

# Ruralite/Currents magazine 2020

## Schedule of Important Dates

### August 2020 Issue

pages 1, 4-5 due .....June 24  
pages 8, 25, 28-29 due .....July 7  
mailing labels due.....July 9  
page 32 due.....July 15  
camera-ready pages due .....July 17

### September 2020 Issue

pages 1, 4-5 due .....July 24  
pages 8, 25, 28-29 due .....Aug. 7  
mailing labels due.....Aug. 10  
page 32 due.....Aug. 14  
camera-ready pages due .....Aug. 18

### October 2020 Issue

pages 1, 4-5 due .....Aug. 24  
pages 8, 25, 28-29 due .....Sept. 8  
mailing labels due.....Sept. 9  
page 32 due.....Sept. 16  
camera-ready pages due .....Sept. 17

### November 2020 Issue

pages 1, 4-5 due .....Sept. 25  
pages 8, 25, 28-29 due.....Oct. 6  
mailing labels due .....Oct. 9  
page 32 due .....Oct. 16  
camera-ready pages due .....Oct. 19

### December 2020 Issue

pages 1, 4-5 due .....Oct. 26  
pages 8, 25, 28-29 due.....Nov. 6  
mailing labels due .....Nov. 9  
page 32 due .....Nov. 16  
camera-ready pages due .....Nov. 18

### January 2021 **Issue**

pages 1, 4-5 due .....Nov. 25  
pages 8, 25, 28-29 due.....Dec. 4  
mailing labels due .....Dec. 9  
page 32 due .....Dec. 15  
camera-ready pages due .....Dec. 17

# Get Growing

By Jodi Helmer

At the last meeting of the Magnolia Garden Club, members voted to undertake a massive renovation of Belva Green Garden in downtown Latta. The garden, named in honor of former Magnolia Garden Club member Belva Green, is currently just a collection of overgrown evergreen shrubs on the corner of West Main Street and Northwest Railroad Avenue.

Amanda Allen Morrell, landscape architect and garden club co-president, created a rendering to depict how the space could look with a little help from the 22-member garden club.

Her vision includes a colorful mural painted on the side of the High Cotton Auction House building, a pedestrian boardwalk complete with tables and market umbrellas, and, of course, lots of trees and flowers.

“We wanted to be bold and (create) a garden to not only honor the memory of Miss Belva, but to provide a place that people can experience in our downtown,” Amanda explains.

“What we’ve tried to do as a garden club is find ways to partner with other civic groups and businesses to

beautify the community in really unique ways.”

Marlboro and Dillon counties are home to six active garden clubs that bring together members with a passion for gardening to support the education, preservation and conservation of local gardens.

The Garden Gate Garden Club of Bennettsville recognizes local homeowners with picturesque properties through its Yard of the Month Club. The Yellow Jessamine Garden Club of Dillon is active in local projects that include planting roses in honor of breast cancer survivors, creating floral arrangements for nursing home residents and maintaining gardens around Blue Star memorials.

The Magnolia Garden Club dates back to 1934. It welcomes gardeners of all ages and experience levels who share a love of gardening. Monthly meetings feature educational programs ranging from container gardening and cooking with herbs to attracting birds to the garden. Local experts from organizations such as Clemson University Extension, the South Carolina State Farm



Bureau, Abingdon Manor and Wild Birds Unlimited often lead the creative programs.

Callen Outen joined Magnolia Garden Club in 2018. Although she grew up in a family of gardeners, received a graduate degree in agricultural education and works as the Clemson University Extension consumer horticulture agent for Dillon and Marlboro counties, she believes there is still more to learn.

“We hear about new topics each week, and that expands our knowledge,” she says. “I like that I can take what I learn and go out to teach others.”

A recent workshop on air layering camellias—a method of propagating the woody plant to create a new plant—was new to Callen. The workshop inspired her to try the process at home. She’ll take a cutting from one of her camellia plants this month and attempt to create a replica





**ABOVE: Magnolia Garden Club Co-President Amanda Morrell leads a youth garden workshop for Latta Elementary School students.**

PHOTO BY BENTON HENRY

**RIGHT: At the annual Harvest Festival, Magnolia Garden Club sells bulbs, raffles colorful container gardens, and talks to local residents about membership and their work in the community.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA MORRELL

to plant in the garden.

In addition to participating in club meetings and activities, Callen educates the public about gardening through her role at Clemson University. Her responsibilities include helping homeowners with all manner of gardening issues: from soil testing and identifying pests and diseases to leading workshops on topics such as dividing perennials, container gardening, worm composting, planting fruit trees and





**Current officers of Magnolia Garden Club, standing from left to right, are Treasurer Patty Griffey, Co-Presidents Amanda Morrell and Dollie Morrell, and Co-Vice President Donna Edwards. Sitting from left are Co-Vice President Lori Ann Corbett and Secretary Lynn Liebenrood.** PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA MORRELL

straw bale gardening.

“There is a lot of interest in gardening in Dillon and Marlboro counties,” Callen says. “Some people garden to relax and spend time outside, and others grow their own food so they don’t have to shop at the grocery store.”

For those who are just starting out, Callen believes free and low-cost extension workshops and expert advice can help build the confidence to start planting flowers, growing vegetables and creating a beautiful—and delicious—landscape or container garden.

Novice gardeners are welcome to join the garden club.

“There’s no prerequisite to being a member of the club,” Amanda says. “We have quite a spectrum of women in our club that range from professional landscape architects like me and women who have been gardening in their yards for years and know so much, to women who join because (gardening) is something that they admire from afar but don’t really know a lot about. We strive to have programs each month that teach us lessons about how to be better gardeners



**Legacy Tree Trail is a quarter-mile loop on the campus of Latta Elementary School. It includes signage about the importance of trees in the environment. The Magnolia Garden Club designed the trail and educational materials.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA MORRELL

and how to take care of the natural world in a positive way.”

Participating in local beautification and maintenance projects is an excellent way to get hands-on experience in the garden and most garden club members are active in community service projects.

“A garden club is one of those civic groups that not only does things like educate its members, but is an outward-reaching club that is constantly trying to find ways to beautify the community and teach the younger generation about gardening,” Amanda explains. “We’re an all-volunteer organization that cares about the community and wants to come together in whatever small ways we can to do great things.”

In 2012, the Magnolia Garden Club—as part of a statewide effort that included the Garden Club of South Carolina and Historic Trees for Historic Places—partnered with Latta Elementary School to build the Legacy Tree Trail.

The quarter-mile loop features 12 trees of different sizes to educate visitors about how trees mature. Plaques list the “date of birth” of each tree, and include information about environmental stressors that affect growth and survival. Each tree was planted

## Seven Gardens to Plant at Home

**Pollinator garden.** Concerns about declining populations of bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinators have led to increased interest in planting gardens that attract pollinators. Plants such as bee balm, verbena, purple coneflower and coreopsis are valuable sources of nectar. Snapdragons, azalea and violets provide food for caterpillars that will turn into beautiful butterflies.

**Aromatherapy garden.** Thanks to their intoxicating scents, lavender, chamomile, lemon balm and mint are used in products ranging from soaps and shampoos to candles. The fragrant annuals and perennials can be harvested from the garden and used in bouquets and sachets that will make the house smell great. In addition to their amazing scents, these herbs taste great, too.

**Herb garden.** Nothing tastes better than herbs harvested straight from the garden. Use fresh basil in lemonade. Perk up potatoes with fresh rosemary and chives; add cilantro, parsley and oregano to fresh salsa. Herbs can be planted in the garden or grown in pots on a sunny windowsill. Make sure to wash them well before adding them to your favorite dishes.

**Container garden.** You don't need a lot of space to grow a beautiful garden. Colorful flowers such as lantana, geraniums, marigolds and petunias thrive in full sun. Got shade? Opt for impatiens, begonias or

coleus. Many vegetables, including tomatoes, grow well in containers. Be sure to add drainage holes in the bottom of the container to avoid soggy roots. In sweltering South Carolina summers, container gardens will need extra water.

**Cut flower garden.** Skip the supermarket bouquets and harvest fresh flowers from a small cutting garden. Easy-to-grow cut flowers include cosmos, zinnias, snapdragons and coneflowers. Choose a sunny spot in the garden and watch them grow. Use a sharp blade to cut the stems and harvest mature flowers early in the morning so the blooms will last longer.

**Birdseed garden.** You don't have to spend big bucks on birdseed. Annuals such as sunflowers, cosmos and zinnias provide a buffet for birds. To create a birdseed buffet, wait until the flowers die and seeds start appearing. Cut the flowers from the stalks, place them in a brown bag and store it for at least two weeks. Once they are dried, shake the bag until the seeds separate and use them to fill your feeders.

**Rain garden.** If April showers leave puddles on the lawn, a rain garden could be the answer. Place native plants such as beautyberry, pink muhly grass and swamp milkweed in sunken areas of the lawn where water pools. These plants, which can tolerate deluge and drought, help soak up rainwater and prevent it from going into storm drains.

in memory of a local resident who left a legacy in the community. Elementary school students created artwork to go with each plaque.

The project—funded with the help of \$200,000 in grants—is in the final stages.

“We wanted to create an experiential moment that not only celebrated the culture of our community, but also taught children valuable lessons about trees and how they contribute to our world,” Amanda says.

While gardening is the main focus, Amanda believes garden clubs also help strengthen local communities.

“It's really special to have a group that crosses generations,” Amanda says. “We're all in different chapters and phases of our lives, and we all learn from each other. Being open to new ideas and learning from all the great knowledge that these women hold has been the most special thing to me about being a part of the garden club.” ■



ILLUSTRATION BY SHIBANUK

Andrea and Andy Fletcher helped honor Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative General Manager Tommy Wolff at his retirement party. Andy was named Tommy's successor, assuming the role at the beginning of February.



# Looking Toward the Future

## Andy Fletcher takes the helm at Columbia Basin

Story and photos by Jody Foss

Andy Fletcher is no stranger to Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative. He served as manager of finance and administration for 4½ years. With the announcement General Manager Tommy Wolff was retiring, Andy decided to apply for the position. He began his new role February 4.

"I know Andy will do an excellent job," Tommy says. "CBEC employees take pride in their work and in their lives. They are a good team and they perform well together for our membership. I commend and endorse Andy Fletcher as my successor. I know he will continue the legacy of Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative."

Andy says his new role includes

something new every day.

"It's managing the cooperative and attending meetings all over the state," he says. "There are many more political actions taking place now that impact our co-op. We need to keep trying to figure out how to meet the needs of our members, communicate what we are doing and how we are doing it. It's important for members to know how our decisions affect them. That is an important part of my role as manager."

Andy was born and raised in Pendleton and graduated from high school in 1986. He worked on fire crews in the Ukiah District for several years.

"It is one of the greatest jobs ever," he says. "I was in the mountains every day."

Every chance Andy got, he would take off with his backpack and a journal to explore the world.

Andy and his wife, Andrea, met in fire

school in Ukiah. The couple spent a few firefighting seasons living on the Fletcher family ranch in Ukiah.

Andrea earned a degree in community health education from Portland State University. In 1994, Andy graduated with a business degree focusing on management and marketing from the University of Oregon.

Andy traveled abroad on several occasions, alternating with college life and seasonal work. It wasn't long before he convinced Andrea that she, too, should learn the art of independent travel on a shoestring budget. After graduation, they grabbed their backpacks and headed to Europe for a monthlong adventure.

"You learn very quickly if you are going to be able to be with one another for a lifetime, because it's 24/7 and there's no escape," Andy says. "It was great!"

The couple traveled by bus, train

and ferry through Ireland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, France, Hungary and Italy. They invited Andy's mother to travel with them for four months through Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia. Andy and Andrea continued to the Philippines and Hong Kong.

"To me, the best thing about traveling is meeting the people," Andy says. "When you have flexibility and time, you can sit down and have a cup of tea, people-watch and enjoy the time instead of trying to see every attraction. You meet people from all over the world that travel the same direction and get to know them."

On a separate six-month stint abroad, Andy and a friend traveled to Cairo, Egypt, two days before the Gulf War. After their arrival in Egypt, no airlines were flying out. Every day, the two walked to the Hyatt Hotel to read the Reuters World News printout to find out what was going on. Five weeks later, they finally caught a flight to Athens and made their way home via Bulgaria, Romania and Czechoslovakia.

"We really got to see a lot of Egypt," Andy says, "which was a good thing!"

In 1995, Andy and Andrea packed up and drove to Pocatello, Idaho, where they spent three years completing graduate school at Idaho State University. Andy earned his MBA in accounting in 1998 and taught accounting for a year before the couple moved to Boise for work opportunities. Andy worked as an accountant for two firms, and Andrea served as director of rural health for the state of Idaho.

The Fletcher family—which includes sons Casey and Cody—moved to Heppner in 2008. Andy took a job with the Morrow County School District as an accountant. Casey graduates from Heppner High School this year and is heading to the University of Oregon. Cody is a sophomore at Heppner High. Andrea works as a health consultant.

Andy remembers when a power outage could last days.

"It was expected," he says. "The necessity of electricity has really changed over the



**LEFT:** CBEC Director Roy Carlson, left, and Tommy Wolff, former CBEC general manager, shared some laughs at Tommy's retirement party at the Elks Club in Heppner at the end of January.

**BELOW:** Manager of Operations Brian Kollman and Tommy share a moment at the retirement party. "I can't help but feel a little melancholy," Brian said. "Tommy and I have worked together at CBEC for a long time."



last few years. Now we expect the power to be on 24/7. When we do have an emergency, like fires or big storms that take out the power, it's amazing to me how the crew goes out and busts their tails to get it back on. We are very fortunate that our employees—our linemen specifically—show our members every day that our primary goal is to provide dependable electricity.

"Our members know them and love the linemen. They are the face of Columbia Basin, for the most part. With Eileen over

in Condon, and Janelle and Meghan in the front office in Heppner, we have great customer service."

Andy's job as general manager involves staying informed of all the latest legislation that can affect the cooperative's ability to provide ample electricity to its members.

"It will be interesting to see the changes that will take place as the future unfolds," Andy says. "We need to find ways to improve and advance our system with green solutions like wind, hydro and solar." ■



Northern Wasco County PUD Lineman Ryan Mancui, left, and Wasco Electric Lineman Andy Gardipee ask students how to be safe around electricity. The utilities pair up every year to provide safety information to local schools.

# The Importance of Electrical Safety

Local utility companies join forces to teach young students

By Traci Brock

Wasco Electric Cooperative and Northern Wasco County PUD annually participate in joint school safety programs to local schools in The Dalles and Dufur.

During these presentations, we demonstrate the importance of electrical safety to first, third and fourth graders.

Our electrical safety demonstrations teach students the dangers of electricity and important safety tips, such as what to do when they see a downed power line.

This year, Northern Wasco County PUD lineman Ryan Mancui and Wasco Electric Cooperative linemen Dan Funkhouser, Andy Gardipee and BJ Ayres used a display the students can relate to—a house, barn, trees, power lines and tractors—and taught the children what can happen if they come in contact with a downed power line.

At the end of the presentation, WEC linemen took students outside to see the bucket truck and the important safety tools used when maintaining and repairing power lines. ■



ABOVE: Wasco Electric linemen Dan Funkhouser, Andy Gardipee and BJ Ayres show first and third graders the importance of staying safe around electricity.

LEFT AND ABOVE LEFT: Ryan shows students what an electrical shock could look like if they play around an open underground transformer.



Members of the Kellogg Grange organize barn dances. The dances, with the band Joe Ross and the Roseburg Foot Stompers, feature square and line dancing.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KELLOGG GRANGE

## In Support of Rural Communities

Granges provide a voice and gathering site for country folks

By Craig Reed

Granges are grassroots organizations that bring members of rural communities together. Their members discuss issues of community concern, schedule social events and plan community service projects.

The Douglas Electric Cooperative service area includes five active granges: Camas Valley Grange, Kellogg Grange, Lookingglass Grange, Smith River Grange and Sunnysdale Grange.

The grange concept was developed in 1867 by Oliver Hudson Kelley, a Minnesota farmer and activist. He believed farmers—a scattered and independent group—needed a national organization to represent them.

The grange lobbied on behalf of rural residents, focusing on schools and education in those early years. The Extension Service, the Rural Free Delivery program for mail distribution, the Rural Electrification Act and the Farm Credit System also came about thanks to lobbying from the grange.

Today's granges don't have quite the memberships they had several decades ago—there are fewer rural residents and technology has made communicating much easier—but some granges still exist under the leadership of the older generation.

These granges hold monthly meetings and offer a range of programs and activities for all ages. The buildings are available to rent for gatherings such as town meetings, potlucks, reunions, dances, weddings and other special events.

"I think granges have a future," says John Fine, grange master at Riversdale Grange just west of Roseburg. "No matter where you go, the real power of organization is in the local community. The grange looks into what a community needs, then devises ways to help with those needs. Providing for those needs make a community a better place for people."

Following are short statements on each of the active granges in Douglas Electric's service area. The public is invited to each organization's monthly meetings.

### Camas Valley Grange

The 20 members of Camas Valley Grange meet at 10 a.m. the second Tuesday of each month.

"Our membership is very small, so we're trying to get a few

*Oregon granges support communities. We are family friendly, nonpartisan, nonsectarian, with membership open to all. With roots in our community, we bring neighbors together to meet local needs.* —OREGON GRANGE MOTTO



Students from Lookingglass Elementary School get a close-up view of goats during the annual Lookingglass Grange Ag Day. Grange members organize about 15 stations emphasizing some aspect of agriculture for the students to experience. PHOTO COURTESY OF LOOKINGGLASS GRANGE

more people interested,” says Sharon Combs, grange master and a grange member for the past 60 years. “We’re primarily a community service organization.”

The Camas Valley Grange organizes and hosts community luncheons, particularly for seniors, at noon on the first and fourth Tuesdays of each month. There is bingo after lunch. Proceeds fund college scholarships for Camas Valley High School graduates.

Grange members participate in the SMART reading program, which helps young students improve their reading skills. Members also host the Firemen Appreciation Potluck the first Saturday in December. Funds from the potluck are donated to the Camas Valley Rural Fire Department.

Grange contact: Sharon Combs, 541-643-6881.

### **Kellogg Grange**

“I think granges offer a unique opportunity for people to serve their communities, to build relationships with neighbors, to cooperate together to support their communities,” says David Madison, grange master.

Kellogg Grange in Oakland has 25 members who meet at 7 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month. Members organize and host several activities.

Bingo is played at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. Barn dances—featuring square and line dancing with caller Woody Lane and the band Joe Ross and the Roseburg Foot Stompers—are popular. So is an annual cake walk that raises money for Camp Millennium, a camp for children with cancer or

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## Granges

*Continued from page 5*

who are dealing with the disease within their families.

In September, the grange hosts a treasure sale, providing people a chance to lease a table and sell their unwanted items. Proceeds from this event go to the grange's building fund.

*Grange contact: David Madison, 541-505-4013.*

### Lookingglass Grange

Members of Lookingglass Grange in Roseburg are involved in numerous activities, the most recent one to establish its building as a safe place to go in case of an emergency. Grange Master Anne Smith says the project is coming along with the help of Douglas Electric Cooperative, the Olalla Water District and the Lookingglass Rural Fire Department.

The Lookingglass Grange has 34 members. The grange meets at 7 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month. A potluck dinner starts at 6:30 prior to the meeting.

Grange members organize several events. This year's Ag Day is Tuesday, April 7. The event features 15 educational stations that deal with different aspects of agriculture. About 200 students from Lookingglass Elementary School visit the stations.

The grange building is home to the Lookingglass Farmers Market from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. every Thursday from April through the end of the year. Most vendors are grange members.

In May, grange members participate in the annual Lookingglass Parade and Clean-up Day.

The grange's major fundraiser is a dinner, auction, raffle and bingo event held early each year. Money from the event funds two \$500 college scholarships for graduating students in the Winston-Dillard School District.

*Grange contact: Anne Smith, 541-420-5074.*

### Smith River Grange

The all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast on the first Saturday of each month from February through November is a popular event at Smith River Grange in Reedsport. The monthly events attract 70 to 130 diners.

The grange's monthly meeting is held after each breakfast.

"We serve a lot of pancakes," says Grange Secretary Rita Houston

Proceeds from the events are used to support grade school and high school sports in the area.

"Our mission is to support our youth and our community," Rita says. "We definitely look out for each other."

The grange and its 25 members also help individuals or families who have suffered a tragic loss.

The Smith River Grange is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Members are planning a summer celebration.



**George and Karen Black work in the kitchen at the Smith River Grange, preparing for the all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast held the first Saturday of each month from February through November. The Blacks are longtime active members of the grange. PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH RIVER GRANGE**

Rita credits longtime grange members George and Karen Black, both in their 70s, with being "the force that keeps us going."

*Grange contact: Rita Houston, 541-401-3197.*

### Sunnydale Grange

"The grange is the voice of rural folks," says Ron Galdabini, secretary of the Sunnydale Grange, 5 miles west of Drain.

The grange has 18 members. The monthly meetings are at 7:30 p.m. the second Monday of each month. A potluck dinner at 6:30 precedes each meeting.

The grange hosts a bingo night the first Monday of each month except during the summer. Grange members also have a cook shack that features barbecued chicken at the annual North Douglas County Fair in Drain.

Funds from these events provide a \$500 college scholarship for a senior from Yoncalla High School and a senior from North Douglas High School.

"We're always looking for new members because most of us are getting elderly," Ron says. ■

*Grange contact: Ron Galdabini, 541-942-4732.*

# Honoring the Past, Embracing the Future



Spray School celebrates a century of education

By Jody Foss

For 10 years, the school bell on the Spray School was silent, in need of a new rope and repair. When Superintendent Larry Johnson arrived in town last year, he made a promise to the school: Soon, the school bell would ring again.

With a strong rope and new supports, the students now ring the bell at the beginning and end of each school day.

Anyone who attends Spray School's centennial celebration Sunday, April 26, can see what it's like to ring the bell for themselves. Beginning at 2 p.m., all are invited to celebrate and honor the 100-year anniversary of Spray School.

Parents, grandparents, students, teachers and administrators are encouraged to come to the centennial celebration in the gymnasium and enjoy the fun.

Many community members have memories of the beautiful stone building, designed and built in 1920. For the past 100 years, Spray residents and those of surrounding communities have flocked to the school for sports events, musical performances, awards ceremonies and classes. Students have gone on to become teachers. Some have served in the military. They have become doctors, diesel mechanics and pilots.

"This is going to be an awesome time for people to touch base and then stay connected, to get together and share stories," says Librarian Jan Bolton. "People who are new to the area will have a chance to meet the folks who are a part of Spray's history."

Spray Elementary School student Blake Newton and Superintendent Larry Johnson work together to get the old school bell ringing. PHOTO BY JODY FOSS



**Spray School students and staff gather on the school's stairway entrance in 1923.**  
 PHOTO COURTESY OF BARBARA TUMALSON

The event will be highlighted with food and a presentation of Spray School through the century since the first stone was placed in the foundation by Loren “Lonnie” Gochenour, who designed and built the school, cutting and hauling rocks in a wagon to town from the Corn Cob Ranch.

“It’s a chance for anyone who has a memory to share to do so,” Larry says. “It will be a fun time with food and fellowship. That is our focus.”

Spray mayor and 1971 graduate Valerie Howell has many memories of her own.

“I think it’s a really great thing,” she says. “Mr. Johnson has come to me a lot to get some of the history that I know. He is a real go-getter. For coming from outside the area, he has a real genuine interest in our community. Spray is so rich in history. I think it’s really fascinating.”

Lonnie’s grandson Loren Delaney will attend the celebration and share some of his memories. Loren has his grandfather’s drafting tools used to design the school and is donating them to Spray Museum. Lonnie’s wife, Ona, kept a diary while living at the homestead in Winlock. Her

granddaughter Barbara Tumalson donated it to Spray Museum.

“It was a fascinating man who built the Spray School,” Larry says.

Lonnie came west from Indiana to Dayton, Washington, and married Ona Hatfield in 1906. Lonnie was a carpenter, draftsman, engineer and architect. He rode horseback from Spokane, Washington, to Oregon in 1911 to file a homestead claim on 160 acres near Winlock.

Lonnie and his neighbors built a school on Sourdough Ridge, as well as a five-bedroom home for his wife and children who came by train in November 1911 from Spokane to Condon and the rest of the way by wagon.

In Ona’s diary, she mentions having their first woman visitor, almost six months after they arrived in Winlock.

“Those of us with homesteading families were left a pretty special legacy,” Barbara says.

Lonnie built a stone house in Spray for Sam Johnson, who ran the telephone company; the Fossil Mercantile; a large house in Mayville; and the original stone arch at Pioneer Park. Lonnie served on

the school board for many years and as Wheeler County commissioner from 1933 to 1941. He died gathering cows on the ranch in September 1942.

Lonnie and Ona had six children. Daughters Pauline Britt and Leora “Babe” Stephens remained in Spray most of their lives. Leora was secretary at Spray School.

While celebrating a storied history, the school continues to look to the future.

To help improve the vocational skills program in Spray, the school recently bought property to develop a new boys’ dorm, and a workshop for welding, carpentry and mechanics.

The school’s art and music programs are taking shape with trips to visit museums and performances.

In late February, a small group of students attended a special vocational tech program in Ft. Yukon, Alaska. Justin Bunch, Tommy Bunch, Tom Chase, Gabe Holm and Nate Clark experienced the culture and learned carpentry and welding skills. ■

*If you have any old photographs, yearbooks or memories to share before the centennial event, contact Larry Johnson at 541-468-2226.*



The Gump family has hosted eight exchange students in the past nine years. From left are Sadie, exchange student Aurora Gaiotti, Jeana, Savannah and Justin.

# A Wonderful Tradition

Foreign exchange program shares cultures and creates lifelong friendships

## Story and photos by Scott Laird

Each fall, Vernonia families and Vernonia High School welcome foreign exchange students from around the world to spend the entire school year in the community: learning, making friends, playing sports and, perhaps most importantly, teaching locals about other cultures and giving them a glimpse into how the rest of the world lives. It's a decades-long tradition.

"There is just so much that they bring to our school and our community," says Cathy Ward.

Cathy is a former instructor in the Vernonia School District and now works for International Student Exchange Programs, known as ASSE. She and her husband, Reggie, have hosted 43 exchange students from 21 countries since 1986.

In past years, Vernonia High School has hosted as many as 18 exchange students in a year. This year there are 14. Potential host families can read through students' profiles and pick a student they think will be a good match for their family and interests. Hosts are required to provide a bedroom and meals for their student. Students bring their own spending money.

Cathy says she picks her students in late winter or early spring, then communicates with them throughout the spring and summer in anticipation of their arrival.

"We ask each other questions," she says. "We send each other photos. When they get here, we already feel like we know each other, like we already have a connection."

Paul Lemaron, an exchange student from Kenya, lived with Cathy in 2013. Paul is a member of the Masai tribe in his home country, where he is getting ready to graduate from college. During his year in Vernonia, he shared a Masai dance dressed in traditional clothing during a Vernonia talent show.

Exchange students can come to Vernonia through four different programs. Students from Germany can participate in the Congress Bungestas, an exchange program sponsored by the United States and German governments.

Future Leader Exchange recruits students from countries that were part of the former Soviet Union. The U.S. government pays for the program to improve international relations and build leaders.

The U.S. put the YES program in place after 9/11. The program brings students from predominantly Muslim countries to

experience American culture and return as goodwill ambassadors.

Students in the FLEX and YES programs must complete 50 hours of community service while they are in the United States.

“It teaches them about volunteering, and they take that back to their countries,” Cathy says.

Kathy Larson decided to be a host mother this year for the first time. She says she has enjoyed her experience with Anisoara (Ann) Crillic, a student from Moldova who came to Vernonia through the FLEX program.

“This is my first time being a parent, not just a host to an exchange student,” Kathy says.

Ann says she wanted to be an exchange student in the United States so she could learn to speak better English, experience American culture and create opportunities for her future.

“It was not a hard decision for me,” Ann says. “For a lot of people, the United States is seen as a paradise, and everything is so good here.”

Ann says she thought it would be easy to be an American teenager, but she struggled at first to make friends in Vernonia.

“You have to build a new life from nothing, and it can be hard,” she says.

She has seen how many opportunities students have in the U.S.

“In my country, we don’t have much,” she says. “Some students here don’t see what they have.”

Ann, who Kathy says is very independent, has adjusted well to life with Kathy while bonding with her unofficial “sibling,” a yellow lab named Harper, and making new friends. For Kathy, having a teenager has been a bit more of an adjustment than she thought it would be, but says she has acclimated well to being a second mother and friend to Ann. She says it has been a wonderful experience.

There is always a period of assimilation for both the exchange student and the host family. The level of English exchange students speak is different for everyone, and sometimes communication and cultural issues can be a barrier. Oregon’s changing seasons can also be a big adjustment. Being a teenager and far from home can lead to homesickness. Sometimes a student doesn’t fit into the family dynamics. That’s how Jeana Gump and her family ended up hosting their first exchange student nine years ago.

Jeana and husband, Justin, have four children, two of which are grown and gone from the house, and two still at home. Nine years ago, her daughter Laura was a senior in high school and ran cross country with Ira Verhogliad, an exchange student from Ukraine who was not fitting with her host family. Jeana stepped up and took in Ira and has since hosted seven more students: Hannah from Germany, Cecillie from Denmark, Justine from France, Pauline from Germany, Lawrence from Taiwan, Inez from France, and now Aurora Gaiotti from Italy.

Jeana’s other daughters are Sadie, a high school sophomore and an accomplished distance runner and equestrian athlete; and Savannah, an 18-year-old special needs student set to graduate this year.

Aurora, who is the youngest of three girls in her family, says she enjoys being part of the Gump family.

“I wanted to experience another culture and see the world from



**From left, exchange student Anisoara (Ann) Crillic with her Vernonia friends Avery Hough, Audrey Hill and Harper.**

another perspective,” she says. “I love this family, and Sadie is like a little sister to me. It’s been very amazing for me.”

Being an exchange sister to Savannah provides a unique experience.

“I think it’s changed each of them profoundly,” says Jeana about all eight students.

Ira returned to Ukraine and worked with children like Savannah, and Inez got a job as a nanny with a family with a child with special needs. She also volunteers with special needs children.

Jeana keeps a journal which her exchange students add to each year. She also has a cookbook with favorite recipes from many exchange students’ home countries.

“The exposure to different cultures has been amazing,” she says.

Families like Jeana’s, who have multiple experiences, can be a great resource for newer hosts, sharing their struggles, offering tips and providing understanding when challenges present themselves.

“It’s really helpful to have returning host families, like Jeana’s, families who have been exchange students, like Erin Swepton, and new families like Kathy Larson,” Cathy says.

Even though Vernonia is a small town and isn’t always what exchanged students dreamed coming to America would be like, most students enjoy their stay and leave with wonderful memories.

“My first exchange student is over 50 years old now and a grandfather,” Cathy says. “He was 19 when he came here, and he still says it was the best year of his life.”

With June just around the corner, soon all the host families will say goodbye. But there’s always next year.

“There’s always lots of kids that need families,” Cathy says. ■

*For more information about International Student Exchange Programs, call 800-733-2773, email [asseusawest@asse.com](mailto:asseusawest@asse.com), or go to [www.ASSE-host.com](http://www.ASSE-host.com).*

# We Can Help Weatherize Your Home

Blachly-Lane rebates and loans make using less electricity easy

**By Craig Reed**

Are you feeling a draft coming through a window seal or through the doorjamb? Is your floor cool, or even cold, to your bare or stocking feet?

That uncomfortable feeling can be eased or even eliminated with the help of loan and rebate programs through Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative.

The cooperative is kicking off a campaign to encourage its residential members to weatherize their homes with the help of loans and rebates. The promotion is specifically aimed at installing new windows and insulated doors and insulating attics, floors and walls.

“Our member surveys show 53% of our consumers live in houses built before 1980,” says Pam Spettel, Blachly-Lane’s member relations manager, who oversees energy efficiency programs. “Building standards have improved for energy efficiency since then, and windows and insulation in houses even 20 to 30 years old often aren’t working like they once did. Broken seals on older double-pane windows make them lose their energy-efficiency properties. Older insulation needs beefing up to keep houses comfortable and lower energy consumption and high bills.”

Blachly-Lane members Jeff and Kandra Newell took advantage of the rebate

## How BLEC Can Help

**Home and Manufactured Home Insulation Rebates**—As much as \$2 a square foot

**Window Rebates**—As much as \$8 a square foot

**Loans**—Borrow up to \$500 with no interest; up to \$3,000 at prime plus 2%

These are just some of the options available. To learn more, visit [blachlylane.coop](http://blachlylane.coop) and look for the Rebate Forms page under the Conservation / Energy Savings tab, or call our energy efficiency department at 888-883-9879.

program and replaced the original windows in their log cabin-style home built in 1981. The Newells retired and moved to the house in 2013.

The original windows were wooden framed and single pane. Storm windows were tacked up during the winter.

New double-pane Anderson windows with were installed in 2018.

“If it was 20 F outside, it was 30 F inside even with the storm windows,” Jeff says. “Before, we would run our pellet stove all the time. Now we’re not using as many pellets, probably 30% less, and there’s been a 30% to 40% decrease on our electric bill, especially during the winter months.”

Kandra says the new windows hold in heat.

“Before, you never got comfy,” she says. “The old windows were so drafty. It used to be when you stepped away from the pellet stove and toward the kitchen, it was ‘Ooh, it’s cold!’ The new windows have reduced the amount of time needed to heat the house and have increased the heat in the house. It’s much warmer than it was, and we’re happy with that.”

The couple received a \$1,000 rebate for the window replacement project.

The Newells also replaced the incandescent lightbulbs in their home with LED bulbs through the Direct Install program.

“There’s definitely value in comfort,” Jeff says.

Longtime Blachly-Lane members Shari Goodin and

Steve Losen took advantage of the rebate program and recently installed new insulation under the floor of their 1983 manufactured house. A vapor barrier on the ground was also laid down. There had been no ground barrier previously.

The couple also had double-paned windows and a ductless heating and cooling system installed.

“The rebate offer makes it more financially doable,” Shari says. “The house stays at a more even temperature now. The floor is much warmer. If you’re barefoot, you can walk around with it not feeling like ice. We got value and comfort out of the changes. Definitely comfort.”

This year, the Bonneville Power Administration increased the rebate amounts offered for residential weatherization projects.

“Along with Blachly-Lane’s loan program, the BPA support is a great opportunity for our members to replace their leaky windows and doors, and to bring their attic, floor and wall insulation up to standard,” Pam says.

Blachly-Lane members can borrow up to \$500 with zero interest from the co-op or up to \$3,000 at prime plus 2% interest. Members can use their rebate check to pay down their loan, or their loan payments can be added to their monthly bill and be paid off over time.

“This is a real boost to our



**ABOVE:** Kandra and Jeff Newell used a \$1,000 Blachly-Lane rebate to replace their drafty home windows with double-pane windows.



**LEFT:** Shari Goodin shows off her new ductless heat pump that provides heat and air conditioning in her manufactured home.

members so they don't have to make such a big investment up front," Pam says. "We always tell our members that the rebate money is theirs. We want them to come and get it."

Blachly-Lane is a BPA customer and receives a set amount of energy-efficiency funding. Those funds must be used to help consumers afford energy-saving improvements to

their homes or businesses. The money is available to members on a first-come, first-served basis.

Members are eligible for free in-home conservation upgrades through the co-op's Direct Install program. The Direct Install program gives members energy recommendations that will help save on future power bills.

Weatherization projects must meet program qualifications and require pre-approval from the Blachly-Lane

energy efficiency department before proceeding. After pre-approval and project completion, members must submit completed forms by mail or email.

"The rebates offered are subject to change and are limited to available funding, so we encourage our consumers to look into this right away if they are interested," Pam says. "New windows, doors and insulation pay for themselves quickly by lowering energy bills over time. We think that's really exciting." ■

# In Support of Rural Communities

Rotary Club members stay active in many South Deschutes County programs

By Craig Reed

The Rotary Club of Sunriver-La Pine has been a giving organization since it was chartered in 1994.

The club's mission is to help provide for and support programs for the area's youth, seniors and the disadvantaged with donations of time, effort and money.

"We're a service club that is constantly looking for opportunities to assist in our communities," says Jim McCormick, a longtime member of the organization.

Cheri Martinen, the club's president for the July 2019 to June 2020 year, estimates about \$80,000 will be donated during that time. That level of support has been common since businessmen Dale Lawrence and Darwin Thurston started the club 26 years ago. The organization averages 35 to 40 members.

"The support we receive is a reflection of our communities," Cheri says. "It shows how much we care, and how great Rotary and our South Deschutes County communities are."

Cheri has been a Rotarian since 2011. But her first experience with the organization came in 2007 when she was a La Pine High School student. The Sunriver-La Pine club sponsored her for a one-year exchange trip to Istanbul, Turkey.

"Rotary changed my life by sending me abroad for a year,"



Sunriver-La Pine Rotary Club members have partnered with the Sunriver Nature Center & Observatory and planted trees in Sunriver's Owners Park. Here, Harry Hamilton digs a hole in preparation to plant a young tree. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHERI MARTINEN/SUNRIVER-LA PINE ROTARY CLUB

she says. "That trip opened my eyes to a broader world. It gave me a huge life-changing experience. Since then, I've wanted to always be involved in my community and donating my time."

Bea Leach Hatler, the Sunriver-La Pine Rotary's president-elect for the 2020-2021 year, joined the organization in 1987. She was

a member of a few clubs before coming to South Deschutes County and joining the club.

When Bea was president of the Redmond Rotary, she traveled to Spain for a Rotarian gathering. The guest speaker for that event was Mikhail Gorbachev, president of the Soviet Union.

"Our members have a passion, a focus and a diversity

that makes this club a powerful provider," Bea says. "It's in my soul now. You can't be in a community and not be involved."

Sunriver-La Pine Rotary supports or is involved in a multitude of activities in South Deschutes County. The club's major fundraiser is its Wine Raffle and Community Benefit Auction. The 18th annual

dinner event is May 8 in the Great Hall at Sunriver. It is open to the public. Tickets are available by contacting Bea at beal1301@gmail.com. Auction items may be donated by contacting Bea.

In its 17 years, this event has raised a little more than \$600,000 that has been donated back to programs in South Deschutes County.

Other club activities and donations include the Adopt-A-Highway program, the Gift of Literacy program, ponderosa tree planting, bingo, and providing scholarships for high school seniors.

Donations are made through the Rotary Club Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Club members clean up about a 1.5-mile stretch of Highway 97 between the Cottonwood and Sunriver exits in the spring and fall.

In late March, club members visit and distribute a new book to each of about 200 third graders at La Pine Elementary, Rosland Elementary and Three Rivers Elementary schools as part of the Gift of Literacy Program.

Twice, club members have partnered with the Sunriver Nature Center & Observatory and planted trees in the Sunriver Owners Park.

Through the winter, the club partners with Village Bar & Grill in Sunriver for Monday evening bingo. Cheri says the weekly event draws a great turnout. The bingo winners split the money with the club.

In another partnership, the club buys poinsettias from Flowers at Sunriver Village at a discount. Members distribute about 55 of the plants in December to seniors at Little Deschutes Lodge in La Pine.



**The Great Hall at Sunriver is the site of the Sunriver-La Pine Rotary Club's major fundraiser, the Wine Raffle and Community Benefit Auction. This year's event is May 8.**

To support an orphanage in El Salvador and to help it buy a van for educational field trips, club members have been helping with the Coffee 4 Kids nonprofit program. Members buy 1-pound or 5-pound packages of coffee beans for themselves or sell the packages to others.

For several years, the Rotarians have been planning and saving money for the improvement of three baseball and softball fields at the Finley Butte Sports Complex/La Pine Community Park. The project includes backstops, dugouts, fences and irrigation systems.

"That will make it a first-class complex," Jim says.


"We annually encourage nonprofits to submit applications for Rotary grants," he adds "We get more requests than we can fund, but we



**Rotary Club member Ron Schmidt is ready to load up poinsettias and deliver them to senior residents at Little Deschutes Lodge in La Pine.**

evaluate each application. The recipients have to be in South County and have to be for the aged, youth or those who are disadvantaged. The grants we distribute are intended to benefit more people than just a handful." ■

*Discussion on present and future activities is at the Sunriver-La Pine Rotary's weekly breakfast meetings at 7:15 a.m. Wednesdays in the Hearth Room at Sunriver Resort. Anyone interested in attending the meetings or joining the club should email Harry Hamilton at weatherlore@msn.com.*



Big Bend Electric Cooperative members and their guests came to Basin City High School for the 2020 annual meeting.

# Big Bend's 81st Annual Meeting

## Story and photos by Kelly Haugh

Big Bend Electric Cooperative's 81st annual meeting was February 22 at Basin City Elementary School. Approximately 250 members and guests attended.

Kelly Haugh, manager of member services, started the meeting by welcoming everyone and introducing the three students selected to attend the NRECA Youth Tour in June: Bryant Hales, a junior at Chiawana High School in Pasco; Grace Booth, a junior at Connell High School; and MacKenzie Shattuck, a junior at Connell High School. Then the three scholarship recipients were announced: Molly Hane, a senior at Lind-Ritzville High School; Maeson Holst, a senior at Connell High School; and Spencer Miller, a senior at Lind-Ritzville High School. Scholarship recipients are selected by three people who

have no affiliation with the co-op and make their selections independent of each other. Each scholarship recipient read their winning essay to the audience.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the meeting was brought to order by Board President Daniel Hille.

"The board of trustees takes the core mission to provide safe, reliable service, in accordance with sound business and environmental practices seriously," Hille said. He explained how the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's continuing education program provides board members knowledge and skills that help them better understand electric cooperatives. Board members can earn their Credentialed Cooperative Director certification.

"In order to earn a CCD, one must take the five core courses," Hille said. "I am

pleased to say 100% of our trustees have earned their CCDs."

He discussed the state of the co-op and explained a necessary rate increase.

"We have announced a rate increase that goes into effect April 1st," Hille said. "Although our costs have continued to increase each year, we have tried to minimize the impact to our members. Despite this increase, Big Bend Electric's rates, compared to other electric cooperatives and PUD's, are among the lowest in the nation."

The treasurer's report from trustee Lyle Holt followed, before Hille introduced CEO/General Manager Yvette Armstrong. She thanked everyone for attending and reiterated BBEC's mission statement: To provide safe, reliable service in accordance with sound business and environmental practices.



**LEFT: Big Bend Electric Cooperative Board President Dan Hille said BBEC’s rates are among the lowest in the nation for co-ops. RIGHT: BBEC Member Service Representatives Tia Kubik and Kristy Pierce welcomed members and their guests to the annual meeting.**

“Our engineering and operations departments work together to prioritize maintenance, replacements and new infrastructure needed to reliably keep the lights on for our members,” Armstrong said. “We plan for next year, five years from now and well into the future.

Armstrong said the largest threat to reliable electricity is supply and demand. She explained how some people are pushing for the removal of the Snake River dams, and coal and natural gas plants.

“Hydroelectricity is the cornerstone of our energy supply,” Armstrong said. “It is the most dependable source of energy as it generates when the sun isn’t shining and the wind isn’t blowing. Our top priority is to provide affordable, reliable and dependable electricity to our members.”

Armstrong introduced and thanked all employees present for their dedication and hard work, as well as the board members for their service.

Following the collection of ballots,

Haugh took the podium and provided the Caring Neighbors report and named many of the local organizations that Caring Neighbors donated funds to throughout the year. “Since Caring Neighbors was formed in 2001,” Haugh said, “more than \$598,000 has been donated to organizations in our local communities. That is a huge amount that all of you should be proud of for having donated.”

Haugh showed a short video that explained how cooperatives began and touched on the seven principles that guide co-ops. She took a moment to describe how Big Bend Electric has “Concern for Community,” one of the seven principles, by participating in and donating to many community events.

Haugh talked briefly about energy conservation and rebates that are available to members. She encouraged members who may be planning to replace anything in their homes, businesses or their irrigation equipment to call the office and

see if they qualify for rebates.

Co-op attorney Mark DeWulf gave his attorney’s report, followed by Hille asking if there was any unfinished business or new business to be presented.

While ballots were counted, prizes were distributed. There were 52 prizes donated by vendors who work with Big Bend Electric throughout the year, as well as prizes donated by the cooperative and 11 children’s prizes donated by law firm Carpenter, McGuire & DeWulf P.S.

DeWulf announced the election results: District 1, John Harder; District 2, Dennis Swinger Sr.; and District 3, Stacy Kniveton were reelected for another term.

Hille adjourned the meeting. Following the invocation given by board member Dennis Swinger Sr., lunch was served by caterer Back 40 BBQ of Eltopia.

Big Bend Electric Cooperative thanks everyone who attended the annual meeting. We look forward to seeing you all again next year. ■

# Beyond Shop Class

From fabrication to aviation, technical education is on the rise

Story by Drew Myron

With a careful eye, Clinton Child sizes up a handrail that will line a flight of stairs.

From his shop in Parkdale, he measures, calculates, designs, mocks, tacks, welds, sands, refines and, finally, installs. Metal fabrication is precise and painstaking work, and he is patient enough to make it work.

You may not know his name, but you've likely seen his work all around town: from seating at Solstice Pizza to conveyor belts at Hood River Cherry Co., deck rails on homes and repairs on agriculture equipment.

"The local community is keeping me busy," says Clinton, who works seven days a week to keep up with demand. "I'm really grateful for that."

Last year, when his wife, Shanna, was six months' pregnant with their second child, the couple took a leap of faith and launched their own business, Parkdale Metalworks.

"I've always been building stuff," says Clinton, the son of a carpenter. "Since I was little, we were always tinkering. It just came natural."

When he was a student at Hood River Valley High School, Clinton's natural talent was reinforced by an internship with the late Rodger Schock, an esteemed metal fabricator and owner of Schock Welding in Odell. Fortified with skills



**"The local community is keeping me busy," says Clinton Child, owner/operator of Parkdale Metalworks, standing with a staircase rail he made for a home in the Gorge. "I'm really grateful for that." PHOTO COURTESY OF PARKDALE METALWORKS.**

and experience, Clinton went onto launch a career in manufacturing.

In many ways, there is a need for more Clintons—and area leaders are working to make it happen.

Thanks to an influx of state and federal funding, Hood River Valley High School is beefing up its career technical education program. Columbia Gorge Community College is building a \$14.6 million

workforce skills center on its campus in The Dalles. The aim is to engage and equip students throughout the region with tangible skills that will fill high-demand, solid-wage jobs.

Yesteryear's vocational-

technical program is today's expanded and refined career technical education. Instead of a single-focused woodworking class or auto mechanics course, CTE works to prepare high school students for next-step education that includes internships, industry partnerships and practical links between technical fields and the traditional academic subjects of history, science and math.

Hood River Valley High School offers five CTE programs with courses in agricultural science and technology, mechanics/construction, power and technology, welding and fabrication, and carpentry.

The school has partnered with local manufacturers, such as Cardinal Glass and Insitu, to provide practical links to professional careers.

"We're excited to share with students opportunities right here in their backyard," says Kate Wurster, career technical education program coordinator at the high school. "It's important to expose students to options."

On the Columbia Gorge Community College campus in The Dalles, technical education is reaching a new high. In June, crews will break ground for the Treaty Oak Regional Skills Center, an expansive facility designed to provide students with hands-on training in a host of technical professions, including construction trades, metals fabrication and aviation maintenance.

The \$14.6 million project includes student housing and is funded by the Oregon Legislature, with additional



**Clinton gained fabrication finesse through an apprenticeship and on-the-job experience. Schools in the area are working to increase technical education programs as a means to engage and equip students with tangible skills that will fill high-demand, solid-wage jobs.** PHOTO BY DREW MYRON

funds from the city of The Dalles, Wasco County and Port of The Dalles. The center is scheduled to open next summer.

The college's renewable energy technology has expanded into electro-mechanical technology—a degreed program that prepares students to work with automated electronic technologies in a variety of industries, including renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, unmanned aircraft systems and engineering.

Along with manufacturing and welding, construction trades is a new program that introduces the fundamentals of house building—including wiring and plumbing—with apprenticeship opportunities.

Plans are in the works for an aviation technology program.

This type of career

education is critical, says Robert Clark, who teaches at Columbia Gorge Community College.

"Manufacturing is the No. 4 industry in the greater Central Oregon region," he says. "There is currently great need for people to go into the field. Finding midlevel workers has always been hard as they cluster toward the top—engineering—and the bottom—laborers. We see lots of workers produced that have skills, but not the ability to fill the role of the jobs on the market.

"Many of the industry folks that I have talked with have stated that they don't have too much problem finding someone who can operate a welder, or that they feel confident that they can train a welder, but that they cannot

## Learn More

- ▶ Hood River Valley High School—Career Technology Education. Call Kate Wurster, 541-386-5034.
- ▶ Columbia Gorge Community College—Career and Tech Education. Go to [www.cgcc.edu/career-tech-ed](http://www.cgcc.edu/career-tech-ed).
- ▶ Parkdale Metalworks. Call Clinton Child, 541-399-0540

find or do not have the time to train a worker to fabricate, fit up parts, work the types of manufacturing equipment they are using or have the integrated math skills needed to complete the tasks. To me, that is where the skills gap is currently."

With his new business, Clinton is filling the gap and working hard to keep up with demand.

"Actually," he says, "I've been busier than I thought I'd be." ■



Clare McKay traveled to Washington to shoot footage for her documentary, "Living an American Dream." PHOTO BY DAVID L. THOMAS

# Living an American Dream

Director Clare McKay's first major film focuses on ranching and rodeo

## Story by Lauren Brown

Clare McKay grew up in Juntura on a ranch with five brothers and sisters. While she appreciates the ranching lifestyle in which she was raised, she chose a different path.

She attended John Paul the Great Catholic University in San Diego County, majoring in communications media—essentially, directing and acting. One night, over beer and tacos, she was regaling a friend

with stories of her family and the ranching life back home when her friend suggested she make a documentary.

Clare says she initially brushed off the idea. She didn't see her family situation as anything to make a film about, but understood how her friends in California saw it differently.

Clare and her siblings are from Haiti. They were adopted as babies and brought to the United States by their parents, Joe and Joyce McKay, who run a ranching

operation in Eastern Oregon.

Clare and her siblings grew up learning the ins and outs of ranching, as well as rodeo.

Clare graduated from college in 2018 and came home. Her brother Luke asked her to make him a sizzle reel—a series of shots cut together—of his bronc rides.

"I said, 'Let me do you one better,'" Clare says. "I'll just make a movie about you. It would give me a chance to use my skills and put together this documentary idea and see what

I can do with it.'"

Clare spent about a year creating the documentary on paper before she shot a single frame. She came up with the story arc, the characters and the pitch treatment.

As she has filmed, some things have changed since that initial plan, but the main thread has remained the same and can be summed up in the title of the film: "Living an American Dream."

"When people ask what this documentary is about, look at

the title because it's going to tell you in four words exactly what you're about to watch," Clare says.

She says the most important word in the title is the smallest: "an."

"I'm not trying to tell or show what living the American dream looks like," Clare says. "I'm trying to tell you what living an American dream looks like. Everyone's American dream looks different."

Clare will narrate the documentary, which is spilt into three parts. The first covers Clare and her siblings' adoptions and growing up on a ranch. The second focuses on the marriage of ranching and rodeo, and how they are important to the community.

"That leads into the third part, which is what I call the call-to-action sequence," Clare says. "We call out the youth a little bit for their apathy. If you want to chase after a dream and succeed at it, it's going to take some failing. It's going to take some falling down. But if you really want it, you have to figure out how badly you want it and keep going for it."

Clare's dilemma of deciding between a career in ranching or her dream to be a filmmaker is a large part of the documentary, but her family is the thread woven through the film.

Her brothers Luke and Gabe are involved in ranching and rodeo. Luke's dream is also to have a family. Gabe has a fence-contracting business and wants to go into the National Guard. Her sister Anna has a family and lives a mile up the road from the family ranch.

What the siblings have in common is they are actively working to make their dreams happen.



**In January, Clare traveled to Elko, Nevada, for the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering to premiere the trailer for her film, "Living an American Dream." Her siblings, who are featured in the documentary, accompanied her. From left are Luke McKay, Clare, Anna Rose Pozzi and Gabe McKay. PHOTO COURTESY OF CLARE MCKAY**

When it's done, the film's cast will include 13 to 16 people, with Clare doing everything from interviewing and filming to promotion and marketing.

Some of her interviews didn't turn out as expected.

"They did not follow the script that was in my mind," Clare says.

She decided to lean into the differences and see where it led.

"That's what made it the beautiful journey that it has been," Clare says. "Everyone answers all the questions differently"

What was going to be a documentary about her brothers' rodeo experience turned into something much more.

"This is about the community of ranchers and rodeo athletes and how those come together and are important, not only for this community but

for the country as well," Clare says. "Agriculture is a huge part of the economy, and some people are forgetting that. I'm going to remind them where their food comes from."

Clare is grateful for all the help she has gotten on this two-and-half-year project, from cast members who donated their time to the people who have given her advice on how to proceed and introduced her to valuable contacts, she says she has learned from every experience along the way.

As she finishes up principal photography and prepares the footage to send to an editor and a composer, Clare is looking for donations to help her get the film across the finish line. She has set up a GoFundMe account. Anyone who would like to donate can go to [anamericandreamfilm.com](http://anamericandreamfilm.com) and click on the donate button.

Clare hopes to have the film ready for screening in late 2020. Then it will go on a festival run.

In January, Clare traveled to Elko, Nevada, for the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, where she premiered the trailer. Within a week of the film's Facebook page launch, she had more than 600 likes.

"It's striking a chord for a lot of people, and that's on both sides of the aisle, and that's what I wanted," Clare says. "It's been amazing because while filmmaking isn't my family's niche, it has given them a chance to talk about what they love to do, which is both ranching and rodeo." ■

*For more information about the documentary and to watch the trailer, go to [anamericandreamfilm.com](http://anamericandreamfilm.com) or [Facebook.com/anamericandream20](https://www.facebook.com/anamericandream20).*

# Majesty of the Wild

The beauty of wildlife lives on through Caleb Hampton's taxidermy

By Dianna Troyer

Prize-winning taxidermy mounts greet visitors at Caleb Hampton's home near Mackay. The teen taxidermist's snarling coyote stands near the front door, while a mule deer buck stares from the stairwell.

"Taxidermy is a way for me to keep an animal alive, in a sense," says the 16-year-old Mackay High School sophomore. "I never get

tired of being outdoors and watching wildlife. I have an eye for the details that make animals look natural."

Caleb's realistic wildlife impressed judges at the Custer County Fair. In 2018, his full-body coyote mount won best of show, a blue ribbon and a purple rosette in the crafts and hobbies category. Last year, his deer won the same awards.

"I like how taxidermy blends so many art forms," Caleb

says. "You're sewing, painting, sawing and sanding, and sculpting with clay."

Caleb's attentiveness impressed local taxidermist Don Swindle when he asked for Don's advice to create his deer.

"I was glad to pass on the tradition to someone who's so eager to learn," says Don, owner of Fins & Fur Taxidermy in Arco. "Caleb is really meticulous. With taxidermy, you have to pay attention to details. He's doing well."

Most people don't understand all the invisible details a taxidermist puts into a mount, Caleb says. The coyote, for example, started with a polyurethane mannequin form. He had to cut and sand it so the pelt would fit. Then he sewed it on.

"Each stitch is about one-eighth of an inch apart," Caleb explains. "It takes a lot of stitches because you have to sew the back, legs and tail to keep it in place. Then I used sculpting clay to make sure the lips were snarling and the eyelids were just right."

Next he glued an artificial nose, mouth and eyes into place and carefully painted them with an airbrush and fine-tipped watercolor brush.

"To make the hair on its back stand up to show it was

agitated, I had to shampoo it, then comb and fluff it into place," Caleb says.

He created the coyote mount while enrolled in a three-day class at the Artistic School of Taxidermy near Kooskia in northern Idaho.

"The teacher didn't touch our work," Caleb says. "He just gave pointers on how to make it better."

Caleb says he knew it was realistic because some fairgoers recoiled in fear when they saw it.

"I was told some people, especially children, thought it was really scary," Caleb says. "It stares right at you."

He says his deer mount was less complex than the coyote because not as many stitches were needed.

"You just sew up the back of the neck to the head and antlers," he says. "It was the first deer I harvested, so it's special to me."

Along with getting individualized instruction from taxidermists, Caleb also studied books, watched online videos and bought Dermestid beetles to ply his craft. A colony of the beetles is commonly used in taxidermy to clean the flesh off bones instead of boiling or using chemical methods.

"People tend to think the beetles are weird and alien, but





**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** Dermestid beetles clean the skulls that Caleb Hampton will make into mounts. Caleb cleans an elk skull to make it into a European mount. Caleb's coyote won best of show at the Custer County Fair. PHOTOS BY CHASE GREEN

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** His deer won best of show at the Custer County Fair last summer.

they're in all of our backyards," Caleb says. "They're nature's cleanup crew for dead animals. They happen to like decaying meat. You can hold them in your hands, and they won't try to bite because they don't like fresh flesh. You're not tasty enough to them."

Six months ago, Caleb bought 3,000 beetles from a supplier. They reproduced quickly, so now he has about 8,000 to 10,000 living in a 10-foot-long chest freezer next to the house. To protect the freezer, he and his father, Jeremy, built a wooden box around it and added temperature and humidity controls.

"It's always at a perfect 71 degrees—the temperature they like best," Caleb says. "With those ideal conditions, they'll clean a mule deer skull in about three days."

Inside the freezer, he put bedding of sawdust and paper, and a foam block for the beetles to nest in.

"When they're eating, to me it sounds like raindrops falling

on a roof—kind of a soft 'chi, chi, chi' rustling sound," he says. "They don't like the cold air, so when I lift the freezer lid to check on them, they hide and it gets really quiet."

Knowing how effective the beetles are, hunters have asked Caleb to do European-style mounts, a popular cost-effective way to display a trophy. The hide is removed from the skull, and the bone is bleached or painted white.

Positive response to his work prompted Caleb to launch a business, Last Stand Taxidermy. He received his taxidermy/fur buyer license from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in January.

"Word travels fast in the hunting community," Caleb says.

He already envisions his summer projects. One of his father's friends gave him a gray wolf pelt. He has a bobcat hide too.

"I need to learn about birds and fish next," Caleb says. "I want to do it all." ■



# Wolverines!

Grit, perseverance propel West Wendover boys to the high school's fourth state championship

By Dianna Troyer

Without saying a word, the West Wendover Wolverines told their coach how they felt about being down four points at halftime of the state championship February 27.

"Their faces said it all when I went into the locker room at halftime," head coach John Sharp recalls. "They looked like they had already lost the game. I told them, 'You're kidding me.'"

With the score 23-19 and

the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association Division 2A championship at stake, John reminded his players of a former Wolverines team.

"The 2012 team was down 10 points with 90 seconds left in the championship game," he told them. "They scored 11 straight points to win the title. This game is not over. You are 16 minutes away from winning state. It's up to you to pick yourselves up and believe in yourselves and each other as a team for 16 minutes."

John says the Wolverines' opponent—the undefeated Incline Highlanders from northern Nevada—was formidable. The Wolverines had lost to them in three previous games.

"Honestly, Incline had more talent than we did," John admits. "But in the second half, our kids played with more heart, and that was the difference. They started the third quarter energized and never let up."

Senior center Jesus Gonzalez says the Wolverines' focused on hard-nosed defense in the second half.

"Coach told us that even though they were undefeated, we could be ourselves and win," he says.

The Wolverines defeated the

Highlanders 61-54, securing West Wendover's fourth state basketball championship. The following day, the boys returned home to a parade, where local police and firefighters blared celebratory sirens.

"We didn't know what the scale of the parade would be," Jesus says. "It was unreal and amazing to feel the whole community was behind us. When the season started, we weren't expected to win state. It was the best thing ever to prove we could do it."

John says this year's team started the season like five individuals on the court instead of a cohesive team.

"Then we lost a game by 35 points, and it was a wakeup call for them," John says. "After that, they came together."

Jesus says he remembers John telling them, "Fans don't remember stats of individual players. They remember a team that wins."

Along with the elation of winning the state championship, John says he hopes his players remember the lessons learned on and off the court. He reminds them that academic effort matters as much as playing basketball.

"Playing a sport is a privilege," John says. "We tell them, 'If you can't get it done



in the classroom, you can't get it done on the court."

Every Monday, the athletic department secretary checks the players' grades and sends an email to John before practice.

"If their grade point average falls below 2.0 or if they get an F in a class for that particular week, they're ineligible to play that week," John says. "Even if they have a 3.5 GPA but get an F, they can't play."

John says he hopes his pre-game speeches influence his players after they graduate. Before a game, he writes two words on the locker room board: Trust. Believe.

"I tell them to believe and



Jesus Gonzalez, the Wolverines' center, is a leader on the court.

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY MORI,  
ELKO DAILY FREE PRESS



The West Wendover Wolverines celebrate their victory in the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association Division 2A championship.

trust in themselves, their teammates and their coaches,” John says. “If you do, at the end of the day, you’ll be successful.”

Some Wolverine alums have told him how his advice affected them.

“During the last 15 years, they’ve come back and told me, ‘I wouldn’t have gone to college if not for you,’” John says. “I encourage them to focus on life outside sports and their community and to see the big picture.”

Jesus says he will remember one of John’s tenets.

“You don’t have to be the most talented person in the room, but you can damn well

be the most hardworking,” Jesus says. “I plan to do that with electrical engineering in college.”

John is optimistic about next year’s Wolverines team even though he will lose five seniors.

“We’ve got talented juniors and others coming up,” he says.

In the Wolverines’ locker room, a plaque hangs beside the door with the motto, “Play like a champion today.” Before leaving the locker room, everyone acknowledges it.

“Every player and every coach has to touch it and do what it says,” John says.

While every year’s team keeps the tradition, John says he never knows how a season

will unfold.

“Last year, we were favored to win state but were knocked out in the first round of the playoffs,” he says. “This year, our team was seeded third in the state tournament and still won. Every season, whatever happens, it’s a team effort. I’m always grateful to the players, my wife and our coaching staff.”

When the glow of winning the 2020 state championship eventually dims, John says he hopes his players remember one thing: “I want them to always remember how proud I am of them and how they never gave up. They believed in themselves.” ■



Coach John Sharp praises his players’ perseverance in the championship game.

# A Day in the Life of a Lineman

Story and photos by Lisa Jacoby

Travis Smart swaps a baseball cap for a white hard hat emblazoned with the Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative logo. He gets out of his truck and heads out in the crisp morning toward a nearby yard.

No fence means he doesn't worry about dogs. But this isn't always the case. When asked how often he deals with canines, he gives a quick smile.

"All the time."

At the next stop, he pauses at the gate and whistles in anticipation of a dog.

"That's an important step," he says.

Travis is a lineman for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative. He is one of seven

who works out of the La Grande office. Travis takes service calls; the other six divide into three-person crews.

"There's a lot of work where we need two or three people," he says.

All of OTEC's linemen work Monday through Friday, except when the lights go out. Outages don't wait until the men clock in at 7 a.m. on a weekday. The crew rotates weekend standby shifts.

"It's very rare that you don't get a call when you're on standby for a weekend," Travis says.

Travis graduated from La Grande High School in 2001. The following September, he began lineman school in Meridian, Idaho. He never planned to have a career in electricity.

"All I ever wanted was to be a pilot," he says. "I knew nothing about electricity."

Eight-hour days of line school included classroom time and hands-on work in the pole yard. He finished by December.

Travis still remembers some of his more influential classmates, especially displaced loggers looking to learn new skills.

"They have great work ethic and are not scared of the cold or heat," he says.

The same can be said for linemen, who work to keep the electricity on for OTEC customers.

"Linemen are the heart of every electric utility," says Mike Pommarane, OTEC director of operations. "OTEC is blessed to have employees who care about providing excellent member service, keeping a reliable electric system and focusing on all aspects of safety."

Linemen work in all weather conditions, but there's another aspect that has nothing to do with rain or snow. Look at any power pole and you will notice the same thing: Each is quite tall.

Travis grew up climbing trees, but working high in the air took some adjustment.

"I wasn't afraid of heights until I started climbing," he says. "It took time to gain confidence in myself and my equipment."

Upon completing line school, Travis was hired as an apprentice by a construction company based in Georgia. He worked around the country building power lines in Georgia, North Carolina, New Mexico, Missouri, Florida and Texas.

After about three years with that company, he learned OTEC was taking applications for an apprentice. He immediately started the process because being back in La Grande meant being close to family again.

"It was a good starting point," Travis says of his first job in construction, "but this is a whole lot better."

He has worked out of La Grande for 14 years. For the first four years, he was an apprentice and worked with two journeymen. An apprentice must complete 7,000 hours—about four years—to move from apprentice to journeyman. Throughout that journey, Travis started on lower-voltage jobs and gradually moved to higher-voltage work.

Travis says line school isn't necessary, but it's a beneficial step.

"It helps you get a job," he says. "It helps to show you have interest and commitment."

Travis' work on this blustery late-winter day includes a drive to Union. On the way, he offers a simple explanation of the path electricity takes from the dams—where



Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative Lineman Travis Smart inspects a member's smart meter.

electricity is created or generated when water flows through the turbines—to your house.

The Bonneville Power Administration generates electricity at the dam and sends it along transmission lines to OTEC substations. Substation transformers lower the voltage to be carried on distribution lines. Transformers on the poles reduce the voltage again so it can be used to power OTEC members' homes and businesses.

Travis explains household use as 120/240. Lights run on 120 volts, while dryers and stoves require 240 volts. Higher voltage, such as 480, powers industrial motors, such as irrigation pumps.

Different types of voltage require different safety precautions. For his work, Travis wears fire-retardant clothing mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

When working with 480-volt power, he dons a ski mask and full-face shield in case the electricity arcs.

"That can kill you," Travis says. "You're standing in the only place that heat and flame can escape."

Most calls on this day are to homes. At each stop, Travis swaps his baseball cap for an OTEC hard hat, wears safety sunglasses and slips on heavy gloves lined with rubber.

Linemen take electricity seriously. They take classes on a regular basis and brush up on burn first aid with a trainer from Emmanuel Hospital in Portland. They learn what can happen when things go wrong.

"We see a lot of graphic photos and videos," Travis says. "You can't get complacent."

After checking on a few issues in La Grande, Travis scrolls through the list of service calls on his iPad and turns his truck toward Elgin. The La Grande office covers towns in the Grande Ronde Valley, out to the Starkey Experimental Station to the west and Telocaset to the east.

The Elgin call is from a customer concerned about tree branches near the power lines. Travis peers up at the situation and decides he can handle it rather than schedule a tree-trimming crew to come later.

This job requires the bucket. Travis



**Travis clears tree branches encroaching on a power line.**

presses buttons to lower stabilizers on the truck, then hops in the bucket and buckles the safety harness.

He says it didn't take long to grow accustomed to the controls that take him high in the sky.

"The linemen show you, and then it's your job to fly," he says.

Today the sky is blue with only a chill wind. Travis and his fellow OTEC linemen have worked in much worse conditions. When the power goes out, they head out to get it back on no matter the weather.

"Heavy wet snow is the worst because it brings trees down, but it's not too bad to work in," Travis says. "Ice storms are the most miserable to work in."

If one customer reports an outage, it's most likely localized to the house. If multiple calls come in, linemen have to investigate.

"You have to patrol the whole line until you find the problem," Travis says.

Throughout his workday, Travis works down his list of service calls, but emergencies immediately rise to the top

of the priority list. If a house catches fire, OTEC must cut the power before firefighters cut into the walls. Sometimes they must address live wires following a collision between a car and power pole.

"First responders block it off and get you in there first," Travis says.

Linemen work with a calculated risk. Although they use appropriate personal protective equipment and safety equipment, their work with electricity still has a real potential of injury.

But Travis talks more about other aspects of his job.

"The cool part is I get to meet a lot of people," he says.

And he spends nearly his entire workday outside.

"I couldn't handle a desk," he says. "I need to move, and it needs to be different." ■

*OTEC offers two \$5,000 lineman school scholarships that are open year-round. For information, go to <https://otec.coop/scholarships> or call 541-524-2858.*



**Lenard Lee owns and operates Mt. Si Motel in North Bend with his brother, Jason, and dog Ruby.**

# WELCOME INN

## Story and photo by Anne Herman

Nestled under a ring of trees, the Mt. Si Motel has captured the attention of viewers near and far.

At the front of the one-story, U-shaped complex stands the neon MT. SI HOTEL marquee. The sign welcomes those passing through North Bend at the intersection of Mt. Si Road and North Bend Way. The sign has lit up screens in TV series and movies such as “Twin Peaks,” “Northern Exposure” and “The Vanishing.” Enjoyable stays and films have preserved the motel’s past in the memories of many.

“We take a lot of pride in the North Bend community,” says Lenard Lee, who owns and operates the Mt. Si Motel with his brother, Jason. “It really feels like we’re doing something good and making a difference. The locals send their relatives to stay with us, and we get tons of repeat business.”

The Walterdorf brothers, Stanley and Harold, built Mt. Si Motel in 1947. The two lived there until Harold died and left the site to Stanley. Stanley put in a swimming pool. He later filled the pool with dirt when city officials insisted on a full-time lifeguard. When I-90 moved and no longer ran right through town, the motel and fell into disrepair.

In 2016, a new pair of brothers, Lenard and Jason, were looking for investment property. They noticed Mt. Si Motel on their way to hikes on Mount Si and Little Si. “It was in such bad shape, it needed a

lot of work,” Lenard says.

At the time, Stanley’s daughter, Marlo Vistrand, owned it. She had lived at the motel since 1977 and raised her four children on the property. She would not see her beloved motel torn down. Lenard and Jason grew up in Preston, and their valley upbringing and intention to preserve and improve the motel persuaded her to sell. “It was very emotional,” Lenard says. “She had a lot of memories there.”

“Our house had burned down in the early ‘90s, so we knew what it was like to rebuild from the ashes,” Lenard says.

Neither Lenard nor Jason had experience in the motel business.

“I asked around about the motel business and I thought, ‘How hard can it be?’” Lenard says. “I clearly underestimated the amount of work.

“When we first bought it, only three of the 14 rooms were rentable.” Lenard says they hired local help, as they had to repair the roof and the plumbing, as well as remodeling the rooms. “The rooms were unique, and we kept them that way. The tiles, the colors, the paintings ... many are from the ‘50s and ‘60s.”

Today, rooms are sleekly modern with white granite counters, upscale fixtures, real subway tiles in the bathroom and wood floors. Every room has a microwave, refrigerator and coffee maker. There is also a laundry room available to the guests.

Lenard says he and Jason divide labor around the Motel. Lenard takes infrastructure work, covering septic,

electrical and drains. Jason gets the the design and the purchasing. “We see each other nearly every day, which is great,” Lenard says.

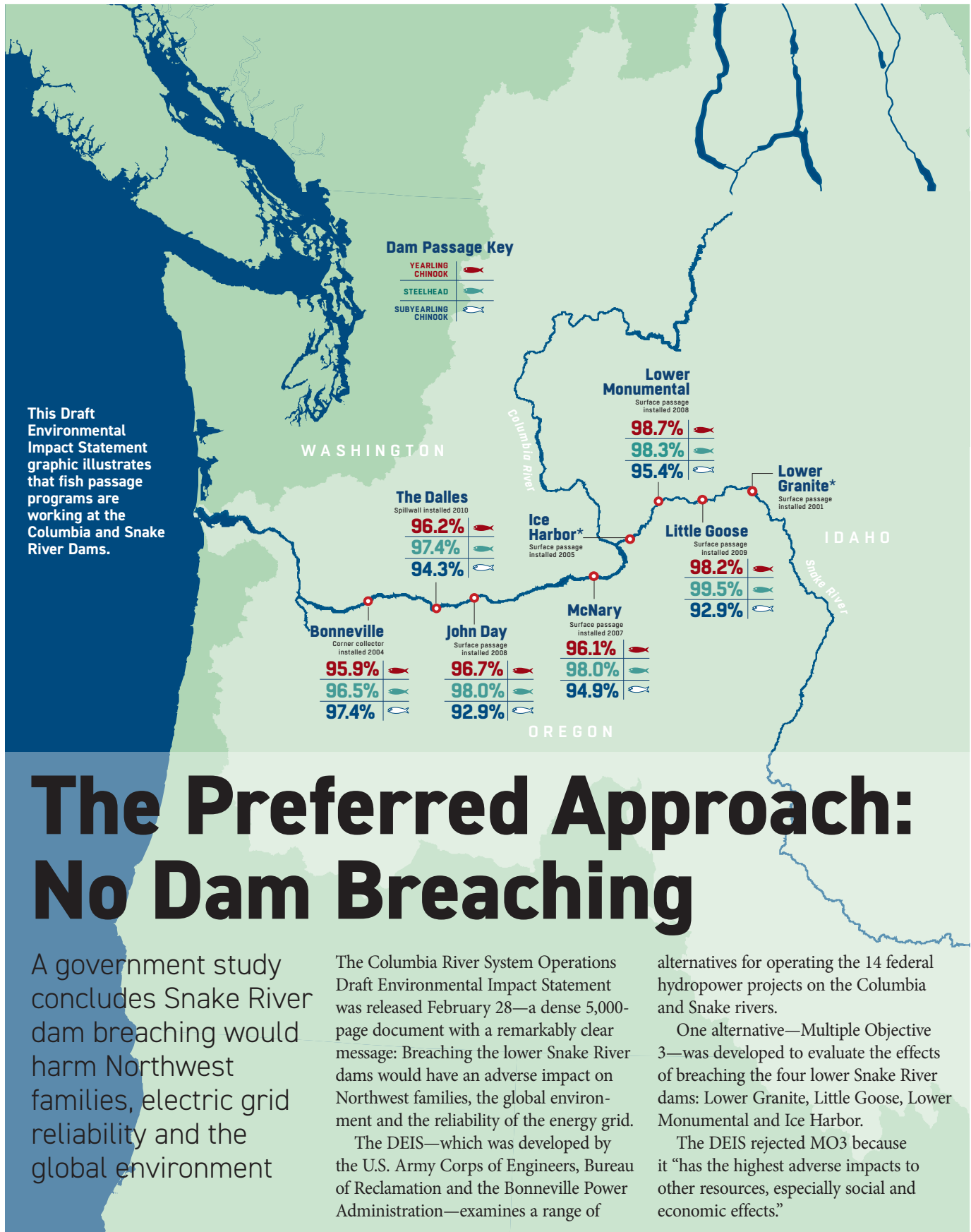
Lenard says the motel gets three main types of guest. First are people passing through town on their way along I-90. Then are people working short term in the area, like contractors. Third is people in transition.

“That third kind is where we offer the most benefit,” Lenard says. “Maybe they’ve lost a job or a home or a spouse, and we give them a clean, sober place to lay down at night. The kindest, most interesting people are the ones who have been down on their luck. We invest in their lives for whatever period of time they need it, and they leave with a special place in their hearts for the motel.”

“We get a fourth kind of visitor too,” he adds. “They are the Twin Peaks fans. They don’t usually stay, but we do let them walk through.”

When the motel needed a manager, Lenard hired Cassie Sutton, one of his longtime tenants. “We like to promote from within,” Lenard says.

Cassie says she loves the mountains, but her favorite thing is the people. “I wasn’t a people person before, but now I don’t know how I lived that way,” she says adding that she loves chatting in the courtyard and hearing people’s stories. “A lot of people come back and say they wouldn’t stay anywhere else. It’s like staying with friends.” ■



This Draft Environmental Impact Statement graphic illustrates that fish passage programs are working at the Columbia and Snake River Dams.

# The Preferred Approach: No Dam Breaching

A government study concludes Snake River dam breaching would harm Northwest families, electric grid reliability and the global environment

The Columbia River System Operations Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released February 28—a dense 5,000-page document with a remarkably clear message: Breaching the lower Snake River dams would have an adverse impact on Northwest families, the global environment and the reliability of the energy grid. The DEIS—which was developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and the Bonneville Power Administration—examines a range of

alternatives for operating the 14 federal hydropower projects on the Columbia and Snake rivers. One alternative—Multiple Objective 3—was developed to evaluate the effects of breaching the four lower Snake River dams: Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor. The DEIS rejected MO3 because it “has the highest adverse impacts to other resources, especially social and economic effects.”



**Ice Harbor Dam is one of the Snake River dams integral to clean, renewable and reliable Pacific Northwest power supply.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

“Oregon’s electric cooperatives are pleased the DEIS recognizes the lower Snake River dams are a critical part of the Northwest’s clean energy future,” said Ted Case, Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association executive director. “It found that breaching the dams would have adverse effects on power costs, particularly in rural counties, while putting the reliability of our electrical grid at risk.”

The study also concluded dam breaching was counter to minimizing greenhouse gas emissions to combat global warming. Because the Snake River dams are an integral part of the Pacific Northwest power supply—powering 900,000 homes annually—the DEIS analyzed the impact on greenhouse gas emissions if most of the hydropower were replaced with natural gas.

In a region where decarbonization has become a major policy objective, breaching Snake River dams would lead to an additional 3.3 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>—a staggering 10% increase in power-related emissions across the Northwest.

Even assuming replacement resources are variable renewables, such as solar with battery storage, the DEIS found an increase in fossil fuel-based generation from existing power plants would occur to maintain system reliability. This is because the magnitude and timing of the reduction in hydropower generation would occur during peak demand, requiring flexible resources to avoid blackouts.

According to the study, reliability of the Northwest power supply would also be compromised. The dam breaching alternative would “more than double the region’s risk of power shortages,” the DEIS concluded, adding that this could lead to brownouts and blackouts in the Pacific Northwest, harming society’s most vulnerable populations.

Those same vulnerable populations—senior citizens and those on fixed incomes—would be impacted most by the massive cost implications of breaching the Snake River dams.

Overall, the DEIS concluded breaching the Snake River dams would have

long-term, major, adverse effects on power costs and rates. For example, if BPA had to replace the lower Snake River projects’ full capability with zero-carbon resources, the DEIS noted “the rate pressure could be up to 50% on wholesale power rates.”

One Oregon electric cooperative manager said a 50% increase in BPA’s rate could lead to an increase of several hundred dollars a year on his members in a rural area that has historically battled high unemployment.

The DEIS acknowledged Snake River dam breaching would create “upward rate pressure” on residential rates and would hit those hardest in counties with a strong public power presence, such as those served by electric cooperatives.

The preferred alternative option in the DEIS keeps the four lower Snake River dams in place but increases spilling water over the dams for fish passage when power generation is less valuable.

The release of the DEIS started a 45-day comment period that closes Monday, April 13. ■