachers will be installed in the high school gym. The district hopes to expand the Paxton Patterson program and house it in a new career technical education center—a 5,000 square foot building—in which students can take part in various career labs.

The one thing Matt wants folks to know is that Crane is a community that knows the value of education.

"We really want people to know that we take pride in who we are, and our kids take pride in who we are," he says. "When visitors come to Crane, we want them to see that this little community takes pride in its schools." ■

YOUR VOT

Mt. Wheeler Power is your co-op. Make your voice heard this election cycle.

By Christina Sawyer

Given the current political climate, you may have a distaste for politics. But if you have an opinion and want to see change, we encourage you to vote.

For the past 50 years, your district has been represented by an elected board member. We encourage you to be part of this tradition and take part in the upcoming Mt. Wheeler Power board elections. Board seats in Districts 1, 3 and 7 opened earlier this year. We accepted nominations through February 28, 2020.

The results of those nominations were not available at the time of this issue's release. However, you will be able to view the biographies of our candidates on our social media pages and in local newspapers.

This month, residents of the above-mentioned districts will receive ballots in the mail. You may ask, why is it important to vote? The cooperative business model has many advantages, but Democratic Member Control—one of the Seven Cooperative Principles—empowers us to choose our leaders and influence the operation of our cooperative.

Key issues directly affect the lives of those our co-op serves, so it's essential for members to educate themselves on co-op issues and vote for the best representative.

You and your vote are the largest and most powerful force driving the future of the cooperative. Unfortunately, not all who can vote will, meaning that fewer people get to directly influence issues that might affect their lives for years to come. In fact, in last year's board election, there was only 33% voter turnout.

This is a great time to get involved and informed regarding the issues and what your director is doing about them.

When considering a board member, you should look at their reputation and experience in the community. Do they have a strong ethical background, a high level of professionalism and good business sense? Will you be able to count on their ability to make sound accounting decisions and employee policies?

It is up to you to ask questions and make an informed choice. You have an opportunity here to make a difference in your electric cooperative.

Many of our members cite feeling as though their vote doesn't count as their reason for not participating in elections. While you may be disillusioned by politics in general, your voice is heard and can effect change locally.

The situation won't be changed by sitting idle while others make decisions for you. Voters who want to inspire change need to support the candidates they feel best represent their needs.

Participating in politics is a hard-won right in our nation. Building a relationship with the political process as early as possible is key to voting becoming a

E MATTERS

lifelong habit.

If you're historically a repeat voter, you're less likely to skip a trip to the polls in the future. This habit-forming participation is key to driving policy and electing leaders who represent the needs of voters of all ages, and it begins with local issues and local elections.

Your elected board of directors is responsible for the control and management of the property, personnel, facilities, equipment and finances of Mt. Wheeler Power. The board employs the CEO, who ensures the continued successful operation of the cooperative. It maintains authority to establish policies, approve plans and programs, and delegate authority to the CEO. While the board delegates the day-to day operations to the CEO, it reserves the right to review operational activities for conformity to policy and plans. The board believes efficient management of the cooperative can exist only with mutual understanding and complete cooperation between the board and CEO.

We encourage you to take a moment to pick up the phone or schedule a meeting with candidates in your district. Don't be afraid to ask tough questions. Even if your district isn't up for election this term, get to know your current board member and find out how they vote on important issues. Ask about their short- and long-term goals for the co-op. Do the research now because their seat will be up for election within 1 to 3 years.

In a district as small as a few hundred members, your vote could sway the election.

If you would like to learn which board member represents your district, call and speak to a member service representative.

Only people listed on a Mt. Wheeler Power membership application are eligible to vote. In joint memberships, such as a husband and wife or a business, the joint members must decide which person will vote because each membership is entitled to cast only one ballot.

To vote, you must be an active Mt. Wheeler Power member from the district in the election planned for April 20. All active members in the open districts will receive a ballot in the mail after March 13.

Please follow the instructions carefully. You will receive a postage-paid envelope to return your ballot to our cooperative attorney. Ballots must be postmarked by April 13, and the return envelope must be signed.

This will not disclose your vote. It is used by the election committee to validate your eligibility to vote and then separated from your ballot envelope, which is counted later. Unsigned envelopes will not be counted.

Make sure you do not include account questions or payments in the election envelopes. They will not be opened until April 20. If you feel you should have received a ballot and did not, please contact us after March 17.

Voting is one of the most important rights and responsibilities members have. Don't give up a chance to choose leaders and representatives who will do what is best for the future of the cooperative. ■

Nevada Guides Provide 'Hunt of a Lifetime' for Wounded Veterans

By Dianna Troyer

Getting up at 4 a.m. was no problem for Robert Evans, an Army veteran going on his first elk hunt last fall near Montello in northeastern Nevada.

"I couldn't sleep anyway, wondering what the day would bring," says the 34-year-old Reno resident. "This was a dream come true for me—a hunt of a lifetime. I'd been trying to draw a bull elk tag in my home state for 15 years."

Robert finally checked it off his bucket list last year, thanks to the Wounded Hero Project—a philanthropic program offered through the Nevada Outfitters and Guides Association. Since 2010, a wounded veteran has been chosen annually to receive a free weeklong elk hunt valued at thousands of dollars. Guides, a butcher and a taxidermist provide their services for free.

Robert, his wife, Karen, and their son, Duane, are still feasting on the elk steaks, roasts and burger. They plan to hang his 5-foot-tall elk mount on a living-room wall when the taxidermist completes it.

The association will choose this year's recipient soon, says Secretary Rachel Buzzetti. A committee picks the veteran from a pool of nominees.

"We get nominations by word of mouth and require the hunter to be a Nevada resident and Purple Heart recipient," Rachel says.

Robert was nominated for the project by April Wolfe, a recreational therapist for the city of Reno. Robert met her while participating in a wounded vet summer camp she organizes. She takes vets to the Reno air races, waterskiing, wake boarding,

Robert Evans with the elk he took down during his hunt, which he described as the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JASON MOLSBEE

bowling and land sailing.

The hero project was the brainchild of Dwight Lindquist, a guide who lives in Wells.

"I wanted veterans to know they're appreciated," says Dwight, who owns Bristlecone Outfitters. "Getting donations was like pushing a snowball downhill. All I needed to do was keep the momentum going. I just asked, and people were glad to contribute. Once it was established, I turned it over to the association."

Members of the guide association volunteer to take the lucky veteran hunting. Several guides, including Jason Molsbee of Cottonwood Ranch Hunting Services, took Robert last year.

Honored to Guide

"We feel honored to guide veterans as a way to give back," says Jason, who also guided wounded hero recipients in 2015 and 2017. "We owe these guys."

A guide for 20 years, Jason, 37, says he shares his admiration for elk with clients.

"When you hear them bugle, it's a real treat," he says. "When you're in the middle of elk, calling them in, hearing them scream … it just gets you hooked. There's nothing like it."

Robert agrees.

"A bull elk is majestic and beautiful," he says.

When Robert learned he was chosen for the free elk hunt, he felt disbelief.

"It didn't seem real until I held the tag in my hand," he says.

He hung the tag on a refrigerator magnet to remind him that his long-awaited hunt would become reality in November.

In mid-October, Rachel invited him to a planning meeting in Elko without telling him what she had on her agenda.

"I thought I'd meet the guides there," Robert says. "Instead, it was Christmas in October."

His first stop was to meet Elko County commissioners, who read a proclamation honoring him for his military service.

Robert was born in Elko and grew up in Crescent Valley 60 miles to the southwest.

He was then taken to a local sporting goods store and given hunting clothes and a Remington long-range rifle with a Vortex scope.

"When I saw that rifle, my blood pressure went up," says Robert, a competitive shooter. "I was so excited. I shoot high power rifle and pistol on my own and with M1 for Vets."

M1 for Vets is a nonprofit that helps wounded vets from Iraq and Afghanistan take up competitive marksmanship as a means of rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life. Robert competes in several classes, including across-the-course service rifle, 1,000-yard F-class, service pistol, tactical rifle and action pistol.

The Hunt

Well-equipped and eager for the hunt, Robert says he packed more than what he took to Iraq. With his new rifle, he felt optimistic about his first day of hunting on the Winecup Gamble Ranch, where he and the guides stayed in a guest lodge.

Jason Molsbee, a guide with Cottonwood Ranch Hunting Services, says it's an honor to participate in the Wounded Hero Project.

About 30 minutes before dawn, Jason drove him several miles to where elk had been seen. On the way, he learned how Robert was wounded.

After joining the Army in 2003 when he graduated from high school, Robert was deployed to Iraq in 2005. In May 2007, he was commander of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and was part of a convoy clearing a route of explosives and weapons.

"As we were passing under an old Iraqi Army guard post, an IED on top of it detonated and amputated my right hand an inch or so below the wrist."

After numerous surgeries and being fitted with a prosthesis, he retired and moved to Reno.

"I was right-handed, so I've learned to do everything left-handed," he says. "I don't regret losing my hand. If I had known I would have been injured, I'd still have signed the dotted line, like most veterans I know. Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to join the Army."

As he and Jason stopped at a fence to open a gate, they noticed elk about 1,800 yards away coming toward them. They hid behind sagebrush, patiently waiting as the elk came within 80 yards and jumped over the fence. Robert picked one and took a shot. It was an impressive elk with six points on each antler.

"What a phenomenal experience—a 6 by 6," Robert says. "My only regret was that it was over so quickly."

Robert says when people call him a hero, he politely disagrees.

"To me, the heroes are my friends—my brothers and sisters—who weren't fortunate enough to make it home," he says. "I think of them often." ■

Donations of hunting gear or money for the program are accepted at Nevada Outfitters and Guides Association, P.O. Box 28-1251, Lamoille, NV 89828. Checks should be made payable to Nevada Outfitters and Guides Association.

Innovation Percolates in John Day and Grant County

Multiple projects are in the works for community development and economic growth

By Susan Parrish

The city of John Day built a hydroponic greenhouse that uses reclaimed wastewater to grow vegetables for local stores and restaurants. PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF JOHN DAY

The city of John Day is ripe for innovative development projects and economic growth.

On Main Street, Grubsteak Mining Co.—the town's oldest restaurant—nods toward the region's gold-mining history dating back to 1862. Just up the street at the Chamber of Commerce, a Tesla electric vehicle charging station beckons toward the future.

Multiple projects use combinations of public and private funding to navigate the community's transition from an economically depressed town to a thriving epicenter of innovation.

John Day recently was selected to receive Touchstone Energy Cooperatives' Creative Placemaking grant to create an action plan to help spur community development and economic growth. A local steering committee will develop the plan with a consultant via conference calls and a site visit.

Lea Gettle, manager of administration and strategic services at Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, nominated John Day for the grant.

"John Day won the contest because they have so much energy behind their leadership," she says. "The judges were impressed with what's going on in John Day."

Touchstone's $20,000 grant is just a sliver of the innovative planning toward community development, economic growth and tourism marketing happening in John Day and Grant County.

Innovation Project in John Day

A champion of innovation, John Day City Manager Nick Green successfully lobbied the state legislature in 2017 for a $2.25 million public stimulus package to improve the area's broadband and 911 infrastructure.

In 2019, Oregon Telephone Corp., based in Mt. Vernon, was awarded a $6 million USDA ReConnect Grant to further expand broadband infrastructure in Grant County. OTC has partnered with John Day to help develop broadband expansion and plans to construct 89 miles of fiber optic line throughout the county.

Bringing reliable internet service to the area not only improves business connectivity and the quality of life for residents, but has the potential to attract business owners and work-from-home professionals.

The largest project is the John Day Innovation Gateway Project. The integrated community development, transportation and design plan will transform acres of brownfield at the old Oregon Pine mill site into dynamic public spaces.

A key element is reconnecting the site to the John Day River through trails and parks. The plan took 2½ years to develop and will take an estimated 20 years to develop. Several million of the funding has already been acquired through 10 grants and local funds. The city is applying for more grants, which could bring in more than $20 million this year.

The project's key elements include:

- Reclaiming the John Day riverfront for public recreation and connecting the site via a riverfront trail system, multiple parks and campsites.
- Building a wastewater reclamation facility.
- Building multiple commercial hydroponic greenhouses. and using reclaimed wastewater to grow vegetables for local stores and restaurants.
- Provide reclaimed water to Restoration Fuels' new torrefaction plant. The plant at the Malheur Lumber mill site converts biomass, including small-diameter trees, into torrefied wood and sold as fuel. The plant expects to hire 15 to 17 workers.
- Securing a 60-bed hotel and adjacent convention center.

• Building a larger interpretive center adjacent to the existing museum at the Kam Wah Chung Heritage Site to better accommodate Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's 9,000 annual visitors.

Nick is enthusiastic about the project's innovative ideas: turning wastewater into a water source in hydroponic greenhouses that grow food for the community and creating new jobs in hydroponic agriculture.

Grant County's 6.8% unemployment rate is the highest in Oregon. The county's population has steadily declined since the loss of the timber industry, and is forecasted to continue declining over the next 50 years.

"We've got to do things differently," Nick says. "Hydroponics is a new industry here, but it's rooted in our core values as an agricultural community. This is us staying true to ourselves but trying to be the best version of ourselves. Being innovative does require you to change your mindset. Not who you are, but how to stay viable.

"What a tremendous opportunity for a small community to fight its way back from a 30-year recession by making public sector investments in its own community. We're trying to create a resilient community that can withstand disruptions."

Grant County Innovation

Grant County leaders also are creating innovative plans to boost economic opportunity, quality of life and tourism.

Allison Field, Grant County economic development officer, says the county and city are collaborating on a master plan for the Grant County Fairgrounds, home of Oregon's longest running continuous county fair.

The master plan proposes improving facilities—including building a pavilion—to draw larger events and more visitors, and to better serve the local community.

Grant County plans to create jobs and business growth by partnering with the nonprofit organization Oregon Regional Accelerator & Innovation Network (RAIN). RAIN hired local entrepreneur Stephanie LeQuieu, who is working to connect entrepreneurs with resources to launch and scale business ventures.

"We're really right on the cusp of greatness," Allison says. "It's been a nice cohesion between the county and city."

Recognizing the need to create a plan for marketing the county to attract visitors, new residents and businesses, the Grant County Chamber of Commerce created a marketing committee led by Didgette McCracken. It started at the beginning because Grant County has no logo, branding guide or cohesive message.

"We wanted to come up with the message that said who we are and why you should come here," Didgette says. "We want a logo that people will recognize as Grant County."

The chamber hired an Eastern Oregon graphic design and marketing team to create a logo and brand identity guide. Eventually, the Chamber will have a marketing strategy to put into action.

Grant County Chamber of Commerce President Jerry Franklin says the county faces the same roadblocks as many rural communities: loss of family wage jobs. As a result, families and new high school graduates are moving away to seek more opportunity.

Jerry credits community leaders for "thinking outside the box" and says he is hopeful the projects will create new jobs, new residents and more tourists seeking the area's outdoor recreation. ■

Planning and Project Information

For more information, check out the following:

▶ OTEC Touchstone Energy Cooperatives' Creative Placemaking grant: www.coopcommunity.com/contest

▶ OTEC economic gateway website: Economicdevelopment.otec.coop

▶ City of John Day's innovation gateway: www.cityofjohnday.com/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning/page/3266/final_innovation_gateway_area_plan.pdf

▶ Grant County Chamber of Commerce: www.gcoregonlive.com

▶ Grant County economic development: https://grantcountyoregon.net/177/Economic-Development

▶ Oregon Regional Accelerator & Innovation Network: www.oregonrain.org

▶ Cycle Oregon's economic impact: www.cycleoregon.com/our-work/our-impact

Cycle Oregon 2020

The famous Cycle Oregon event will boost the local economy September 12-19 when it brings 2,000 cyclists to Grant and Wheeler counties for its 32nd classic, Ride the Painted Hills. This year's ride begins and ends in John Day. Riders will stop in Monument, Fossil, Mitchell and Dayville.

Cycle Oregon Executive Director Steve Schulz says John Day and other Grant County communities have embraced bicycle tourism. In turn, Cycle Oregon pumps about $150,000 into local communities through grants and stipends by using local volunteers to pull off the event's logistics. Cycle Oregon riders spend about $500,000 in the communities.

Cycle Oregon riders have pedaled through Grant County before.

"We're excited to return to Grant County," Steve says.

A mother washes clothes at a stream in the village of Aldea Montanita de la Virgen. PHOTO BY MIKE TEEGARDEN

Oregon Empowers Guatemala

OTEC linemen volunteer to bring power to village in Central America

By Joseph Hathaway

Rural electric cooperatives have a long-standing tradition of bringing lights where there are none. More than 80 years ago, cooperatives were formed to provide power to rural American communities, lifting isolated residents struggling to survive the Great Depression out of the darkness. Given its origins, electric co-ops are well-positioned to help others who lack access to electricity.

In the spirit of the cooperative way, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative and other electric co-ops around Oregon are teaming up to embark on an ambitious project to help electrify a remote village.

This April, volunteers from OTEC will join a team of other utility professionals from across the state for two weeks to bring much-needed electricity and residential services to a village in Guatemala.

The Oregon Empowers Guatemala project has been fostered by a team from the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association and coordinated through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's philanthropic arm, NRECA International.

The project is made possible by our linemen's volunteerism and primarily funded through donations from several Oregon cooperatives, national cooperative partners, member-owners and employees.

By working together across the country, the power of the cooperative network in the U.S. serves 42 million people nationwide. This network is what made formation of OTEC possible 30 years ago.

NRECA International has served and expanded the cooperative network globally for more than 50 years, bringing power to more than 160 million people across 45 countries.

"This is the first year the cooperatives in Oregon have teamed together to send volunteers representing Oregon directly, and I am humbled to have an opportunity to help support the effort," says Les Penning, CEO of Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative. "Access to electricity will set the groundwork for economic prosperity, better access to health care, enhanced safety, and the opportunity for new jobs and commerce for these villagers. It's a life-changing gift."

The Oregon Empowers Guatemala team will travel nearly 3,500 miles to build an electric distribution system in Aldea Montanita de la Virgen, in the district of Jalapa, a mountainous region in the southeastern part of the Central American country.

The village has 60 homes that consist of two to three rooms each. The center of the village has three structures: a church, a community/health center and a three-room schoolhouse—all without electricity.

Locals live humbly without running water, refrigeration or electric appliances.

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

Villagers live on what they grow, including corn, beans, bananas, watermelons, squash, fruits, chickens, turkeys and game hens. They grow coffee to sell for income.

Oregon's utility volunteers will wire all 60 homes and the community buildings for electricity. The system will consist of 3.1 miles of primary line and 2.5 miles of secondary line. Most of the terrain consists of steep hillsides.

A lighting ceremony will be held once the project is complete, bringing power to the village and opening a world of opportunity for the people who call Aldea Montanita de la Virgen home.

The Oregon Empowers Guatemala committee, comprised of Oregon cooperative leaders, selected a team of 13 volunteers for the upcoming trip.

Charlie Tracy, director of engineering; Curtis Eggleston, line crew foreman in Burns; and Tom Higgins, journeyman lineman in La Grande; will represent OTEC. Several alternates are ready to step up if needed.

"This is an opportunity to serve others in need, and it is a need that I can help provide," says Curtis, who grew up in Burns and has worked for OTEC since 2001. "I'm fortunate to be in a place in my life and career to be a part of something bigger."

The project supports several of the Seven Cooperative Principles: Cooperation Among Cooperatives, working together to help other people who need it; and Concern for Community, improving the quality of life of local communities at home and abroad.

"I hope to leave the people of that community with a better situation than what they've experienced before we showed up," says Tom, a 17-year veteran of OTEC. "Hopefully, the electricity will improve their quality of life and bring them access to amenities that most of us take for granted in our country, like possibly improving their farming standards with the ability to pump water."

OTEC's communications team will provide updates during the trip, posting videos and photos on otec.coop and our social media sites so member-owners can track the progress of this project. ■

For more information on the project, visit www.oregonempowers.com.

Charlie Tracy, director of engineering, will represent OTEC in Guatemala.

Curtis Eggleston, line crew foreman from Burns, will represent OTEC in Guatemala.

Tom Higgins, journeyman lineman from La Grande, will represent OTEC in Guatemala.

Krista Winn, left, and Maggie Burdick, her niece, spread painted rocks around Anderson Island. PHOTOS COURTESY OF KRISTA WINN

Hide and Seek ... and Hide

By Crista Fitzgerald

Anderson Island has always had rocks. Waves visit with the tides, leaving stones on the beach like forgotten luggage. More and more, the rocks of Anderson Island move around town on waves of people. These painted rocks deliver instructions for a secret game of hide and seek.

About 15 years ago, Wayne and Peggy Nelson built a weekend getaway cabin on Anderson island, and now spend around half of their time "on island." The cabin quickly became the family's hub for events, holiday celebrations and island life exploration.

Wayne and Peggy's daughter, Krista Winn, is a physical education teacher. She is a recipient of a National Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year Award. She lives in Port Angeles with her husband, Tim, also a teacher. One afternoon a few years ago while on a walk at home, Krista found a couple of painted rocks in a park. Some clever person had used stones and paint to encourage finders to support an upcoming vote for local teachers. It didn't take long for Krista, a self-described crafty person, to get out some paints and decorate a few rocks with butterflies, hearts and friendly greetings. She added a tiny note on the back, encouraging whoever found one to hide it again so someone else could do the same. Then she hid them around her school for the kids to find. Painting rocks was relaxing. Krista decorated a few more, and also began hiding them around Port Angeles. She enlisted her niece, Maggie Burdick, to join her artistic adventure.

Though the rocks came from the beach in front of the family cabin, this was a strictly Port Angeles endeavor—until a couple of Port Angeles rocks turned up on the island. Krista and Maggie did not plant them. The rocks migrated to the island on their own, and everything changed. Now the full family would spread Anderson Island Rocks. "I wanted to let my family join in, since we are all here together, and the island is a place we enjoy so much." Krista says. "It costs very little, makes people happy and it's lots of fun."

This house was all in: Krista, Tim and their son, Nels; Krista's sister, Karen, her husband, Brian, and their daughter, Maggie; even Krista's daughter, Kelly, and Maggie's son, Cooper. Together, they made this rollicking rock painting and hiding adventure a family affair.

Painting rocks can be as basic or as detailed as a person wants it to be. At the beach cabin, family members talk and laugh as they let their imaginations run wild with paint pens. "We feel like such a part of the island," Krista says. "Here we're

CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE: Maggie hides most rocks during the summer. Krista has honed and refined her painting method. The family has an Anderson Rocks float in the Anderson Island Labor Day parade.

all on Island Time. It's a perfect place to paint." When the designs are dry and the instructions on back have been affixed, rocks are sprayed with finish. Most of the creativity occurs during Christmas and New Year holiday get-togethers. Most rocks are saved and hidden in summer when the island population increases with walkers, bike riders and explorers.

Before the rocks go into buckets for hiding, before Wayne starts the car and rock-hiders pile in to sleuth out good hiding spots, Peggy—mother, aunt and grandmother to this artsy clan—takes her pick of those she can't part with. They will stay put in the cabin. "It's kind of like keeping kids' artwork," Krista says.

Gathering, painting and hiding rocks for people to find on the island was a hit. Maggie created "Anderson Island Rocks," a Facebook page. Islanders proudly post pictures of the rocks they find, sometimes of the spots they were found and dutifully comment that they have been rehidden. One lucky woman reported finding three in one day. Krista laughs at the state of the oldest rocks. "Some have been around so long they are looking pretty sad," she says.

Krista has no idea how many of the art rocks lay undiscovered, or how far they have traveled or if any get tucked in backpacks as souvenirs from some eccentric island art project. She estimates they have painted more than 1,000 rocks. The family has had a Painted Rock entry in the Anderson Island Labor Day Weekend Parade two years running, and plans to participate again this year. While walking along the route, Krista says children watching become excited as their float approaches, because she and her family hand out hundreds of painted rocks as they pass by. "When we hear a kid shout, 'I have my own rock!' and see their eyes light up, it makes us happy," she says.

Krista gives only broad, basic hints as to where rocks can be found: along trails, outside the ferry building, around schools, the country store, at the swimming hole (sometimes with the use of goggles), where the golf course crosses the road ...

"It's not like geocaching," Krista says with a laugh. "They can be found anywhere but the beach." ■

Paint Your Own Rock

Krista Winn has refined the rock-painting process. She has experimented with products to balance artistry with weatherproofing.

Here is her recipe for painted rock art:

- ▶ Find a rock you want to paint.
- ▶ Wash and dry the rock.
- ▶ Paint the background color, if any. Then make base coat with acrylic craft paint or pen. Let it dry.
- ▶ Paint the overlay design. Let it dry completely.
- ▶ If you have instructions for the finder, paint them on the back or affix a sticker.
- ▶ Apply Rustoleum clear gloss sealer to both sides in two light coats.
- ▶ Find a spot to place the rock—out of the way but noticeable enough to be found.
- ▶ Wait for others to find and move the rock, and see if new stones appear.

She Saw the Sign

By Rick Stedman

Signs made at this Seahawks corporate event likely wouldn't ever be displayed on a foggy night at Century Link Field. Attendees had come to an event hosted by The Makery—a Tacoma do-it-yourself crafts company—and would be walking away with personalized pieces of art.

"This was pretty awesome, and a really fun event," Jolie McNulty, owner of The Makery, says. "The Seahawks workshop offered a laid-back setting and non-stressful environment at their corporate headquarters in Renton. Each attendee painted their own individual signs while enjoying camaraderie and creativity with others."

Now in its fifth year, The Makery offers the materials to make creative signs that double as beautiful home décor and lasting memories. Jolie refurbished furniture before beginning The Makery, and brings her passion for handiwork and craftsmanship to the hands of customers.

"Since opening five years ago, we have hosted more than 1,000 private events at our DIY studio," says Jolie. "We've hosted everything from wild and crazy kids' birthday parties to laid-back bridal showers, and everything in between."

After just more than a year in business at the Tacoma studio, The Makery was crowned best art gallery in western Washington by viewers of KING5 television's Evening Magazine. In late 2019, The Makery was again acknowledged by KING5's Evening Magazine viewers, this time voted best team-building activity in the annual Best of Western Washington viewer's choice poll.

Recently, The Makery has hosted events like the CHI Franciscan holiday party; a Facebook women's event; team building for each of Boeing and Children's Dental Care; as well as club members of Fircrest Golf Club and the Tacoma Country Club.

"We host lots of kids' birthday parties," Jolie says.

OPPOSITE: Team members at The Makery, like Stacy Isenberger, left, and Miranda Beagley, help guide visitors through the creative process.
LEFT: Julie McNulty founded The Makery in 2016
BELOW: Visitors can choose from a range of paints and materials.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ESHA HART PHOTOGRAPHY

"They usually last a couple of hours and include some form or creative expression for the kids, along with opening presents and eating birthday cake. These are always enjoyable events."

On the home front, Jolie and her husband Justin, a warrant officer at Fort Lewis, have two children.

"Our 7-year-old daughter Zoey and 1-year-old son Kaisen have both been raised around paint and wood," Jolie says. "We have signs they painted throughout the house. I like to think of what projects I'd like to do with them and then offer those in the studio. They are our favorite mini makers."

Parkland Light & Water Manager Susan Cutrell says her daughter, Telysha, recently booked a party at The Makery for about a dozen people.

"We preselected our project—words, frame, etc—and for two hours we had a private room with an instructor who would walk us through each step," Susan says. "We all made a custom piece and had a great time."

While much art is made inside The Makery's walls, about a third of The Makery's business centers on "take and make" kits. Visitors come to the shop, select the kit they want, then take it home and get creative in the privacy of their home.

Other creative workshop options include "open paint" sessions. When customers make a reservation online, they also choose from various frame options and design options.

If a visitor wants to personalize a sign, they can preregister at least three days ahead of time while The Makery develops a tailored stencil. If they know exactly what they want to design or see something in the studio they want to replicate, The Makery offers custom design options. Specifications can be emailed to The Makery and the company will prepare the stencils and materials.

At the session, an instructor is always nearby to assist with tools and materials like a quick-drying chalk paint, a blow dryer to aid in drying and easy-to-peel stencils. In no time flat customers will have their very own masterpiece ready to hang in their house!

"A lot of visitors simply love the experience," Jolie says. "They come for three hours, paint a super-cute sign, and that creative message is a nice reminder of that fun afternoon." ■

All children age 0-5 in Columbia County are eligible to receive free books from Imagination Library. Participants sign up through United Way of Columbia County.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNITED WAY OF COLUMBIA COUNTY

Partners in Success

Program helps provide free books for children and their families

By Scott Laird

Learning to read in early childhood is one of the most effective ways for a child to begin a successful path in life. That's why United Way of Columbia County is partnering with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and helping local families receive a free book every month.

Getting involved is easy. The families of children age 0-5 sign up with Imagination Library. Through United Way of Columbia County, children receive an age-appropriate, new book—for free—mailed directly to their home every month until their fifth birthday.

The program in Columbia County started about 18 months ago to address early education across the county.

Dolly Parton, the famous country music star, started the program in her own county about 30 years ago. It has slowly grown and now sends books to more than 1 million children.

"The concept is to deliver children their own books so they can build their own library and develop a love for reading," says Claire Catt, new executive director of the United Way of Columbia County.

Every child in Columbia County is eligible for the program. There are no income qualifications.

Claire says studies show children who participate in the program have better kindergarten readiness scores, better third-grade literacy scores and higher high school graduation rates.

"Getting books into homes can make a really big, lifelong impact," she says.

Families can sign up by mailing in an application, or they can call the Columbia County United Way office in Rainier and Claire will sign them up. Families can also sign up online or at a WIC appointment.

About 1,300 of Columbia County's 2,500 children are registered in the program.

The program is funded through local organizations and their donations. Contributors include several Friends of Library groups; Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions clubs; and several local credit unions. A fundraiser on March 5 at coffee shops across the county also supports the program. Look for "Wake Up for United Way" flyers for participating businesses.

Claire says partnering with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a significant change for United Way.

"This is a new direction for the United

Way nationally, to be administering programs and services," she says.

United Way is known for operating as a funding mechanism for local nonprofits by raising funds and distributing them to locally affiliated chapters, which then allocate the funds to organization in their communities.

"As donation culture has changed—and technology has changed—so have the strategies United Way is using in our communities," Claire says.

Partnering with Imagination Library is one of those new strategies.

"I think this is something we'll be exploring a lot in the coming years—doing more of the service and program delivery ourselves instead of just dishing out dollars," Claire says.

Columbia County's United Way office is in Rainier. Claire is the only employee. She gets direction from a volunteer board of directors. A mother of three, Claire is originally from Longview, Washington, and now lives in St. Helens. She replaced longtime United Way Director Kathye Beck in November.

Claire has a strong background in community work. She has worked at Head Start, with the Oregon State University Extension Service and for Columbia Health Services.

In addition to Imagination Library, United Way of Columba County is helping support home-delivered meals programs for senior citizens through local senior centers with funding, volunteer recruitment and outreach. It also supports the Columbia Pacific Food Bank and local food pantries, as well as Community Action Team's energy and utility assistance and its housing programs.

In 2019, United Way of Columbia County distributed about $75,000 to local organizations.

This year, Claire will conduct community conversations across the county to help identify issues and concerns and find out what people want their communities to look like.

"Because of the changes over the last 30 years to the way people tend to donate to organizations and causes, the United Way—nationwide and in Columbia County—is really looking for our niche," Claire says. "What are we well positioned to do and what problems are we able to help solve so we can make an impact in our communities?"

Children who receive books from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library are better prepared for kindergarten, show better reading comprehension by third grade, and have higher high school graduation rates.

United Way does much of its fundraising through local employers and workplace campaigns. Employees can make a pretax deduction and give a regular amount on each paycheck. Claire reminds Columbia County residents who already donate—or are considering doing so—to make sure to mark the Columbia County United Way as the recipient so their dollars go to programs in their own communities.

"That's the most convenient method for donors and an easy way for people to provide sustained, long-term funding for the important work we do," she says. ■

For more information, contact Claire Catt at United Way of Columbia County, 503-556-3614, or go to UnitedWayofColumbiaCounty.org. Mail donations to P.O. Box 538, Rainier, OR 97048.

Alaska Counts

Toksook Bay is the first to be counted in the 2020 Census

Toksook Bay proudly hosted the first enumeration of the U.S. 2020 Census in January. Steven Dillingham, director of the U.S. Census Bureau, visited Toksook to conduct this decade's first official census count.

Lizzie Chimiugak, the oldest elder in Toksook Bay, was the first person in the nation to be counted, using a translator to help with the interview process. A community ceremony commemorated this historic event with residents singing, drumming and performing dances that have been handed down for generations. Visitors were also treated to a flavorful feast of traditional foods.

Getting an accurate count is important because many remote, hard-to-access areas such as Toksook Bay could lose out on federal funds for health care, education and general infrastructure if the population is undercounted.

Numerous census workers have been hired to travel to villages to work directly with residents. This means you may see people you don't know wandering through your community. They are there to help you fill out your census form, which should take less time than it takes to finish your morning coffee.

What is the Decennial Census?

Every 10 years, the federal government conducts a population count of everyone in the United States. Data from the census provide the basis for distributing more than $675 billion in federal funds annually to communities across the country to support vital programs—impacting housing, education, transportation, employment, health care and public policy. The data is also used to redraw the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts and accurately determine the number of congressional seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives.

What information will be requested?

The census collects basic information about the people living in your household on April 1. The Census Bureau will never ask for Social Security numbers, bank or credit card account numbers, money, donations of anything on behalf of a political party.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Strict federal law protects your census responses. It is against the law for any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any census information that identifies an individual. Census Bureau employees take a lifelong pledge of confidentiality to handle data responsibly and keep respondents' information private, with strict penalties enforced for wrongful disclosure.

The Census Bureau has a robust cybersecurity program that incorporates industry-best practices and federal security standards for encrypting data.

Census forms must be completed before the spring thaw occurs and folks head out to their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. Providing accurate data is beneficial for the future of individual communities, the regions and the children who are the future of Alaska. They need funding for vital programs and improved infrastructure to help them and future generations survive and succeed in the harsh, remote environment they call home. ■

ABOVE: Toksook Bay villages kicked off the beginning of the 2020 U.S Census with a community celebration, which included dancing and food. PHOTO BY JIMMIE LINCOLN

LEFT: Lizzie Chimiugak, Toksook Bay's oldest villager shows she can still dance. PHOTO BY JIMMIE LINCOLN

BACKGROUND: Most Alaskan villages are located off the road system, so census workers start their counts in winter. They use snowmachines and ATVs to travel across the barren landscapes and frozen rivers, conducting as many counts as possible before the ground thaws and turns into marshes that inhibit travel. After the river ice melts, residents migrate to their hunting and fishing camps and aren't available to participate in the count in person. PHOTO BY DAWNE MANGUS

Extreme Winter Working Conditions

AVEC field employees don't have a typical day in the office

Next time you are having a bad day at the office, be thankful you work in a heated building with running water. AVEC field employees don't have a regular office to work in. Most of them work outdoors, braving extremely cold, potentially dangerous conditions.

Subzero Temperatures

Temperatures in Alaska can drop quickly and early, with subzero temperatures arriving in force in October and lasting through March or April. Cold temperatures can generate additional revenue for AVEC, but also cause a multitude of problems. Typical high temperatures during the winter months range from 15 degrees down to minus 60 degrees, with the wind chill factor causing temperatures to feel even colder.

Field personnel wear heavy arctic winter clothing and continually monitor the temperatures and their exposure time to avoid frostbite. Excerpts from a January trip report to Kiana said, "Work has been really slow due to extremely cold weather. Temperatures down to –52 degrees. Add another minus 10 for wind chill factor. Exposure time is very limited."

Another trip report said: "-40 degrees this morning, nothing started. By noon we had the skid steer and the snow machine going. Attempted to dig the anchor hole again and broke the auger bit off again …; minus 44 this morning, everything running …; minus 40 this

morning … having problems with the snowmachine; minus 50 this morning. Had more problems with the snowmachine."

Winds and Drifting Snow

Strong winter winds frequently occur in many communities. These powerful forces of nature can play havoc in many ways, including blowing loose material into or on top of people and blowing debris into their eyes.

One of our welders said he sometimes has to stop welding to dump out the snow that has blown inside his welding helmet. Strong winds make climbing power poles and trying to use a 30-foot hotstick to pull a cutout or turn off a transformer extremely dangerous.

Blowing snow also causes snowdrifts to develop. Employees have to shovel out the entrance to power plant buildings. Equipment and parts stored outside get covered with snow and ice and have to be located and dug out. Even though some of our plants sit 4 feet off the ground due to permafrost and blowing snow conditions, sometimes the linemen shovel snow two or three times a day.

Gambell's Buried Plant

Gambell's old power plant used to regularly get drifted over. In January 2000, a couple of nonstop blizzards dumped 18 feet of snow during a two-week period.

"We had white-out conditions for more than 10 days, with winds of 60 mph," said Patrick Hughes, who was in Gambell at the time. "Snow covered our tanks and the entire power plant, turning it into a 21st-century igloo. We could walk on top of the tanks in our tank farm and only the exhaust stacks were visible on top of the plant."

ABOVE: AVEC linemen sometimes have difficulty locating service entrances when roofs are covered with wind-blown snow.

OPPOSITE PAGE: When temperatures drop to 40- or 50-below zero, snowmachines don't start and linemen walk to their job site pulling gear on a sled.

Thanks to the valiant efforts of Patrick and his crew, who worked around the clock for 10 days, there was only one 20-minute power outage due to overheating. Unfortunately, Patrick suffered second-degree frostbite.

"I had to balance personal safety with keeping the lights on," Patrick said. "I didn't have any choice but to do whatever was necessary to keep the radiators clear of the constantly-falling snow and free of ice that stopped the blades from turning."

Gambell's new power plant sits on 4-foot-high pilings with a covered walkway over the module entrances so snowdrifting usually isn't as big of a problem any more.

Buried Homes

Along with snow drifting around power plants, snowdrifts form high enough to almost cover homes. It's not uncommon for our employees to get a call about problems with a residential service and they end up walking or riding over the snow-covered home while looking for the service entrance.

One time, an employee rode around on a snowmachine looking for a house he simply couldn't find. After he stopped to get his bearings, he felt a painful burning sensation in one of his legs. Somehow he had parked right next to the stovepipe of the house he was looking for and it burned his pant leg.

Flooding and Storm Surges

An increasing number of communities are subject to flooding, either from the sea or rivers. Communities on the sea get hit with powerful storm surges that bring strong winds and high waters that relentlessly eat away at the land. Some water surges turn power plants and tank farms into islands and topple tanks.

Other communities are located along rivers that flood during spring breakup, when frozen ice jams cause water to back up. Once ice jams break loose, the backed up water roars down the river, overflowing banks, roads and bridges and carrying heavy icebergs that cause damage.

Powerful winter storms have also caused extensive erosion to the northern villages of Shishmaref and Kivalina, threatening homes, distribution lines and even tank farms. Some homes in Shishmaref have fallen into the ocean. AVEC has also had to relocate some distribution lines and most of our tank farm in Kivalina.

Savoonga's Unique Storm Outage

In late December 2010, Savoonga residents suffered from a weeklong power outage due to a unique situation. Warm temperatures had caused the sea ice to melt or drift away, resulting in open water near the village. A sudden drop in temperature of almost 50 degrees, accompanied by strong winds from the north, resulted in saltwater being picked up and deposited on our lines and hardware, such as insulators and transformers.

Continues on page 8

Winter Work

Continued from page 5

The extreme cold resulted in the salt spray freezing into a semi-solid slush—a highly conductive coating. This caused numerous faults throughout the system, resulting in outages. Strong winds (60-plus mph), severely cold temperatures and a power outage at the airport prevented air traffic to and from Savoonga, further compounding the problem.

AVEC linemen worked diligently in inclement weather to locate and resolve these problems. The linemen had to powerwash the hardware (insulators, transformers and bushings) to remove the conductive material to prevent further arcing.

Unfortunately, we may see more storms like this due to climate change. Therefore, AVEC retrofitted the distribution system with equipment that can withstand the arcing caused by frozen salt spray and retrofitted systems in other susceptible villages.

Strong winds and heavy snow storms can cause snow drifts to build up and almost cover homes, meters and service entrances.

Canceled Flights and Scary Landings

When it gets extremely cold or the weather gets severe, small planes can't fly, which causes delays in travel and shipments of parts. Traveling employees always carry emergency gear and extra food as they can get stuck in villages or in hub airports for three days or more due to flights being held.

Canceled flights mean crews can't get to the villages to work on projects, which can be really critical if the power is out and employees or required parts are not able to arrive. This happened right after September 11, 2001, when all aircraft travel was halted. There was a downed power pole in one of our villages, and nobody was able to fly there to fix it for a few days. Luckily, the power plant operator on-site contained the problem until help arrived.

One November, our welder was finally able to fly to Hooper Bay after his flight was put on weather hold for a few days.

"Upon landing, we had trouble with ice on the runway and a strong crosswind at the air strip," Greg Tiplady said. "We were unable to stop at the end of the airstrip and slid off the runway sideways. Luckily, we found no serious damage."

Equipment Failures

Extremely cold temperatures can cause major equipment problems, including breakdowns, frozen fuel lines and the inability to get equipment started. This can cause headaches and frustration, especially since field personnel can't easily get replacement parts, such as new spark plugs. They can't drive to a local parts or hardware store. They usually have to call the main office to have parts shipped.

One typical winter trip report stated: "We worked several hours trying to get the four-wheeler, skid loader and snowmobile running."

A week later, the same employee reported, "Problem with snowmobile, fouled plugs. Pulled snowmobile back to plant and warmed it up."

Dangerous Animals

Gambell is also the site of another exciting and potentially dangerous incident. One morning, an employee woke up to discover fresh, large polar bear prints in the snow, circling the living quarters. Unlike other types of bears that eat plants and berries, polar bears only eat meat and have been known to track and prey on humans. The employee called the city office and asked for somebody to come down with a rifle and make sure it was safe for him to go outside.

Food and Water

Field employees carry all of their tools and gear to each of the villages, along with all the food they will need. These items can weigh 600 pounds or more. In contrast, many of us just have to bring a purse or wallet to work.

Many power plants don't have refrigerators or running water available, which also adds complications. During winter, food needing refrigeration is left outside in coolers. While canned food is popular in the summer because it doesn't need refrigeration, it is avoided during winter because the cans freeze and explode.

Some villages have washeterias that provide shower and laundry facilities. There are places to buy potable water. However, in some villages, such as Wales, water is only available from streams or springs that freeze in winter and require chopping through ice to get water.

Can you imagine working all day and having to travel a mile through blowing snow and freezing temperatures to fill up containers with water so you can drink and wash? ■

Thank You!

Alaska is an incredibly beautiful state, but it can be harshly demanding and unforgiving. We appreciate the hardships our field personnel endure while working to keep the power on. We are proud of the outstanding work and service they have provided the cooperative and our members in extremely challenging conditions for more than 50 years.

Bonding Over Big Game

In Lincoln County, a Centuries-Old Tradition Thrives

By Dianna Troyer

Frank was hunting with his son, Aaron, when he took down this record-setting mule deer buck. PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANK CHEENEY

On a cloudless summer morning in 2016, Frank Cheeney slipped off his shoes, adjusted the bow and arrows on his back, crouched behind some bushes and began crawling toward several mule deer bucks bedded down among sagebrush outside of Pioche.

Frank knew stalking a group of bucks with sagebrush as his only cover might not end well, but his son, Aaron, had convinced him to do the stalk. With the wind blowing toward him, good fortune favored Frank. The deer never scented him.

"He stood up not knowing I was there," Frank says. "I took the shot."

The mule deer buck Frank harvested that day had an antler rack that scored a measurement of 205 and 6/8 inches, according to Pope & Young Club, a nonprofit that promotes bowhunting and registers large North American big game animals taken with a hunting bow. It was so big Frank earned a new world record for a typical mule deer taken with a hunting bow.

For scoring purposes, antler racks are classified as either typical or nontypical. Typical racks are those with antler points in typical locations; they are mostly symmetrical. Non-typical racks are often odd-looking and have mismatched points.

Each spring, Frank and other hunters in Lincoln County apply for hunting tags from the Nevada Department of Wildlife. For them, hunting is about familial and communal bonds, filling freezers with food and cherishing the wilderness and wildlife.

"For my family, hunting has always been about the time spent with friends and family preparing for and carrying out hunting activities," says Frank, a 53-year-old Pioche native and crew boss for the Nevada Division of Forestry. "We have always looked for nice bucks, but score has really never meant that much to us."

Frank says he never intended to have his deer scored when he submitted its antlers and an article about his hunt to Eastman's Bowhunting Journal. When the editor saw the antler size, he insisted the mule deer be scored. A shoulder mount of the deer was featured in the yearlong 2018 Eastman's Trophy Deer Tour, a traveling show of the biggest mule deer of North America.

"Hunting is about passing on skills and traditions that are a way of life," says Frank, who teaches classes on hunting ethics and skills that are organized through the Nevada Department of Wildlife. "It's about sharing a campfire, good food and stories with family and neighbors. It's about teaching my three kids to be ethical hunters and conservationists, so that they can pass these same traditions on to their children."

Frank says he's proud of Lincoln County's centuries-old hunting tradition. According to the Bureau of Land Management, Native Americans were hunting throughout southeastern Nevada more than 10,000 years ago. They left behind hundreds of rock art images at more than 40 federally protected sites throughout the county. Many of them pay homage to the animals that sustained them.

"The other day I found some bighorn sheep etchings that I'd never noticed before," Frank says. "When we're out in the hills, we see all kinds of artifacts like grinding bowls and arrowheads. I always wonder what it looked like when they were hunting around here."

Just as wildlife sustained Native Americans for centuries, it still supports Nevadans today. The Nevada Department of Wildlife estimates hunting and wildlife watching contributes more than $1 billion to Nevada's economy annually.

"Hunting really helps our

economy," Frank says. "The stores, restaurants and motels are really busy every fall during hunting season."

Within its 10,634 square miles, Lincoln County has 16 federally protected wilderness areas. Local hunting guides say it has become a nationally renowned destination for hunters seeking trophy-sized big game.

In Nevada, licensed master guides provide guide service for big game, game birds, game fish, furbearers and unprotected wildlife.

"In the past five years, our trophy hunting has exploded with social media and people posting their photos," says Master Guide Brad Lloyd, who grew up in Eagle Valley and runs a hunting guide service called 7L Outfitters. "I grew up hunting, helping my grandpa and his friends. It's all I've ever wanted to do. My wife, Jessica, hunts too and is a huge part of my business."

Brad's clients come from all over the country, and he says many come back year after year.

"Several clients have become like family to us," he says.

Some hunts are unforgettable for guide John Stever, owner of Vantage Point Outfitting in Pioche. Three years ago, he guided a veteran who was referred to him through the Wounded Hero Hunt program offered through the Nevada Outfitters and Guides Association.

"This was by far the most rewarding hunt I've ever done," John says.

His client, Staff Sgt. Michael D. Davis, had been awarded a Purple Heart after being wounded in Afghanistan in 2009. A mule deer buck was on his bucket list.

"We spotted a buck our first morning, and Mike took a long straight shot. He was beyond thrilled with the hunt," John says. "The reward for me came from sharing the excitement of something I'm passionate about with someone who has given our country so much."

Another client was terminally ill with cancer and had a bull elk on his bucket list.

"We'd looked all day but hadn't seen anything he wanted to harvest," John recalls. "He was tired and disappointed and told me he was frustrated that he didn't have the energy he used to have. We quit in the afternoon and were driving back. I was talking to myself, asking for just one elk for him."

John happened to look up toward a tree-lined ridge and noticed a tan spot that was out of place. Stopping his pickup truck, he jumped out and looked through his binoculars at an elk. He slowly led his client up the ridge toward the shady timber where several elk were bedded down.

"I started cow calling, hoping to get a bull's attention and draw one out into the open," John recalls. "One finally did, and my client made a perfect shot. It was incredibly emotional for all of us. He died a year later."

At 52, John says he relies on the hunting skills he first learned as a child.

"As soon as I could walk, I tagged along with my dad and grandad," he says. "When I got

Continues on page 8

Michael Davis, left, who received a Purple Heart while serving in Afghanistan, took down this mule deer with help from guide John Stever, right. PHOTO COURTESY OF VANTAGE POINT OUTFITTING

Hunter Wilkin hoists a massive pair of elk antlers he found last spring in Lincoln County. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILKIN FAMILY

Jessica Lloyd harvested an antelope with her husband, Brad, a guide and outfitter. PHOTO COURTESY OF 7L OUTFITTERS

Hunting

Continued from page 5

too tired to walk, they carried me. I did the same with my daughter, Brooke. She's 25 now and still loves being outdoors. My kids are the fifth generation to hunt in the county. Scouting and seeing wildlife, being outdoors with family and friends—that's what matters most. Harvesting an animal is secondary."

Frank Cheeney's neighbors, Lorin and Amy Wilkin are also avid hunters.

"We have so many good hunting memories with our family—watching the animals, seeing the scenery, just being out there in fresh air," Amy says. "After the hunt, we like to sauté the back-strap in butter and make jerky using my grandpa's recipe. The meat usually lasts us a year, so every fall we hunt and fill the freezer again."

Native American rock art in Ash Springs near Alamo depicts local wildlife. PHOTO COURTESY OF LINCOLN COUNTY AUTHORITY OF TOURISM

To fill his freezer again this year, Frank will hunt with his son, Aaron, who will help his dad and Taylor Price, a guide based in Caliente.

Last year, one of Frank's friends made a bow shot that took down another record-setting mule deer, knocking Frank out of the Nevada Wildlife Record Book. Frank's record still stands in Pope & Young's registry, however, because his friend isn't interested in recording it there.

New records or no, Frank says he will enjoy the upcoming hunting season, and the freezer will be filled again.

"That's what it's all about," he says. ■

Anatomy of a Hearing: The Power of a Single Pole

Congressman Greg Walden showed House Energy and Commerce Committee members the image of Central Electric Cooperative's power pole that still awaits approval to be moved to mitigate against wildfire. PHOTO COURTESY OF CEC

Dave Markham's testimony on wildfire mitigation helped establish America's electric cooperatives as the anti-PG&E.

By Ted Case

The title of the January 28 hearing was enough to give Dave Markham, CEO of Central Electric Cooperative, pause: "Out of Control: The Impact of Wildfires on Our Power Sector and the Environment."

The witness list before the House Energy and Commerce Committee included the head of Pacific Gas & Electric, the beleaguered California-based utility vilified for the role it played in the 2018 Camp Fire that claimed the lives of 85 people.

Fairly or not, every electric utility in the country had seemingly been tarnished by PG&E's myriad operational failures.

Energy and Commerce is arguably the most powerful committee in Congress It is known for its incisive, rapid-fire questioning. It is not a place for the unprepared.

Nevertheless, Markham accepted Congressman Greg Walden's (R-OR) invitation to appear before the committee. Walden is his congressman, and Markham had his own story to tell about wildfires—and how America's electric cooperatives are nothing like PG&E.

Markham was no stranger to the U.S. Congress. He had testified twice before the House Resources Committee about

the importance of streamlining vegetation management practices when seeking approval for routine maintenance and upgrades of power lines and poles in utility rights-of-way on federal lands. His compelling testimony on frustrating delays with federal land management agencies helped create momentum for legislation in the FY 2018 appropriations bill that intended to streamline the permitting process on federal lands.

But Markham was back on Capitol Hill to send another message about the yet-to-be implemented law. In his submitted testimony, he wrote it was imperative "land management agencies establish timelines and milestones that promote efficiency, accountability and consistency between federal land managers and utilities."

A day before the hearing, Markham met with Walden to preview his testimony and share CEC's frustration with getting approval from the U.S. Forest Service to move a power pole a mere 20 feet to reduce the risk of wildfire.

"Do you have a photo of that pole?" Walden asked.

"I can get one," Markham said.

Walden, former chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, is a champion of responsible management of federal lands. As a former broadcaster, he also understands how to create an interesting narrative.

At the hearing, during his customary opening statement, Walden projected the photo of the single CEC power pole on the committee's large screens.

"CEC's service territory is 56% federal land, and when they tried to move the pole 20 feet to mitigate against the threat of wildfire, they faced significant delays," Walden told his colleagues, many of whom stared incredulously at the screen.

He said government red tape had created an untenable situation where the U.S. Forest Service was unable to give approval to move one pole to an area that is safer and more accessible.

Walden concluded his statement by arguing, "Delays in this sort of maintenance effort can have deadly consequences, especially when combined with our poorly managed federal forests."

Dave Markham, right, was the only electric co-op representative on a panel that included members of academia and the CEO of Pacific Gas & Electric. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

This dramatic opening paved the way for Markham to differentiate Oregon's electric cooperatives from PG&E, highlighting that co-ops have a more difficult challenge compared to the California utility, which has 30% federal ownership. Markham testified how electric co-ops work diligently to keep the rights-of-way cleared, and transmission and distribution systems maintained.

The image of the single power pole struck a chord with Walden's colleagues, many of whom followed up with questions about whether it was an isolated incident. Markham replied the problem was widespread throughout the West, and the land management agencies need to "make vegetation management a priority over approving a driveway on federal land."

The lack of prioritization also concerned Oregon Congressman Kurt Schrader, a member of the committee who had been the Democratic sponsor of the vegetation management legislation Congress passed. In his questions to witnesses, Schrader lamented the lack of progress with the law's regulations and with maintaining rights-of-way because of land management delays.

"We can remove hazardous fuels," he said. "It's not that complicated. That's jobs in rural Oregon."

After a marathon-like four hours and seven minutes of testimony and questions from more than 20 members of Congress, the hearing concluded. Predictably, the hearing covered a range of issues—from climate change to forest management—but the image of a single pole carried the day. It was an example of the challenges electric co-ops face every day serving some of the most difficult territory in the nation.

The hearing ended with Markham's request to ensure another Camp Fire never happens.

"All we're looking for is accountability and consistency and to get these issues resolved," Markham said. ■

Palmer Field: Marlboro County's German POW Camp

By Vanessa Wolf

Sixteen million Americans were sent overseas to serve in World War II. An estimated 120,000 spent at least a portion of the war behind barbed wire. Of the 27,000 American soldiers captured by the Japanese, 40% are believed to have died in captivity.

In Europe, it's believed 93,941 Allied soldiers were held during the course of the war, and 92,820 eventually returned home. Meanwhile, from as early as 1942 through late 1946, an estimated 425,000 Axis prisoners—primarily German, but also Italian and Japanese—lived in 700 camps throughout the United States, including South Carolina.

In the spring of 1943, after victories in North Africa, the number of German POWs had grown to unmanageable numbers. It was impractical to house and feed so many in these war-torn regions, and empty transport ship returned to the United States every day. Soon, shiploads of captured Nazi soldiers landed daily in Boston and Newport News harbors daily.

The captured European soldiers identified as holding the most strident Nazi beliefs—Third Reich leaders, Gestapo agents and self-identified extremists—were sent to Camp Alva in Oklahoma, which reached between 1,200 and 1,500 prisoners at its peak. Those soldiers were held under close surveillance and granted few privileges. Other POWs were first moved to military bases and former Civilian Conservation Corps camps to minimize escapes.

As the number of POWs grew, military and civilian leaders decided to make greater use of these able-bodied prisoners by sending them into rural areas in need of laborers.

While the Geneva Convention of 1929 did not require that POWs receive payment, the U.S. government granted them 10 cents a day in canteen chits, with higher-ranking officers receiving slightly more. Those who volunteered to work—typically in mess halls or laundries at the base or performing general labor for private contractors—earned another 80 cents, the same amount an American private was paid at the start of the war. Those funds could be used to buy luxuries such as beer, candy and tobacco, and any unspent money was held in reserve until a peacetime.

By April 1944, South Carolina had five camps with approximately 250 men assigned to each. Those working outside the base were often placed in tent-based compounds close to their employers. The work often involved cutting trees for pulpwood or performing work on local farms. The civilian employers of these prisoners were required to prove there was insufficient available local labor. The U.S. Military billed the farmers and business owners the prevailing wage for the prisoners' services, and what was not paid to the prisoner was used for the costs

These German prisoners were sent to Camp Blanding in Florida. They were just a few of more than 400,000 prisoners throughout the U.S. during World War II. South Carolina was home to about 8,000 POWs. Many camps allowed prisoners to work for pay. CREATIVE COMMONS

to operate the camps.

In 1941, several former cotton fields made way for Marlboro Aviation School, a training facility for the 55th Army Air Corps. Set on SC Highway 9 West near its intersection with Beauty Spot Road West, the airfield included barracks, a ground school and several administration buildings. It was later renamed Palmer Field in honor of Captain William W. Palmer, a Bennettsville resident who earned a Distinguished Service Cross in WWI. At the Bennettsville training facility, young cadets were taught to fly the PT-17 Stearman biplane. During the next three years, the school trained 6,410 pilots before closing as a military base in October 1944.

Less than two months later, the barracks reopened as a POW camp for an estimated 244 Germans. The prisoners assisted the labor-starved agricultural and pulp and paper industries. In most cases, these were not the professions the POWs had practiced in Germany, and the farmers and overseers were tasked with their training.

By the middle of 1945, roughly 8,000 former Axis soldiers lived and worked in the Palmetto state. Twenty encampments spread across 17 counties, with one located just outside of Bennettsville.

The YMCA and Red Cross officials who inspected the POW camps between 1944 and 1946 reported the South Carolina camps had relatively pleasant conditions. While most were encampments and lacked recreational facilities or other amenities, officials

found that the prisoners were allowed comforts such as planting robust gardens and building themselves furniture from salvaged lumber.

Such romantic notions aside, the prisoners were no doubt faced with drudgery, boredom and despair at their circumstances. Most lost considerable weight and labored under fears they might be deported to Russia at any time.

As awareness of the Holocaust grew, a decided change in attitude swept through America. By 1945, virulent anti-Nazi feelings had surfaced and only a fraction of prisoners were still willing to join outside work details.

In the years that followed, many former POWs later returned to visit their former encampments, which had reportedly become a place that had saved their lives. Between 1947 and 1960, an estimated 5,000 men who had spent between one and three years as prisoners of war on American soil immigrated back to America.

In her 2013 book, "From German Prisoner of War to American Citizen: A Social History with 35 Interviews," author Barbara Schmitter Heisler interviewed some of these immigrants. One of her subjects, identified only as Robert M., spent time at Palmer Field.

Robert was born in Salzburg, Austria, in 1919 and became an early member of the Nazi Party, joining the Arbeitdienst in 1938. In 1939, he volunteered for the paratroopers, and in December 1942, he married his wife, Olivia. Robert was later dispatched to North Africa, and became a POW in April 1943 near Tunis, Tunisia. He spent several weeks in a British camp near Bône (now Annaba), Algeria, where he reported that the "treatment was gentleman-like." He was then transported to Oran, but the camp lacked sufficient food and water.

"Most of us lost our Tropen (tropics) wristwatches to American guards," he said.

Weeks later, Robert traveled by train to Casablanca, Morocco, from where he boarded and crossed the Atlantic by American transport ship. He arrived in Norfolk, Virginia, in June 1943.

"It took us four weeks to make this crossing," Robert recalled. "We were very hungry."

He was then put on a train to Alabama and placed in Camp Aliceville. He transferred to Camp McCain in Mississippi in April 1944. In June 1945, Robert was transferred to Palmer Field.

Robert spent four months at Palmer picking peanuts and cotton. Schmitter Heisler wrote, "Working on various farms, Robert recalled that he helped a farmer take his tobacco to a market. 'That man, I wish I could remember his name, gave me a quarter and told me to buy myself an ice cream. But I didn't. I was so excited to have some real money that I just kept it until it was time to return to Europe.'

Approximately 425,000 Axis prisoners lived in 700 camps throughout the U.S.
CREATIVE COMMONS

There never was a good war, or a bad peace.

– BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

"Another farmer, Mr. K.B. Hodges, served him and his men a sweet potato pie, while Mrs. Hodges provided ice-cold water and served lunch, including 'very large watermelons.' Grateful for the treatment, Robert and his men repaired three of Mr. Hodges' trucks."

The war ended September 2, 1945, and Palmer Field was deactivated shortly thereafter. The site later functioned as a drive-in movie theater, and after that as a chicken farm. In the early 1960s, Powell Manufacturing purchased the land to produce tobacco-growing equipment.

On May 27, 1946, Robert was returned to Salzburg. Shortly thereafter, he and his wife started emigration procedures.

While this may seem unfathomable, Ms. Schmitter Heisler explained, "The returning POWs had been in America before. Although as prisoners of war, they had not been free to come and go as they pleased, the circumstances and conditions of their internment in America had provided them with first-hand experiences. These included opportunities to interact with Americans, learn English and see different parts of the country. For them, America was not an abstraction or an image of a place they had read or heard about or seen in movies. It was a place where they had gathered personal experiences, providing them with a sense of knowing the country, of having seen how people live. For former POWs, immigration was less of a leap of faith or a journey into the unknown. It was more like a homecoming."

It's impossible to know whether these former Nazi soldiers and their families would have immigrated had they not been former POWs on American soil. ■

ABOVE: Pamler Field was named in honor of Captain William W. Palmer, a Bennettsville resident who had earned a Distinguished Service Cross in Word War I. TOP: The POWs in a Michigan prison camp were among more than 6,000 troops imprisoned throughout the state. CREATIVE COMMONS