



Different-sized transformers are used according to the service requirements; in this case, a three-phase service.

BELOW: The yellow box contains a circuit breaker, which protects the electrical circuit of the signal booster on the same pole.

# The Ins and Outs of Power Poles

Story and photos by Rodger Nichols

Have you ever wondered what the strange shapes on and near power poles are?

Even though Northern Wasco County PUD owns and maintains the poles, not everything on a pole belongs to the PUD. Some items belong to phone and internet providers.

The first poles to sprout in The Dalles weren't power poles. Oregon Steam Navigation Co., founded in 1860, built a major telegraph project that connected Portland to The Dalles in 1873.

Electricity first came to The Dalles in July 1888, when the private The Dalles Electric Light Co. built a wood-burning power generation plant at Seventh and Union streets.

The first telephone line in The Dalles connected the Umatilla House hotel to The Dalles fire department and the

department's shops. It was installed in 1891. Several other individual lines were installed, but the town didn't get an interconnected system with multiple users until 1894.

Cable TV came to The Dalles in 1954. It was the second system in the state behind a system in Astoria that was the first in the nation. ■

### Keep Power Poles Clear

When the PUD asks you not to attach anything to a power pole, it is not just trying to avoid a bunch of visually tacky notices. There is a real safety concern.

Staples, nails or tacks used to attach a flyer to a pole can remain embedded even after the flyer is removed. Those remnants can be dangerous to a lineman climbing the pole with his spiked boots.

And yes, linemen still climb poles. There are many places inaccessible to bucket lifts.





**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** Northern Wasco County PUD's connected grid router antenna collects then transmits meter readings from customers to the PUD. A city of The Dalles service control panel regulates the water levels along a fault line. What looks like a snowshoe is a device that holds an additional line to allow a technician to lower the segment to the ground so the technician can splice in a new service. A city of The Dalles Wi-Fi antenna provides free Wi-Fi, mostly in downtown The Dalles. A fuse cutout is a combination of a fuse and a switch, used in primary overhead feeder lines and taps to protect distribution transformers from current surges and overloads.



Award-winning musician James Pakootas has started his own studio in Spokane. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES PAKOOTAS

# Breaking These Chains

Music was always James Pakootas' lifeline. Now, he's an award-winning musician using music to help others.

By Jesse Utz

On Highway 155, near the Agency Campus of the Colville Confederated Tribes, there is a stretch of guardrail.

On April 26, 2015, after leaving a community event, James Pakootas put his car right into that guardrail, splitting the car in half. Three days later, he awoke from a coma and his right arm was paralyzed. He was alive. Soon after, a phrase kept echoing in his thoughts: "Break these chains."

James is now an award-winning musician and speaker, and uses the challenges he has faced to help others break their chains.

"Everything I do is a means to building relationship and community," James says. "It doesn't matter if I am delivering a

## “We must learn to communicate in a way that all hear us and learn from us as we learn from them.”

—JAMES PAKOOTAS

burrito and salsa, I make a connection with someone. If I am speaking at a local high school, I am building a connection.”

James grew up on the reservation, with an absent father and prejudices surrounding him. He was sexually abused by a relative when he was young. James watched his mom and grandma work hard just to scrape up enough money to buy him new basketball shoes. They moved many times, eventually coming back to Coulee Dam. Music was always James’ lifeline.

James battled his own addiction. The car crash rang the bell of revelation in his life.

“Things had to change,” James says.

His change came quick. Just a few months after the crash, he helped organize the first Carrying the Message Sobriety Conference—a three-day event in partnership with Colville Tribal Behavioral Health and Millpond Days in Nespelem.

“I was in over my head,” James says. “I had to organize speakers and entertainment for three days, and I had never done anything like that. Plus I had to secure the funding for it. It remains one of the hardest things I have ever organized.”

It was a success, with people showing up and donating.

Not long after, T.S. Solution—a rapper and producer from Spokane—wanted to host a conference for youth in the area. James convinced him to hold the event on the reservation, where James’ event went so well. Soon, James was organizing the Empower the Future conference tour. Solution joined with Lou Rodas, Miah Bearcub and other acts, visiting Lake Roosevelt High School, Nespelem School, Pascual Sherman, Omak, Keller, Inchelium and Yakima. The tour mixed rap, traditional tribal artists and motivational messages.

“He (James) has done so much for our community, more than anyone will ever know,” says Jordan Flett, a recent graduate of Lake Roosevelt who attended the tour. “He is a big part of our family because of his sobriety and what he brings to the table. He teaches the younger generation to be better than they are and to achieve what they want. He is one of the reasons I am the person I am today.”

Even after the success of the tour, “break these chains” still

echoed in James’ mind. He turned it into his own music. James, Daniel Nanamkin and Tony Louie released the song “Break These Chains” in March 2019.

James had another success. That November, the group won “Best Rap/Hip Hop Video” at the Native American Music Awards. The song went to No. 1 in certain markets in Canada and the United States.

Not long after, a student in Inchelium, on the Colville Confederated Reservation, committed suicide. The school reached

out to James, who had recently worked with Lake Roosevelt High on a retreat to equip students with the tools to help their peers with issues affecting them.

He set up a conference for healing, and the school hired him as an ambassador for students.

Soon, the students were talking and James was listening. In addition to making connections, James helped plan a fashion show concert and the second tour of Empower the Future, before COVID-19 limited events.

“They just needed someone to listen to them and speak on their behalf,” James says. “This was not going to be a quick fix. They needed someone who was committed to them for the long haul and I committed. I understood, because I had been there myself.”

In March 2019, James received the First Peoples Fund’s Artist in Business Leadership Fellowship. James moved to Spokane and created a music studio in his home, where he created internships for artists to record, write and produce professional products.

“They live here and are submerged in the process until it is done,” James says.

Making the most of his pandemic distancing, James is releasing new music, and starting a band. He also is learning his native language.

After his time in isolation, James knows his mission to give back will continue.

“The world has changed and will never go back to the way it was,” he says. “We must learn to communicate in a way that all hear us and learn from us as we learn from them.” ■

For more information, visit [jamespakootas.com](http://jamespakootas.com)



**James won Best Rap/Hip Hop Video at the Native American Music Awards in 2019.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES PAKOOTAS

# Living a Fairytale Life

Artist Herb Leonhard has left his mark on the Northwest as graphic designer by day and illustrator by night

Story and photos by Rene Groom

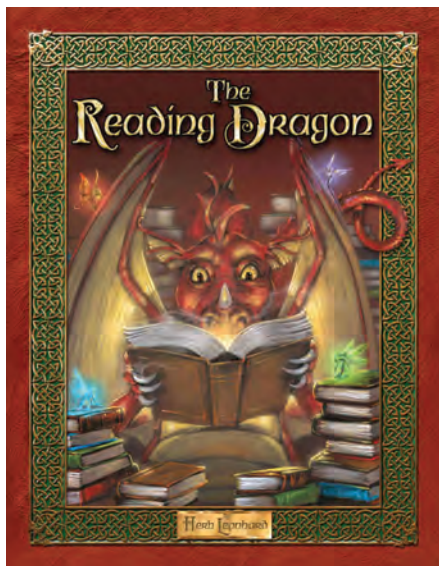
As a young boy, Prosser resident Herb Leonhard enjoyed comic books and the artistry he found in them.

Herb studied commercial art and illustration at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland. There he met and married his wife, fellow artist Allyson Leonhard. After college, Herb received an internship that opened the doors for his career in graphic design.

With a career spanning more than 30 years, Herb has designed wine labels, painted murals, and illustrated album covers and more than 50 books.

Observers of Herb's artwork will fall in love with the complexity and whimsical nature of his art.

"I love to tell stories through my work,"



Herb says.

One of Herb's beloved characters, a dragon named Alexander, is no stranger to readers in Richland. Painted on the facade of the famed Adventures Underground bookstore in Richland, this lovable dragon has collected a few fans of his own.

In Herb's new children's book, "The Reading Dragon," Herb describes Alexander's story as, "A delightful tale of a dragon who loves to read. With the help of his fairy friends, he goes on a quest to find a chess master dragon who can save his castle from being destroyed by giants."

Herb has other murals throughout the Tri-Cities, including the Dragonfire building in Kennewick and the interior of the Horse Heaven Saloon in Prosser, where he shared the painting adventure with his wife.

Herb also painted a pony statue called "The Sea Horse," sponsored by Horse Heaven Saloon as a part of the Parade of Ponies through Prosser's downtown historic district.

Horse Heaven Saloon owner Gary Vegar has a long history working with Herb. He is quick to point out that Herb and Allyson are wonderful artists.

"Both are gifted and joyful to work with," Gary says. "We are pleased to be partnering up on our third project together."

Herb and Allyson will paint a cowboy bronc rider on the east-facing exterior wall of the saloon.

While Herb is drawn to painting



intricate depictions of friendly, mystical beings, observers of his art will quickly learn there is no one style that limits his talent, no one medium that restricts his presentations and no one age group his art appeals to.

While his paintings are bright and fun and remind the world of a more gentle time, he also offers coloring books for adults that invite the would-be-artist to color inside or outside the lines. For would-be-writers, Herb offers delightful picture books rich in illustrations for the active mind.

While Herb's coloring books and prints can be bought online, Herb and Allyson enjoy attending farmers markets, as well as medieval and renaissance fairs where they get to know their customers and share stories of the characters and the tales behind the prints. Local customers can meet Herb at Richland's Farmers Market.

Herb's art has been recognized by Washington Association of Wine. He received the Sparks Award for Excellence by the Spokane Regional Marcom



Readers who have enjoyed a meal at the Horse Heaven Saloon will recognize Herb and Allyson's whimsical, western designs.

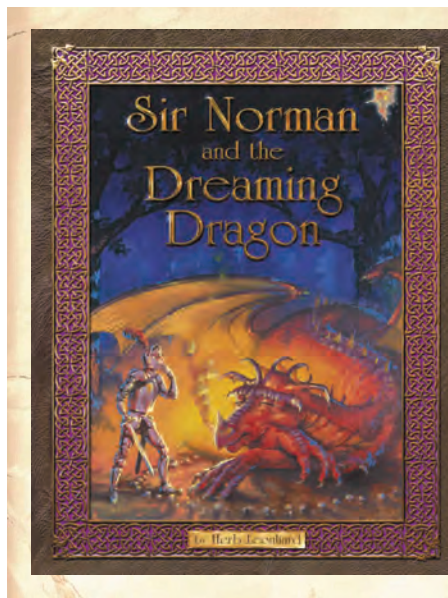
Association for the Smasne Cellars' Farm Boy wine label he created. He has also been recognized by the Academy of Children's Theatre for the work he did on the organization's advertising posters.

As to what his future looks like, Herb's reply is simple: "More like what I have been doing."

Like the comic heroes of his youth, the mild-mannered man has superpowers of his own. Perhaps his biggest superpower is his ability to know what he loves and earn a living doing it.

Herb's life and story is a reminder that we can live out our dreams no matter where we are. Big dreams can be achieved in small towns. ■

*To learn more about the achievements of Herb Heonhard, an award-winning artist, author, visit [herbleonhard.com](http://herbleonhard.com) or Herb Leonhard Art on Facebook.*



## Sir Norman and the Dreaming Dragon

*In addition to "The Reading Dragon," young readers may also enjoy this book written and illustrated by Herb.*

Of all the graduates of the Royal Knight's Academy, Sir Norman is the least promising to ever perform brave and great deeds. But one day when a dragon is sighted in the kingdom, Norman is sent to prove himself worthy of the Princess Kilmeny. Things do not go as planned: after befriendng the dragon Brampton, Norman is captured by the Troll King, and must be rescued by an unlikely team of newfound friends.



Artists Allyson and Herb Leonhard of Prosser are partners not only in life, but in art. One of their collaborations can be seen inside Prosser's Horse Heaven Saloon.



# Honoring Successful Safety Culture

Douglas Electric Cooperative employees and safety director receive awards

By Craig Reed

Despite broken branches, fallen trees and several inches of wet snow, Douglas Electric Cooperative crews and management staff worked long days throughout several weeks in 2019 to restore power to the co-op's members.

They put in thousands of hours without an accident resulting in lost work time. Even after power was restored and the adrenaline rush for linemen eased as the "Snowmageddon" event of early 2019 faded, workers continued to do their jobs safely.

The Northwest Public Power Association recently recognized the efforts of Douglas Electric's employees during this major outage and throughout 2019 with a first-place safety award. NWPPA is an international association representing and serving about 155 customer-owned utilities in the Western U.S. and Canada.

Awards are based on a review of a utility's safety form, which includes the number of hours worked, recordable injury/illness cases and lost workdays. Douglas Electric earned the safety award for utilities with 40,001 to 80,000 hours of exposure.

NWPPA also honored Greg Pierce,

director of the six-member Cooperative Safety Group that includes Douglas Electric. Greg received the career commitment to safety award.

Greg says Douglas Electric deserves the NWPPA safety award.

"They take care of their people, they take care of their equipment," Greg says. "They work so well together. Those guys in the field take care of each other. When they have that kind of a culture, it results in mindful, careful, safe work habits."

Douglas Electric has 35 employees, with 20 of those being outside line crews. The outside employees range in age from the 20s to 60. Operations Superintendent Todd Sherwood says the older linemen are good at teaching, emphasizing and passing safe work habits down to their younger workmates.

"They all did an exceptional job pacing themselves during that snowstorm event," Todd says. "Nobody was foolish in some of the harshest conditions you can imagine. Working those long hours is exhausting, but these guys kept their focus and did a great job working safely."

"You can give all the safety training in the world, but if you don't have the right frame of mind, it goes to waste. Their frame of mind gives us a good safety record. They want to go home, and they want their companions to go home, with all their fingers and toes."

Douglas Electric has a safety committee that meets regularly to cover issues and concerns both for the outside crews and the office staff. Phil Bigler, the co-op's assistant general manager, has been the chairperson of that committee for the past three years.

**Douglas Electric Cooperative linemen have been honored for their safe work habits in 2019.** PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOUGLAS ELECTRIC



**Rockslides and landslides present another hazard for DEC linemen. Slides not only take out power lines, they make access difficult for linemen who are working to get the lines back up and powered.**

“What our employees did during the largest weather event in Douglas Electric’s 80-year history, with no lost-time incidents, is remarkable,” Phil says. “It’s hard work for the guys in the field because they’re most exposed to the conditions, but there is also support from the office staff, making sure the outside crews have the supplies and equipment they need.”

General Manager Keith Brooks says he has reinforced the safety culture at the co-op since coming to Douglas Electric almost three years ago. He attends most of the safety meetings and established a safety culture assessment survey program. Those surveys are filled out and turned in anonymously.

Both Keith and Greg say employees are encouraged to speak up in meetings about safety concerns, with no worries about being reprimanded. Management wants concerns to be discussed openly and to be used as learning experiences.

“We support a safety-first attitude,” Keith says. “We never value production over safety. The surveys measure the

culture and whether we’re moving the needle that makes Douglas Electric a safe place to work.”

Keith says from his experience in the industry, accidents are just as likely after a major event, once the adrenaline, hype and focus have eased.

“The work becomes mundane again, and that’s the time I feel jeopardy,” he says. “But they managed their way, not only through the storm but the aftermath.”

Greg says the goal of safety meetings and presentations is to help enhance the judgment of utility employees so they make the right decisions that will keep them safe. He has been in the utility industry for 40 years and has held numerous positions since beginning as an apprentice lineman, giving him myriad experiences to draw from during safety conversations.

“Greg’s reminders of what we need to do—what we need to look out for—are important,” Todd says. “Our business is pretty hazardous. There are a lot of little factors where things can go wrong. His training helps us keep our heads where

they need to be.”

Greg says he was impacted early in his career when his roommate—another apprentice lineworker—was killed on the job. Greg, the young man’s family, friends, co-workers and the utility all mourned the loss of life.

Now 61, Greg has been passionate about safety ever since.

“I’m really humbled,” he says of receiving the NWPPA honor. “I know some of the guys who have won this in the past. I admire those guys, and to be in that club, I didn’t expect that.”

In addition to Douglas Electric, the members of the Cooperative Safety Group are Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative, Consumers Power, Emerald People’s Utility District, Lane Electric Cooperative and Salem Electric.

“Recognition from your peers that you’re doing things correctly is always nice,” Keith says. “But the thing that gratifies me the most is that our folks take safety seriously and are going home to their families each night intact.” ■



The board members who brought forth the variable frequency drive project stand outside the Bierly Acres pump house. From left are former board member Ron Lindquist, Mark Jensen, Floyd Paye, Duane Fuller, Dan Comingore and Chuck Alexander. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAN COMINGORE

# Energy-Efficiency Champion

## Bierly Acres Water Improvement District

By Courtney Cobb

When Bierly Acres Water Improvement District switched to a variable frequency drive, little did the owners know they would save money, time and water.

The irrigation water cooperative north of Madras serves 49 members with a 1970s system. Board Chairman Dan Comingore says the district consistently looks to implement efficiency measures on the aging system comprised of an irrigation weir, feeder pond, pump and mainline stretched out to deliver water to all members.

Past board member Ron Lindquist—a former Surprise Valley Electric Cooperative

employee—raised the idea with the board to research different energy-efficiency efforts, which included contacting Central Electric Cooperative about rebates. CEC told Ron about its variable frequency drive program.

VFDs are electric controllers that vary the speed of the pump, allowing it to respond efficiently to fluctuations in demand.

“We recognized the variable frequency drive system could have a real fit within our district,” Dan says, “and not just for our system itself, but for our pump operator Floyd Paye, all the members involved in our district and, of course, the environment.”

For years, Floyd spent countless hours managing the 49 different parcels within the district’s one pump system—a tough job due to the continually changing pressure on the system where, at times, there might be 300 sprinklers running in the morning and only 50 by afternoon.

“That’s a big change in demand on the pump and demands from our members,” Dan says. “That creates some real inefficiencies. In our old system, our pump would continually run at its maximum capacity whether you were running 300 sprinklers or you were running 50 sprinklers.”

Robert Wallace, a WyEast RCD field energy analyst who consults on behalf of



**Bierly Acres' variable frequency drive can help save time, energy and water.**

CEC, says installing a VFD is like putting a throttle on the pump.

“The pump will speed up to accommodate, and as people turn off their water, the system’s pumps shut down,” he says. “Floyd used to have to go and run the pump several times a day. There was a rotation where not everyone could run at once, so we talked about how the variable frequency drive would be beneficial. The pump is going to sit there and run by itself, and you aren’t going to have to adjust it all the time.”

**The Savings**

Robert says most CEC members who install a VFD will save about 10% on average, but each project is different, so savings vary. In addition to the financial incentives, irrigators are motivated to save water—a priority as Central Oregon endures ongoing drought conditions.

Bierly Acres realized almost 30% of savings in energy and water efficiencies since installing the VFD a year ago. Dan says the difference between the 2018 and 2019 irrigation season proved incredible.

“I’m very confident saying the savings from that variable frequency drive alone

was at least 25%, if not higher,” he says.

The district plans to reinvest the savings in the system to help fix any leaks and possibly buy a new pump in the future.

**The Process**

Dan says the entire project depended on Ron’s leadership.

“He was the one who managed the implementation of this,” he says. “Because of his expertise and abilities, he was able to follow through and make this all happen. Had it not been for Ron’s initiative to reach out to CEC, this project may have never got off the ground.”

Robert says once a CEC member’s project is in the queue, he works with them to review their power consumption history over the last three years and runs the numbers to determine where energy savings could materialize.

“We need to know what the existing system is and then what the planned upgrade is,” he says. “We use this as part of the energy savings estimate and to justify the rebate.”

CEC’s engineering department also reviews members’ meter location and improvements for the planned upgrades to ensure members have the right electrical service to meet their needs. After receiving the green light from engineers, members can work with their chosen vendor for installation.

Once installed, Robert typically does a site visit to take pictures of the new VFD, gathers any additional documentation and signatures, and submits the rebate to CEC.

Due to COVID-19, the program’s process has changed slightly to encompass more virtual collection of required documentation. Instead of on-site visits, members are asked to take pictures of installed equipment.

The Bierly Acres project, completed in late 2018, and its process could not have gone smoother.

“Ron took the lead for our district on this project,” Dan says. “Robert was great to work with, and any time we needed answers, Ron got those. Central Electric

**How Much Is the Financial Incentive?**

Central Electric Cooperative strives to ensure equitable distribution of the Bonneville Power Administration energy-efficiency incentive funding. Due to high participation levels, CEC has limited the potential incentive amount per project to \$5,000, with an annual membership incentive limit of \$10,000.

This practice may change due to available funding and levels of participation, among other factors.

- ▶ **Existing turbine-style pumps:** \$80 per nameplate motor horsepower controlled by the variable frequency drive.
- ▶ **New turbine-style pumps:** \$80 per nameplate motor horsepower controlled by the VFD.
- ▶ **Existing centrifugal-style pumps:** \$50 per nameplate motor horsepower controlled by the VFD.
- ▶ **New centrifugal-style pumps:** \$50 per nameplate motor horsepower controlled by the VFD.

**Variable Frequency Drive Requirements**

- ▶ Be within CEC’s service territory.
- ▶ Be billed as an agricultural account with three full years of “typical” use history for existing pumps.
- ▶ Be between 20 and 500 horsepower.
- ▶ The pumping application must be used for the delivery, distribution or transport of water for irrigation purposes.
- ▶ There is an existing minimum variation in flow rates of 20% or discharge pressure requirements of 10%.
- ▶ Installations shall meet IEEE 519 standards.

was great to work with. The nice thing was we didn’t have to jump through a bunch of hoops to make this happen.”

Dan recommends the VFD program to everyone.

“It’s a cost-saving to our system, to our members,” he says. “We are being as environmentally friendly as we can with the system that we have.” ■

# We All Have a Role in Fire Prevention



In July 2017, a tree outside a Lane Electric Cooperative right-of-way and on railroad property caused a fire in Oakridge. One mobile home was lost and several small businesses were threatened. Local authorities quickly got it under control with no additional damage.

## By Craig Reed

The summer fire season is here again, so it is time to be conscious about prevention.

Lane Electric Cooperative's outside crews received a refresher course in fire science, held a safety meeting, put fire suppression equipment in proper order, and applied for exemptions to work on the power lines during the early stages of fire season.

Lane Electric members also have a responsibility to protect their power source, their homes and their rural property. They should follow guidelines presented by the Oregon Department of Forestry regarding defensible

space around their structures. The general rule is to have a large fuel break of dirt, green vegetation or dry grass that is less than 4-inches tall around structures.

The destructive and deadly wildfires in Northern California the past few years are reminders that human- or lightning-caused flames can quickly spread. Taking preventive measures in advance is important.

"Out of tragedy comes movement," says Lane Electric Operations Manager Tony Toncray. "People are more open to severe trimming and removal of trees in the right-of-way areas for the power lines."

Greg Pierce, safety director for the six-member Cooperative Safety Group, agrees the California fires opened Oregonians' eyes with regard to wildfires. He says all the fuel on the ground will become extremely flammable with any dry spell.

Firefighting this summer is expected to be negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as firefighters try to stay healthy, Greg adds.

Joe Raade, division chief for South Lane County Fire & Rescue, says it's paramount to do property work now.

"That will help control how a fire will spread and the property damage it may cause," he says. "I think most people

are fire wise, fire aware, and will do the things that help alleviate exposure to fire."

Rural residents should have a fire barrier; trim tree branches away from buildings and roofs; remove vegetation neither fire resistant nor green; remove leaves and needles from rain gutters, roofs and decks; and move firewood or debris piles to a safe distance from buildings.

Residential driveways should be clearly marked with an address number and have a clear right-of-way, providing easy access for large fire engines to reach structures.

"One of the most important things people have control over is the defensible space

they have around their home and property,” says Rainbow Plews, fire chief for the Upper McKenzie Rural Fire Protection District. “I think people need encouragement and even education about what to clear, what to water, what to plant when building a home or putting in landscaping. Those factors make a huge difference when a fire comes through.”

Residents with questions can call their fire district or the Oregon Department of Forestry for resources, or ask for a staff person to visit and provide an analysis.

“People need to take that education and then apply it at home,” Rainbow says.

The time to prepare is before a fire happens, she adds. Houses with good defensible space have survived past wildfires.

“If defensible space has been prepared, it makes our job so much easier and safer,” she says.

At Lane Electric, work on the co-op’s overhead lines is done throughout the year. Vegetation management in rights-of-way is on a three-year rotation. Checking for hazard trees and branches and their possible removal is on a two-year rotation. A tree or branch falling onto a power line can create a spark that can fall to the ground and start a fire.

“Inspection is paramount” says Skip Shipman, Lane Electric’s rights-of-way coordinator. “We drive, use a four-wheeler or hike the lines looking for trees that could possibly start a wildfire. It’s quite the involved process.”

Skip adds that Lane Electric members are essential in the

**Protect Your Home**

**7 Ways Residents Can Reduce the Risk that their Homes & Property Will Become Fuel for a Wildfire**

- #1 Clear**  
Clear off pine needles, dead leaves & anything that can burn from your rooflines, gutters, decks, porches, patios & along fence lines. Falling embers will have nothing to burn.
- #2 Store Away**  
Store away furniture cushions, rattan mats, potted plants & other decorations from decks, porches & patios. These items catch embers and help ignite your home if you leave them outside.
- #3 Screen & Seal**  
Wind-borne embers can get into homes easily through vents & other openings and burn the home from the inside out. Walk around your house to see what openings you can screen or temporarily seal up.
- #4 Rake**  
Embers landing in mulch that touches your house, deck or fence is a big fire hazard. Rake out any landscaping mulch to at least five feet away.
- #5 Trim**  
Trim back any shrubs or tree branches that come closer than 5 feet to the house and attachments, and any overhanging branches.
- #6 Remove**  
Walk around your house and remove anything within 30 feet that could burn, such as woodpiles, spare lumber, vehicles and boats – anything that can act as a large fuel source.
- #7 Close**  
If ordered to evacuate, make sure all windows & doors are closed tightly, and seal up any pet doors. Many homes are destroyed by embers entering these openings and burning the house from the inside out.

**NFPA** has many more tips and safety recommendations on its websites, including [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).

inspection process because they can report danger trees.

“We rely heavily on members making us aware when there is a problem or a potential problem, especially after a storm comes through,” Skip says. “They do an outstanding job in calling and reporting hazards.”

As the fire season progresses through hotter, drier months, the co-op’s crews and the contract crews are pulled from extreme fire areas and do more work in or near rural communities where the fire potential is less.

In his 32 years in the electrical industry as a lineman,

foreman and manager, Tony Toncray says no crew he knows of has created a spark that started a wildfire.

“But we carry that risk and fear of a fire all the time,” he says. “There’s always the potential, so being as preventive as possible for all of us is very important.” ■



# Small Things **Big Success**

Nanoparticle researcher earns prestigious award to continue studies

**By Craig Reed**

Makenna Pennel is a small-town girl making it big. She is doing so with microscopic particles.

The 2020 University of Oregon graduate is from the unincorporated area of Deadwood in the Coast Range. She is one of the 17 students in the 2016 graduating class of Triangle Lake Charter School.

Makenna's success in

academia has taken her not only into the UO research labs, but also to Northwestern University in Illinois as an intern researcher; to London, Oxford, Paris and Dublin with the UO Honors College; to Scotland as a Fulbright Summer Institute Fellow; and to Hawaii to present her research at a conference.

The 22-year-old is one of eight UO students who received a 2020 graduate

research fellowship from the National Science Foundation. The award recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees in NSF-supported science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines.

Makenna earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry at UO and will use her fellowship to attend Stanford in the fall to pursue a

doctorate in chemistry.

"This is the NSF's most prestigious student award," says David Conover, the foundation's vice president for research and innovation. "We are tremendously proud of this year's recipients and of the talent they bring to their fields."

Makenna says receiving the fellowship is "an incredible honor, especially for being an undergraduate." She says the

awards are usually presented to students already in graduate programs.

“It is very prestigious,” she says. “I’m very excited for this next chapter.”

Makenna’s focus at Stanford will be on nanotechnology—the study and application of extremely small particles. One nanometer is a billionth of a meter.

“You have to use high-powered, multimillion dollar microscopes to see them,” Makenna says. “It blows my mind to see things that incredibly small. It’s one of my favorite things to do in the lab.”

Makenna will develop a project to study and research after she gets established at Stanford. She estimates her doctorate program will take about five years.

“My interest revolves around nanotechnology, sustainability and renewable energy,” she says.

After earning her doctorate, Makenna says her career options include becoming a professor and teaching or working as an industry chemist.

“One of my passions is science communication,” she says. “It’s something I’d love to do in the future, to get other people excited—as excited as I am—about science. I’d like to bridge the gap between everyone in science.”

Makenna has co-authored one article involving her research with her UO chemistry professor, Jim Hutchison. The article was printed in *Chemistry of Materials*—a scientific journal published by the American Chemical Society.

She and Jim are co-authoring



**ABOVE:** Makenna Pennel with nanocrystals she created in the University of Oregon lab. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Makenna graduated from UO this spring.

a second article they expect to be published soon.

Makenna is also writing a book aimed at young students to get them interested in and excited about science.

“Her science is amazing, but her ability to communicate the science is equally amazing” Jim says. “She is super smart, of course, but she is just really tenacious about what she wants to do.”

Makenna’s undergraduate thesis on how nanocrystals grow was honored by UO with the Robert D. Clark Award, which recognizes exceptional projects.

Makenna first got interested in chemistry early in her high school years when she and other Triangle Lake students traveled to Eastern Oregon University in La Grande and participated in some summer programs. She says an enthusiastic chemistry professor sparked her interest.

Following her junior year of high school, Makenna earned

an internship at Oregon State University and was part of a team that worked with nanoparticles in an environmental engineering lab.

“We studied where nanoparticles go and behave in different bodies of water,” she says. “There are nanoparticles in a lot of consumer products that end up in water.”

Makenna’s academic interest and energy earned her a Stamps Scholarship to UO. According to the university, the merit-based scholarship is its most prestigious and generous for undergraduate students, covering all college expenses for four years.

The graduate research fellowship from the National Science Foundation will cover Makenna’s expenses while she works toward her doctorate.

Derek and Tricia Pennel, Makenna’s parents, say they are “stunned” by the fellowship their daughter has been granted. They admit the chemical

research Makenna is doing is “over our heads, but we’re very proud of her and her work.”

“Someday, some of her research could change the world,” Derek says.

Derek’s professional background is in corporate finance. Tricia worked in accounting before becoming a stay-at-home mother.

They say their daughter was meticulous at a young age, so they tabbed her early on as “the ultimate accountant.”

“I guess the same skills that make a good accountant make a really good scientist,” Derek says. “She took those and ran with them on the science side.

“Where she has really excelled is her knack for being able to talk about what she’s researching in ordinary terms. She’s been recognized at the university for her ability to communicate complex matters—something a lot of scientists and researchers are not able to translate.”

Makenna admits she’s been fortunate in the opportunities to be involved in numerous study, research and travel programs during her high school and college years.

“I like to say I’m well-rounded with a lot of different interests beyond just science,” she says.

For the next several years, however, her focus will continue to be on science as she studies and researches the big picture involving small nanoparticles.

“I think the sky is the limit for her,” Jim says. “Whatever she does—whether a professor or a scientific researcher—she’s going to do an amazing job.” ■



# On-Site Support

Volunteers help during devastating events

By Craig Reed

When a general alarm for a fire sounds, a support group reports right along with the La Pine Rural Fire Protection District firefighters.

The Support Services Team is a group of volunteers who serve the community through the fire district and under the guidance of Assistant Fire Chief Dan Daugherty. The group has 10 members,

but welcomes new volunteers.

The team's motto is, "Some can't do all—but all can do something!"

The Support Services Team was established about 20 years ago by ham radio operators. Their initial mission was to support emergency communications through their radio operations.

Jim Williams, one of the operators, took a lead role in developing an organized team and expanding its volunteer duties.

The team's mission includes refilling air tanks and switching them for empty tanks, providing firefighters nourishment and fluids and watching them for any health issues, being an outreach arm for the fire district, and providing residents with education and information. The volunteers also provide care for fire victims until support comes from the Red Cross.

"The team has provided services to the community that the district would not



**Members of the Support Services Team set up a table of drinks, fruit and snacks for firefighters during a Burn to Learn training session. The volunteers support the La Pine Fire District at training sessions and during devastating events such as accidents and fires.**  
 PHOTO COURTESY OF LA PINE RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

otherwise be able to provide,” Dan says. “The volunteers are critical members of the La Pine Fire District. They enable the district to focus on emergencies and enable the district to increase services to the citizens. The firefighters, the staff, the district’s board of directors and the ladies in the office appreciate their advocacy for the district. The district is extremely proud of our support services program and those who serve both the fire district and the community.”

Fire district personnel are called to La Pine-area fires 12 to 14 times a year. Members of the Support Services Team help at each incident.

The fire district is about 100 square miles. When a general alarm sounds, support volunteers hurry to the La Pine fire station. An older ambulance that has been converted to a supply vehicle stocked with snacks, drinks, blankets and coats is driven to the fire scene and parked a safe distance away.

“We stage them at a very safe location,” Dan says. “Then we bring folks that need comfort to them. Safety is our No. 1 goal. We definitely don’t put any of them in danger. The volunteers provide compassionate care to the victims who have suffered a loss.”

The team’s supplies are funded through

the fire district’s regular budget.

Ted and Karen Sommers have cared for numerous people during their 10 years as members of the team. Ted, 76, is a retired fireman.

“Our thoughts have always been to help people,” Ted says. “It doesn’t matter what time of day or night, we’re on call to help around the clock. It’s nice to be able to help people.”

Pam Salminen, 67, is the youngest member of the support team. She and her husband, Ken, had been seven-year members of the group when Ken died earlier this year. She is continuing as a volunteer.

“It’s an essential program for the area, that is for sure,” Pam says. “The firemen are very glad to have us around. It’s a good program that helps the community.”

Pam says it is important to be a good listener for people who have suffered losses in a fire.

“Their house is on fire, they’re kind of in shock and their adrenaline is going,” she says. “You just have to be compassionate toward them. The main thing is just to listen to them as they try to work through what is happening.”

In addition to having a presence at fire incidents, volunteers set up educational booths at community events each year. Their message focuses on fire prevention, fire safety and disaster preparedness.

Members receive an orientation and basic first-aid training, learning what to look for while caring for victims and checking on firefighters.

“We would like to have 30 members,” Dan says. “We are looking for a few good men and women who want to support the community and support the fire district. We’re especially looking for couples who want to give to their community. We’d like to strengthen that group again.”

“We’re happy to talk to anyone who is interested in the program,” Pam says. ■

*For more information on the La Pine Rural Fire Protection District Support Services Team, call the fire station at 541-536-2935.*



Jake Smith, manager of Kristin's Farm Stand, checks on an organic eggplant in the greenhouse. PHOTO BY DIANNA TROYER

## Grown Local, Delivered Fresh

Kristin's Farm Stand finds the perfect location near Malta to raise organic vegetables and livestock for doorstep delivery

By Dianna Troyer

Organic vegetables and hormone-free meat raised south of Malta are feeding consumers who crave fresh food delivered to their doorsteps in southern Idaho and northern Utah.

"The Idaho farm was a perfect place for us to expand our business," says Kristin Varela-Schild, who started Kristin's Farm Stand in Brighton, Colorado, two years ago. "Some investors who owned the land in Idaho found us because we have a reputation for being skilled at running greenhouses and

raising livestock."

She says the farm was ideal because it was between two large markets—Boise and Salt Lake City—with easy access to cities to the north.

Kristin started her business after her daughter lost 32 pounds in three months and was diagnosed with severe celiac disease in 2016. Her daughter was intensely intolerant of gluten and certain preservatives and chemicals in food.

"We had to know where our food came from, so we started raising our own," Kristin says. "The only change we made was eating the food we grew. She regained her health

and weight. It made such an impact on me, seeing the connection between what food you eat and your health."

Their friends and neighbors tasted the difference between the food Kristin's family raised and what they bought in grocery stores and asked to buy some.

"Our vegetables grow as soil-based vine crops, so they're flavorful and nutrient dense," Kristin says. "We had such a demand, so in 2018 we launched our business as a customized fresh food service with home deliveries."

Their business differs from other food-delivery services.

"We don't offer a

subscription service," Kristin says. "All of our products are sold individually. You can cherry pick exactly what you want, in the quantities you want, including meat by the individual cut. It's exactly the same way you would purchase food from your local grocery store. We like to make it easy on people without the fear of a commitment. There's no minimum to order."

To offer a similar service in Idaho, construction started last fall on six new 30-foot-by-100-foot greenhouses 15 miles south of Malta. Raft River Electric Co-op electricians provided expertise in wiring



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Yesenia Arreola picks miniature cucumbers. Kristin Varela-Schild expanded her family business to Idaho, providing home delivery of freshly picked produce. Annie Smith cradles freshly picked mini sweet peppers.**  
TOP RIGHT PHOTO COURTESY OF KRISTIN'S FARM STAND

the buildings.

“Our greenhouses are energy efficient and use water effectively, too,” Kristin says.

Eventually, the greenhouse floors will be plumbed with geothermal water on the farm to heat them during winter.

As the greenhouses were finished, Kristin began looking for a farm manager.

“We’re so grateful Jake Smith found us,” she says.

A Malta dairy farmer, Jake also happens to be a firefighter who responded to a grassland blaze several miles past the greenhouses last fall.

“On the way home, I stopped in to say hi and welcome them to the area,” Jake says.

With his agricultural

background and contacts throughout the region, he was offered the job of farm manager.

“The eggs and vegetables we raise here really do taste different from what you buy in the store because they’re delivered soon after they’re picked,” Jake says. “Our customers tell us they never knew vegetables could taste so good.”

Jake and seven employees tend to tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, green beans, lettuce, spinach, kale, arugula, eggplant, microgreens, cattle, pigs, lambs, and chickens on the 490-acre farm. The vegetables are grown organically, with organic certification in progress.

Livestock is pasture-raised and grass-fed and finished. The

meat is processed at a USDA-certified butcher in Rigby.

“Nothing goes to waste here,” Jake says. “Vegetables that are good but don’t meet standards for appearance are fed to the chickens and pigs.”

Livestock is rotated frequently throughout pastures to fertilize the land without chemicals.

Jake says the farm is focused on improving the soil through grazing methods and growing crops with no-till planting.

The pasture-raised chickens are moved weekly so the land is fertilized in each new location.

“The chicken house is on skids, so we pull it with a tractor and the chickens follow us,” Jake says.

After planting in January,

they picked their first crop—tomatoes and mini sweet peppers—in March. Jake donated hundreds of pounds of excess tomatoes, green beans and mini seedless cucumbers to Burley churches. The food was given to members who lost their jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic, but hadn’t received unemployment checks yet.

“It’s important for us to give back to local communities,” Kristin says. “We have a strong demand for our food in the region. Life’s too short to eat bad food. We’re excited to be in Idaho.” ■

*Get more information about Kristin's Farm Stand and sign up at [kristins-boise.com](http://kristins-boise.com).*



Brianna Kin Kade, the 2020 Othello Rodeo queen, and her horse, Bro, have represented the rodeo while distancing. PHOTO BY BRAYDEN BIASE

# An Uncharted Rodeo Reign

Othello Rodeo queen Brianna Kin Kade has wrangled with changes caused by the pandemic

By Katelin Davidson

While the 2020 Othello Rodeo was canceled due to the threat of COVID-19, one individual is guaranteed to represent the rodeo.

Brianna Kin Kade is the 2020 Othello Rodeo queen, and is ready to serve the community and promote her favorite event. Brianna was crowned at the Othello Rodeo last year and officially coronated in November.

The first few months of Brianna's reign went as scheduled. The queen normally travels to rodeos, rides in parades and represents the association at a variety of area events. One of the last events where Brianna represented Othello was in Coulee City in May.

"They had a parade throughout the town," Brianna says. "I had a really great time seeing everyone while having some fun and visiting with other royalty. After the parade, we kept social distancing at the



arena in order to let the queens do run-ins, and there were barrels set up. All of us queens did a barrel run with all our chaps on. I truly appreciate them doing this for us.”

Alongside her at many events is Bro, her trusty young horse.

“Bro really enjoys this experience. When we do rodeo run-ins, he thinks the whole crowd is cheering for him,” Brianna jokes.

Brianna quickly realized this year would be unlike any other in the event’s history.

“Most of the rodeos have been canceled,” Brianna says. “A lot of the big rodeos I was looking forward to have also canceled.”

After canceling this year’s rodeo, the Othello Rodeo announced that Brianna would stay on as rodeo queen in 2021.

## Othello Rodeo History

The Othello Rodeo is a proud local tradition. The 2020 rodeo has been canceled because of the pandemic, but the rodeo has taken a year off before.

The Othello Rodeo began in 1948, with the sole purpose of bringing a fall activity to the community. The first rodeo featured 56 cowboys in seven events, with a total purse of \$500.

It continued as an amateur rodeo for a few years, bringing in a variety of cowboys who went on to earn world championships. In 1952, the nonprofit Othello Rodeo Association was officially created and continues to organize the event.

In its first 20 years, the rodeo was held at three different locations. Today’s site was built in 1959, when the rodeo took a single year hiatus to complete the facility. Othello was selected to host the Northwest Amateur Trails Rodeo in 1961 and hosted its first world championship rodeo the following year.

The Othello Rodeo is sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

Instead of being disheartened at the lost events, Brianna met the challenge with enthusiasm and determination.

“I’ve had to get really creative,” Brianna says, laughing. “Social media is a big part and helpful for the rodeo industry. I’ve been posting entertaining and knowledgeable things to get people interested, and for them to learn the possibilities about rodeo and what we could be doing.”

This spring, Brianna began posting short videos with the Moses Lake Roundup queen. The duo hoped their videos would offer insight into the industry while displaying the young ladies’ comedic ability.

She also had the opportunity to adopt a family through the Rascal Rodeo and visit with family members. The Rascal Rodeo is a nonprofit for children with disabilities or chronic diseases that allows children to interact with rodeo personnel and their horses.

Brianna did not grow up in a rodeo family. Her early life was focused on raising livestock to show through 4-H and FFA. Yet she always had a love for horses and rodeo, and dreamed of being a rodeo queen one day.

In 2018, she was crowned as a Ritzville Rodeo princess. As a beginner in the rodeo world, she gained valuable experience that has benefited her in her current role.

She also participated in the Washington High School Equestrian Teams and was a member of the Ritzville Rodeo Association Youth Drill Team.

“After serving for Ritzville, I came away with so many great friends and opportunities,” Brianna says.

The experience with the Ritzville association led her to try out for the Othello crown.

“It’s such an amazing opportunity for young women to gain life skills, and it can help with your future,” she says. “You’re representing an association and a town, a community. It’s a big job, but it’s worth it.”

Brianna says her success would not be possible without her strong support system of family, friends and rodeo association members. She looks forward to each of the Othello Rodeo events, but one unique to the Othello Rodeo is a favorite: the Wild Cow Ride, where teams must saddle a wild cow and ride it around a barrel in the allotted time.

“The Othello Rodeo Association is truly a family, and this is my favorite rodeo,” Brianna says. “They have a very unique event. It is such an amazing rodeo. I highly recommend everyone comes to see this rodeo.” ■

*For information regarding the Othello Rodeo, visit [othellorodeo.com](http://othellorodeo.com) or follow the Othello Rodeo Association on Facebook.*



Kim Wetherell of Parkdale, left, is a loyal Pour Girls Espresso and Eats customer. Her daughter, Kali, is a barista at the popular diner.

# Pour Girls Success

## In tough times, an outdoor diner finds its niche

Story and photos by Drew Myron

Never made coffee. Nearly no food experience. A global health crisis.

This is not the recipe for success.

Against all odds and timing, Pour Girls is experiencing unexpected achievement.

What began as a coffee cart on a struggling corner lot has turned into a bustling enterprise that, even in a pandemic, is seeing record sales.

"I would have never thought we'd be busy during this, but it's just been getting busier on a daily basis," says Mellissa

Halseth, owner and founder of Pour Girls Espresso & Eats in Odell. "Sales are flying through the roof. It's a really busy time right now."

Mellissa barely finishes her thought when her sidekick, Manager Tiffany Berquist, announces another record day of sales.

"That's another bonus," Mellissa says. "Every time we hit a new record, the girls get a bonus. That's the fourth time this week"

Its quick success for a small business that opened just more than a year ago with

humble aspirations.

"I thought Odell could really use a place like us," Mellissa says. "When we opened, we thought it would be mostly coffee."

Demand changed the plan. The town has no coffee shop, and aside from Mexican restaurants, there are no food options. Pour Girls quickly filled the gap by offering breakfast, lunch and coffee drinks.

Inside the cozy trailer, a grill sizzles with bacon cheeseburgers, hot dogs, turkey club sandwiches and more.

The crew serves up to 100 meals a day.

"I wanted something to do, and I

thought I'd be running a little coffee shop, but it's so much more than that," Mellissa says.

Though she has no background in food service, Mellissa has plenty of business training. She has spent most of her life in Hood River, working in mortgage lending, title work and managing the port marina.

A few years ago, Mellissa and her husband, Ben, started Halseth Excavating. He runs daily operations and she maintains the behind-the-scenes part of the business.

The couple live in Parkdale and have been married 19 years. Now, the two are both entrepreneurs.

"Never in my life did I think I'd be self-employed and never double self-employed," Mellissa says. "It's a lot of work, but I love it."

Located on Odell's main street, Pour Girls—"also Poor Girls," jokes Mellissa—is a frequent stop for those working in nearby industrial businesses, fruit processing plants and schools.

Bordered on one side with shade trees and grass, Pour Girls offers picnic tables, umbrellas and plenty of space—amenities especially valuable in these days of distancing.

"There's no other place in Odell to sit outside and enjoy a meal," Mellissa says. "One of my greatest joys is seeing people outside, eating and visiting."

"The community vibe sets us apart," says Tiffany, who grew up in Parkdale and came to Pour Girls with experience in food service at Mt. Hood Meadows.

She joined the business and quickly rose to manager.

Open six days a week, Pour Girls hums with six employees and a focus that emphasizes both the professional and personal.

"It's my job as part of the community to create good employees and instill good work ethics and skills," Mellissa says.

"I really love it here," says Tiffany, who has learned the business of payroll forecasts, food ordering and customer relations. "I started with one day a week, then six days. I thought it would just be a summer job,



**Pour Girls thrives with six employees and a community focus. From left are Tiffany Berquist, Kali Wetherell, Hailee Borrego and owner Mellissa Halseth.**

but I've really fallen in love with this place. It's more than just a job to me."

And it's more than coffee to loyal customers.

"It's close, they're friendly and it's a great spot to get up to speed on all the Odell happenings," says Garin Buckles, owner of Champion Tool Storage.

He favors Pour Girls scones and sandwiches, and stops nearly every day on his way to work.

"And my dog loves it there because she gets dog treats," he says.

Lindsay Weseman of Parkdale works at Hood River High School and frequently treats her daughters to lunch.

"They enjoy getting the hot dog meal and a smoothie, and I always get a turkey sandwich," she says. "I also really enjoy their chai tea lattes."

Mellissa's dogged effort has earned respect from those who have seen a succession of business come and go at the same spot. Right away, Mellissa went to work

clearing the lot, trimming trees, pulling weeds and creating a fresh seating area. She partnered with local schools to offer prizes, such as snowcones and Italian sodas, for student reading programs.

"Mellissa is kind, friendly and determined," Lindsay says. "She works hard, and that shows in her business. She is also willing to work with and for the community, and that is something I really appreciate."

Grateful for the support and mindful of the work it takes to keep going, Mellissa can hardly believe the change just one year can bring.

"I had never made coffee until the first day we opened," she says with a laugh. "Now, I dream of it." ■

*Pour Girls Espresso & Eats is at 3665 Atkinson Drive in Odell. Summer hours are Monday through Friday, 5:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturday, 6 to 11 a.m.; closed Sundays. There are reduced hours in fall/winter. Call ahead orders at 541-806-0954. Reach Pour Girls at [pourgirls19@gmail.com](mailto:pourgirls19@gmail.com).*

# Stepping Up to Protect the Land

When fires start, rural fire protection associations respond

By Lauren Brown

Gary Miller has lived through three large wildfires that devastated his private land, burned timber and killed livestock and wildlife. After the 2012 Miller Homestead Fire, Gary—a Harney Electric Cooperative board member and a Frenchglen rancher who operates Rock Creek Ranch and DJ Miller Ranches with his sons Max and Levi—decided it was time to be proactive.

With help from others, Gary filled out the paperwork, took the training and rounded up the equipment. The Frenchglen Rural Fire Protection Association was born.

“We all understand that fires are a very natural process,” Gary says.

Of course, ranchers don’t want to lose livestock or buildings. The biggest fear around fire is the grazing restrictions that come along with the aftermath of a megafire that burns vast swaths of potential grazing acreage.

The Miller Homestead Fire burned about 170,000 acres, most of it on Gary’s land and government-permitted range.

“That’s why I felt—instead of standing back and complaining and calling people names—it was time to get involved,” Gary says.



**A helicopter helps the Frenchglen Rural Fire Protection Association fight the Fish Fin Fire in Catlow Valley last August.** SUBMITTED PHOTO

There are six rural fire protection associations in Harney County, based out of Crane, Frenchglen, Fields-Andrews, Lone Pine, Silver Creek and Wagontire. The associations are entirely volunteer, nonprofit organizations comprised of ranchers and farmers in remote areas where there is no state, federal or local fire department.

RFPA members receive training from the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The Frenchglen RFPA operates under a memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Land Management and the

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge that allows members to respond to wildfires on federal land. RFPAs often provide an initial attack on a wildland fire and members respond along with BLM firefighters.

The Harney County RFPAs have a good working relationship with federal and state agencies, but that has not always been the case.

When Gary first started the Frenchglen RFPA in 2012, there was a lot of tension between the RFPAs and the BLM. Communication was lacking, and the

RFPAs members and federal firefighters could find little common ground. However, that began to change with the creation of the Harney County Wildfire Collaborative—an arm of the High Desert Partnership.

Chad Karges, former head of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and one of the founding members of the High Desert Partnership, convinced Gary to attend the wildfire collaborative meetings. There were representatives from the RFPAs, as well as federal and state agencies.

“The first few meetings were very painful, but we all stayed there and worked through it,” Gary says. “Now, we work side by side.”

Six different agencies were represented on the last fire Gary responded to.

It was through the collaboration that a liaison job was created to facilitate communication between the RFPAs and the federal and state agencies. Gary says there had been a gap between what he could do as an RFA member and what BLM firefighters were trained to do.

“Because we don’t have to be that highly trained, there’s a communication gap between us and the BLM, especially when you get on a fire,” he says.

The RFA liaison position was created with the Burns Interagency Fire Zone as a result of discussions that came out of the meetings.

The liaison, Jacob Gear, has been working throughout the year with the RFPAs and the Burns group to ensure RFA members have the training and equipment they need to do the job. He also coordinates communication between agencies when a fire occurs.

“He has been perfect for that,” Gary says. “When there’s a fire, he rolls in and helps tie every agency together. He’s been trained, so we can just go to work and put the fire out. There is no confusion now.”

Likewise, Jacob says Gary brings plenty to the table.

“One of the things I appreciate about Gary is he is a well-grounded individual”



**The Frenchglen Rural Fire Protection Association, created by Gary Miller, above, uses firetrucks that stay with members with the proper training to operate them. SUBMITTED PHOTO**

Jacob says. “Firefighter safety is always on his mind, and is in the forefront of his thoughts for both the RFA firefighters and the federal agencies.”

Gary also can provide firefighters with the best routes for access, the location of water sources and areas of concern.

Gary says there is an advantage to having nearby RFA members respond to a fire.

“We know the area, and we can get to the fire quicker,” he says.

The initial attack provided by the RFPAs has proved to be a huge asset for the BLM, according to Burns District Manager Jeff Rose.

“We’ll support them as best we can,” Jeff says. “We communicate much better, and I think their equipment is improving greatly”

Jacob says communication is key when fighting fire, and Gary’s willingness to start a conversation and get to know people has made an impression on him.

“After a fire, when people are leaving, if he hasn’t met them, he takes a moment

to thank them and introduce himself,” Jacob says.

Jacob says he has made a point to do that as well.

“If we’d just do that more, we’d learn that we have a lot in common,” he says.

Gary notes that while he likes being involved and feels that nothing but good has come from his involvement with the RFA and the wildfire collaborative, it makes for a full plate.

“We all have our own job and our own living to make, and this is all above and beyond,” he says. “The RFPAs were founded on neighbors helping neighbors. That is something that sometimes neighbors forget. I think that’s the key to getting folks more involved. Some people will take on more responsibility than others, but everyone can do something little to help.” ■

*For more information about Harney County RFPAs or how to get involved with your local RFA, contact Jacob Gear at [jacob\\_gear@fws.gov](mailto:jacob_gear@fws.gov).*



The Lost River Range serves as a backdrop to the Rock Creek Hydro facility, which generates local power.

# Rock Creek Hydro: A Great Fit

Story and photos by Anna Means

Salmon River Electric Cooperative has supported local power generation for years. It's finally become a reality with a small hydro plant in the Lost River Valley.

SREC Board President Norman Wallis, says for the 16 years he's been a director, "the feeling has been if SREC can make local generation work without a financial burden to membership, then we're all for it. We'd love to do it if it fits."

Directors have researched wind, solar, biomass and hydro, but none met all the criteria: economical to deliver, cost-effective power, safe and reliable, and able to be integrated with SREC's

contract terms with the Bonneville Power Administration.

Norman says nothing really fit, especially when it came to economy of delivery.

Gordon Fulton's Rock Creek Hydro project—merely a stone's throw away from SREC's old 69-kilovolt line—made the cut. As of last July, power generated from the base of Mount Borah run through SREC lines.

As sole proprietor of Rock Creek Hydro LLC, Gordon enjoys a challenge. That's what he got every step of the way as he waded through permitting and building his small power plant—about the size of a modest home with

garage—with water that irrigates fields downstream after it generates about a half-megawatt of power.

The project might not have happened if the 1983 earthquake had not destroyed a concrete ditch that carried water to Gordon's and a neighbor's fields. The two ranchers collaborated to install an underground pipeline from the mouth of Rock Creek Canyon to the edge of the fields, which included a steep descent.

For years, Gordon thought it was a shame not to put 600 feet of fall to use. He began research for a power plant in 2012 and started collecting equipment and engineering information in 2014. He approached his own cooperative, Lost



**Rock Creek Hydro LLC's Gordon Fulton worked with Salmon River Electric Cooperative to build a new small power plant.**

River Valley Electric, in 2015, but it went no further.

In 2016, Gordon and Rock Creek Hydro approached SREC. The original plan was for SREC to transmit power to BPA's lines, where it would be sold to Rocky Mountain Power. A feasibility study showed it looked like a good deal.

Permitting was extensive, even for a small power plant that wouldn't produce a full megawatt.

"No real tax incentives, that I know of, were available by the time we went online," Gordon says.

He received a small grant from the Department of Agriculture for building a power plant on an existing irrigation system.

Gordon applied for a separate water right to generate power, which was immediately protested by Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Bureau of Land Management. He says it took two years to resolve that challenge.

He needed a right-of-way permit from BLM to build the generating station and transformer on public land that had already been disturbed twice.

"That required a full-blown environmental assessment," Gordon says.

"I had to get blessings from botanists, archaeologists, wildlife biologists, fisheries biologists, etc., only to be repeated by BLM specialists with the same titles. It took two years and \$35,000 to complete."

Then he had to mitigate for sage hens, which cost another \$1,000.

"There was endless paperwork to obtain a Federal Energy Regulatory permit," he says. "Luckily, it was finally determined that since this project was an improvement on an existing irrigation system, that it came under the magical term of 'qualifying facility.' In small energy production, this is the equivalent of winning the lottery."

Gordon had to solicit comments from local municipalities, commissions and tribes, most of whom didn't protest, he says.

There was bonding, insurance, wheeling charges, reoccurring testing and preventive maintenance.

Gordon persisted, partly because of the support he got from SREC—especially General Manager Ken Dizes.

"I can't say enough good about Ken Dizes," Gordon says. "He believed in the project and helped where he could."

Ken pointed Gordon in the right direction to buy a used transformer from

the old Hecla mine on Jordan Creek. When Gordon learned it would cost a fortune for a private company to connect his substation to the 69-kilovolt line, Ken proposed the SREC crew do it, at Rock Creek's expense, when they had time.

Gordon encountered a serious economic roadblock with BPA's charge for transmitting the energy to Rocky Mountain Power. Again, Ken stepped in.

"I negotiated terms with BPA and Rock Creek for SREC to purchase the output when it appeared to no longer be cost effective for Rock Creek to sell to Rocky Mountain Power," Ken says.

The maintenance provision was going to be costly. Ken negotiated a deal to include Rock Creek in SREC's maintenance contract, with Gordon paying his share.

SREC's ratepayers bore no expenses, nor will they in the future. Rock Creek Hydro carries its own weight and, in return, gets the same power rate SREC pays to BPA.

With one successful project under its belt, the SREC board is now in discussions with the Warm Springs hydro plant, which approached the board as its current sales contract with a different power company is expiring. ■

# Local History in High Demand

Lost River Valley residents can't get enough of the local history Facebook page

By Dianna Troyer

The popular Lost River Valley History Facebook page owes its launch five years ago to a distant set of circumstances: a lost dog 160 miles away from the valley.

James Logan, who grew up near Mackay, wanted to help his friend find his lost dog. It had disappeared near Malad in Oneida County.

"The only public Facebook group I found was for Oneida County's history," says James, 39, a territory sales manager for Google in Salt Lake City. "I loved seeing the old photos and reading about people's lives even though I didn't know anyone there."

A lot of people read the page, including a rancher who found his friend's dog and contacted him so they could be reunited.

"I was a little jealous of their history page," James says. "I told myself, 'I want a site like this for my hometown.'"

As site administrator, James says he is pleased the Facebook account has 1,485 members. The group uploads a variety of photos and writes comments on topics ranging from vintage concert recordings to historic photos of people, places and events in the valley.

"We have such a rich history in the valley," James says. "When people post photos and write comments, they're



James Logan launched the Lost River Valley History Facebook page five years ago. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES LOGAN

passing on history and adding to it. It's all about personal stories and how our lives are often intertwined."

James posted a photo of himself taken by his mother at a parade in Mackay in 1983.

"There were others who were near me and recognized themselves and commented," he says. "A lot of us have family photos in a shoebox or stored somewhere. Share them. You never know how they'll trigger memories for someone else."

When James was a high school sophomore, his family moved from Mackay to Grace, about 160 miles away. Although he graduated from Grace High School in 1998, James says Mackay will always be his hometown.

An avid mountain biker, skier and climber, James says a love of the outdoors was instilled in him while growing up near the scenic Lost River Mountains.

He says it is gratifying how the Facebook site provides a social outlet for people staying at home during the coronavirus pandemic. He noticed a surge in use this spring.

"Posting photos is a way to stay connected with people and an easy way to feel positive," says Charlotte McKelvey, 84, a local history buff in Mackay.

She and her daughter, Karen Hames, are frequent contributors.

A popular photo they posted was taken in 1951 during the annual Copper Basin cattle roundup. Three silhouetted cowboys astride their horses watch over a herd of cows. They were Charlotte's husband, Don McKelvey, shortly after he graduated from high school; his father, John; and his brother, Johnny. It was published in the Salt Lake Tribune and National Geographic magazine.

"Some friends saw it and recognized them and mailed us a copy," Charlotte says. "You could tell who it was by the way they were sitting on their horses. They didn't even know a photographer had taken their photo."

Other popular photos are a stagecoach traveling from Mackay to Challis in the late 1800s, a wagon near Houston hauling kids to school, and the Shay train locomotive



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: In the late 1800s, stagecoach routes passed beneath the scenic Lost River Range. The Shay locomotive was designed to navigate steep curvy tracks to access mines above Mackay. HISTORICAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATHY NEVILLE Charlotte McKelvey, left, and daughter Karen Hames frequently post historic photos to the valley's history page. PHOTO BY KATHY NEVILLE**

used at the mines above town.

The Facebook page links readers to music of the past. Mackay alum Dan MacLerran, a technical coordinator for theatrical and musical productions at the College of Southern Idaho, posted a link to a playlist he made from recordings of Mackay bands and choirs from 1975 to 1979. Listen at [tinyurl.com/MackayBands](https://tinyurl.com/MackayBands).

"The quality of the recordings is really good," Karen says. "My brothers, Jim and Jack, were some of the high school trumpet players on the recordings."

Charlotte is steeped in the valley's history. Her maternal and paternal

grandparents came to the valley in the late 1800s as children. Their families ranched or mined. Her husband's relatives also were early valley settlers.

High school sweethearts, Don and Charlotte were married in 1954. They have become a repository of their family histories.

"After Don passed away in October, we started going through boxes of our family photos," Charlotte says. "We wanted to share them, thinking others would like them as much as we did. Over the years, people have given me their family photos when they don't want to keep them, so

we've posted them, too."

Charlotte has organized hundreds of photos in notebooks.

"The older you get, the more sentimental you get about local history," Karen says. "People like coming back to their roots."

James reads the page several times a week to learn about Lost River Valley history.

"It's been fulfilling to see so many people posting photos and comments, or answer questions about the history of buildings or places," he says. "I've loved it all, whatever the posts are." ■



# Quick Reactions

## Mt. Wheeler Power crews first on the scene

By Christina Sawyer

June 24 was a beautiful afternoon, until lightning moved into the Lund area.

Lightning strikes dancing along the mountain ridges made for a spectacular sight, until the White Pine County Sheriff's office had to evacuate the small farming community and close the highway to traffic due to fire.

A two-man Mt. Wheeler Power crew was in the area, and it headed toward Lund after a member called around 3 p.m. to report a pole on fire. As the crew approached the town, one of them radioed in, requesting the fire department.

Radio dispatchers could hear it in his voice. This fire was big, and backup would be needed.

The fire caused power outages, leaving members were left without water because their water pumps depend on electricity. With no way to defend their property, homeowners grabbed what they could and followed instructions to evacuate.

The second two-man crew to arrive brought a water tank to help members fight fire that approached their homes.

Remaining crews at the Ely main office started loading poles and equipment. CEO Kevin Robison grabbed gloves and helped get trucks loaded,

while staff ran for water and sandwiches to send along, knowing they had a long night ahead of them.

Community still means something in this small town as neighbors helped neighbors evacuate livestock and other farm animals.

Mt. Wheeler Power crews were restricted from restoring power, but jumped in to help with evacuations and defended property by cutting fire lines.

The smoke was thick and choking as members grabbed who and what they could and headed north toward safety. Fire crews responded quickly, and soon planes could be heard coming in and dropping

retardant.

The fire—referred to as the Brown Fire—consumed 8,268 acres, according to the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

Mt. Wheeler Power crews were permitted access around 7 p.m. and worked through the night to set 10 power poles destroyed in the fire, restoring power to members around 1 a.m.

It was evident several homes faced devastating harm and won the battle. Firstly due to the quick response of first responders, but secondly due to the defensible space members created by clearing brush away from their homes.

The Brown Fire moved



**ABOVE:** A fire crew hoses down power poles during the Brown Fire. **TOP:** A green lawn makes for a good defensible space. **BACKGROUND:** Fire took out 10 power poles, cutting power to Lund. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MT. WHEELER POWER

quickly: it was just four hours from the first report at 3:05 until crews were permitted access to restore power.

Using fire-resistant landscaping and hardening your home with fire-safe construction measures is the best defense, but as the residents of Lund learned, things move quickly in an emergency. Your preparedness can be the difference between a close call and complete devastation.

Assemble emergency supplies and belongings in a safe location ahead of time. Make sure everyone in the home is on the same page, knowing the planned escape routes and meeting locations.

Preparing your home for a fire is a family affair.

Gather family pets and have them ready to evacuate. Pack your vehicle with your emergency items, including medications and personal identification.

Stay aware of the latest news from local media and your fire department for updated information. Evacuate your home if called to do so. Do not linger once the evacuation orders are given. Leave early and stay away until officials have cleared your area for return.

Promptly leaving your home and neighborhood clears roads for firefighters. Their focus

can be on suppressing the fire instead of public safety.

It is essential to understand what is in danger when evaluating your property. The National Fire Protection Association reports most homes that burn during a wildfire are ignited by embers or firebrands landing on the roof, in gutters or on or under decks and porches, vents or other openings in the home. Other homes burn from small flames (surface fire) that can touch the house, such as dry grass that can allow a fire to run right up to the siding.

Mistakenly, some property owners will clear a patch of land surrounding their house down to the dirt, thinking

that will keep them safe. That actually creates a clear path for embers to reach your structure. It also often becomes a space overtaken by weeds, that are highly flammable when dry.

Keeping your lawn hydrated and maintained, as well as planting fire-resistant shrubs, can protect your house by catching those embers before they reach your home.

There has been an alarming number of devastating wildfires in Western states this summer. ■

*Preparedness is your best defense. Visit <https://disastersafety.org/wildfire/protect-your-home-from-wildfire> for more information.*



Dancers in traditional garb perform during the 2016 National Basque Festival in Elko. PHOTO COURTESY OF SYDNEY MARTINEZ/TRAVELNEVADA

# Basque Pride in Nevada

A love for the homeland and its traditions carries on for Basques of northern Nevada

By Dianna Troyer

Devoted to her Basque heritage, Traci Wines cherishes and relies on her grandmother's handwritten recipes in sickness and in health.

"She made garlic soup for anyone who was sick," Traci says. "It's good even when you're not sick."

Traci, 53, grew up working in her family's popular Basque restaurant in Elko before marrying her husband, Joe, and moving to his ranch in Ruby Valley. She teaches at the one-room Ruby Valley Elementary School.

"My favorite Basque foods are rice pudding and paella—a rice dish with vegetables and shrimp or clams or chorizo and spices," Traci says. "But I've never been a fan of our traditional foods of beef tongue or the black squid ink soup."

Traci grew up hearing stories of Basque Country and learned traditional dances from her relatives.

"I'm fortunate that both my maternal and paternal great-grandparents came from Basque Country and were a big part of my life when I was a child," Traci says.



**LEFT: Traci Wines' family has shared its Basque heritage in Nevada for generations. RIGHT: Traci's great-grandfather, Calisto Laucirica, was grand marshal of the 1977 National Basque Festival Parade.** PHOTOS BY CAROLLEE EGBERT

Basque Country is about the size of New Hampshire, lying along the coast of northern Spain and southern France and straddling the Pyrenees Mountains. It encompasses seven provinces: four in Spain and three in France. It is renowned for its fresh seafood and vegetables, stunning white beaches and picturesque mountains.

Basques are credited with creating Nevada's informal state beverage, Picon (pronounced PEE-con) Punch—a cocktail of Amer Picon (an herbal orange peel liqueur) blended with grenadine, club soda and brandy. Traci says her grandfather, Johnnie Aguirre, had a reputation for making the best Picon Punch when he was bartender at Nevada Dinner House in Elko.

"People would come in just to have him make that drink," Traci says. "He always added a twist of lemon."

After immigrating to Nevada, Traci's relatives were instrumental in running businesses and establishing local Basque cultural institutions. Her great-grandfather, Calisto Laucirica, came to Nevada to herd sheep in the Lamoille area and later owned Nevada Dinner House, where the Elko Euzkaldunak Club formed in 1959. "Euzkaldunak" means Basque speaker. Traci's grandfather, Johnnie, was elected the club's first president.

Soon, club members invited Basque shepherders and ranchers to Elko for a day to celebrate their vibrant heritage. In 1964, the celebration became a two-day event named the National Basque Festival. It is celebrated on Fourth of July weekend to thank the United States for providing freedom and economic opportunities.

The festival has grown in popularity. Destination magazine rated the festival among its "Top 100 Events in North America." The festival invites all "to become Basque for a weekend" as celebrants dance, sing and compete in contests of strength. In

their homeland, Basques were renowned for clearing mountainous forests to establish towns, so contests focus on lifting round, 200-pound stones and chopping trees.

This year's festival was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic, but organizers held an outdoor dinner and dance at The Star, a boarding house and restaurant established in 1910 that catered to Basque shepherders who longed for their country's cuisine served family style.

The Star has roots in Tracy's family: Calisto managed The Star from 1936 to 1941. Calisto moved on, buying Nevada Dinner House with relatives in 1951.

Traci's grandparents, Johnnie and Mary Aguirre, became owners of the dinner house in 1962, and the enterprise stayed in the family until 1985.

"I grew up at the restaurant," Traci says. "Even when Calisto got older, he would sit in the kitchen and help where he could. He liked to keep the olive oil bottles full and put the garlic in them. He liked to cook meals for my dad and uncles."

She says she wished her grandparents had taught her to speak Basque. Basque is one of the few non-Indo-European languages in Europe.

"My grandmother told me she was too busy working to teach me the language except for her favorite cusswords and counting to 10," Traci says with a laugh. "I loved being at the restaurant and remember running through the double doors of the kitchen when I was a child. When I was old enough, I became a waitress."

She recalls her grandparents upheld an informal Basque code of loyalty and provided jobs to immigrants.

"Make friends with a Basque," Traci says, "and you're friends for life." ■

# Community Helping Community



Working with our local partners, we can improve lives and strengthen our communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed our world. The impacts of this public health crisis have been felt by our members and communities across Eastern Oregon.

Now more than ever, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative is focused on delivering safe, reliable and competitively priced electricity.

Our commitment to you doesn't stop there. We understand some of you may need more from us, so we've compiled available resources to help you navigate and ease the impacts of this pandemic.

Here at OTEC, we remain dedicated to our member-owners and the communities we call home.



### Community Connections

- Baker County: 541-523-6591
- Union County: 541-963-7532
- Grant County: 541-575-2949
- Harney County: 541-573-6024

Help with utilities, rent (depending on funding), pet food.

### Salvation Army

- Baker and Union counties: 541-523-5852; food, clothing.

### Grant County Food Banks

- 541-575-0299

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP)

- 1-800-723-3638

### Department of Human Resources

- Baker City: 541-524-1800
- Burns: 541-573-5227
- John Day: 541-575-0728
- La Grande: 541-963-4113

### Marla's Mall

• Baker City: 541-524-2309; serves all counties. Free to anyone; clothes, shoes, housewares.

### Lifeline

• 1-800-848-4442; assistance for phone and broadband for low-income families.

### Training, Employment, Education

- Baker Technical Institute: 541-524-2651; training programs, including free training for SNAP recipients.
- Worksource: [www.worksourceoregon.org](http://www.worksourceoregon.org); resume building and job search.
- Eastern Oregon University: 541-962-3672
- Blue Mountain Community College: 541-276-1260
- Building Healthy Families: 541-426-9411; free education program for pre-birth to 5 years old.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative knows our members have been impacted by COVID-19. We are here to help.

### Payment Plan

OTEC can help set up a payment plan for those behind on their bill payments.

### Income-Based Energy-Efficiency Programs

OTEC can get you in contact with an organization to help you set this up.

### Prepaid Metering

Take charge of your energy bill by buying power when needed, but on your own schedule.

### Levelized Billing

Guard against large fluctuations in your bill due to changes in the weather by creating a rolling average of your energy use.

### Budget Billing

Pay equalized monthly payments to avoid large swings in your energy bill. It's an easy way to add a specific cost to a household budget.

### Energy-Efficiency Rebates

Keep your home energy efficient by upgrading water heaters, insulation, windows, appliances and more. Call OTEC for current rebate information or visit [www.otec.coop](http://www.otec.coop).

*For more information on Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative programs, go to [www.otec.coop](http://www.otec.coop) or call a member service representative at 541-523-3616.*

*For more information on eligibility for various state and federal assistance programs, go to [www.oregonhelps.org](http://www.oregonhelps.org) or call 211—a free, confidential nationwide service.*

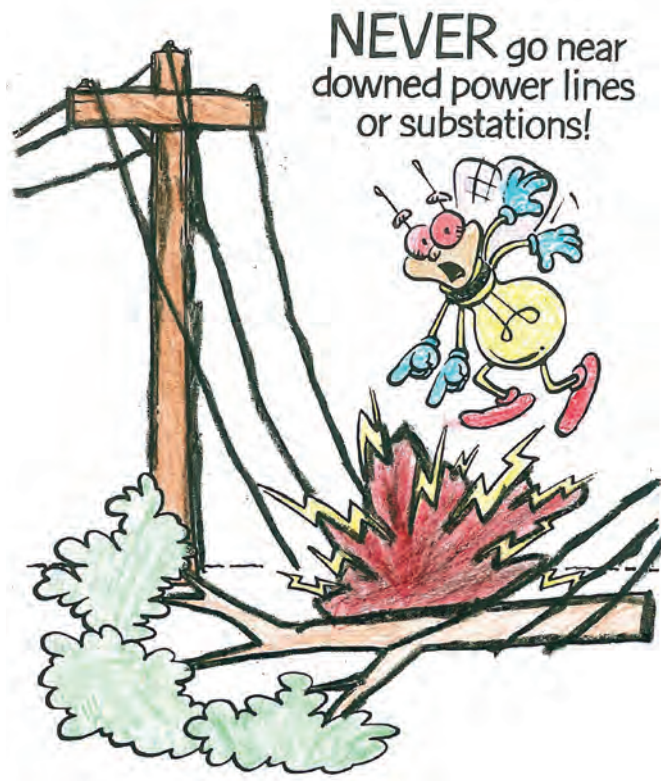
*Other resources are available through churches and faith-based organizations.*



**Aidyn Blesam, 11**  
La Grande  
Grade 6-8 Winner



**Ainsley Vancil, 9**  
Hines  
Grade 4-5 Winner



## Kids Saluted for Electrical Safety Art

Increasing respect for the power of electricity is important to OTEC

By Joseph Hathaway

Safety is a top priority at Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative. The past two years, the cooperative has done its part to help increase electrical safety awareness by holding a kids' electrical safety artwork contest. Children in OTEC's service territory have been creative while learning about safety around electricity.

The theme for this year's contest was "Play it Safe Around Electricity."

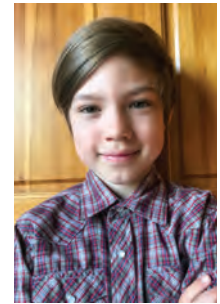
Kindergartners to fifth graders were given the option of coloring one of three illustrated pages, all with different topics, such as keeping a safe distance from power lines, not climbing trees near power lines and not flying a kite near lines.

Sixth through eighth graders were allowed to create an original piece of art.

Nearly 90 submissions came in from children across Baker, Grant, Harney and Union counties. Winners were selected in a poll of OTEC employees.

"We're delighted that so many local kids took an interest and submitted artwork," says Terry Fischer, OTEC's director of human resources. "We want to provide a platform to open up a conversation about electrical safety. Through community outreach programs like this, it helps make kids and families aware of the dangers of electricity. We hope to further expand our outreach efforts to reach as many kids as we can, because knowing how to be safe around power lines and electricity is a subject that never goes away."

OTEC plans to hold its third kids' electrical safety artwork contest in February 2021. ■



**Mission Moraga  
Gray, 8**  
**La Grande**  
Grade K-3 Winner

## Please Help Teach Your Children About Electrical Safety

One of a parent's highest priorities is to protect their children. One way to do this is by teaching them about being safe around electricity. You can start at an early age.

Teach children water and electricity do not mix. Children should never play with or use electronic devices around water. Make sure ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) are installed anywhere electricity and water could meet to help prevent shocks. GFCIs detect and prevent dangerous situations where an electric shock could occur.

Emphasize to kids that the only objects that go into outlets are electric plugs. Sticking other items in an electric socket can lead to an electric shock or death. As a parent, you can help prevent this by having tamper-resistant outlets installed. They have a shutter system that only accepts electric plugs. Another option is to use outlet plug covers. However, these can easily be removed.

Tell children to leave electric cords alone. If a curious child puts a cord in his or her mouth, they could suffer an electric burn. Kids should be taught never to pull a plug out of the socket by the cord. This could damage the cord. It is a good idea to leave cords out of sight, so children are not tempted to play with them.

Emphasize that electronics and their accessories must be handled with care. Advise kids never to stick fingers or objects into toasters or any other electrical appliance. Encourage younger children to ask for help when they want to use an electronic device.

Include utility emergency numbers with other posted emergency phone numbers, and instruct children how to call for help in an emergency.

Visit [www.otec.coop/safety](http://www.otec.coop/safety) for more information. Check out our kids' page at [www.otec.coop/otec-youth](http://www.otec.coop/otec-youth).



Dora Huestis is an avid reader and singer. She plans to study music education, with a choral concentration, at Gonzaga University.

# 2020 TEC Scholarship Winner: **Dora Huestis**

The Mount Si High School grad finds her song through helping others

Story and photos by Anne Herman

One question on the Tanner Electric Co-op College Scholarship application is about one of the Seven Cooperative Principles: Concern for Community. Dora Huestis, this year's winner from North Bend, centered her response on her three years volunteering with Girls on the Run—a program for third- through fifth-grade girls.

“It’s so empowering to be in an all-female environment, teaching them about loving yourself, loving others, nutrition, communication, friendship, body image,” Dora says. “Girls start thinking about their bodies and they can develop positive or negative images based on what they’re hearing.”



**Dora was on the cross-country and track and field teams at Mount Si High School. She now runs 35 miles a week for her own enjoyment.**

Dora says Girls on the Run encourages participants to think about how what they see on TV and in magazines pertains to them.

“We help them know they’re perfect as they are,” she says.

Dora is a runner. She was on the cross-country and track and field teams at Mount Si High School for four years, serving as captain of both teams for the past two years. Her first year she had a stress fracture and couldn’t run, so her friends gave her pompoms and made her team cheerleader. These days, she runs 35 miles a week.

“I do it for the joy and the addiction that is running,” she says.

Dora also loves reading.

“If my house were on fire the first thing I’d save—after my family and pets, of course—would be my Kindle,” Dora says.

She says one of the hardest things about the COVID-19 closures is missing the library.

Dora’s graduation was affected by the pandemic. The ceremony was produced as a video and shown online. Students made appointments to be filmed, one at a time, picking up their diplomas from a table in a parking garage.

“It’s teaching us to persevere, adapt and overcome obstacles,” Dora says. “It’s hard not having the closure, the rites of passage that decades of students have had. No one got a prom or senior overnights. But I’m grateful that I’m healthy and my loved ones are healthy, and we’re coming together to overcome it.”

The ceremony did have all the traditional elements, including Dora singing the national anthem and performing with her choir. The choir sang “You Will Be Found,” from the musical “Dear Evan

Hansen.”

Dora says she always loved to sing. When she was 12, she joined a girls’ choir and found a voice teacher. She started vocal jazz choir at Twin Falls Middle School, and continued into high school. Sometimes, Dora’s jazz choir does improvisational scatting.

“It’s terrifying but so freeing,” Dora says. “Every time I scat it’s nerve-wracking, but every time I do it, it’s the bravest thing I’ve ever done. Maybe that and asking a guy out.”

By the end of high school, Dora was taking three periods of music a day. She was a student conductor for concert choir and conducted a piece at the choir’s fall concert. She even took physical education and health credits over the summer to fill her schedule with more music.

This fall Dora plans to attend Gonzaga University and major in music education with a choral concentration. She also would like to take English and history courses. Her goal is to be a high school choir teacher.

“I’ve had some of my happiest moments in choir,” Dora says, adding that she’s seen her own teachers get great joy from their jobs. “They had us talk about our dreams and hopes, and what we wanted to see in the world, and it gave us this amazing voice.”

Dora says helping others as her teachers have helped her would make a rewarding career.

“It makes me happy when I’ve had any kind of hand in others feeling like they have a voice, when I feel like I’m impacting them in some positive way,” Dora says. “It’s reciprocal. I learn so much from them. There’s so much love to go around.” ■



Jim Ross, left, executive director of the Franklin Pierce Foundation, greets Washington High School senior and John Pedroso Memorial Scholarship winner Kalven Cousineau in 2019. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FRANKLIN PIERCE FOUNDATION

# Scholarship Matchmaker

The Parkland-based Franklin Pierce Foundation helps match scholarships and college-bound students

By Rick Stedman

Pursuing a college education these days is not cheap.

According to educationdata.org, the average price for a four-year degree is approximately \$122,000 in tuition, fees, room and board, and other costs.

Fortunately, numerous Parkland-area individuals, businesses and organizations provide scholarships for local students pursuing higher education through the Franklin Pierce Foundation.

The nonprofit began in 1973, undergoing several name changes

before landing on its current moniker in 1999. It administers scholarship programs for Parkland-area schools, including Franklin Pierce High School, Washington High School and GATES High School.

Executive Director Jim Ross says that in 2020, the foundation surpassed \$500,000 in total scholarships awarded. He says the foundation currently has 36 different scholarship descriptions.

“If all scholarships were awarded each year, there would be 67 recipients,” Jim says.

To minimize expenses, the Franklin Pierce Foundation has no paid employees. Officers, the executive director and even the webmaster offer their services pro bono.

“For every dollar donated to the foundation, 99 cents is paid out in scholarships,” Jim says.

In 1968, Jim was hired as a geology teacher, assistant librarian and audiovisual coordinator at Franklin Pierce High School.



**LEFT: 2019 Parkland Light & Water scholarship recipient Daiara Jones poses with PL&W board member Janet Detering.** PHOTO COURTESY OF PL&W  
**RIGHT: Jim Ross with recipients of the Distinguished Navigation Scholarship from Washington High School in 2018. From left, Kaitlyn Ramoie, Dominique Jackson, Jim, Andreas Phillips and Zoey Surma.** PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FRANKLIN PIERCE FOUNDATION



During the next 42 years, he also taught geology, biology, environmental science, algebra, chemistry, physics and numerous specialized courses. He officially retired from the school district in 2010 and promptly became the foundation's executive director.

During his teaching career, Jim served on many committees. He says the most rewarding, and often the most frustrating, was the Franklin Pierce Scholarship Committee. As a member and chairman of this committee, he helped select a handful of scholarship recipients each year.

"There were always too few scholarships and too many deserving students," Jim says.

His job with the foundation is to help create more scholarships to award. Though scholarships seem plentiful, Jim says there is always a need for more.

"Most of our scholarships are funded annually by individuals, groups or families," Jim says. "But these scholarships can disappear at any time."

Since 2001, Parkland Light & Water has offered a scholarship to local high school graduates.

"PL&W's Board of Directors chose to create an annual PL&W scholarship as another way to support our community and education," says Susan Cutrell, PL&W general manager. "PL&W is proud of the young talented recipients and is happy to assist in their continued education."

To qualify for the PL&W scholarship, students must meet the following criteria:

- A graduating senior who is the son or daughter of a Parkland Light & Water Co. member, or a student residing in the home of a Parkland Light & Water Co. member, for the duration of their high school education.
- A 3.0 GPA or better for the last three years as a student at

Washington High School.

- Shown good citizenship, and participated in school and community activities.
- Financial need is also a consideration.

Jim says most scholarship recipients are decided by a school's staff scholarship committee. He recommends new scholarships use these same committees to select their winners. These committees are usually headed by one of the school's counselors, and other members come from various departments.

"The foundation believes these people know best the abilities and potential of their graduating seniors," Jim says. "That is how the recipient of the Parkland Light & Water scholarship is selected. In other situations, some scholarship sponsors want to have a say in the selection. In that case, I recommend the committee determine nominees and then the sponsor can select the final recipient."

Jim says it is important for the community to recognize how much the teachers and staff members of the Franklin Pierce School District support the community through the scholarships. In fact, more than half of the foundation's scholarships are funded by current or former staff members, and more than \$20,000 was donated via payroll deduction, Jim says. One Franklin Pierce alum—who went on to join the staff at an area school—donates \$200 a year, creating a scholarship in honor of her niece.

"Although \$200 seems small compared to the cost of college these days, for many graduates the fact that someone would invest in their future contributes to their feeling of self-worth," Jim says. "Our teachers and staff members care about their students, even after they graduate." ■

*To donate or to learn more about the Franklin Pierce Foundation, visit [franklinpiercedn.org](http://franklinpiercedn.org) or call 253-298-3057*

# A Community Favorite

After supporting the community for decades, Clatskanie has returned the favor to Colvin's Grill during COVID-19

Story and photos by Scott Laird

Colvin's Pub & Grill has been a mainstay in Clatskanie's downtown for decades. It has survived floods and economic downturns, and it looks like it will survive a global pandemic.

How does the business do it? By being an integral part of the community.

Kim Rogers—known as Kimbo to his friends and the Clatskanie youth he has coached throughout the years—has been the owner of Colvin's for 24 years. He bought the business following the flood in 1996, when he was just 27 years old.

Colvin's success is not based on any big secret. It provides good food and friendly service at a reasonable price, and has loyal employees and customers.

On top of that, Kim has a good business sense for running a restaurant. He sharpened his skills working for Burns Brothers truck stops, starting as a teenager washing dishes in Wilsonville. He was managing the large-volume location before he graduated from high school.

"The restaurant had 360 seats and a huge staff," Kim says. "I was hiring the servers, cooks and dishwashers; ordering the food; controlling my labor costs; and working on a budget."

Rather than attend college to learn more about running a business, Burns Brothers had him learn on the job. He was shuffled around to places like Barstow, California, and Cheyenne, Wyoming, and finally back to Wilsonville.



**Colvin's Owner Kim Rogers learned the restaurant business working at Burns Brothers truck stops, starting as a teenager. He started running Colvin's when he was 27 and continues to be a hands-on owner and manager of the pub and grill.**

"I learned everything I needed to know by dealing with customers and learning from other restaurant managers," Kim says.

Tom Colvin, the original bar owner, worked in logging camps in the early

1900s and moved the business to its current location at 135 N. Nehalem Street from just down the street. In 1996, at the time of the flood, Bob Rowe owned the bar and the restaurant was leased out.

Kim now runs both the bar and the

restaurant and added a banquet room where Colvin's can host meetings, parties, and even small weddings and events. He also has kept the original name.

"I researched it, and Tom was very active in the Chamber of Commerce and city government," Kim says. "He has one of the largest scholarships at the high school and was instrumental in starting the Lower Columbia Baseball League that hosted games between loggers in the river towns. It just made sense to keep the name."

Kim says Colvin's has always been active in sponsoring local activities and events, such as the Quilters Club, Heritage Days, youth sports, elementary school events, and community raffles and auctions. Kim also coached youth and school softball and basketball.

"It's always made sense to me that in a small town you give back as much as you can, so if anything ever happens—like a flood or a pandemic—hopefully that gets returned," he says.

According to Kim, that goodwill has been returned, and in a big way during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I can't believe it," he says, getting a bit choked up. "The response from the community and from the different organizations that we supported over the years—like the Booster's Club and the Fireworks Fund—has been great. They all just kept supporting us. I can't imagine getting the kind of support we've had here in any of the bigger towns like Lake Oswego, Gresham or West Linn."

Kim says Colvin's began offering takeout the first day of the COVID-19 shutdown in March, adding an online ordering app to make it easy for customers and doing curbside delivery.

"People bought gift cards, we did a great to-go business and they've just been very supportive," Kim says.

In addition to loyal customers, Kim says a lot of his success—especially during COVID-19—is because of his great crew of employees. He says his crew of 13 has been flexible with schedules and hours,



**Part of the charm of Colvin's is its long history, logging decorations and antique bar. Tom Colvin, the original owner, was a logger and active member of the Clatskanie community.**

and supportive during the pandemic.

"They're a huge asset to me and an important part of how we've been able to get where we are, because I can't do it alone," Kim says.

Colvin's opens six days a week at 6 a.m. for the coffee and breakfast crowd. On Sundays, they open at 8 a.m. They also serve lunch and dinner.

Kim says they are known for their chicken fried steak breakfast and their Friday prime rib dinners. There are lottery machines in the back and a separate dining room for families. The kitchen tries to be accommodating and make sure everyone gets what they want, even if it is not on the menu.

"We have a saying," Kim says. "If we have it on our shelf, we can put it on a plate."

As a hands-on owner who often works shifts in the kitchen himself, Kim says Colvin's offers a small but diverse menu, and focuses on consistency, presentation, and training for his cooks. The business also does off-site catering for local events.

Part of the charm of Colvin's is the history of the building. The bar and dining area are decorated with old logging photos and the long, wood bar is a centerpiece. A mural featuring an old Clatskanie team from the baseball league is featured in one corner.

"I've always been a hard worker, and tried to work my way through any problems," Kim says. "My philosophy has always been to treat everyone the way I would like to be treated. That's how I treat my employees and my customers. It seems to be working." ■



**ABOVE:** It takes two female walrus skins to cover a boat. The skins last about four seasons before they must be replaced. PHOTO BY LONNIE PERRY **RIGHT:** Walrus have been a mainstay in the Yupik culture for centuries. PHOTO BY CHRIS/ADOBESTOCK

# Walrus Harvesting

## An important subsistence lifestyle

By John Waghiyi Jr.  
Adapted by Clare Charlie

The St. Lawrence Island Yupik culture has been blessed since time immemorial to use walrus as one of the primary sources of its dietary and cultural needs.

Walrus is never hunted for its ivory alone. Although ivory has been an important supplemental and primary source of income to many families, carving it is a time-consuming and expensive process.

The female's skin is used to cover whaling boats. Two or more split female hides are used to cover a boat. The skins can be used an average of two to four years before they must be replaced. This centuries-old process is time consuming but continues to be a necessity in the Yupiks' subsistence lifestyle.

Baby walrus is considered a delicacy among the Yupik people. The outer skin is made into rawhide ropes for harpoon lines and skin boat-cover lacing ropes. Long ago, walrus hides

also were used to cover houses and floors.

Most of a walrus is edible. The outer skin, called "manguna," is either cooked fresh—as is the red meat, intestines, heart and flippers—or stored in meat caches to be fermented. Even the stomach contents, usually clams, are eaten if they are found to be freshly eaten by the harvested walrus.

Use of the walrus has changed from the days of the Yupiks' ancestors. Before

snowmachines arrived in the village, every family needed a dog team for transportation. Walrus was a primary source of food for the dogs. Whether edible by people or not, most of the walrus meat was salvaged for dog food.

Today, if a walrus is skinny or inedible, it is butchered and put back in the water to be recycled into the ecosystem. It is eaten by water fleas and eventually returns to the food chain.

The Yupiks' grandfathers followed traditional laws passed





**Students, elders and local residents build a traditional angypik (umiaq) skin boat in a joint project through the Gambell school.** PHOTO BY LONNIE PERRY

down orally. Specific rules and regulations are still followed, with personal safety the most important rule. It is said that nothing will bring back the life of one person.

Respect for the land, weather and resources are important because of living on an island with adverse weather and ocean current patterns. Every person needs to learn to hunt on the ice, read the weather and learn respect for the ocean currents.

This knowledge is needed

in life-threatening situations. Traditional experience and studies have shown the ice pack can travel up to 5 miles an hour.

Harvest seasons are different every year, and ice sometimes makes it difficult to go hunting. Because Savoonga is centrally located on St. Lawrence Island, the current and wind sometimes keep ice packs in front of the village, so even when neighbors from Gambell may be hunting, the Yupiks are unable to hunt.

The west to east ocean currents are prevalent during the spring, but if the northerly or westerly winds are blowing, the ice pack moves close to shore around Savoonga.

The Yupiks' relatives from Gambell usually start harvesting the migrating walrus herds before they do. One day the herds will be harvested in front of Gambell, and the next they could be in front of Savoonga, depending on the wind and ocean current.

Walrus meat is divided equally among the captain and his crew members. The meat is shared with extended families and relatives away from the island, such as in Nome, Anchorage and other villages.

The Alaska Eskimo Walrus Commission villages work cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to manage the walrus harvest. ■

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# Finding Fun

Summer in Lassen County offers a lot of pandemic-safe activities

Summer in Lassen County is usually filled with loads of community events. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, events such as the Main Street Cruise, Blues Grass Festival, Lassen County Fair and the Blues and Brews Music Festival have been postponed or canceled.

Fortunately, we live in an amazing place with an abundance of activities to keep us entertained throughout the summer and fall. You need only look around to find hiking, kayaking, swimming and shopping.

Susanville and the surrounding area is home to a variety of lakes, rivers, streams and hiking trails. Here is a short list of websites and other resources that will help guide you in your search for outdoor (and indoor) adventure.



## A Cool Hot Spot

You don't have to travel far to find the coolest spot in Susanville. The Honey Lake Valley Community Pool is at 900 South St., in the heart of town. It offers a variety of swimming programs, including swim aerobics, swimming lessons and open swim. Find out more at [cityofsusanville.net/community-pool](http://cityofsusanville.net/community-pool) or at [facebook.com/pages/Honey-Lake-Valley-Community-Pool](https://facebook.com/pages/Honey-Lake-Valley-Community-Pool). PHOTO BY THERESA PHILLIPS

## Visit a Farmers Market

The Lassen Land and Trails Trust's Susanville Farmers Market is open each Saturday through September. With a large variety of vendors—such as

Amaiya's Magical Treats—you're bound to find whatever you're looking for. The market is in Historic Uptown Susanville on Pancera Plaza. There's live music, too. For details, visit [www.lassenlandandtrailstrust.org](http://www.lassenlandandtrailstrust.org), or find the organization on Facebook. PHOTO COURTESY OF LASSEN LAND AND TRAILS TRUST





## Visit a National Park

Volcanos anyone? Lassen Volcanic National Park is just a short, scenic drive away. The drive through the park is an easy daytrip with amazing stops along the way. Bubbling, boiling mud pots on one side and year-round glaciers on the other, it's one of most amazing national parks in the country. For details, visit [www.nps.gov/lavo](http://www.nps.gov/lavo).

PHOTO BY THERESA PHILLIPS



## Head to the Lake

Looking for a great way to beat the summer heat? Grab your kayak and head to Antelope Lake, which is just 30 minutes from Susanville. With miles of easy-to-access shoreline, it's the perfect place to launch your vessel and enjoy the natural beauty. There are several overnight campgrounds and many day-use areas. For more information, visit the Plumas National Forest website, [www.fs.usda.gov/plumas](http://www.fs.usda.gov/plumas).

PHOTO BY DOUG C. SMITH



## Hit the Trails

If hiking, trail riding and mountain biking are your thing, check out Susan Ranch Park. Located in Susanville behind Meadow View School on Paiute Lane, the park boasts miles of groomed trails. The multiuse trails are some of the finest in Northern California.

The park is maintained by Lassen County and is open to all. Lassen Land and Trails Trust website features this trail and many more. Maps and info can be found at [www.lassenlandandtrailstrust.org/susanville-ranch-park](http://www.lassenlandandtrailstrust.org/susanville-ranch-park).

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEREMY COUSO

## Check the Chamber Calendar

For a complete list of things to do in Susanville and Lassen County, visit the Lassen County Chamber of Commerce website, [www.lassencountychamber.org](http://www.lassencountychamber.org). You can find information on local recreation spots, restaurants, entertainment and much more.

## Stay Safe Out There

Remember, if you are headed out to explore the great outdoors, social-distancing guidelines still apply. Many trails are marked one way only, and it's always a good idea to carry a face covering for situations where you cannot maintain a safe distance from others. The California Department of Health has issued guidelines for all of California. Visit [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov) for the most up-to-date information.

The information here is up-to-date as of press time, but due to the constant changes due to COVID-19, please check with each venue to ensure it is open before visiting.

# A Peek Inside the Parlor

Diversification is the recipe for dairy's success

By Tahlia Warrick

From the highway, Milking R Dairy looks like most commercial dairies in Florida's heartland, with barns, feed storage and cows all whizzing by your view as you look outside your car window.

Right from the start, though, one thing sets Glades Electric Cooperative member Milking R Dairy apart: Guests are invited to slow down and come on in.

Sutton Rucks and his family have transformed their fully operating commercial dairy into an agritourism destination.

"We want to be proactive—to promote dairy farming and

agriculture in general," Sutton says.

The Rucks family always welcomed the occasional school group in search of a farm tour, but hosting guests did not become a part of their everyday routine until recently. They now host tours from mid-November through late spring, welcoming groups from as far away as Broward County and as close as their own community of Okeechobee.

"Folks just need to know where their food comes from," Sutton says. "I had no idea how many people—even in our little town—who had no idea what goes on on a dairy farm."

Over time, the tour experience has been further developed. Educational stations cover all aspects of farm operations—from feed mixes to

milking—and visitors have the opportunity to pet baby calves.

The farm has a small shop and ice cream trailer where guests can buy hats, toys, gifts and Sutton Milk products—Milking R Dairy's ice cream and milk brand. The shop sits adjacent to a playground featuring unique farm games for visitors of all ages.

Perhaps the most popular attraction at the farm lately has been the Sutton Milk small-batch ice cream. Sutton's daughter, Lindsey Rucks, manages the ice cream program, which has produced and sold 2,500 to 3,000 pints every week since it started in March.

"It's small-batch ice cream, so we don't have an automatic filler or anything," Sutton says. "We feel like the less intrusive we can be to the product, the more of the natural taste we keep. It's all hand labor, making and packaging the ice cream."

Ice cream sales shifted when coronavirus regulations limited face-to-face customer interaction, but the popularity did not wane. Lindsey used an online platform to take orders and arranged pick-up times to reduce crowd size.

In the early days of the online platform, it was not unusual for the ice cream to sell out within 10 minutes.

As the ice cream business continues to grow, Sutton is looking ahead to his next project: opening a bottling plant for Sutton Milk products in Okeechobee. He anticipates being able to bottle Milking R

## IF YOU WANT TO GO:

**Milking R Dairy**  
5818 US 98, Okeechobee  
[info@milkingrdairy.com](mailto:info@milkingrdairy.com)

**Online ice cream shop ordering information:**  
Join the Milking R Ice Cream Fan Club on Facebook

**Tour information:**  
[www.milkingrdairy.com](http://www.milkingrdairy.com)

Dairy's milk in reusable glass in six to nine months.

While those plans are still in development, Milking R is working with a co-packer, allowing Sutton to begin bottling Milking R Dairy's milk now.

"We will have our second run of milk in the bottle on Wednesday morning," Sutton says. "With the first run, we sold out of our milk within four or five days after it was bottled. We had 2,000 units, and it was gone."

The coronavirus pandemic exacerbated supply-chain issues facing dairy farmers in Florida. Seeing his neighbors and even his own farm struggle with marketing issues as a result of the pandemic reinforced Sutton's desire to bottle locally.

"We've talked about bottling our own milk since 2017," he says. "With this coronavirus, we decided it's time to take the leap. Hopefully nothing like this ever happens again, but if it does, we're here for you guys. We want to be here for the local consumer."

Much like their decadent ice cream in assorted flavors, Sutton doesn't plan to stop at



During tours of the dairy, guests are invited to visit the calf barn to pet a baby calf. Milking R Dairy raises and milks Holstein and Brown Swiss cows. PHOTO COURTESY OF MILKING R DAIRY



**ABOVE:** Customers arrive at the ice cream trailer beside the Milking R Dairy shop to pick up their Sutton Milk ice cream. Ice cream orders are placed in advance online. PHOTO BY JENNIFER KOUKOS  
**RIGHT:** A group of students at Milking R Dairy's gift shop while visiting for a farm tour. PHOTO COURTESY OF MILKING R DAIRY

providing customers with traditional milk options.

"We're just doing whole milk now, but we will have whole chocolate milk in two weeks, and we're working on some different flavors," Sutton says. "We're actually going to do an orangesicle-type flavor, maybe just a seasonal flavor. We're even looking ahead to do some eggnog for the holidays."

As with their ice cream, a benefit of operating on a smaller scale is the flexibility to try new things and experiment with different flavors—much to their customers' delight.

Sutton says the farm tours, ice cream shop and now the bottling plant are all ventures rooted in educating and connecting with consumers to help preserve Milking R Dairy for

the next generation.

"This isn't just us," Sutton says. "This is four generations worth of work right here. Everything we're starting now—this is our avenue to keep it going for five or six generations."

His grandparents started the dairy in the 1930s. Sutton was his grandmother's maiden name. He and the milk brand are named in honor of her.

Sutton works beside his wife, Kris, who manages the book-keeping and accounting; his daughter, Lindsey, who manages the ice cream business and customer engagement; and his son, Garrett, who helps maintain everyday operations on the dairy and oversees the family's beef cow operation.

Milking R Dairy has always



been a family affair. Now, the family farm is open to other families who want to learn more about dairy farming in Florida—or just looking to satisfy a sweet tooth with fresh, local ice cream. ■

# Business Spotlight

**NAME:** Tupelo Creek Woodworks

**CITY:** Wewahitchka

**OWNERS:** Logan and Jessie Pippin; Jonathan and Jayna Harper

**EMAIL:** tupelocreek@gmail.com

**PHONE NUMBERS:** 850-890-7017 (Logan)

850-867-9321 (Jonathan)

If no answer, please leave a detailed message or text with your name, number and request.



## Friends Craft Business From Wood

A shared love for woodworking led friends Jonathan Harper and Logan Pippin to a bigger dream. The pair have worked together for the state of Florida for several years.

One day at work, Jonathan and Logan were talking about their “honey-do” lists when another co-worker suggested they start a business helping others tackle their own home wish lists.

After years of pondering the idea, in 2016, Tupelo Creek Woodworks was born.

While continuing to work full time, Jonathan and Logan have grown from a hobby-style setup to a busy side business, overcoming challenges presented by Hurricane Michael along the way.

The Harper home sustained major damage, pulling Jonathan away from Tupelo Creek Woodworks for the better part of a year as he completed repairs.

Logan pushed through at a slower one-man pace, as many potential customers in

the area also focused on damaged or destroyed homes.

A shortage of wood supplies and inflated prices due to the lack of resources took a toll on the business, but the volume has picked up. As people complete rebuilds and repairs, they have sought custom pieces of furniture to add the final touches to their homes.

As the two friends work, they have hours of conversation, “debating life and attempting to solve all the world’s problems,” as the two men put it.

Jonathan and Logan say the mission statement for Tupelo Creek Woodworks is more “the ultimate mission statement for humanity” than a traditional business statement.

“We proudly embrace a cross on our logo because we know that it is his love that changes our hearts,” Logan says. “That is why our forever mission statement will be John 3:17: ‘For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.’”

Jonathan and Logan don’t want to build just another piece of furniture. They want to make a staple centerpiece that creates memories for generations to come.

“When you commission a Tupelo Creek Woodworks build, we stand behind our work and will ensure it stays functional,” Jonathan says. “Our goal is to ensure that every customer is always happy with their custom-built pieces.”

Jonathan and Logan say they do not want to mass-produce furniture, but to build a sustainable business that can have an impact on their children. They hope to pass on their knowledge and love for woodworking to their children. ■



**LEFT:** Sawdust flies as Jonathan Harper crafts a custom piece from wood. **ABOVE:** Partners Logan Pippin, right, and Jonathan.



Jonathan and Logan hope to build pieces that last for generations, and a business they can share with their kids and future generations. ABOVE: Jonathan builds a table for the family homestead as his son, Landon, lends a hand. TOP: Logan shows his son, Tanner, some basic steps while working on an entryway shiplap wall with hooks.



**Tupelo Creek Woodworks creates affordable custom furniture for family, friends, neighbors and the community. Jonathan and Logan have built:**

- Arbors
- Barn doors and mini barn doors (for windows)
- Baseboards/trim
- Beds
- Benches
- Blanket ladders
- Chicken coops
- Coffee tables
- Conference tables
- Cookbook holders
- Desks
- Dining room tables
- End tables
- Entryway tables
- Mailboxes
- Media consoles
- Nightstands
- Picnic tables
- Podiums
- Porch swings
- Serving trays
- Shelving
- Signs
- Sofa tables
- Stovetop covers
- Vanities



*Got a custom piece in mind, but lack the time or patience to create it yourself? Contact Tupelo Creek Woodworks via phone, email, Facebook Messenger or Instagram.*