From left, David Hunt, his son, Stacy, and grandson, Ty, worked for years to fully restore the 1962 Chevy Impala they found in Hermiston. "It was an opportunity for the three of us to work on a project together," Stacy says. "It was really nice."

Off to the Races!

Reparing and racing cars has family appeal

Story and photos by Jody Foss

Stacy Hunt was 5 years old when he started going to the circle track in Hermiston to watch his father, David, race.

"I'd go watch him all the time," he says.

Stacy has followed in David's footsteps. As a small boy, he raced motocross bikes. He was racing on the circle track by 15.

"It's the adrenaline rush," Stacy says. "It's pretty intense going at high speed around a corner on the track. There's a lot of G-force. We crash a lot—it's just part of it—but we build in enough safety equipment so we don't get hurt in a rollover."

Drivers also wear protective clothing and helmets.

Stacy and his son, Ty, often work with David on detailed rebuilds and restorations in Stacy's shop. They recently completed a 1962 Chevrolet Impala.

"This one belongs to Grandpa," Ty says, as he runs his hand along an impeccably polished black Impala. "We worked together on it for the last five years."

The previous owner was restoring it and ran out of motivation, so David bought it.

"It hadn't been running for over 20 years," Ty says. "The paint job is still pretty fresh. It takes time to cure."

Ty, who works for his grandfather on his ranch, bought a 1972 Firebird to restore when he was 13.

"It was pretty much my senior project," he says. "I drove it to prom and

Stacy and his wife, Ginger, stand next to a new project: the restoration of a 1947 Dodge truck for a client in Texas.

homecoming. I finished it when I was 18."

David and Stacy work together at Hunt's Auto Refinishing and Racing. David does the bulk of the mechanic work and works on motors for race vehicles. Stacy manages the intricate process of restoring vintage vehicles for clients. He also has the more mundane job of fixing deer damage.

To fully restore a vehicle requires expert know-how and patience. Stacy attended college in Pendleton to learn the details of the craft and has worked for himself for the past 26 years.

Stacy's shop has plenty of room to work on several vehicles at once. Harley Davidson motorcycles await fine-tuning. Stacy is restoring a 1947 Dodge Power Wagon for a client in Lexington, and a black 1967 Firebird for its Arlington owner. Another 1947 Dodge truck was recently fully restored and painted red for a client in Texas. A friend wanted one just like it, so another project is in the early stages.

A painting booth gives Stacy a dust-free environment for laying on paint after repair and filling, countless coats of primers and endless hours of sanding.

"When we paint, we put on about four coats of color and four coats of clear," he says. "Before that, you put on two coats of primer and sand it out with 220 sandpaper, put more coats of primer on and sand with 400, more primer and sand with 600. The whole tell of a paint job is in the prep work."

On the weekends, Stacy heads off to the racetrack with his wife of seven years, Ginger. Their 17-year relationship has always included trips to racetracks around Oregon and Washington. Sometimes, they head to a mud bog race or a demolition derby.

"Ginger is a trooper," Stacy says. "We will make a vacation out of a trip to go find parts."

On a good weekend at the races, they may come home with $300, which barely covers fuel and expenses.

"It's an expensive habit," Stacy says with a smile, "but it's a lot of fun."

Racing keeps the Hunt family looking forward to their next adventure. Ginger's four children— Danielle, Megan, Eli and Lacy—attend a race or join the family at a swap meet to look for parts.

"It's a great family deal," Stacy says.

Stacy's daughter, Deanna, who lives in Washington, also likes to join the family fun.

Ginger competed in rodeo as a teenager and has taken to racing. At a recent "hooptie X" race—a mile-and-a-half rally course in a cheap car—Ginger finished with the best time in an Izuzu Amigo.

The women's division isn't competitive enough for Ginger, "so she just jumps in the with boys," Stacy says. "She has definitely grown into it, and she's won about everything."

Stacy says although racing is competitive, his fellow racers are a great group of folks.

"If you are broke down, people pitch in and help you out," he says. "Everybody helps each other out until that green flag drops and all bets are off." ■

To contact Hunt's Auto Refinishing and Racing, email stacyhunt26@yahoo.com or call 503-758-9678.

A Buzzing Enthusiasm

A half-million bees keep Jerry Frazier on his toes

Story and photos by Rodger Nichols

Bees might as well be Jerry Frazier's mascot. He is just as busy as a member of the hive.

Jerry sold his successful Oregon Trail Insurance business eight years ago, but he has not slowed down one bit. He serves as treasurer of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in The Dalles and on the board of Eastern Oregon Episcopal Foundation. He is an enthusiastic gardener and helps raise food for the local food bank. During the pandemic, he is delivering meals to parishioners with health concerns.

On his acres outside The Dalles, Jerry raises Barbados Blackbelly sheep, Belgian Tervuren dogs and somewhere around a half-million bees.

The bees are Jerry's most recent enthusiasm. He serves as president of the Columbia Gorge Beekeepers Association.

Jerry and a partner also run a nonprofit that delivers supplies to local beekeepers and removes bees that have formed hives inside buildings. The two recently removed a massive hive that had settled in the walls of a wind surfboard drying shed in Hood River, forming a comb 8 feet tall.

"It was a messy business," Jerry says.

He removes bees using a special vacuum, with the goal of transporting them to an offsite hive box so the hive can survive.

Although Jerry was wearing a protective bee suit and hood, one bee managed to get inside and sting him just below his left eye.

"Stings are a part of dealing with bees," he says.

Stings are best treated with a Benadryl salve, and an antihistamine tablet if there are multiple stings. That supersedes the old practice of putting a baking soda paste on the sting, although baking soda helps neutralize the acid in the bee venom.

Backyard beekeeper Jerry Frazier with the gear needed to protect himself from stings.

Jerry describes himself as a backyard beekeeper, rather than a commercial operation.

"Commercial beekeepers are in it for two reasons: pollination and honey," he says. "Backyard beekeepers are in it because it's a hobby, and honey happens to be a spinoff for those who want to put up with it."

Hives are designed with vertical frames the right size for bees to create the hexagonal cells that store honey and serve as brood cells for the larvae. And there are a lot of larvae.

"We figure there's probably 1,600 to 1,800 hatch emergences a day," Jerry says. "The queen lays that many eggs in the heat

A closeup of a frame displaying honey cells shows bees actively working. A bee's lifetime is only six to eight weeks.

of the summer every day. They progress through the larva stage, the pupa stage and then emerge as workers. There's a class structure there, and just like people, the youngsters have to do heavy-duty work."

That means scouting for blooms and hauling nectar back to the hive to process into honey. They gather and spread pollen, which propagates the plants, including the blossoms in orchards around the region. As the bees mature, they settle back into the hive and take care of the hatchlings.

The life cycle of the bee is a short one—only six to eight weeks—so the hive needs to constantly generate new workers.

When it's time to harvest honey, the frames of the hives are removed, and the caps of the cells are scraped off. The frame is placed in a machine that spins and extracts the honey by centrifugal force. Jerry says it's a messy process, but worth it.

The flavor of honey depends on which blooms the bees have fed on.

Last fall, there was a honey tasting at Columbia Gorge Beekeepers Association's meeting in Hood River. Local growers brought their own honey. Some who had traveled brought samples from South America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

"The differences in taste was absolutely amazing," Jerry says.

He describes store-bought honey as mild.

"There's sweetness to it, of course, but the real thing is so much better," he says.

One of the best honeys, he says, is sourced from blackberries in the Willamette Valley.

Jerry's favorite is his own knapweed honey from Wasco County.

"Knapweed honey is really good," he says. "In fact, in the blind tasting of the local honeys, I think I was second or third." ■

Looming Threats

There is real concern among orchardists and other farmers who depend on pollination for their crops. A looming threat in recent years has been a mite called *Veroa destructor*. The mite attaches to bee larvae and feeds on the bee's fat as they grow. Beekeeper Jerry Frazier says losses recently have run about 50%.

Another potential threat is a large Asian hornet that preys on bees. The hornet is 2 inches long and native to Southeast Asia. One was found recently in Northwest Washington. The discovery is such a concern that the agriculture department at Washington State University has placed 600 traps within the state to see if more are found.

Under the Hoods

Steve and Sandy Hood mentored many at Lake Roosevelt High School, benefiting generations

By Jesse Utz

Steve and Sandy Hood have been married 40 years. Both worked at Lake Roosevelt High School. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE HOODS

Steve and Sandy Hood are well-known throughout Elmer City.

Steve is synonymous with Raider wrestling at Lake Roosevelt High School. Most anyone who went to the school also had the pleasure of visiting Sandy's eighth grade classroom.

Together, the Hoods are responsible for thousands of hours dedicated to the kids who call the Grand Coulee Dam area home.

Steve moved from Spokane Valley to Elmer City at 7 years old. Sandy came to the area from Vashon Island via Ellensburg when she was offered a teaching job by then-principal Ray Gilman.

"The plan was to just put in a couple years for experience," Sandy says.

She never left. She married Steve in 1980.

"Elmer City was always home to me," Steve says. "I had no desire to really go anywhere else."

Steve started coaching wrestling. His only experience on the mats was the three years he wrestled for Lake Roosevelt where, as Steve puts it, he was "average at best." His longtime friend and fellow teacher and coach Ralph Rise taught him how to manage a wrestling program.

Before long, Steve was the head coach.

"I treated every wrestler the same and I went all in," Steve says.

Soon, the local wrestling program, the Coulee Crushers, was growing. Wrestlers were coming to him with a hold on wrestling basics.

"Schools started dreading seeing the Raider singlet lining up across from them," Steve says. "We had once worried about certain schools and now our kids were worried about us."

Steve's wrestlers learned more than throws and pins. Passion, integrity, dedication, working through adversity and never giving up were just some of the lessons former wrestlers mention when asked about their former coach.

The mat room wall at Lake Roosevelt High School is adorned with plaques honoring Steve's mentees' successes.

The Hoods say they tried to instill those lessons in everything they did.

"Mr. Hood meant a lot more than words can explain," says Shane Innes, a two-time wrestling state champion. "He never gave up on anyone."

Asked to name his all-time favorite wrestler, Steve thinks long and hard.

"All of them," he says. "Whoever was on the mat in front of me at the time was my favorite at that moment in time."

That was unanimous among the wrestlers as well. They all thought they were Steve's favorite.

Between school bells, Sandy taught English and history to rowdy eighth grade students, and Steve led the auto shop program.

"I learned more about being a man under the hood of a car with Mr. Hood than I did anywhere else," says Shawn Ford, a former student and wrestler, and current professional pit crew member.

Steve's favorite hobby is Studebakers—an addiction that started when he was 14. His brother, Roy, was given a 1959 Studebaker Lark from Ira O'Brian, a neighbor. That sparked his heart for the rare vehicle.

Steve now owns that '59 Lark along with a red diesel Studebaker truck, and a yellow one he frequently drove around town.

He sold the red truck once. Four years ago, he bought it back. While telling the story, he looks over at Sandy.

"I bought it back without her permission," Steve says.

Just as Steve has stories about hundreds of wrestlers, Sandy has stories about veterans. An administrator approached her about starting a Veterans Day assembly at Lake Roosevelt schools.

Steve sold his red Studebaker truck, only to buy it back years later.

"I was not thrilled," Sandy says. "I don't like to be the center of attention."

She participated, and the assembly kept happening. It became an annual event, and continued to grow.

Sandy was learning local veterans' stories, and soon had files filled with names and letters.

"It made teaching the history of wars a little more real to the students," Sandy says.

Sandy says one student noticed a veteran in the files had not noted receiving any medals after serving in Korea. The student researched and found that the soldier should have received a commendation.

The Hoods ended up teaching life skills to those around them wherever they were. Sandy impacted the lives of most all the students who walked through her classroom doors. Steve mentored a world champion bull rider, multiple state wrestling champions and academic wrestling champions.

"Winning was the goal," Steve says. "But the lessons learned along the way are way more important than the awards." ■

Answering the CALL

Team Rubicon is ready to help

By Danita Cahill

Veteran-led disaster-response organization Team Rubicon is a healing journey for its volunteers as well as its recipients.

What started out small—a team of eight veterans and medical professionals responding to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti—has burgeoned into a base team of 40,000 volunteers. Of those dedicated volunteers, 75% are veterans, including Jodi Martinez of Lebanon.

Jodi, who has PTSD, served in the Army from 1979-1980 in Fort Story, Virginia, near Virginia Beach. She was in Unit 61 B10 LARC XV. LARC XV stands for Lighter, Amphibious Resupply, Cargo, 15 tons. Jodi was a deck hand and did maintenance on amphibious vehicles. She was medically discharged and receives disability for bad knees; she's had a total of five knee surgeries.

After watching a TV segment in 2012, Jodi joined Team Rubicon.

"Michelle Obama went to Haiti and was talking about it," Jodi says.

The nonprofit organization has a dual mission of disaster response and veteran reintegration. Team Rubicon (TR) gives veterans a sense of purpose and community. For volunteers, the team is like an extended family, and has a positive impact on veterans' mental health.

"We call it our "TRibe," Jodi says.

Team members stay in touch even during times when they're not deployed.

"I know they've got my back," Jodi says." If I'm down, they're on the phone calling me to make sure I'm OK."

When disaster strikes, Team Rubicon members receive an email alert and can choose to apply for the mission. Volunteer selection is based on the level of training and skills. Veterans tend to be the first ones chosen, although there are civilians with special skills, such as medical professionals, police and firefighters on the team.

Team Rubicon volunteer Jodi Martinez creates art to help cope with PTSD. PHOTO BY DANITA CAHILL

Jodi, whose father is also a veteran, used to work alongside younger members, clearing debris, tarping houses, tearing out flood-damaged Sheetrock and wood flooring.

"The younger people started running circles around me," Jodi says.

That's when she switched to logistics. Now she helps organize operations, which includes everything from running the food units to ordering backhoes and portable toilets.

"Logistics is the backbone of everything," Jodi says, noting the hours are long. "I get maybe 20 hours of sleep in a seven-day period."

Jodi, who comes from hardy plywood-mill-working parents, still enjoys getting her hands dirty. She went through saw classes and is now a trained Sawyer I.

"The sawyers go in after hurricanes and buck and limb fallen trees," Jodi says.

Team Rubicon accepts applications from those

requiring assistance. They try to help vets and seniors first, and families with small children who need to get back into their homes.

Team Rubicon has carried out 148 operations around the world. Team Rubicon has helped clean up hurricane damage in Panama City, Florida, and cleared debris from super storm Sandy in New York. Team members have responded to floods in Coal City, Illinois; Moore, Oklahoma; and Houston, Texas. The need in Texas was so great, Jodi stayed three weeks.

A couple of recent jobs were closer to home. Last year, the team helped out in Vida when residents were snowed in. Also in 2019, they assisted when flood waters overwhelmed parts of Pendleton.

"That one meant a lot to me, because the guy was a veteran," Jodi says, noting there was an additional bonus. "He fed us so much pizza!"

The work in disaster-struck areas is a lot like military missions, and veterans, such as Jodi, want to continue serving their country.

"Our motto: 'It's like being on the battlefield, but not getting shot at.' We call it our work vacations," Jodi says. "We say it's 'adults only.' Race, religion, political views—check that at the door.' These people we're helping are having the worst day of their lives."

While the volunteers are helping others, they're occupied and focused. The work is gritty but rewarding.

"When you finish something, that thank you and that hug that you get makes it all worth it," says Jodi, who has 15 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Jodi, far left, with some of her Team Rubicon teammates during a Linn County fire mitigation project. PHOTO COURTESY OF JODI MARTINEZ

Jodi's nickname among the other volunteers is "Mom." Jodi's husband also plans to volunteer after he retires.

"We're hyped up, working hard, then we go home," Jodi says.

It's when the vets return home that mental health issues tend to flare up. The volunteers call it "deployment blues."

"It's like a whole different life," Jodi says of going home.

For part of her mental-health therapy, Jodi paints. She says it helps keep her focused and in the moment. With COVID-19 keeping her mostly homebound, she's painted every day for the past four months.

"Everything just falls away when I paint," she says.

But as much as Jodi enjoys working with canvas and brushes, she misses her Team Rubicon family.

"COVID has been hard," she says. "We haven't been able to have our TR socials," she says.

The team usually gets together several times a year during down time. They take part in veterans' parades and host various socializing events, which keeps camaraderie high, and, hopefully, suicide rates down.

Jodi, who served during peacetime, says, "It's awesome to sit down and listen to the vets tell their stories. Some served in Afghanistan or Vietnam. They feel comfortable sitting around with all of us and talking. It's very healing."

Team Rubicon is making the best of the current challenging situation and helping where it can. Volunteers are putting together COVID-19 tests and helping at testing sites. They're also putting together food baskets to deliver to shut-ins.

"Team Rubicon has been the best help for me," Jodi says. ■

> "When you finish something, that thank you and that hug that you get makes it all worth it."
>
> —JODI MARTINEZ

Interested in Being Part of Team Rubicon?

"There's always a place for everybody," Jodi says. "If you don't want to go out and muck out, we'll find something for you to do around the barracks."

There are even "desk jockeys" who stay home and help via computer.

For more information or to donate, check out Team Rubicon's website at teamrubiconusa.org/volunteer, or find them on Facebook at facebook.com/teamrubicon.

Hermiston Watermelon:

How Sweet It Is

By Allison Cloo
Oregon Aglink

Oregon is fortunate to have such a share of famous and tasty agricultural products: berries we've developed, seed we've perfected, grain and nuts that travel halfway across the world. Yet one of the more enduring and iconic Oregon crops isn't quite in our top twenty products by volume or dollar amount.

Still, as sure as you'll find it on the table at a summer cook-out or a church picnic, the Hermiston watermelon is a crowd-pleaser for the ages.

Since the first half of the 20th century, when farmers started planting the seeds in rotation with the other onion, potatoes, and grain of Eastern Oregon, the melons of the Hermiston area have been delighting consumers with their natural sweetness.

Watermelons come from plenty of other places, of course, but Hermiston has a climate that allows for the quality local product to show up in stores when the harvests in California and the southwest are all but done. On top of the great timing, the melons from Hermiston bring a little extra goodness to the table.

"Consistently hot days and cool…sometimes plain cold mornings lead to greater plant cell respiration, and thus an amazingly rich sugar content," says Paul Kern, a sales representative for Botsford & Goodfellow. Buyers like seeing that local sticker, but the quality reputation of the fruit has meant that the melon is more than the marketing. Your everyday shopper at a grocery store might not know much about cell respiration, but they do know that the watermelon seems just as sweet this year as it was last year.

Botsford & Goodfellow has been packing and shipping Hermiston watermelons and other products through the Northwest and beyond since 1965. This is Kern's 27th year with the company, and he spends four months a year at his "summer home" in Hermiston around harvest and packing time.

According to Kern, around 1,200 acres of land in the Hermiston area is dedicated to watermelon each year, with most of those coming out of four farms: three conventional and one organic.

"Plantings are staggered for harvest and generally start in early April continuing through May," he says. "The rows of plants are separated by a thin row of wheat to help protect the young transplants from the sometimes harsh spring winds. Harvest usually kicks off around the 10th of July," but can vary due to unseasonably cold springs or early heat.

The number of varieties has grown over the years as consumer tastes and retail needs have changed. "We grow a number of varieties as we have to accommodate a wide range of factors, i.e. size, rind and flesh color, earlier maturing, later maturing, soil conditions etc," says Kern. The most predominant varieties in recent years are Fascination, Exclamation and Melody, all seedless varieties.

Originally developed in 1939 by Japanese scientists, the "seedless" variety of watermelon didn't reach commercial viability in the United States until the late 1970s and 1980s when varieties were sufficiently resistant to diseases and other damage. Since then, seedless varieties have gained in popularity and market share, but Kern sees a "resurgence" in seeded varieties.

"Personally, I don't think there's a better melon for taste and texture," says Kern.

Other developments include "icebox varieties" or personal-sized watermelons that can satisfy the craving but don't require hauling around the full-sized version.

That traditional large size, and the fact that melons are growing on their vines along the ground, are part of what makes watermelon harvest so challenging. The labor market is tight, as with many agricultural industries, and harvesting watermelon still requires the heavy fruit to be cut free by hand and pitched into field bins. From there, they are driven to the packing sheds where conveyor belts usher them to be polished, weighed, and sorted for any defects.

The melons grown and packed in Hermiston then ship out to retail and wholesale outlets across the Pacific Northwest, and even into Canada or across the Rockies, depending on the year.

There's a hometown pride about the watermelons. The Hermiston city logo incorporates a watermelon slice and the motto, "Where Life is Sweet." There and in nearby Irrigon, locals still celebrate with annual festivals. Each year newspapers across Oregon herald the start of watermelon season.

Farmers like the Pollocks, Walchlis, and Bellingers have been growing these melons for several generations now. Flip that around another way, and you can imagine that there are three, four, even five generations of Oregonians who have been buying the melons at their local grocery.

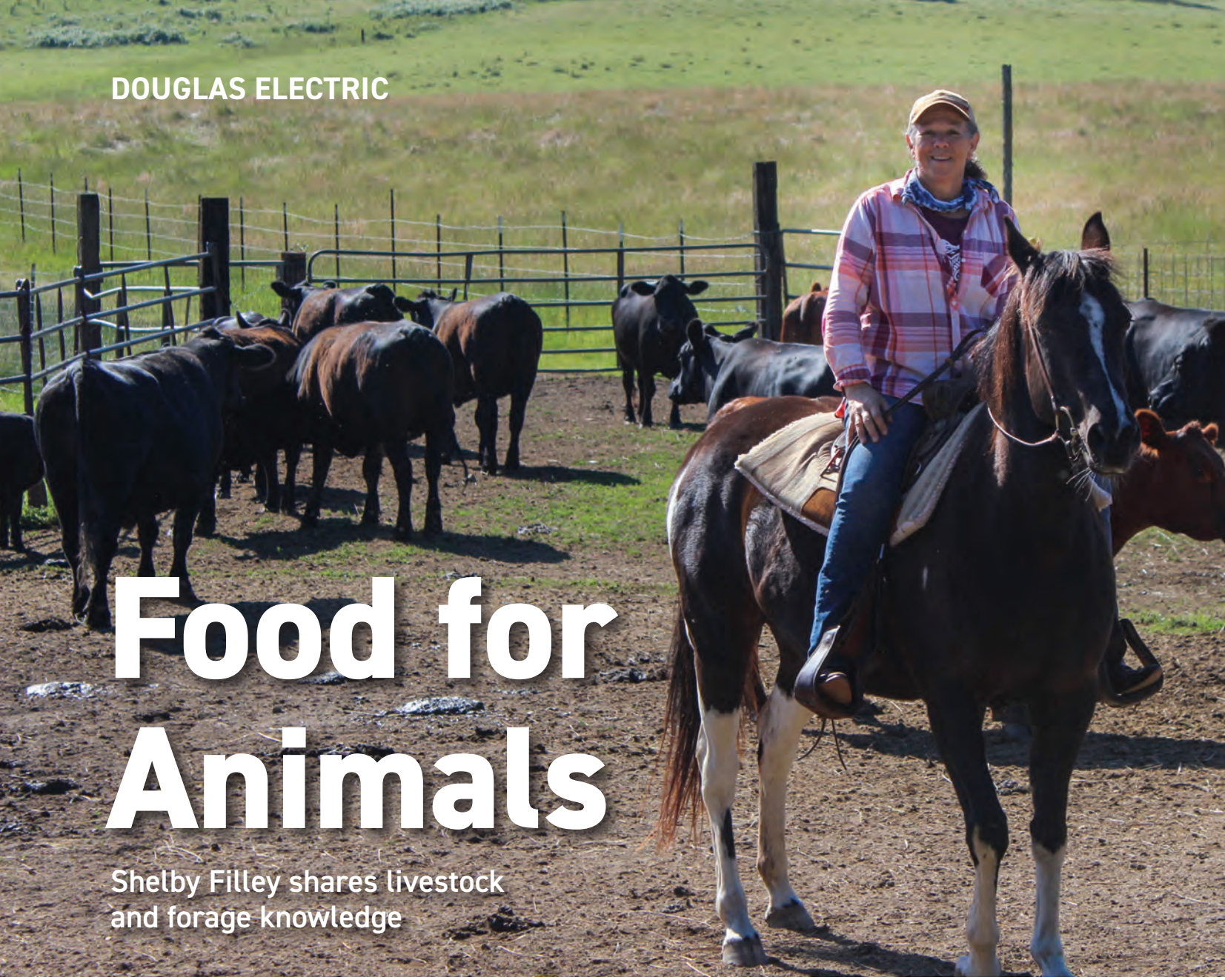
There's a sense of anticipation for lovers of a Hermiston melon. The large cardboard bins that hold the watermelons in the produce section eventually show up by the front doors of the market, and the labeling shows that the harvest has moved from Mexico and California up to our own watermelon capital.

The slogan on every red, white, and green box is proof that the marketing teams have their fingers on the pulse. It doesn't take much to get people excited for the quality that the farmers strive to meet each year. Just two words "They're Here!" and it feels like summer has finally arrived.

Oregon Aglink, formerly known as the Agri-Business Council of Oregon, is a private, non-profit volunteer membership organization established in 1966, dedicated to growing Oregon agriculture through education and promotion. Learn more at www.aglink.org.

Photo Opposite Page: Farmer Skip Walchli during harvest in 1959.

Photo Left: Paul Kern shows one of the bright yellow flowers starting its journey to becoming a full watermelon.



Food for Animals

Shelby Filley shares livestock and forage knowledge

Story and photos by Craig Reed

Conversations around the family dinner table about dairy cows and their nutrition influenced preteen Shelby Filley.

"My grandfather, Moses Hernandez, was a nutritionist for his dairy cows," Shelby says. "He was always talking about feeding cows. That's where I got my love for nutrition and cows."

Shelby, 60, has been a livestock and forage specialist for the Oregon State University Extension Service for 21 years. She is based in Roseburg. When she was hired in 1998, her responsibility was Douglas County. Because of state budget cuts, her job extended to cover six counties, then altered again to cover all of Western Oregon.

"I try to encourage livestock and forage producers to use proven methods to produce efficient, environmental and economical livestock and forages," Shelby says.

Shelby works with farmers and ranchers who have cattle, sheep and goats. She admits cows are her favorite.

Shelby has written and co-authored hundreds of newsletter and magazine articles, and posted online about a variety of subjects, ranging from cows and their calves to forages and fertilizers to reproduction strategies in livestock. She has helped organize artificial insemination and ultrasound clinics for livestock and their owners. She also coordinated a shepherds' group for sheep producers.

"Shelby keeps the information flowing and moving from the Oregon State Extension Service to us," says Lee Sandberg, a Douglas County cattle owner. "We're not always able to get out and attend the available classes, but she still works to get you the latest information. If you call her, she's going to answer the phone and help you to her fullest. She's always ready to take on the next project."

Randy Schrum, who has a cattle and hay operation in the county, says he and Shelby spent time last year going over soil samples to improve his hay crop. He says her advice paid off with an excellent hay crop this year.

"We sat down and went over the soil samples, and she explained the details so I could understand it and then get the right mix of fertilizer for the soil," Randy says. "She gave me every bit of five hours, and I

Shelby Filley is the Oregon State University Extension Service livestock and forage specialist for Western Oregon. In her spare time, she enjoys being on a horse and helping friends work cattle.

Shelby works with livestock owners to help them grow the best forage for their animals.

couldn't have asked for better advice."

Sarah Schartz, a sheep owner, credits Shelby with organizing the shepherds' group and helping members improve the conditions for their sheep operations.

Shelby, a graduate of Monte Vista High School in San Diego, began her formal livestock education at the University of California-Davis. She earned her degree in animal sciences in 1982. She says she had some really fantastic teachers who were animal nutritionists. They impressed her with their research, and she switched her focus from veterinary science to ruminant nutrition.

In addition to earning her degree in 1982, Shelby married Cameron Filley, a psychiatric technician.

The couple moved back to the family dairy in Chino, California, where Shelby helped mix ingredients for the dairy's feed wagon and attended Cal Poly-Pomona. She earned her master's degree in 1986 in agriculture with a focus on ruminant nutrition.

Shelby worked for Herd Technology in Chino, studying milk and colostrum replacement, then worked as a senior research technician in molecular biology at Loma Linda University.

That work inspired Shelby to pursue a doctorate. She was accepted at Oregon State University in Corvallis in 1994.

During her three years in the OSU program, Shelby spent two years at the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center in Burns. She studied the rebreeding of first-calf cows and the use of essential fatty acids to stimulate the animals' reproductive systems.

"Although we made some progress in understanding the problem, we didn't increase the rate of pregnancy in those cows," Shelby says. "That study has continued with different combinations of essential fatty acids and different proportions being considered. It's still a hot topic, a complex problem."

A month before Shelby graduated with her doctorate in animal nutrition and reproduction, the OSU Extension Service hired her for the position in Roseburg.

In addition to visiting farms and ranches, and talking with livestock owners, Shelby provides educational programs on nutrition, forage and reproduction in the field and in classrooms.

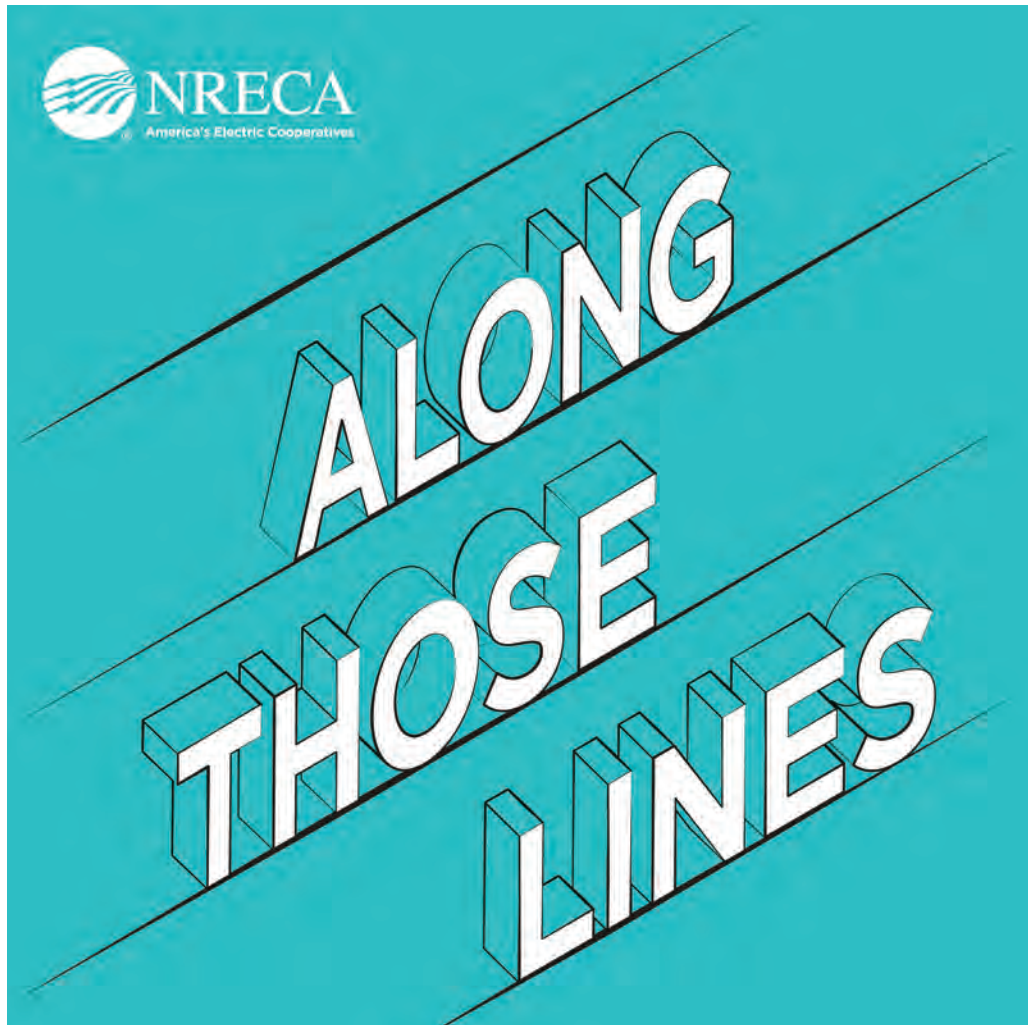
She is a full professor with tenure at OSU, where she is a part-time teacher for some classes, a guest lecturer for others, and a mentor for assistant and associate professors in the agriculture department.

In May, Shelby was named Western region director for the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists, moving up from the president position of the Pacific Northwest chapter for the organization.

"I credit my grandfather for my love for nutrition," she says. "I credit Cameron and our daughters, Samantha and Tracy, for helping me get to where I am now, and I credit the producers I work with now for their interest.

"If anybody wants information, I'm willing to take the time to give it to them, whether you have two cows or you are a large producer." ■

For more information, call Shelby Filley at 541-236-3016 or email Shelby.filley@oregonstate.edu.



To hear the entire "Along Those Lines" podcast featuring Central Electric Cooperative President and CEO Dave Markham, go to www.electric.coop/podcast or www.cooperative.com/news/Pages/Along-Those-Lines-Podcast.aspx.

National Podcast Sheds Light on Vegetation Management Issues

By Courtney Cobb

In August, Dave Markham, Central Electric Cooperative president and CEO; and Janelle Lemen, National Rural Electric Association's environmental regulatory issues director; were interviewed by Scot Hoffman for NRECA's monthly podcast, "Along Those Lines."

The discussion centered on how electric cooperatives face hurdles coordinating with multiple government agencies when seeking approval to maintain rights-of-way on federal land, and ongoing efforts to improve the process. Following is a brief excerpt from the Q&A session with Markham and Lemen.

Hoffman: Dave, you have spoken on behalf of not just Central Electric, but on behalf of all co-ops regarding wildfire mitigation. What made you take up this issue in such a high-profile way?

Markham: We had experienced some issues here in Central Oregon within CEC's service territory with the federal land agencies. As I got to talking to fellow co-op managers across the country, I found ours was not an isolated incident. As we all tried to work toward wildfire mitigation, some of the issues with these federal land agencies were just absurd. It got to a point where we had to take action, and I might as well step up and take it on.

Hoffman: Janelle, these things impact lots of different regions for lots of different reasons, but do you have a sense of how many co-ops have to deal with this issue?

Lemen: There's a lot of different risk factors across the regions. So, I would say the majority of electric co-ops across the

Dave Markham

Janelle Lemen

country have it at some level as wildfires are happening more frequently. In some areas, those concerns may be lower, but there's a lot of areas in the country where co-ops may have a heightened risk depending on their local conditions. So, it's weather, topography, various ignition sources, along with other factors, like the remoteness of fires and land management policies that all come into play. But again, most co-ops have wildfire concerns to some degree.

Hoffman: Could you give us an idea of what it is that co-ops do in their rights-of-way or in their territories more broadly to mitigate power line-caused fires?

Markham: For Central Electric Cooperative, we have a lot of forested areas and rangeland, too. Our service territory covers 5,300 square miles. Oregon co-ops serve 65% of the landmass of Oregon, so we have to keep the danger trees from coming into contact with our wires and poles. We have to manage the vegetation underneath the wires and outside of the right-of-way, including the danger trees. There's a lot that goes into managing your right-of-way and making sure that you're mitigating the risk of wildfire.

Hoffman: One of the things that you do, Janelle, is you advocate to the federal government on behalf of co-ops regarding the policies affecting the way they do business and the way they mitigate fires. Which agencies, specifically, do you deal with, and what are some of the key policy items that you're trying to shape right now?

Lemen: I work with the Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service, working on policy issues that affect vegetation management and wildfire risk suppression on federal lands. We have been working with those agencies to implement changes that were enacted by Congress in 2018 in the omnibus spending bill that include key vegetation management provisions to reduce wildfire risk along rights-of-way.

The Forest Service recently issued its final vegetation management rule, and we expect the BLM to issue a similar rule later this year. These rules will streamline the approval process for co-ops to be able to go out and quickly manage vegetation, whether that's in an emergency or just doing their routine work to mitigate vegetation hazards that could lead to wildfires.

Hoffman: Dave, you've been called to testify in front of Congress on a couple of occasions about this particular issue. You're considered one of the experts in the program about it. When you go and talk to federal lawmakers, what are you telling them? What are you asking them?

Markham: The three times I've testified before Congress, I've shared stories that were eye-opening. While it takes a long time to get legislation pushed through, each story built upon the other to make a case for reform.

Back in 2014, I talked about how long it took to do a project to replace 2 miles of underground cable on Forest Service land—a year to get it approved—and the danger of letting underground cable go unreplaced. And then, before they give us approval, they have to get an archaeologist out there, despite putting cable right back in the same place.

We needed to move a pole 6 feet, and it took over a year to get approval. Again, we had to wait, plus pay the expense of having an archaeologist come out and do shovel probes and inspect the area.

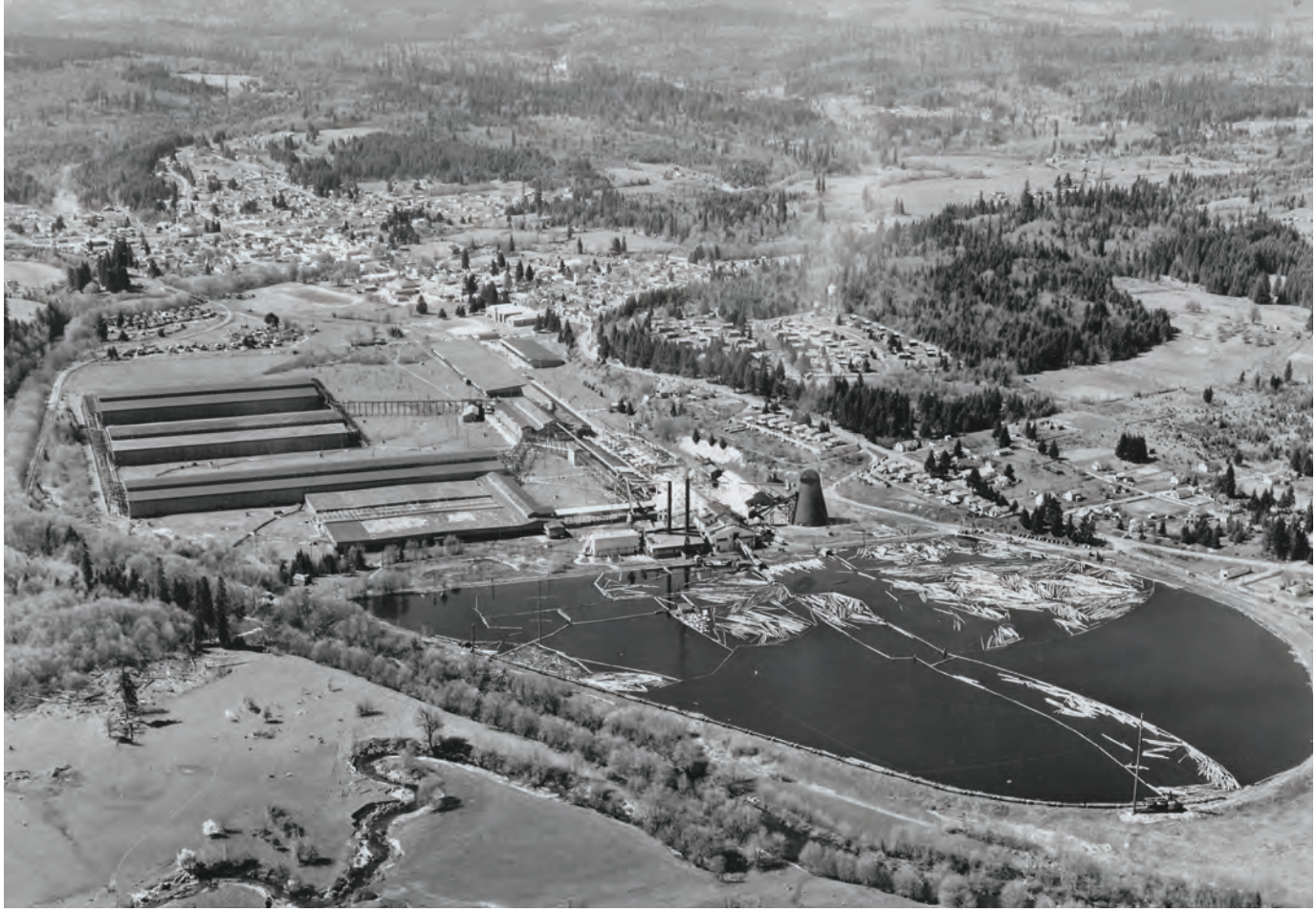
When you share those real-life situations with lawmakers, they realize what has to take place.

This last time I came back to testify, wildfire mitigation was a huge issue. We have a 13-mile stretch of distribution line through a heavily forested area. We had done extensive planning to get the power poles replaced, the vegetation managed and the danger trees out of there. Again, it took a year to get approval for the project, and I'll tell you that approval didn't come until I made my trip back to D.C., and I was able to testify about it. We finally got signoff, but if a wildfire had started while we were waiting for this, it would come back on us. Not on the federal land agencies, but us.

If we're going to reduce the risk of wildfire, you've got to allow us to get in and upgrade our system, manage our system, conduct maintenance on it and remove dangerous vegetation.

Hoffman: Would you say, overall, that the federal government is a good partner in this effort?

Markham: They can be good partners. They're good people and they work hard. I think that there's an education process that needs to go with this, and it needs to come from the top down. We need to have uniformity between the neighboring federal land agencies. I have to deal with different applications of their policies between one district and another within our service territory. There has to be consistency, uniformity and it needs to come from the top down. ■



The Oregon-American mill site in Vernonia covered more than 200 acres. The 36-acre mill pond is in the foreground of the photo. The town of Vernonia is above the mill site. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VERNONIA PIONEER MUSEUM

A Lumber Company Legacy

The Vernonia mill shut down more than 60 years ago, but its legacy lives on

By Scott Laird

From the early 1920s to the mid-1950s, Oregon-American Lumber Co. was the heart and soul of Vernonia.

With high-quality timber holdings in the surrounding Nehalem River Valley and a large electric sawmill, Oregon-American employed hundreds of locals in logging camps, on railroad and trucking crews, at the sawmill and in their sales force.

Vernonia thrived as a mill town, with numerous auto dealerships, food markets and other businesses springing up to support the families that flocked to the town seeking jobs and a fresh start out West.

The mill closed in 1957, but the historic remnants of Vernonia's mill town heyday are still visible, most notably at the mill pond and the large concrete chip shed used to store sawdust for fuel.

The mill pond, where logs were stored before processing, is now a recreation destination and city park called Vernonia Lake. It is annually stocked for fishing and encircled by a paved walking path. That path is also used by bicyclists connecting to the Banks-Vernonia State Trail and the Crown Zellerbach Trail developed Columbia County. Both trails were former railroad grades that served the mill and logging camps in the surrounding area.

To tell the full story of the Oregon-American Lumber Co.—or O-A, as it is known to locals—takes an entire book. Jim Blain and brothers Edward and Greg Kamholz did just that in their 350-page history of the company, "The Oregon-American Lumber Mill Ain't No More."

The book contains a detailed account of the formation, growth and end of O-A's Vernonia operation. The book also includes technical information about the company's management, and colorful stories about the administrators and workers who made the company successful.

O-A's operation turned Vernonia—originally settled by farmers—into a Western boomtown. Before the mill started operations in 1924, the town's population was minuscule. The 1920 census counted just 142 residents. By 1930, that number soared to 1,625. Vernonia was considered the fastest-growing town in Oregon. The 1960 census following the mill's closure saw a drop of more than 400 people from the 1950 count.

David C. Eccles and several family members and partners incorporated the Oregon-American Lumber Co. in 1917, bought timberland in the region and got involved in the railroad industry to transport his lumber harvests.

Financial troubles forced the owners to sell the company to Central Coal and Coke in 1921. A rail line was established in 1922.

Construction began on the mill, and the mill pond received its first logs in 1925. By 1929, the mill employed 500 people. The mill shut down in 1931 during the Depression but reopened in 1936.

Why did O-A operate a large sawmill in the backwoods of Vernonia, nestled in the foothills of Oregon's Coast Range, 30 miles from the nearest town and more than 40 miles from the nearest waterway, which was the most economical way to transport timber in those days?

It was exactly because it was in those backwoods—home to some of the largest and best old-growth timber found anywhere in the world.

Douglas fir was king, and O-A owned some of the best stands of it, including the massive DuBois Tract, which contained more than 22,000 acres of prime timberland west of Vernonia in Clatsop County.

Considered one of the largest lumber producers on the West Coast and capable of producing 180 million board feet of lumber in a year when running at full capacity, the O-A mill and operation were unique in several ways.

The mill was made of steel and concrete—materials in direct competition to the product the company produced. In addition to selling dimensional lumber, the mill operated its own dry kilns, which allowed it to produce value-added products such as hardwood flooring, siding and wooden gutters. The mill sold cedar logs directly from the pond to local, small-mill operators to be made into cedar shakes for roofs and siding. It developed a market for its wood waste by installing a chipper and selling pulp for paper production.

Railroads played an important role in transporting the original O-A logs, first from the woods to the mill, and then from the mill to market.

One of the earliest logging camps was at a place called Keasey at the end of what is now Keasey Road, about 10 miles northwest of Vernonia. Situated at the end of the rail line, an 80-foot turntable was installed to allow locomotives to turn around. As many as 12 trains a day rolled through Keasey during boom times.

The current Keasey Tree Farm—called Homewood at the time—was also a stop on that rail line. The Homewood sign still identifies the site.

Homewood was a stop on the railroad that brought logs from Keasey to the Oregon-American lumber mill in Vernonia. Homewood is now the site of the Keasey Family Tree Farm, but a sign still marks the location. PHOTO BY SCOTT LAIRD

The war years following the Depression were a time of great change in the logging and mill industry.

Mechanization and new inventions—such as the diesel engine for hauling logs—created a more efficient operation, although there was some resistance to the changes. In 1943, O-A bought a gasoline-powered chainsaw, but found it difficult to convince the union and its workers to use it in place of hand saws.

Even with mechanization, the mill had a hard time keeping up with demand for lumber, especially during and immediately following the war.

Finding workers also played a part in slowing O-A's ability to meet demand. In 1943, 153 O-A employees enlisted in the armed forces. The company's employment dropped to 454.

O-A experienced a remarkable period of success between 1947 and 1951 following the war. Demand for its product was up, supplies of timber were competitive and prices were high. In addition to employing or contracting with loggers to harvest its raw product, O-A created jobs for road builders, truck drivers, rail operators and mill workers.

O-A created other benefits for the local community, including electrical power. The original Vernonia Light and Power Co. was a privately owned utility started in 1923 that eventually failed. It was taken over by the Oregon Gas & Electric Co., which often had difficulty meeting the demands of the community and had to contract for surplus power generated by the O-A mill.

In 1945, OG&E became West Oregon Electric Cooperative, a utility financed by the Rural Electrification Administration, supplied with power from the Bonneville Power Administration.

By the 1950s, most of the old-growth timber around the Vernonia region had been logged, and other accessible timber became harder to reach.

In 1953, the Long-Bell Lumber Co.—another massive operation in the Northwest—bought O-A. In August 1957, the last log train dumped its load in the Vernonia mill pond. On December 20, the mill shut down for good.

Vernonia still considers itself a logging town, even though the O-A mill—and the jobs and prosperity it brought to a small farming community in the backwoods—is just a memory. ■

Lake County Examiner

140 years of publication

Danielle Jester, left, and Tillie Flynn work on a story for the Lake County Examiner. PHOTO BY TONI BAILIE

By Toni Bailie

In 1900, a devastating fire destroyed most of Lakeview's business district, including the Masonic Temple, which housed the Lake County Examiner.

The intrepid newspaper staff salvaged a few sheets of paper and an assortment of odd type. The following day, they published a special edition about the fire that "made brave hearts quake." They reported that not a single life was lost, and businessmen were already ordering material to rebuild.

Since its founding in 1880 by Stephen Moss and C.A. Cogswell, the Examiner has never missed a weekly publication. Carrying on this tradition, Examiner General Manager Tillie Flynn has kept the newspaper afloat despite the financial impact of COVID-19.

"It's been a struggle with advertising down 30% to 40%," Tillie says. "But we've managed to keep everyone on staff by cutting back to 30 hours per week and reducing the size of each issue. This is a time when the local newspaper needs to step up and be part of the solution."

Headed by Managing Editor Danielle Jester, the Examiner staff includes reporter Kevin Winter, advertising representative Kaitlyn Carpenter and office manager Charley Tracy.

Tillie believes it is important to inform residents of local happenings.

"The Examiner is a keeper of the gate, a record of county history," Tillie says. "We cover everything as public record."

In many cases, past issues are the only source of county history. These issues are archived at the University of Oregon. Bound copies dating to 1899 are available for public reference at the Examiner office.

The Examiner covered the Christmas Eve fire in 1894 that claimed the lives of 40 people attending festivities at Silver Lake. An overturned lamp set the building on fire.

The paper had a special eight-page edition in 1930 hailing the opening of Marius Theater, which featured talking movie pictures.

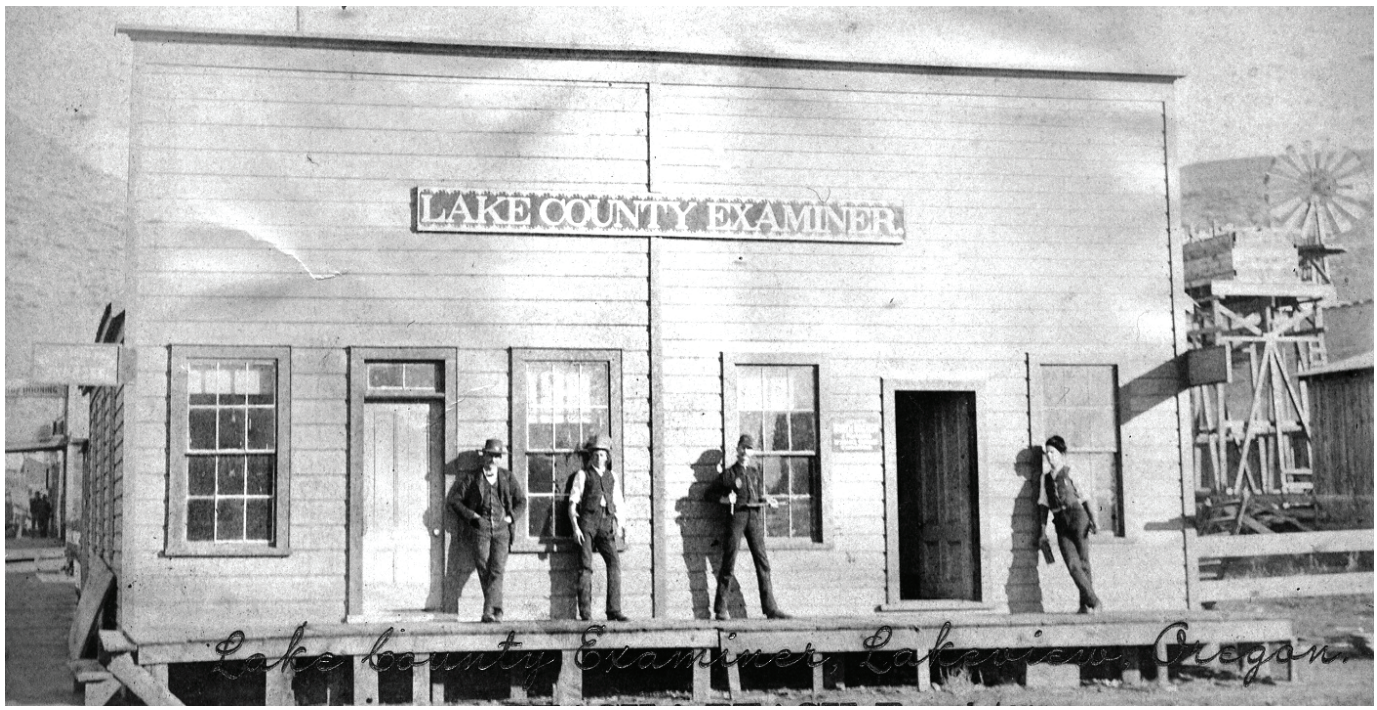
Tillie holds a journalism degree from University of Nevada. She was selling advertising for the Klamath Falls Herald and News when she met Lake County rancher John Flynn and fell in love. Planning to move to Lakeview after their marriage in 1984, Tillie told the Herald and News publisher, "If you buy the paper in Lakeview, I will run it for you."

She has been at the helm of the weekly publication ever since.

Each spring, the Examiner publishes the Progress Edition, with features about Lake County residents and advertising by local businesses.

Due to turnover of employees at federal agencies in Lakeview, there are always new residents surprised to learn how many services are available in the area.

"This year, the Progress Edition was a boon," Tillie says. "We strive to keep residents informed about local businesses. Now the economy is starting to improve, with



The Lake County Examiner has been publishing a weekly paper since its founding in 1880. This photo is from 1888.

people out and about again and tourists coming through."

The Examiner outlived 10 other newspapers published in the county. During the homesteading era, land notices were a major source of revenue. In 1904, the publication installed the first linotype machine in Lake County. In 1913, the hand press was replaced by machinery operated by electricity.

Les Shaw, editor from 1947-1976, wrote a popular column "Behind the Sagebrush Curtain."

"There are things you can do in a personal column that you can't in an editorial," Les said. "You just sit there at the typewriter and talk to them on a personal level."

Gary Whitehouse followed in the footsteps of his great-grandfather and paper co-founder Stephen Moss. Gary was hired right out of journalism school as Examiner editor. From 1978 to 1984, he navigated the progress in publishing technology, from a linotype machine to the offset printing process.

"It was pretty intense, reporting, writing, editing, photography and darkroom work," Gary says. "Sometimes I worked 50- to 60-hour weeks covering school sports, city council, county commissioners and the school board. I believe small papers provide a sense of community identity and promote local businesses."

The Examiner now has an online presence. Kevin Winter videos staff members giving a summary of weekly news and ads for local businesses. He posts the Lake County Flash to Facebook on Friday and the Hot Spot on Tuesday. Recordings of the city council and county commissioner meetings are also posted online.

"We give information to counter rumors and hear-say," Kevin says. "This takes the place of having a local television station."

During the pandemic closures, Kevin filmed short interviews of local businesses explaining what services were still available, including curbside ordering from restaurants.

Kevin joined the staff as a reporter in October. Although many community events and school sports have been canceled because of the pandemic, he gathers information from local police, sheriff's department, the district attorney and news from North Lake County.

Monday is deadline day, with all stories due by noon. The staff works on the layout, sending the pages to the Herald and News in Klamath Falls for printing.

Danielle, the new managing editor, grew up in Yreka and worked at the Siskyou Daily News and the Klamath Falls Herald and News as reporter and interim associate editor. She enjoys living in a small town and appreciates the friendly people she has met since coming to Lakeview.

"I'm happy to be working for a newspaper that represents a rural area and publishes 100% local news," Danielle says. "We are a source of unbiased information that truly represents the community." ■

Born With a Rural Heart

LEC board member loves helping make life better for area residents

By Craig Reed

Shortly after putting her first words together as a toddler, Ingrid Kessler looked up at her parents and said, "When are we moving to the country?"

Their reply was, "When you grow up."

She and her husband, Andy Burke, now live with dogs and cats on their rural property in the Noti area.

"I've always had a rural heart, a rural soul," Ingrid says.

Taking that passion for rural life and its communities to another level, Ingrid is an advocate for rural folks in her role as a member of Lane Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors. She has represented the co-op's Central District—an area southwest of Eugene—for the past six years. Ingrid was elected to another three-year term in June.

"One of the responsibilities that is most important to me is contributing to the quality of life here in rural Lane County," Ingrid says. "I know serving on the board is a big opportunity to help make things better for the people who live here.

"It's a fascinating industry. It is a lot of work to become familiar with a brand new industry, but there are a lot of programs to help educate you."

Ingrid says that education has come from attending both Oregon and nationally sponsored classes. She also complimented Lane Electric General Manager Debi Wilson, the co-op's staff and Ted Case, executive director of the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, for answering her many questions.

"Our industry deals with many complex issues," Debi says. "It is critical that each director stay informed of these issues to make the best decisions for the benefit of the membership. Ingrid is not afraid to step out and advocate for the co-op and its members. She has visited with elected officials to let them know who we are and to ask for their support on issues that impact power costs."

In addition to using her electric co-op education to benefit Lane Electric, Ingrid used it as the chairperson on the statewide Action Committee for Rural Electrification. ACRE is the federal political action committee of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Representing approximately 1,000 electric cooperatives, ACRE supports incumbents and candidates for the U.S. House and Senate who will speak for and protect the interests of co-ops and their members.

Last year, Ingrid was elected to the NRECA Board of Directors.

"She speaks on behalf of all Oregon cooperatives as a director at NRECA," Debi says.

> "One of the responsibilities that is most important to me is contributing to the quality of life here in rural Lane County."
>
> —INGRID KESSLER

"Most recently, she and her fellow directors advocated for financial relief related to the COVID-19 pandemic. NRECA worked with our elected officials in Washington, D.C., to ensure that cooperatives would be eligible to receive the Paycheck Protection Program loans. They were successful."

At the local level, Ingrid says it's been important to keep electricity rates as low as possible and to safeguard renewable resources. At the state and national levels, she has spoken to officials about energy policy, focusing on such issues as affordability, environmental impact and social justice.

Before becoming a rural resident, Ingrid spent most of her life in big city environments. She was raised in Manhattan and attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, earning a degree in classics—ancient Greek and Latin.

She was attending Stanford University in California and working toward a doctorate in the classics when she had "a very early mid-life crisis."

"I wanted to be a veterinarian," she says.

She was accepted at Michigan State University in East Lansing and earned her doctorate in veterinary medicine in 1994.

"I went from ancient philosophy to emergency veterinarian medicine," she says with a laugh.

While working toward her doctorate, Ingrid took a special animal surgery course at Washington State University in Pullman. After finishing the course, she traveled west and then down the Oregon Coast. That trip inspired her to apply for veterinarian jobs in Oregon.

After two years of general practice at Bush Animal Hospital in Eugene, Ingrid had the chance to fill in as a relief doctor at the Emergency Veterinary Hospital, on the border of Eugene and Springfield.

"In the first hour, I knew emergency medicine was for me," she says.

Two months later, she began working full time at the emergency hospital. Ten years later, in 2006, she and a business partner bought the emergency facility. The hospital grew under the

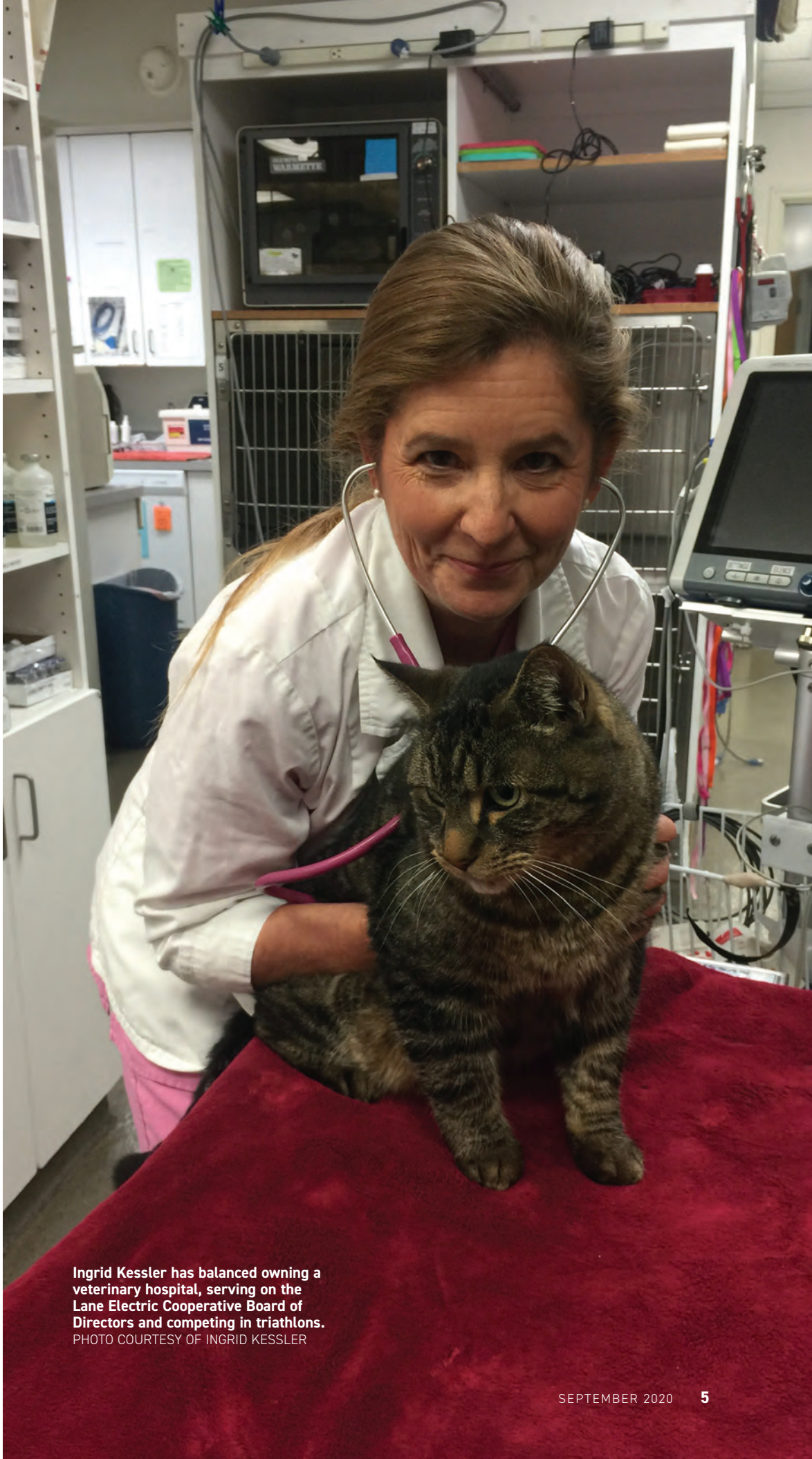
management of the partners and their staff.

During that time, Ingrid represented the hospital as a member of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce and the local government affairs council. Through those groups, she met Lane Electric General Manager Rick Crinklaw, who invited her in 2011 to be a member of the co-op's scholarship committee. She accepted. When the Central District board position opened in 2014, she was encouraged to submit her name.

"It was a very hotly contested election," she recalls, noting there were six candidates. "I was very, very fortunate to prevail."

For five years, Ingrid was a busy businesswoman, a veterinarian and a Lane Electric board member who was learning about an entirely new industry. She also found time to train as a triathlete, competing in swimming, biking and running in both Ironman and individual sport events. In 2019, her schedule got a bit lighter when the emergency hospital was sold, ending her career as a practicing veterinarian.

"For five years, I had more than a full-time job and the board position," Ingrid says. "It can be done. So for anybody who might have the interest in a board position, it's both a great way to serve the community and to have the personal opportunity to be involved in the community, talking about things that are important and to affect wonderful changes for our shared future." ■



Ingrid Kessler has balanced owning a veterinary hospital, serving on the Lane Electric Cooperative Board of Directors and competing in triathlons.
PHOTO COURTESY OF INGRID KESSLER

Johnny Sundstrom on the porch of his Deadwood home. He writes every day between and 5 and 6 p.m.

Finding His Voice

Fiction author self-publishes seven books in a decade of inspiration

By Craig Reed

For years, Johnny Sundstrom had a desire to write fiction. Only in the past decade has he finally found the time, confidence and opportunity for self-publishing.

The 76-year-old wrote "Dawn's Early Light," a stand-alone novel, and a trilogy called "Land of Promise." The four historical Western fiction stories, set around the mid-1800s, focus on the western movement of pioneer families and the hardships they faced in traveling and establishing homes in such wide-open places as southern Wyoming and southeastern Oregon.

A second trilogy, "Land of the Evergreens," is also fiction, but deals with more modern issues in the Pacific Northwest: marijuana in book one, drug and arms cartels in book two, and timber in book three.

Johnny wrote rough drafts of these stories on a manual typewriter in the 1980s. He has rewritten and edited them

for publication.

The final book of the "Land of the Evergreens" trilogy is due out this year.

"I've always been inspired to be a writer," says Johnny, a Deadwood area resident.

He says he experienced a "diversity of cultures" during his life. He lived in Oregon during the 1980s when marijuana, drug cartels and timber were controversial.

As executive director of the Siuslaw Institute, which he founded in 1994, Johnny has written numerous articles on land management and conservation. He's also written grant applications on behalf of the nonprofit dedicated to the "sustainable improvement of community and habitat in the Coast Range of Oregon, particularly in the Siuslaw River Basin."

A home computer and internet made it easier to complete his work. Before the internet and since 1975, Johnny has lived on the family property in Deadwood, 55 miles from Eugene. Previously, there was no easy access to a public library to do research for his fictional Westerns.

"I couldn't have accurately written those stories before the computer," he says. "Now I can go on the internet and check facts on dates and places."

Johnny says he writes for himself, not for financial gain. He admits he's not much into marketing his books. Even if he wanted to, he realizes living in the Coast Range near Deadwood is a long way from book fairs and publishing agents. So he is satisfied with self-publishing and ordering about 50 copies per book, selling those from his home or giving them away.

Johnny with the photo that appears on the back of his latest book, "Crossfire." PHOTOS BY KATE HARNEDY/KATEHPHOTO.COM

"I feel it's a blessing to be able to share these stories with other people and to receive their feedback," Johnny says.

Danell Sundstrom, Johnny's daughter, has read "Homegrown" and "Crossfire," the first two books of the "Evergreens" trilogy and is eager to read the third one, "Old Growth."

"His stories and his characters are really complex," Danell says. "He dives into creating real characters. His character relationships grow and blossom and are very realistic.

"Dad is very humble about his writing. He just puts it out there. He doesn't do a lot of things for monetary reasons. He's not rich in money, but he's rich in connections with people, with the land, with the various projects he's been involved in. Those help fulfill him."

Johnny was born into a military family in Florida. In his youth, his family lived in Southern California and the Seattle area. He earned a bachelor's degree from Williams College in Massachusetts, with a focus on English literature, film work and production. He worked in theater in New York and in radical filmmaking in San Francisco during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

To escape what he called "urban America," he moved to the Deadwood area in 1970. In 1976, he was part of a group that bought the property he now lives on. Adjoining land was purchased in 1978. Johnny says the property—which features cattle, sheep, goats, horses, timber and a large garden—has evolved into a family owned cooperative.

In addition to working on the home property, Johnny provides natural resources consulting through the Siuslaw Institute and has administered several large watershed restoration and education projects. He has worked at local, state and national levels for soil and water conservation districts for more than 30 years.

As a member of the Siuslaw Basin Partnership, the Siuslaw Institute applied for and was named the 2004 winner of the International River Prize—an honor presented by the International River Foundation in Brisbane, Australia.

The prize allowed the Siuslaw Basin Partnership to connect with Sakhalin Island on the Pacific Coast of Russia to exchange ideas and projects involving fisheries, timber and agricultural lands. Johnny coordinated or participated in 12 cultural and scientific exchange trips between the two locations.

As his travel and outside responsibilities have decreased in recent years, he has had more time to give thought to his stories. These days, he writes between 5 and 6 p.m.

"It's a time when I don't have to write, but I can't do anything else so therefore I might as well write," he says. "I now look forward to that hour all day. Writing is my entertainment.

"To live with these characters, to follow their stories, is intriguing for me. I write to discover what happens to the characters, to the places and to the story. They develop as I write." ■

Johnny Sundstrom's books can be ordered from him by email at siwash@peak.org.

K-9 on Board

Spyke, a 5-year-old German shepherd, became a member of the Lake County Sheriff's Office last December. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RACHEL BONINE

Spyke and Deputy Rachel Bonine team up against crime in Lake County

By Craig Reed

When Spyke goes to work, he puts his nose to the ground.

With Lake County Sheriff's Deputy Rachel Bonine alongside, the German shepherd uses his nose to track, search for and find any number of items. It may be as simple as his first deployment, when he found a lost key fob in the dark. Or it could be hidden drugs, a crime suspect, items of evidence, or a missing person during a search and rescue.

Spyke and Rachel have been a team for the Lake County Sheriff's Office since last December. The dog and deputy first met each other the month before, when Rachel visited a training kennel in Southern California to select a working canine partner. She observed four dogs before picking Spyke to be her partner.

"I really liked his demeanor," Rachel says. "He was social, and I needed a dog that was social because we'll be out in the public a lot and visiting school events and the kids."

Rachel, 34, has been a Lake County deputy for 3½ years. Although she has had dogs all her life, this is her first time as a handler and partner with a law enforcement dog. She wanted a dog that would be both friendly off the job but serious when it was time to work.

Spyke and Rachel are stationed out of an office in Christmas Valley. Their work area is roughly the northern half of the 8,600-square-mile Lake County. They travel south to the Lakeview area when needed.

"We clicked right off the bat," Rachel says. "With his level of training, he's a good fit with me being a green handler. He's pretty impressive with the different things he can do."

Rachel, a 2017 graduate of the police academy in Salem, says she has been interested in working with a dog since pursuing full-time law enforcement work.

Although 5-year-old Spyke had plenty of training prior to joining Rachel, the two continue to attend training sessions.

Spyke is certified with the Oregon Police Canine Association to track and hunt for articles such as guns, knives, drugs, people, clothes and other items with a human scent.

"He's got a broad range of things he

can do," Rachel says. "I'm excited for us to partner with the search-and-rescue people on a missing-person case."

Stacy Crawford, a Deschutes County Sheriff's Office deputy and master trainer for the Oregon Police Canine Association, says Rachel and Spyke have shown a strong bond while working together in training sessions.

"There's a lot of trust between the two of them, and that makes a great team," Stacy says. "They're an extremely dedicated team."

Stacy says a good law enforcement dog must have a high hunt drive and a don't-give-up attitude, which he sees in Spyke. He also says a good handler must have patience in letting the dog work—just like being a good parent.

The partners must be willing to continue to practice and train to get better.

"There's no doubt in my mind that they're going to be successful, that they're going to be a great team," Stacy says.

Dan Kloss, who worked with four dogs as a member of the Albany Police Department and was the trainer in the six-session patrol class, says he also saw a bond and trust growing between Rachel and Spyke.

"Spyke is a very cooperative dog, and Rachel is an animal person who understands animal behavior and psychology," he says. "She's going to rely on him to help on a case, and he's going to rely on her to help. It'll be a good team effort."

Rachel says Spyke constantly excels in both training and deployment. She describes him as "an extremely quick learner with a fantastic nose."

Searching for and identifying drugs was new to Spyke when he came to Lake County.

"Once he figured out what he was hunting, he got it," Rachel says.

When Spyke is successful in his hunting and detection, Rachel rewards him with his ball-tug toy.

"He's always happy to go to work," Rachel says. "He has a very high drive, and he's always hunting with his nose to the ground. But he's also a super fun dog, a very friendly dog." ■

Lake County Sheriff's Office Deputy Rachel Bonine and Spyke work and train together in the northern half of Lake County.

Spyke checks for drugs under the hood of a vehicle. Spyke can search for drugs, items of evidence, crime suspects and missing persons.

Locally Grown Pain Relief

Snowville farmer grows industrial hemp for pain-relieving oil

By Dianna Troyer

Ches Burmester is giving "the girls"—260,000 female industrial hemp plants prized for their pain-relieving properties—whatever they need to thrive on his northern Utah farm.

In a former 130-acre alfalfa field near Snowville, the hemp plants are watered, weeded and nurtured to withstand the region's wind, heat and alkali soil.

"Strips of alfalfa will still grow and be a nurse crop to protect the young plants as they grow," Ches says. "They need a little bubble space, too—about 5 feet to reach their ideal height of 6 to 8 feet by fall when they'll be harvested."

The girls have other unusual benefactors: two ball pythons named Stripes and Boulder, the farm's organic pest exterminators. In May, the pythons were released at night in a greenhouse to feast on mice eating newly planted seed.

"We're excited and nervous because it's our first time to grow hemp," says Ches, who is partners with three others in the business venture called Tycoon Botanicals. "We're raising female plants because they have higher concentrations of CBD oil, so we call them the girls. Our crop is organic, too, to make it more marketable."

After harvest, the plants' cannabidiol oil will be extracted and used as an ingredient in lotions and ointments used for pain relief and cosmetics.

Two Idaho physicians who studied the benefits of CBD oil and wanted to be part of the increasingly popular hemp industry found Ches and hemp-growing consultant Cristian Martinez of Salt Lake City through internet searches and mutual friends.

"A patient of theirs lives in Snowville and knew about our farm," Ches says. "They wanted a farmer willing to take a risk and grow it in a field that would meet criteria for being organic. The warm days and cool nights here should increase oil yields, too."

With Ches' farming expertise and Cristian's five years experience raising industrial hemp and marijuana, the plants are well cared for.

The partners invested in specialized equipment: a 1,600-square-foot greenhouse to start the plants from seed in May, a strip tiller to cut 1-foot-wide rows for hemp in the alfalfa field, a 24-foot-wide hemp planter that plants six rows simultaneously, a specialized watering system and a shucking machine for harvest.

To meet the criteria for being organic, herbicides cannot be used. A crew of 15 to 20 employees weeds the field by hand or with string trimmers. The alfalfa is trimmed with 30-inch-wide riding lawnmowers.

Butte Irrigation in Paul built a custom watering system that includes sand filtration units and a salt deionizer to deal with the alkali soil. Perforated driplines, about 70 feet long, are attached to the pivot and dragged along the rows.

"The irrigation system delivers 725 gallons a minute to the entire pivot, which is approximately 1 gallon an hour per plant," Ches says. "For me, growing hemp has been an education in botany."

Applying his biology and ecology degree from Colorado Mesa University, Cristian has worked at marijuana and hemp farms in Colorado, Oregon and Utah since 2015.

Male hemp plants are culled from fields, allowing female plants with higher concentrations of CBD oil to thrive, Cristian says.

After the 2018 federal farm bill allowed cultivation of hemp nationwide, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food established a

ABOVE: Cristian Martinez, left, and Ches Burmester planted a 130-acre industrial hemp field in May. RIGHT: The 1,600-square-foot greenhouse provided room to grow 260,000 industrial hemp seedlings. OPPOSITE PAGE: A planter drops the small hemp shoots, placed into trays by Ches and Cristian, into the ground and tamps them into place. PHOTOS BY DIANNA TROYER

department to monitor the crop. More than 220 licenses have been issued statewide.

Unlike marijuana, hemp doesn't contain high concentrations of the psychoactive chemical tetrahydrocannabinol, more commonly referred to as THC. At harvest, the hemp must contain 0.3% or less of THC or the plants are destroyed.

"It's easier to grow more acreage of hemp than marijuana because there are less regulations," Cristian says.

Ches and Cristian are uncertain of the amount of CBD oil their plants will yield. Generally 50 pounds of biomass yields 1 liter of oil.

"We'll have to wait and see until mid-September and October," says Ches, who plans to have 50 employees during harvest.

The partners are negotiating with several companies to buy their hemp.

"We'll see who wants it the most," Ches says.

Unlike the perennial alfalfa next to it, hemp must be reseeded every year.

"We've invested heavily in equipment, so we'll keep growing it," Ches says. "This fall, we'll see what we need to tweak. Then we'll do this again next year. Eventually, we'd like to extract the oil here on the farm." ■

The Happy Mask Makers—from left, Dorcey Hunt, Kim Yaeger, Audrey Schaible, Sharon Oestreich and Yvonne Anderson—donated masks to health care facilities including East Adams Rural Healthcare at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HAPPY MASK MAKERS

The Heroes Behind the Masks

Volunteers throughout the Big Bend service territory unite to support local communities

By Katelin Davidson

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Washington, residents found themselves socially isolated from their friends, families and communities. As businesses shut their doors, many locals found a way to continue local outreach from the solace of their own homes.

From Connell to Ritzville to Odessa, individuals began making masks for people in their communities. Some started because of their involvement with medical centers, while others picked up the hobby because of the businesses shut down.

Audrey Schaible's mask-making journey started early in 2020. She began making and donating masks to Australia wildfire relief efforts through a national organization.

By the time COVID-19 made its way to her Ritzville hometown, Audrey already had a head start. She began donating her masks to local health care facilities.

Dorcey Hunt put out a request on social media for donations of supplies or masks to meet the need for personal protective equipment in health care facilities. Her request was immediately answered by community members who donated supplies, as well as multiple volunteers who started making masks of their own. The donations went to health care facilities in Ritzville and Odessa. As more masks were produced, they were provided to essential business employees who had to continue working during the pandemic.

"I decided to start making masks while I was out of work," says Kim Yaeger, who works as a hairdresser in Ritzville. "I had been working on projects around the house and saw that Dorcey Hunt was making them, so I asked if she needed any help. I didn't realize what I was getting myself into."

The demand for masks has increased since the women sat down at their sewing machines in March, but the community continues to donate materials.

While the gratitude from residents has been uplifting and encouraging, the group agrees one of the best rewards is to be in

the community and see someone wearing their mask.

"When I see my clients or people around town wearing the masks I made, it is such an awesome feeling," Kim says.

Sharon Oestreich joined in the effort at the same time as Kim and Audrey to help local organizations and businesses. After a short time working together, they supplied health care facilities and businesses with masks. They proudly branded themselves as "The Happy Mask Makers" and shifted their focus to supplying masks to community members.

Taking 25 to 40 minutes to make a mask, volunteers continue to give their sewing machines a workout. Social media has been the easiest way to connect with individuals—when mask makers hear of a need for more masks, they sit back down at their machines.

Sharon's favorite project was making a specialty mask for all of the graduating seniors of Lind-Ritzville High School. The mask included the school's colors, script saying "2020" and a handmade tassel.

"The best part is knowing that I helped someone," Sharon says. "If you can take away that little bit of anxiety for someone and help them, it's just a feel-good feeling."

In Connell, Virginia Colby started a similar effort, with a group of ladies also stepping up to help supply locals with masks. Among the mask makers was Abbi Peters, who dug out her sewing machine for the first time since sixth grade and joined the mask-making effort. The first donation went to clinics and hospitals in the Tri-Cities area and the Connell ambulance crew. All of the supplies were donated and shared between those making masks. Virginia helped provide filters given with every mask.

As individuals, every mask maker agrees their decision to make masks was simple—the community needed help and they had the skills to fill the demand.

"When COVID first started, we were feeling so helpless," Abbi says. "This whole experience has been surreal. There is such a need, but it's been really fun to be a part of the solution."

Each of the mask makers have made 100 to 400 masks, and their efforts continue. Fabric, filters, elastic and handmade crochet earpieces have been donated to the ladies' mask-making efforts.

All monetary donations Audrey and Sharon received were automatically given to Adams County Pet Rescue to help offset the hardship the pandemic caused for them. Audrey also focused on making sure every volunteer at the nonprofit has a mask.

Due to a need at medical facilities, Dorcey Hunt began making masks to help her coworkers, as well as people considered high risk in the local community. PHOTO COURTESY OF DORCEY HUNT

After helping supply essential employees with masks, attention shifted to community members deemed high risk. Their masks were donated to family and friends throughout the country, but most remained in local communities. The distribution included local drop-offs or establishing a pickup location for pre-ordered masks.

As time progressed, the mask makers found new ways to make the earpieces or build in a pipe cleaner on the nose to help people not fog up their eyeglasses when wearing the mask.

Most masks were made for adults, since they still had to work within the community. In the Ritzville community, the mask makers have started making children's masks to donate to area youth as they prepare to return to school this fall.

Many mask makers are reconnecting with community members through their donations, which can be a source of support during a stressful time.

"A local quilter had passed away and her husband saw me at the post office and said, 'I'm going to bring you fabric tomorrow,'" Audrey says. "As he gave it to me, he got teary eyed and said, 'It was hard to go into the sewing room, but I know you guys need it. And she would have wanted to help.' It meant so much for him to just go that far to make his wife happy." ■

Abbi Peters in Connell started an assembly line to complete masks quicker. PHOTO COURTESY OF ABBI PETERS

Martha Verduzco leads a rally at the regional jail in The Dalles, where citizens are working to abolish for-profit detention centers.
PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA VERDUZCO

A Voice for Justice

Martha Verduzco rallies for change

By Drew Myron

Even without a megaphone, Martha Verduzco commands a crowd—not because she is loud, but because she is driven, energized and working hard for change.

A leader in Hood River's Latino community, Martha has been called a true force in the Gorge.

"Martha is fire, and she is passionate about the community," says Amber Orion, a community organizer who has worked with Martha on marches and hunger strikes around social justice issues. "She is one of the fiercest organizers I work with."

Martha stands at the forefront of most every action for racial justice in the Columbia Gorge. She is a founding member and the leader of the Hood River Latino Network, an advocacy and resource organization; a leader of Gorge ICE Resistance, a coalition working to stop the practice of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement holding immigrant detainees at the regional jail in The Dalles; and is chair of the Rural Organizing Project, a statewide organization supporting social justice issues.

In one moment, Martha can rally a crowd of hundreds to protest injustice. In the next moment, she gently comforts an immigrant confused by the court system.

Martha works as an administrative assistant for Carpenters Local 1503—a job in which she helps protect the rights of more than 4,000 union members. In her off hours, she organizes a festival showcasing local Latino culture.

Among all the volunteer roles and work responsibilities, Martha returns to her home: a serene 6-acre farm in Parkdale, where she lives with her husband, Gabe; and children Alexander, 7; Ángel, 18; and Monique, 20.

In many ways, Martha, 42, was born an activist. For her birth, Martha's parents—who emigrated from Michoacán, Mexico, to Hood River—crossed into Washington to see the area's only Latino doctor.

Martha's parents still live in the Hood River Valley. Her father is a janitor for

the Hood River School District, and her mother is a packer at Diamond Fruit Growers.

Since childhood, Martha has witnessed her family and friends face issues related to housing, employment and myriad everyday issues—from the inability to obtain photo identification to overcoming language hurdles.

It's no surprise Martha was compelled to step up.

"I've always been a helper," she says. "I'm a humanitarian at heart. I love to help people. I think that's my purpose in life."

In 2016, Jose Bibian asked Martha to help orchestrate A Day Without Immigrants—a local march that was part of a national movement to protest federal immigration policies. Organized in just two days, 240 people showed up in the rain to walk 2 miles across Hood River in support of immigrant rights.

Latinos comprise nearly one-third of Hood River County's population. Latino influence is particularly noticeable in the Hood River Valley, where agriculture is fueled by Latino labor.

"We are a big part of this community," Martha says. "We have a large percentage of people of color, and we have a lot of racism—hidden racism."

In 2017, Martha and a group of friends formed the Hood River Latino Network. The advocacy group provides support to Latinos and people of color in the Gorge. The network connects members with resources, often partnering with local nonprofit organizations, such as The Next Door, One Community Health and FISH food bank. The network was founded by Jose, Samuel Murillo, Arturo Leyva, Patricia Verduzco and Monica Romero.

"We felt people were calling out for community help and empowerment," Martha says. "We hope our group makes people feel like there's a little bit of hope—that they're not helpless, not hopeless."

Martha is the first to take the lead to help Latinos, says Arturo, a local music producer and a member of the network.

"Martha's voice is very important," he says. "She is passionate about serving and bothered by injustices. I believe that voices like Martha's are vital in our community and our democracy."

Home is where the heart grows for Martha and her family, which includes husband Gabe, son Alexander and daughter Monique. Son Ángel is not pictured. PHOTO BY DREW MYRON

Increasingly, Martha's voice is mobilizing a larger community. In July, a Black Lives Matter protest in Odell drew more than 60 people—a mix of whites and Latinos—in a show of support for racial justice and reform. Martha says the turnout was encouraging.

"We're so thankful for the allies who stand with us," she says. "We didn't know how many allies we had—people in our community that want better things for us."

Martha dreams of creating a community resource center—a place of information and opportunities "where people feel comfortable and free," she says.

She elaborates on Rural Roots Rising, a monthly podcast created by Rural Organizing Project:

"I wish there was a place where my mom could have gone when she felt that they weren't treating them well at the packing house, or my dad when he was being yelled at by his foreman," she says. "I wish there was a place a person could go to, someone who they could trust, and at least hear them out. Sometimes just being able to talk about what's going on gives you relief."

Martha, with members of Gorge ICE Resistance, advocates to end the practice of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement holding immigrant detainees at the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facility in The Dalles. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA VERDUZCO

For now, Martha is working hard for a brighter future.

"I'm doing all of this for my family—for my children—so that my kids can live in better world," she says. "That's what we all want for our kids, right?" ■

This little waterfall is one of many scenic vistas on a trip to the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIAN DAY

The Great Outdoors

Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge welcomes visitors with new resources

By Lauren Brown

For those looking for a way to escape their homes during the pandemic, the great outdoors offers a way to safely social distance from others while enjoying the natural landscape.

Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge near Denio, Nevada, gives urban dwellers peace and quiet with a stunning big-sky backdrop.

The refuge is building a $1.2 million office/visitors center to give travelers a place to obtain guidance during their stay. The new building will replace a 1970s-era single-wide mobile home that serves as the office space for Refuge Manager Brian Day and his assistant. The current office has had electrical issues, a leaky roof and other failings.

Brian says the cost may seem high, but it is because there of extra costs involved to get a crew and supplies out to the refuge's rural location.

"Being out here in the middle of nowhere really adds a lot to the cost," Brian says.

The new visitors center and office will provide added visibility from the main road into the refuge and offer maps, regulations and information on its history.

"We'll have pamphlets on some of the history in the area, like the Civilian Conservation Corps," Brian says. "They put in a lot of the infrastructure in the 1930s back when the refuge was first established."

Brian says Sheldon is different from other wildlife refuges because most of the refuge is open, allowing visitors to hike and observe wildlife within the refuge

Creation for Conservation

Established in 1931 by President Herbert Hoover, Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge was created to protect the American pronghorn, which was in danger of extinction.

In conjunction with the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge to the north, the Sheldon refuge plays a role in the conservation of other wildlife, including greater sage-grouse, American pika, California bighorn sheep and redband trout. The refuge was named for Charles Sheldon, a founding member of the Boone and Crockett Club.

boundaries. Other refuges limit visitors to specified tour routes.

"At Sheldon, we also have pretty good hunting and fishing opportunities, and some really nice backcountry camping," Brian says. "If you like the isolation and getting away from people, it's a good opportunity out here."

One of the refuge highlights is the Virgin Valley Campground, which is open year-round.

"It has a hot spring that's been made into a pool, and it's piped into a bath house with the warm showers," Brian says.

There is no fee. Campsites are obtained on a first-come, first-serve basis (no reservations). There is also a fishing pond for people 12 and younger, 65 and older, and those with disabilities. The campground features fire rings, tables, pit toilets and drinking water.

Other camping areas include Catnip Reservoir, Big Spring Reservoir, West Rock Spring, Fish Spring and Badger. While these other campgrounds only have fire rings and pit toilets, all offer access to nature and excellent nighttime stargazing.

Horseback riding and rockhounding are allowed on the refuge. There are corrals at Badger Camp and Fish Creek. Pelletized feed is required to avoid introducing weeds from hay.

A maximum of seven pounds of rock can be collected from the surface per day. No digging is allowed. There are several patented opal mines in the area. Private owners offer opal mining for a fee.

Virgin Valley opal deposits include the prized black opal, as well as fire opal of many hues.

The refuge covers 572,896 acres in the northwestern corner of Nevada. The nearest town off Highway 140 is Denio Junction, where visitors can stock up on water and food before entering the refuge.

"I tell people when they come out here, bring water, food and make sure you top off your gas," Brian says.

Since the pandemic began, Brian says the refuge has seen a spike in activity. There was a crowd for Memorial Day weekend and, while it tends to taper off during the hot, dog days of summer, Brian expects the increase in visitors to continue, especially as word of mouth about the refuge spreads on social media.

"We've really seen the bump in visitation in the last few years," he says.

When folks post photos of the dramatic landscapes at the refuge, it's easy to see why people are drawn to the area. Brian says many people come from Reno and Winnemucca, as well as Oregon, to camp, hike, fish, hunt and photograph wildlife.

"There really are some amazing landscape opportunities," Brian says. "You can see a long way out here, and it's just big wide, open country. It's very pretty." ■

ABOVE: The refuge was established in 1931 by President Herbert Hoover to protect the American pronghorn.

TOP: Workers install an informational kiosk at the refuge's Virgin Valley Campground.

For more information about the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge and directions to get there, go to www.fws.gov/refuge/sheldon.

Dane and Parker Moon, from left, drill the mineralized zone on the historic Montana Mine on Estes Mountain. PHOTO BY DARR MOON

Prospecting Family Knows the Drill

The Moon family honors Idaho's mining heritage, working gold claims in central Idaho

By Dianna Troyer

Darr Moon juggles his time between two offices: his engineering firm on the square in Rupert and his outdoor office at 9,500 feet, where he and his family search for gold at historic mines in central Idaho's mountains.

"Mining gold is my healthy bad habit," Darr says.

In his youth, Darr explored the historic Yankee Fork Mining District, which was home to some of Idaho's richest gold and silver deposits in the late 1800s. It still yields flakes, nuggets and small gold veins.

"I grew up shoveling gravel into a sluice box," says Darr, 61. "I never outgrew the pull of gold. It's a treasure hunt."

Darr and his family live on Jordan Creek, 20 miles northeast of Stanley near historic mines.

He points out how modern civilization is dependent on gold and other metals.

"Think about your phone, or any electronic device for that matter," Darr says. "It has gold, copper and silver in it that came from a mine somewhere. Electrical contacts are made from gold because it's such a good conductor and resists corrosion. Most people don't even realize that. We definitely live in a metal-dependent world."

When gold was selling for $35 an ounce in 1974, Darr's father, Durell, a retired geological engineer who lives in Heyburn, bought patented mining claims in the historic Yankee Fork District.

Darr and his family marvel that gold prices began soaring to historic highs in August at more than $2,000 an ounce. Investors worldwide turned to gold as a stable investment amid financial uncertainty and turbulence due to the coronavirus pandemic's impact on countries' economies.

"Historically, people have always turned to gold for stability in times of crisis," Darr says. "Dad and I both caught gold fever, fortunately. As engineers, we've both made a good living, so we didn't need to strike it rich with gold."

Durell joked that he "kept his gold in the bank—unfortunately, a gravel bank—and one that's hard to make withdrawals."

Durell became acquainted with hobby miners and former mine employees in the Yankee Fork Mining District when he bought the Rod and Gun Club Bar in Stanley in 1961. He was drawn to the region for its rich mineral deposits and scenery.

Growing up, Darr heard stories from old-time miners.

"I admired their knowledge of local geology and how independent and self-sufficient they were, especially during winter when it can be minus 60," Darr says.

Eventually, Durell bought land that was once part of the General Custer, Lucky Boy and Montana mines.

Darr, his wife, Dorothy, and their sons, Dane and Parker, continue the family tradition. They keep small gold samples for their mineral collection and sell gold flakes in vials—about one-tenth of a gram—to the Yankee Fork Gold Dredge Mining Museum and the Custer Museum in the old ghost town of Custer.

"When we work the land, we think about how we're walking in the footsteps of those miners who came before us and what they overcame to make a living," Darr says.

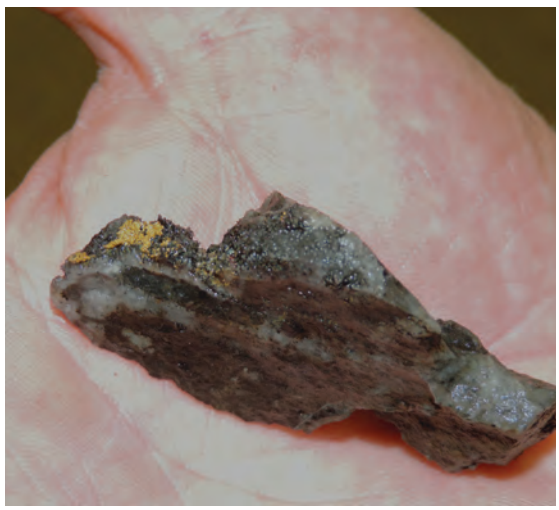
In the winter, when 10-foot-tall drifts and sub-zero temperatures prevent mining, Darr says he "mines libraries and the old newspapers for local history."

His most exciting find is the journal of Col. William Birelie Hyde, an engineer who built the Custer Mine and mill. After reading the journal at a local library, Darr bought a copy on Amazon.com and tracked down Hyde's family in California.

"I'm piecing together a glorious history of the area through his eyes," Darr says.

During its first year of operation in 1880, the Custer Mine produced $1 million worth of gold and silver when gold was worth $20 an ounce. The metals were melted into bars that were 8 inches wide and 24 inches long. Each one was 80% silver and 20% gold.

"That spring of 1880, the roads were impassable due to snow and mud," Darr says. "He piled up the bars in his office until he had an 8-foot-tall stack by the time the roads opened and they could be hauled away."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The view from Estes Mountain looking at Mt. Greylock and the White Clouds at about 9,500 feet in elevation. PHOTO COURTESY OF DARR MOON **Darr Moon shows samples of gold ore his family mined in the Yankee Fork area.** ABOVE PHOTOS BY DIANNA TROYER

Getting to work was challenging for some miners who descended a 160-foot rope ladder. Others rode in ore buckets attached to a mile-long tram line.

"The weight of the ore going down in buckets propelled the buckets with miners in them to come up the other side," Darr explains.

The Moons have no plans to develop a commercial mine. Instead, they allow friends to pan for gold on their claims on Jordan Creek.

"People naturally like rocks, especially if they're gold," Darr says. "We welcome people who want to pan and find some color. A lot of the big nuggets that were found historically came down Jordan Creek."

To showcase Idaho's mining heritage and to share an appreciation of the scenic pine-scented forests surrounding them, Darr plans to build some rental cabins on their property in the coming years.

He says he hopes those who rent the cabins "will see for themselves the grandeur around them. They can learn firsthand what the early prospectors and miners did and how they lived—and that's priceless." ■

Morgan Motsinger—with help from her husband, Ryan—owns and operates a full-service business.

Coastal, But Not Cliché

Lot 35 Homes mixes family and thoughtful design in Tillamook

Story and photos by Chelsea Yarnell

Morgan Motsinger wants people to feel at home.

"Designing a home is not only about making you feel comfortable, but designing a home that you can invite people over to," Morgan says.

Morgan and her husband, Ryan, own and operate Lot 35 Homes Construction + Interior Design. The full-service design, construction and boutique retail business helps customers fine-tune their home.

"Home updates are hard without guidance through the complicated construction process or overwhelm of design decisions," Morgan says. "With a variety of services to fit your needs, we'll guide you through the process to take you from the home you have to the home you've been dreaming about."

The business has a storefront on First Street in Tillamook that showcases beautiful interior décor and a meeting space dedicated to design consultations.

"The store is accessible to anybody," Morgan says. "I like to showcase a coastal feel without being cliché. I'm inspired by

Lot 35 Shoppe provides opportunities for customers to buy locally.

nature and creating a really calm environment through scents, color and textures."

The Motsingers' journey began in 2008 when Ryan became a licensed general contractor and started the construction business. Painting was his specialty, but as the years went by, he had the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of renovations and new-home builds.

When Morgan started decorating in 2016, they realized they could provide an extraordinary level of service to their clients.

"I really enjoyed doing design work and said, 'Let's see if anything comes of this,'" Morgan says. "I kept getting more and more referrals, and I kept pulling Ryan off his jobs to help with mine. In 2018, we joined businesses."

Lot 35 Homes was born. In 2019, the Motsingers expanded their business to include Lot 35 Shoppe in downtown Tillamook.

"When you buy something from a small business, you're buying equity and investing in your community group," Morgan says. "The more shopping opportunities we have here, the more we can keep people buying local. I want people to buy things at others' stores and remember their home here."

As parents of three children—one with special needs—the Motsingers understand the importance of creating safe, beautiful homes that function around equipment for those with special needs.

"We feel so strongly about the impact of the home environment on our mental, physical and social health that we added specialized design services to families with special-needs children whose lives we can enrich with our expertise," Morgan says. ■

Visit Lot 35 Shoppe in Tillamook at 1902 1st St. B, online at lot35homes.com, or on Instagram and Facebook.

Les Tracy, a woodworker and painter based in Carlin, learned the art from his father and grandfather. PHOTOS BY CAROLLEE EGBERT

A Feel for the Brush

Les Tracy's tole painting and woodworking talents benefit nonprofits in Carlin

By Dianna Troyer

In his living room art studio, flowers seem to blossom almost instantly as Les Tracy brings them to life with a brush and acrylic paints.

He deftly and quickly paints delicate daisies, a few purple tulips and red hearts on a white wall clock. He pauses, looks over his artwork, and decides to add a few green leaves here and there.

"I paint whatever I feel like, depending on my mood," says the 73-year-old Carlin retiree. "I'll keep what I make until I think someone needs a gift."

Les has more time to focus on his hobbies of tole painting and woodworking since he retired from Newmont Mining Corp.'s gold mines north of town in 2006. He was a driller for 30 years and a surveyor for four more.

"Painting and woodworking always relaxed me after work," Les says. "Especially now with all that's going on in our country during the pandemic and staying home most of the time."

Les often surprises his friends and family with wooden keepsake boxes, dome-top trunks, and other items he built and painted.

"He made me a beautiful wooden flower holder for my office door," says Ella Trujillo, director of the Carlin Open Door Senior Center. "Whatever he makes, you can tell it's done with love and care."

Les can be counted on to donate his decorative artisanal handicrafts to several local nonprofits for their fundraisers.

"Whenever the senior center or other organizations need to raise money, I'm happy to give whatever I have on hand," Les says. "I'm not the only one who donates, but they always seem to like what I bring and pick it as a raffle prize."

CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE: Les Tracy is a woodworker known for his tole painting. Tole painting was common among German and English settlers. Les often makes boxes or trunks.

Ella says she counts on Les to provide a trunk or other item for the center's annual autumn Turkey Shoot & Bingo and winter Sweetheart Bingo.

In 1987, Les took classes in Elko to learn tole painting techniques. The classes were taught by Brenda Gerber in the old Mountain City Lumber Co. building. Les learned how the decorative folk art came to America with German and English settlers, who painted flowers and other designs on common household objects, furniture or as borders on walls.

"During the class, I realized I have a knack for art," Les says. "The beauty of tole painting is that you can make up your own patterns."

His favorite floral patterns are daisies and tulips, which remind him of his mom's garden.

"She always had beautiful flowers," Les says. "It stuck with me, and I planted all kinds of flowers around my house."

Besides tole painting flowers on his handicrafts, Les has decorated Carlin homes with his floral motifs.

"I've painted flowers and butterflies as borders on walls or on wooden curtain valances," he says. "Word gets around in a small town. The painting I've done came about through word-of-mouth or from people meeting me at my booth during arts and craft fairs. If they have an idea, that's great. If not, I'll make a few suggestions."

Les has also perfected painting faux finishes, making affordable pine look like expensive hardwood.

"I like to paint the grains of tiger maple, bird's eye maple, oak and other hardwoods," he says.

Les learned about the beauty of wood and woodworking skills from his father and grandfather when he was young. He would sneak into his dad's workshop to use the power tools. He also would stop at his grandfather's house when he walked home from school.

"He was always waiting for me in his bib overalls in his garage, where he had his shop," Les says. "He had a can of bent nails and told me, 'Better get to work and straighten those nails if you want to make something.' He noticed I had a feel for the wood and what to make with it."

He says he reminisces about his dad and grandad while making boxes and trunks in his workshop behind his house. As a tribute to his grandfather, Les made a sign for his house: Home of Bent Nails and Bib Overalls.

"I like wearing bib overalls like my grandpa did," he says.

To make the distinct dome-shaped lid for his popular trunks, Les uses a steamer to heat and shape plywood, giving it a curved contour. By steaming the wood, he can bend it onto a form, and let it dry in that form's shape. Once a trunk is finished, it takes several more weeks to paint, allowing for drying time for different layers.

"It's gratifying to put some beauty in the world and make people smile," Les says. ■

New Directions Northwest Inc. has been placing signs with simple messages around Baker City to offer hope and love to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO COURTESY OF OREGON TRAIL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Coping During Coronavirus: **Managing Your Mental Health**

By Lisa Jacoby

Kimberly Lindsay always thinks about the ice cream.

Her father, Bud Collins, was a lineman for Lane Electric Cooperative in Eugene. In 1980, an accident left him without the use of his legs. Kimberly remembers how, sometimes at night when he was in bed and she was in the bedroom next door, he would whisper to get her attention so she would get him a bowl of ice cream.

"He loved ice cream," she says.

Usually, she got the ice cream. Sometimes, she pretended she was asleep.

Bud died by suicide in 1982. He was 38. Kimberly was 10.

"I would give my whole everything to have one more minute with my dad," Kimberly says, "to get him a bowl of ice cream."

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Risk factors for suicide include clinical depression, loss of employment, isolation and physical illness.

That list echoes the current state of affairs due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Kimberly is executive director of Community Counseling Solutions, which serves four counties in Oregon, including Grant. She is passionate about suicide awareness—she also lost her grandfather and a cousin to suicide—and worries about how the coronavirus pandemic will affect the number of deaths by suicide.

"Anecdotally, you'll hear the rates are higher," Kimberly says.

Although we won't know, perhaps for years, how the pandemic impacted the occurrences of suicide, history gives us a clue.

"History is generally the best predictor of the future," Kimberly says.

She points to major events in the past 100 years that had a devastating impact on the economy and people of the U.S.: the Great Depression, World War II, the oil crisis of the 1980s and the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009. Statistics from those periods show a rise in

deaths by suicide.

"For males, at least historically, their identity is wrapped up in their jobs," Kimberly says.

Now we are in the midst of a pandemic with a record rate of unemployment.

"This economic downturn, if we look at it with a historical lens, will cause an increase in suicides," Kimberly says. "Economic downturns have driven the greatest spike in depression, which drives spikes in suicides."

Loss of a job is just one aspect of the current situation. To curb the spread of coronavirus, the CDC recommends staying 6 feet away from other people and limiting social gatherings. Many Oregonians have faced weeks or months of a quarantine lifestyle under the "Stay home, save lives" mandate, which closed schools and many businesses.

All of this affects mental health.

The Dave Romprey Oregon Warmline—a phone-based service that provides trained peers who field calls from people seeking help with issues such as addiction, feelings of suicide and loneliness—has seen a 300% increase in calls since the pandemic began.

Shari Selander, CEO of New Directions Northwest in Baker City, says that within one week of the stay-home order by Gov. Kate Brown, the facility implemented urgent care same-day access for individuals needing mental health or substance abuse services. New Directions continues to have open access for walk-in services Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"Seeking services as soon as you know that things don't feel right is best," Shari says. "Don't wait to reach out for help when all is feeling hopeless. Times are hard right now with loss of jobs, loss of housing, loss of interactions and relationships, financial responsibilities and physical illness of COVID-19—with no apparent end in sight for now."

Kimberly offers a description of how many may be feeling during the pandemic: "A feeling of downness, but not clinical depression."

Recognizing these feelings and taking steps for self-care are important. The CDC has dedicated a web page to coping with stress, recognizing that everything associated with a pandemic—fear and anxiety about a new disease, physical distancing, worry about what the future holds—can cause stress and anxiety.

Following are suggestions to deal with stress, as suggested by the CDC:

- Know where and how and get treatment and support services.
- Take care of your emotional health.
- Take breaks from the news and social media.
- Take care of your body (exercise, eat healthy, get plenty of sleep, and avoid excessive alcohol and drug use).
- Make time to unwind.
- Connect with others.

Mental Health Resources

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**: 800-273-TALK
- **Community Counseling Services, John Day:** 541-575-1466
- **Grant County Health Department:** 541-575-0429
- **David Romprey Oregon Warmline:** 800-698-2392
- **New Directions Northwest:** 3425 13th St., Baker City (new location); crisis number: 541-519-7126
- **Center for Human Development, La Grande:** 541-962-8800
- **Harney County Health Department, Burns:** 541-573-2271

Suicide Prevention

The last bullet point on the list—connect with others—is one that seems lacking during a pandemic. But Kimberly says that human connection just might save someone's life.

"What we know is suicide is preventable," she says. "And conversations are important. Take a second to say, 'How are you?' Sometimes that's all it takes."

Statistics show many who die by suicide showed a higher percentage of accessing help from a health care provider. In many cases, a significant event can be linked to the death.

"For most people, if you go back 48 hours there was an indicator," Kimberly says.

Community Counseling Solutions is completing year one of a two-year process for Zero Suicide—a training protocol committed to reducing suicides by training the workforce, identifying those at risk for suicide, and treating suicidal thoughts and behaviors using evidence-based treatments.

"It is a great, great preventive plan of action for any agency," Kimberly says. "Suicide is as big of a concern as ever."

For the general population, she points to QPR Institute, which provides a 30-minute online suicide prevention training at https://qprinstitute.com. QPR stands for question, persuade and refer. The website explains these as three steps anyone can learn to help prevent suicide.

History shows the economy will decline again someday, and people will need help.

"If you can start to have the conversations earlier, you're laying framework for the next pandemic," Kimberly says. ■

An On-Island Education

Children from Anderson Island have long had smaller, even outdoor, learning environments

By Crista Fitzgerald

The modern Anderson Island Elementary is on the 40-acre Jane Cammon Park, on land leased from the island park district for $1 a year on a 99-year lease. But the island started with a one-room school. Island schooling brings unique challenges, reflected in the island's different schoolhouses.

Wide-Awake Hollow School once served the combined seven children of the four original settling families, and taught all island students until 1958. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is the oldest surviving one-room schoolhouse in Pierce County. It is now used as a community fitness and recreation center.

After Wide-Awake's closure, Anderson Island students traveled to the school on federally owned McNeil Island. A trip to school was a 5-minute ferry ride across the sound to a waiting gray prison bus.

McNeil Island was the site of a maximum-security federal prison and home to about 60 families employed there.

McNeil Island had a three-room school for grades one through six, with two grades to a room. That first year was a new experience for students of both isolated islands, but friendships grew. By Christmas, all 40 or so combined island students performed a holiday program for their parents in the McNeil Island school gym.

Through the efforts of booster parents wanting separate schools on both islands, the school became part of the Steilacoom Historical School District in 1975. The state recognized on-island education as "remote and necessary." In 1980, a new one-room school was built on Anderson Island, and elementary students were brought back home.

One student benefiting from the efforts was fifth-grader Dana-Lynn (Wood) Ballou.

Anderson Island Elementary serves about 15 students, from preschool to third grade.
PHOTO BY CRISTA FITZGERALD

LEFT: Wide-Awake Hollow School is Pierce County's oldest surviving one-room schoolhouse. PHOTO BY CRISTA FITZGERALD
OPPOSITE: Anderson Island Elementary students work on their journals while sitting on learning logs in the outdoor classroom. From left, Juliet Anderson, Caiden Witham and Liam Clay. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDERSON ISLAND ELEMENTARY STAFF

It was a long time ago that she was sitting at a student desk, but she recalls only a dozen children in the entire new school serving kindergarten through sixth grade.

Dana remembers two accordion doors that converted the room to three separate spaces. After sixth grade graduation, students ferried to Steilacoom for middle and high school.

Dana met her future husband in high school, moved to the mainland and began a family. Her mom, Vera Wood, remained on the island and worked at the school for more than 30 years. During that time, the school grew. Buildings and classrooms were added, and a gym built.

Dana and her family visited often. Missing the island lifestyle, she moved back and became the secretary of her childhood school.

During the last 24 years, Dana has been lunch lady, dishwasher, librarian, playground mom and general tell-me-what-needs-doing secretary at the school. She sent her four children there, and didn't consider any other option.

"There is a little more freedom for students here," Dana says. "There are some great human beings coming out of this school. So many are still friends, still connected, years later."

Dana created a fitness club for the children in conjunction with efforts by Principal Susan Greer, who has been at the school for six years. Susan is the only school employee who does not live on the island. She splits her administrative duties and time between Anderson Island and Chloe Clark Elementary, a school on the mainland.

"In splitting my days—two on Anderson, the smallest school in the district, and three at the largest school—I get to bring some of the excellence of each school to the other," Susan says.

Susan expects 15 students to be enrolled this fall between preschool, kindergarten and grades one through three. There are six schools in the district, including Anderson. While Steilacoom Historical School District will begin the year with distance learning, in a regular year an effort is made to use field trips and off-island gatherings with mainland school students to acclimate Anderson students to the larger classroom settings that begin with grade four.

"We want to ensure the students who graduate from here have good social skills and emotional well-being," Susan says. "It's a big shift for children to go from a small, intimate school setting to a large classroom. We prepare them for the transition and have guidance counselors looking out for them at the new school."

Susan and the entire staff celebrate their school's uniqueness and the successes of their students.

"I'm always proud of our students," Dana says. "We graduate good people." ■

Outdoor Learning

It did not take Anderson Island Elementary Principal Susan Greer long to identify a spot about an 8-minute walk from Anderson Island Elementary that would make an ideal outdoor learning classroom. Susan discussed her idea with park personnel and soon had a dozen "learning log" seats and a couple picnic tables available for student use.

Susan is a staunch advocate for outdoor and physical education activities as important components in developing even the youngest student's independence, resilience and observation skills.

"It's a natural environment for science, math, self-discovery—an integration of learning," she says. "We encourage them to ask 'what if' questions, and help them discover the answers themselves."

Susan hopes to eventually have a gazebo built for use during inclement weather. In-classroom "green learning" sessions help students explore sustainability and composting. Disposable containers and cutlery are no longer used in the lunchroom. The students are recyclers who learn about salmon, tend to a small garden and built a composting worm bin.

Last year, Anderson Island Elementary School won a Green School Award. Part of the recognition is a large green flag with an insignia, suitable for a flagpole.

The mainland school where Susan works is near a park. She has her sights set on helping that school benefit from an outdoor classroom too.

Calm Garden Respite

The Wolf Tree—a Douglas fir that is hundreds of years old—shelters the Shade Garden and its visitors.

Lakewold Gardens grows spectacular views year-round

Story and photos by Rick Stedman

Lakewold Gardens is an oasis of beauty and calm.

Set on 10 acres adjacent to Lakewood's Gravelly Lake, Lakewold Gardens is one of the great estate gardens in the Pacific Northwest.

Lakewold Gardens has been accessible to the public for more than 30 years. Thanks to its caretakers, including two full-time horticulturists and a host of volunteers, it continues to make every effort to persevere its serene quality. The gardens host more than 10,000 visitors annually from around the world.

A Century of History

Emma Alexander bought what is now the Lakewold property in 1908. A decade later, she deeded the property to her son, H.F. Alexander, and his wife, Ruth, who named the estate Inglewood.

In 1925, new owners Major Everett Griggs and his wife, Grace, bought the property and renamed it Lakewold—a Middle English term meaning "lake-woods."

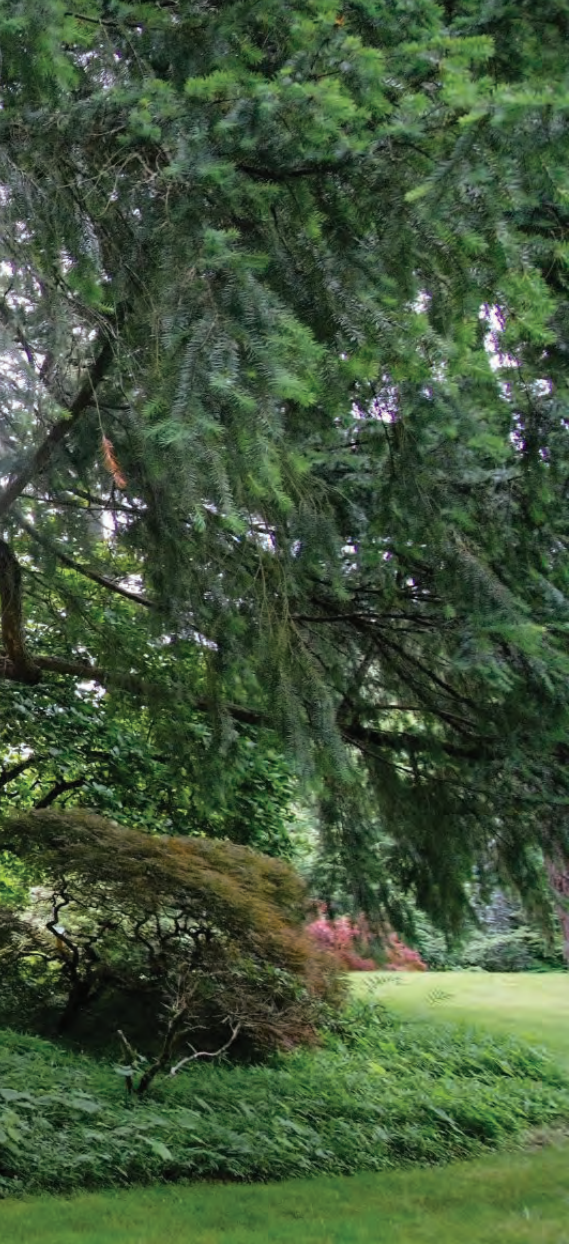
In 1938, G. Corydon and Eulalie Wagner bought the gardens and became the last private owners of the property. In 1987, Eulalie, who had been a widow for nearly a decade, donated the entire estate to a new nonprofit organization: The Friends of Lakewold. The only stipulation was that an endowment fund be raised to assure continued care of the gardens. Lakewold Gardens officially opened May 7, 1989.

"As we become more and more city creatures, living in man-made surroundings, perhaps gardens will become even more precious to us, letting us remember that we began in the garden," Eulalie said.

Vibrant Colors Year-Round

Lakewold Gardens Executive Director Susan Warner says the gardens are a draw year-round.

"Lakewold Gardens offers an assortment of color and texture where visitors can enjoy, explore and discover the beauty and contrast offered throughout the seasons," she says.



Lakewold Gardens has many varieties of trees throughout its 10 acres, including these Japanese maples.

Spring is a popular time to visit Lakewold Gardens, as nearly 800 rhododendrons share their vibrant colors. The best views can be found from March through May.

"From tiny species rhododendrons to giant hybrids of yesterday, Lakewold's rhody collection is sure to captivate the visitor with heady fragrances, masses of color and sheer volume," Susan says.

The elegance of Lakewold is due, in part, to Thomas Church, a landscape architect. During his first visit to the Pacific Northwest in 1958, he stopped at Lakewold Gardens. Through the years, he returned regularly to suggest refinements to Lakewold's design, stressing the importance of drawing visitors into the garden.

Japanese maple trees are some of the colorful attractions visitors see today.

"There are several Japanese maple trees that visitors can view, including the picturesque Acer Shindeshojo, which peaks in early spring," Lakewold Gardens Communications Coordinator Brandon Lambeth says. "The beautiful peeling bark of the Paperbark maple is just one example of Japanese maples that display unrivaled fall colors, which make these trees so special. They are a photographers' dream."

Smile for the Camera

Photography is a big deal at Lakewold Gardens. With its lush gardens and a Georgian-style mansion, the venue offers a beautiful setting that has hosted countless weddings, anniversaries, business parties and other celebrations.

Brandon says there are many locations on the grounds to set up and host any event or gathering, depending on the size of the party and time of year.

Parkland resident Megan Specht attended a wedding at Lakewold Gardens several years ago.

"It was summertime and everything was in bloom and absolutely beautiful," Megan says. "I was in the wedding party, and we had a great time. Everything was very elegant, and the reception was one of the best I've ever attended."

Several areas within Lakewold have been designated as gardens within the garden.

The Shade Garden, for example, is under the outstretched limbs of the Wolf Tree—a multi-branched Douglas fir that is several hundred years old. The Wolf Tree serves as the canopy for a variety of colorful flowers and smaller trees, like Himalayan blue poppy and Japanese maple.

Other smaller gardens with their own unique design and characteristics include the Woodland Garden, Rock Garden, Cutting Garden and Knot Garden.

The Garden Shop—located in the original 1918 carriage house—has inviting surroundings with a distinctive inventory of plants, seeds, quality tools and an assortment of garden-related gifts.

"Lakewold Gardens is here for you as a place of healing, reflection, inspiration and joy," Susan says. "Everyone is welcome." ■

For more information on Lakewold Gardens, visit lakewoldgardens.org or call 253-584-4106.

Changes at HOPE of Rainier

A new executive director brings a vision for the local food pantry

Story and photos by Scott Laird

Change can be hard, but a recent change at HOPE of Rainier food pantry is proving to be valuable.

Kelly Miller was appointed executive director of HOPE of Rainier in July, although she has been unofficially serving in that role since March.

For the past three years, Kelly has also been executive director of Turning Point—a food pantry and community resource center in Clatskanie.

"With me now directing both food pantries, I'm looking to combine resources to make a better experience for both communities," Kelly says. "I think we can create a better pool of resources and really meet the needs here. Our boards of directors are excited to work together and collaborate to do fundraising. I think we're going to be able to do some really great things."

Kelly was born and raised in Clatskanie and moved back from St. Helens this summer. She started at Turning Point as a volunteer, quickly moved to intake coordinator, and a few months later filled in as interim executive director, which became her permanent position.

Turning Point has several successful programs to support community members, in addition to providing monthly food boxes for those in need.

"We have a pretty successful model at Turning Point, and I hope to recreate that here at HOPE," she says.

Kelly Miller, the new director of HOPE of Rainier, hopes to make some changes to improve the food pantry's service to the community.

Kelly wants to use her strong background in retail sales to develop a thrift store to help fund the facility. Turning Point has had great success with its shop throughout the years.

"A thrift store could provide a consistent flow of income for HOPE," Kelly says.

In late July, she was trying to secure a thrift shop location separate from the food pantry building.

"I'm really excited to get a thrift store going here in Rainier because I know the revenue it creates at Turning Point, and I think we can do that here," she says. "With having a thrift store, I would be able to provide clothing vouchers to clients for job interviews or vouchers to help with household items such as bedding, dishes, etc., for families that have been displaced by tragic events."

Kelly is building relationships with local businesses and community members to increase resources. Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a successful Turning Point program that allows community members to access emergency funds once every six months for things such as rental deposits or rental assistance, gas vouchers to get to doctors' appointments, water bill payments, eviction prevention, or propane for heating and cooking.

"I would really like to be able to create enough revenue to incorporate that program here at HOPE for the Rainier community," Kelly says. "It's a really important program for a lot of people, especially with the instability with the job market, the housing market and everything else going on right now."

Turning Point works closely with Clatskanie PUD to provide energy assistance through its Share the Warmth program. Turning Point helps local schools with supplies in the fall, and HOPE provides weekend food for students who qualify for the free lunch program. This summer, Fibre Federal Credit Union provided funding for a food program for students in Clatskanie and Rainier.

"Anything that we can do to help our community members, that's my goal," Kelly says. "I have real compassion for people and our communities."

Community volunteers are key components to the success of HOPE and Turning Point.

"We could not make it without our volunteers," Kelly says.

"Our volunteers are so kind, helpful and compassionate," says Lisa Soule, president of HOPE's board of directors.

HOPE serves about 80 to 90 households and 225 individuals each month. Thirteen volunteers donate more than 200 hours a month. A group of volunteer Master Gardeners maintains a garden that provides fresh fruits and vegetables for food boxes.

Turning Point serves about 10% fewer people, with just four volunteers providing close to 240 work hours in a month.

HOPE receives support for its programs through a variety of community efforts.

Lisa Soule, President of the HOPE Board of Directors, helps pack food boxes for Rainier community members.

Community fundraisers have struggled or been canceled during COVID-19, however, so local food pantries are even more dependent on community partners during this time.

Churches and other community groups have helped with canned food drives. Community members donated 756 pounds of food in June.

In addition to receiving regular shipments of food from the Oregon Food Bank, the local Grocery Outlet store and its owner, Taylor Elliot, donated 581 pounds of food in June. In July, Grocery Outlet hosted a campaign called Independence From Hunger, which generated 3,587 pounds of food for HOPE. The campaign also raised cash from shoppers, including a single $500 donation at the beginning of the month.

"Grocery Outlet really does a lot for us," Kelly says. "Taylor helps us during the holidays and is really fantastic."

Turning Point also receives support from the local Safeway, with donations of 500 to 1,500 pounds of food several times a week.

During COVID-19, Oregon Food Bank has used federal grant funds to provide extra food to local food pantries, which allows HOPE and Turning Point to provide food boxes twice a month rather than once a month.

Kelly says monetary donations are the best way the community can help HOPE and Turning Point right now.

"We actually have a lot of food because of the extra support from the Oregon Food Bank, which has been wonderful, but that's going to end at some point," she says. "Monetary donations really help because we haven't been able to do our regular fundraising. We have other expenses and overhead just to keep our doors open." ■

Hope of Rainier is open Mondays and Wednesdays from noon to 4 p.m. Turning Point is open Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 4 pm. You can send a tax-deductible donation to HOPE, P.O. Box 448, Rainier, OR 97048 or to Turning Point, P.O. Box 773, Clatskanie, OR 97016. You can also donate through HOPE's webpage at www.HopeofRainier.com.

Alaska Village Electric Cooperative crew members unloaded 30,000 pounds of freight for the Shungnak power plant project to upgrade to automated switchgear. Fom left, Don deLima-Schou, Ciro Rivera, Bob Washington and Patrick Shick. The aircraft is a C-130 Hercules flown by Lynden Air Cargo. PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICK SHICK

Upgrading the Shungnak Power Plant

Switchgear from the 1970s is retired, allowing better plant automation

Alaska Village Electric Cooperative received Rural Utilities Service funding through the High Energy Cost Grant Program to upgrade the power plant in Shungnak.

The project will retire the circa 1970 manual switchgear and replace it with automated controls. The new controls will automatically start, stop and parallel generators to meet varying load. The upgrade will make it possible to integrate solar panels planned for installation next summer by the Northwest Arctic Borough.

The four existing diesel generators will be retired, and three new units will be installed, increasing capacity, improving fuel efficiency and lowering emissions.

This will benefit two communities, as Shungnak also provides power to Kobuk via an electric intertie.

Due to low water levels in the Kobuk River and intermittent barge service in Shungnak, most of the materials for the project were delivered by a single C-130 Hercules air charter from Anchorage. Temporary power was established in Module No. 4 and the crew began removing all the old gear.

The new system should be on line by the end of September, with final close out by the end of the year. The estimated cost is $2.4 million. ■

An Alaskan Workhorse

Only one of AVEC's communities is accessible by road, so the bulk of our diverse range of cargo, supplies and equipment is shipped by barge or airplanes. The Lockheed C-130 Hercules is an American four-engine turboprop military aircraft. The C-130 was originally designed as a troop, medevac and cargo transport aircraft. It is invaluable in Alaska because it can carry heavy loads and make takeoffs and landings on the relatively short, unprepared runways found throughout Alaska's remote villages. The plane is 97 feet, 9 inches long with a wingspan of about 133 feet. A rear ramp allows vehicles to drive into the body of the plane to remove and load bulky freight.

LEFT: One of two Caterpillar 3456 500-kilowatt gensets with marine manifolds awaits installation. PHOTO COURTESY OF AVEC

ABOVE: A new automated switch gear, control panels and master panel will soon power Shungnak and Kobuk.

LEFT: Kids turned discarded Styrofoam from the equipment packaging into rafts. PHOTO BY ROBERT WASHINGTON

A view of the damage from above the transmission line corridor.

Hog Fire Ravages System

Transmision lines and power plant go down during major fire

By Theresa Phillips

The week of July 19 was one for the record books. North of Susanville along Highway 36, the Hog Fire burned out of control. Communication lines were lost early in the week. For several days, most of Lassen County was without internet and cell service.

Ash and smoke filled the skies. The weather was hot and dry. A thousand firefighters descended on the town with their equipment, giving Susanville the look and feel of a disaster movie.

As luck would have it, due to PG&E's planned maintenance of the Caribou transmission line, the LMUD system was disconnected from the grid July 7 and was receiving power from the Honey Lake Power Plant.

Due to safety concerns, LMUD crews de-energized transmission lines near the fire on Sunday. When the fire burned through LMUD's de-energized transmission lines, PG&E agreed to supply power to Westwood through the Hat Creek line and electricity continued to flow to our community from Honey Lake Power.

Except for a short outage in Lake Forest, LMUD power supply remained steady.

Fire personnel informed the operations center that there was significant damage to both the 100 and 200 transmission lines. Without these lines, LMUD would not be able to receive energy from the Caribou line—the main connection to the PG&E system.

Fire personnel allowed LMUD crews to enter the fire zone on Tuesday, July 21, to evaluate the damaged lines. While the fire continued to burn, crews assessed the damage.

The next day, they did a detailed inspection of the transmission lines. Although 3 miles of line was burned, most of the damage was superficial and the poles were still viable. But 25 poles were destroyed and needed to be replaced. The badly damaged poles were in "rock holes." It was evident pole replacement would be a long and tedious task.

TOP: Crews work 14-hour days to restore power after fire damaged transmission lines and poles. ABOVE: Linemen replace 25 transmission poles.

Looking Back

In July 2018, the Whaleback Fire destroyed 7 miles of distribution line that served our Eagle Lake customers. Due to the location of the original line, it was deemed LMUD would not replace the damaged line, but instead replace the line with an underground line at a more accessible location. While underground line is nearly fireproof, it can be extremely costly. The cost to underground 8 miles of distribution line was approximately $3 million. We have had several inquiries as to why we did not underground the transmission lines that were damaged by the Hog Fire. Due to the higher voltage, the cost to underground transmission is estimated to be about $3 million per mile, making such a project cost prohibitive. LMUD continues to work toward building the Skedaddle Substation, which will give us a more stable connection to the east. This will mitigate future damage to our transmission lines and provide a redundant connection to the grid.

With a plan in place, on Thursday, July 23, LMUD sent three backhoes to start digging holes for the replacement poles. To expedite the job, crews agreed to work 14-hour days, sunrise to sunset.

Later that day, at approximately 3:30 p.m., the worst-case scenario happened: Honey Lake Power experienced an equipment failure and power was lost to most of LMUD's system.

Calls from concerned customers poured into the office. Initially, all we knew was Honey Lake Power had gone offline. With repairs to our damaged lines barely begun, the situation was bad. Restoration was predicted to be at least two days.

The only thing to do was double our repair efforts and get the job done as quickly as possible. With help from line crews of our neighboring utility, Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative, crews worked around the clock.

Knowing they would have to stage for islanding, crews prepared the system.

Meanwhile, Honey Lake Power personnel started repairs to its plant. It was all-hands on deck.

Friday morning at 2 a.m., LMUD and PSREC crews finished repairing the LMUD transmission line. With voltage support restored, this allowed delivery of needed power to Honey Lake Power.

Friday morning at 8 a.m., PG&E was able to supply enough power to get Honey Lake Power up and running. Once that was completed, LMUD separated from PG&E and started picking up load.

Bit by bit, power was restored to our system. By 12:30 p.m. Friday, July 24, all customers had power.

An outage that was expected to last more than two days was over in 20 hours.

The effort and commitment that went into restoring power to our system in such a short time was amazing. We are extremely grateful for our community partners, Honey Lake Power, PG&E, CalFire, Lassen Office of Emergency Service, Lassen Forest Service and Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative. Without the cooperation and help from these groups, we would have certainly faced a more dire situation.

LMUD line crews and the entire LMUD staff pulled together and worked through extreme conditions to ensure our community had the power it needed when it needed it most.

As we face the remainder of the 2020 fire season, we urge you to be fire ready. Prepare for power outages by visiting www.ready.gov. If you haven't already, enroll in our outage text alert system by texting the letters LMUD to 877-754-7697. You will also find outage information at lmud.org or facebook.com/lassenmud. ■

Cody Dirks, also known as "The Slow Cheetah," hosts a show called '90s at 9. It features 1990s grunge music Thursdays at 9 p.m.

KLYX Tuned in to Student Success

Lincoln County students run Nevada's only high school radio station

By Dianna Troyer

Some behind-the-scenes radio jobs make a person seem invisible.

"Most people don't even realize my job exists, and that's fine," says Jordan Tomlinson, 38, director of engineering for Townsquare Media in Boise, Idaho. "You turn on your radio in the car and never even stop to wonder who makes sure the sound gets there or how radio waves travel to a mountain transmission antenna and eventually back to your car."

Jordan says he chose his career based on his experiences working at Lincoln County High School's radio station in Panaca. He was president of the school's radio club from 1997 to 2000.

The student-run station, KLYX "The Lynx," 89.7 FM, runs 24/7 and is Nevada's only high school radio station. It is vital to the community, providing music, news and live broadcasts of high school sports. It is also networked to the statewide Emergency Alert System to warn residents of floods and other natural disasters.

County residents often rely on students to work as DJs at weddings, dances and community celebrations. Since 1990, more than 150 radio club students have worked at the station as music DJs or sports announcers.

Annual club membership has ranged from one student to eight. Several, like Jordan, have careers in radio.

"The club definitely helped me find my calling in life," Jordan says. "As a kid, music—I still love all kinds—is what drew me to radio. The only station you could get in Panaca was the high school one, and I couldn't wait to be old enough to work

LEFT: Radio club members made an unforgettable trip to New York City in April 2001. While standing at Ellis Island, they could see the Twin Towers in the background. Back row from left are Chris Menditto, Davis Chavis and Marty Soderborg. Front row from left are Vanessa Martin (Plunkett), Lee Rollins and Neil Heiselbetz. RIGHT: Radio club member Ariel Escobedo, a 2001 graduate, designed and painted the radio logo in the gym. Lincoln County High School Principal Marty Soderborg often announces games there, which are broadcast on the station. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARTY SODERBORG

there. When I started working at the station, I realized I have an aptitude for the technical side of radio—the computers, mixer boards, microwave dishes, transmitters."

After graduating from high school, Jordan knew he wanted a career in radio. He earned an electronics degree from ITT Technical Institute.

"My degree led to this job," he says. "I love everything about it, taking care of every bit of every system that keeps our radio stations running."

Jordan's mentor was Marty Soderborg, a teacher since 1992 and Lincoln County High School principal since 2009. Marty, 54, has advised the radio club, managed the station and taught radio classes for more than two decades. He says he's pleased the club and station have guided students like Jordan to their careers.

Depending on their interests, students have toured radio stations in metro areas, including New York City, Salt Lake City, St. George, Hollywood and Las Vegas.

"We've watched how a Jazz basketball game is broadcast in Salt Lake City," Marty says. "In New York City, we visited major news studios where two students, Chris Menditto and Neil Heiselbetz, were even invited on the air, and we toured Madison Square Garden's incredible broadcast system."

Marty says the station must be self-sustaining financially. He is pleased the station has great community support.

"We rely on 13 local sponsors," Marty says. "We're grateful, too, for time and equipment donated from Lincoln County Telephone Systems and Lincoln County Power District No. 1. Some winters, the only way to get up to our antennae on Highland Peak for maintenance and repair was to ask someone at the power district to take us up in their snowcat. Dixie State University in Utah provides scholarships and donates equipment, too."

KLYX has a broadcast booth, recording studio and a production area with one wall completely covered in CD racks, enabling students to broadcast music for nearly any listeners' tastes—from classical to the 1950s to current hits.

Like Jordan, Marty says his love of music drew him to radio. He knew little about the technical side of broadcasting when he agreed to be the station assistant in 1997 and took over as the club adviser and

Continues on page 8

Marty shows Brendon Reich how equipment works.

Jordan Tomlinson, 38, stands next to the radio transmitter and equipment rack for KSAS (Kiss-FM) in Boise, Idaho. He says working at the high school radio station motivated him to pursue a career in radio. He is director of engineering for Townsquare Media in Boise, and helps out the high school radio station with equipment and maintenance.

KLYX Tuned in to Student Success

Continued from page 5

station manager a year later, replacing Tom Brown, who had moved.

Marty says he learned along the way from two school district maintenance supervisors, Steve Heiselbetz, who handled the technical aspects of the station early on and Mike Anderson since 2011.

Thankfully, technological advancements have made it easier to run the station.

"We started with tape drives and eight-track carts," Marty says. "When you recorded on a cart, there was no editing, so if a mistake was made, the student had to start over. Before we had an automated program in 2013, we had a five-disc changer that played only classical music. Someone would come in and change out the music whenever we weren't broadcasting with a DJ in the booth."

The station has evolved. In 1989, it was affiliated with KLNR, a National Public Radio station in Las Vegas that erected a tower on Highland Peak to expand coverage to southern Nevada.

As an occupational learning experience, the NPR station allowed students to provide four hours of evening programming as DJs and ball-game announcers.

During the 2010-2011 school year, the school district received its license to be the sole entity operating the station with the call letters KLYX—a nod to the school's lynx mascot.

Marty encourages students to have a sense of humor and enjoy themselves at the station with programming—whether it is comic skits, new music, horoscope readings, jokes or fake commercials. Students from 1999 to 2002 created 30-minute productions called "A Closer Look and Listen" that included profiles of their favorite bands.

"I rebroadcast these shows last spring as a 20th-anniversary celebration of those students," Marty says.

Students have also done play-by-play and color at sporting events.

"One of our most popular student game announcers was Ricky Witfield from 1994 to 1998," Marty says. "His nickname was Slick Rick, and he went on to study radio broadcasting at Brown College."

Marty says it takes a village to run a radio station—not only students, but community volunteers. His assistant station manager is Jake Zierow, a science and math teacher. Sports announcers who have helped Marty with play-by-play and color include Dennis Roden, Steve Heiselbetz, Richard Katschke, Van Cluff, former student Ruben Rowe and Vern Shumway.

Jordan still routinely shares his professional expertise with KLYX, making the 1,000-mile roundtrip trek from Boise to Panaca to help Marty maintain and update equipment.

"If there's some equipment we can't use anymore, but it can help them out, I'll donate it," Jordan says. "I'm always happy to help my hometown radio station and see it continue to succeed." ■

Paddle Into Nature

Fisheating Creek Outpost offers peaceful retreat on the water

By Tahlia Warrick

Three years ago this month, Brooke Hendry, general manager of Fisheating Creek Outpost—a Glades Electric Cooperative member—headed to Palmdale to assess how the outpost had fared in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.

Greeted by record-high water levels, she was forced to leave her vehicle near Highway 27 at the entrance of the park and paddle a kayak the rest of the way to the campground.

When Brooke arrived, she discovered extensive damage.

Fisheating Creek Outpost General Manager Brooke Hendry with kayaks available for rent. PHOTO BY TAHLIA WARRICK

"Irma really took a toll on us," Brooke says. "It took our cabin, it took all of our vehicles. There was 8 inches of water in our main office. There was an extensive amount of electrical work and facility repairs to be done."

Brooke and her staff reopened the campground two and a half months after Irma, even as they continued working to restore park amenities.

"We opened, but we were operating the office out of a pop-up tent," Brooke says. "We were in that for about two months. Then we had a portable office brought in that we used for about a year. Finally, in September of 2019, we moved back into this office."

All of the outpost's vehicles and vans—along with their rental cabin—were considered a total loss due to flooding. The vehicles were replaced right away, but the cabin had to be rebuilt. The new cabin was completed in February 2020 and is once again a popular attraction for overnight guests.

The outpost has undergone even more construction as improvements have been made to the campground.

"We've also recently completed some new renovations in the park, so half of our RV sites have brand new electrical pedestals, new sewer and water, and concrete pads," Brooke says. "Within the next few years, every site here will have a concrete pad."

Fisheating Creek Outpost
7555 U.S. Highway 27
Palmdale, FL 33944
fisheatingcreekoutpost.com
863-675-5999

With hurricane repairs and additional renovations complete—and social-distancing measures encouraged—the outpost welcomes outdoor enthusiasts of all skill levels and interests.

For those looking to escape into nature for a few hours, Fisheating Creek Outpost offers paddling experiences, hiking and biking trails, wildlife viewing, fishing and swimming.

"I wish that more people knew about the paddling that we offer here," Brooke says. "A lot of people just think of it as a fishing spot. It's not just a fishing spot. There is so much paddling to be done. There is so much day-use recreation to be done here, and it's just not utilized like it could be."

The outpost offers canoe, kayak and paddleboard rentals. Guests can rent at the campground and paddle along the creek at their leisure.

The outpost also has a drop-off service that takes paddlers upstream. Then paddlers make their way back downstream to the outpost at their own pace.

"We have two drop-off locations where we offer a shuttle service," Brooke says. "We take them upstream and drop them off at Burnt Bridge. That's an 8-mile paddle. Then we have a drop off at Ingram's Crossing as

ABOVE: Paddlers are invited to explore miles of creek at their leisure. A shuttle service is available to drop off paddlers upstream. PHOTO COURTESY OF FISHEATING CREEK OUTPOST. **RIGHT: Fisheating Creek Outpost offers tent camping sites with picnic tables along the creek and around the swimming lake.** PHOTO BY TAHLIA WARRICK

well. That's a 16-mile paddle."

Depending on the paddler, 8 miles takes most guests about four hours. Sixteen miles is closer to an eight-hour, full-day paddle.

"Once you get dropped off, and you're that far away on the creek, you hear nothing but animals and nature," Brooke says. "That's what's so unique about Fisheating Creek. There are cypress trees and water lilies. You paddle through narrow, winding passageways and come across some lakes that are wide, but the creek itself is not wide."

For those looking to extend their stay, the outpost offers RV camping sites, primitive camping sites and group camping sites. Primitive sites are along the creek or around the swimming lake at the north end of the park, which has a rope swing and pavilion for day-use.

Brooke and her team plan to continue renovations and improvements around the park, including to the 1.6-mile hiking trail that loops out to the creek and back to the camp.

"This year, we're going to be putting a boardwalk down for the trail so that it's handicap accessible and can accommodate more hikers," Brooke says. "Over the next few years, we are planning to install a floating dock in the creek as well."

Fisheating Creek Outpost is a gateway, right off the highway, for guests to step into a secluded piece of Florida.

"I love the quietness of the creek," Brooke says. "The creek itself is so unique because it's just an untouched waterway. There is no development on it. You're just in nature out there."

Whether looking for a new way to spend a few hours outdoors or a scenic place to camp, Fisheating Creek Outpost offers something for everyone. For those not sure where to begin, the outpost office is staffed seven days a week.

"We recommend to come by and visit," Brooke says. "We have information packets to give out, and we welcome visitors to take a 30-minute free pass to come in the park and check it out to see what we have to offer." ■

Moore Haven Church of God of Prophecy partnered with another local church to provide free barbecue dinners for community members during food pantry distributions May 16. PHOTO COURTESY OF MHCGP

Food Pantry Multiplies the Impact

Moore Haven church maximizes donation from Glades Electric Charitable Trust

By Tahlia Warrick

As Moore Haven Church of God of Prophecy Pastor Charity Martinez worked to open the church's food pantry in August 2019, she couldn't have foreseen the essential role it would play in the community a year later.

"We started the food pantry to meet the needs of the community," Charity says. "When I started researching food pantries in the area, I learned that there were only two."

Thanks to the coronavirus pandemic and statewide shutdowns felt throughout the area, on the anniversary of the pantry's opening, it distributed four times as much food as in 2019.

Charity's team has worked to keep up with the demand.

"We were feeding about 25 families when we first opened," Charity says. "I think our most was 45. With the onset of coronavirus, when we did distribution in March, we had almost 100 families, and we've had almost 100 come through every month since."

Every Friday, the pantry receives food from the Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida. Charity's team of volunteers and staff from the church package and distribute the food once a month.

"We were getting a truck once a month, but we went to every Friday just to meet the needs in the community," Charity says.

While grateful to be able to disburse more food at a time when it is needed most, Charity says keeping up with the demand has not been easy.

Distributing food boxes to 100 people during a two-hour window is, in itself, a challenge.

"We get almost 3,000 pounds of food every week here," she explains. "In four weeks, that's almost 12,000. Then, we push that all out in one day because we stock every week to get ready for the one monthly distribution. The numbers are just crazy."

Although the pantry is designed to distribute food provided by the Harry Chapin Food Bank, that has not stopped local farms and businesses from contributing.

"We've had U.S. Sugar

Thank you to the Glades Electric Cooperative members who participate in Operation Round Up and help local efforts such as the Moore Haven Church of God of Prophecy food pantry. To join Operation Round Up, sign up through the SmartHub app, stop by the office or call Member Services at 863-946-6200.

Pastor Charity Martinez, right, helps pack boxes of food for distribution. PHOTO BY TAHLIA WARRICK

donate water, orange juice and fresh green beans. Perry Farms donated watermelons. Sunshine Medicaid donated bags to fill with food. We've had all kinds of support," Charity says.

In June, the Glades Electric Charitable Trust donated $1,500 to support the church's efforts. The majority of food is provided by the food bank, but many items essential to the pantry must come from elsewhere. GECT's donation helped fill some of those gaps.

"The donation from Glades was a huge blessing," Charity says. "We used it for things like ordering more shelves to hold the food because the shelves that we had weren't enough to meet the increased demand of people we were serving.

"Then there are some things that you don't get from the food bank that you have to order, like protein shakes for the elderly, so I've ordered those that we've had to pay for."

Charity and her team have gotten creative while working to feed their hungry neighbors.

One time, they received such a large shipment of chicken they enlisted help from another church and invited community members to enjoy a hot meal.

"We got so much chicken in May that we actually did a barbecue for the community," Charity says. "We offered free dinners on the day of distribution, so they got their food box and they got a free meal."

Since opening the church's doors three years ago, Charity has focused the congregation's efforts on outreach in the Moore Haven community. In addition to the food pantry, the church manages a thrift store in town to provide clothing and goods at affordable prices.

Charity hopes to find new ways to serve the community.

Next year, she plans to provide lunches for children out of school on summer break.

"Anything we can do to help the community, we try to do that," Charity says. "We don't want to do something that's already being provided. We want to do something that serves a need."

After a year feeding neighbors in Moore Haven, the church's food pantry has been instrumental in sustaining the community—and its impact will last far beyond the current challenging circumstances. ■

> "The donation from Glades was a huge blessing."
>
> —CHARITY MARTINEZ

Reinventing Itself

Gulf Island Shipyard pivots to new construction to stay alive in a volatile market

Story and photos
By Cheré Coen

In the worst of times—with low oil prices and in the midst of a raging pandemic—Gulf Island Shipyard has found success in new ventures. Reinvention is a company tradition.

When oil prices crashed in 1985—taking down Louisiana's oil and gas industry—Gulf Island Fabrication Co. opened. It focused primarily on installing and maintaining offshore oil and gas platforms.

The fabrication company was founded by Alden "Doc" Laborde—a World War II naval commander who, in 1953, built the world's first offshore mobile drilling barge, says Christian Vaccari, senior vice president of Gulf Island Shipyards, one of the company's divisions that came along later.

"He needed boats to supply the oil rigs," Christian says. "Oil and gas were the main focus of the business for many years."

The company went public in 1997 and bought other divisions. Locations included one in Texas and three Louisiana cities—Houma, Lake Charles and Jennings—with all sites "heavily concentrated in the oil and gas markets," Christian explains.

Oil prices dropped again in 2016 and production slowed to a crawl, mirroring those dark days in the 1980s. The shipyard division—which includes both new construction and repair—had enough of a backlog to keep business rolling, says Christian.

But that soon slowed down as some of the company's largest customers in the oil and gas industry declared bankruptcy.

"As the backlog burned off, it affected the shipyard and the fabrication side," Christian explains. "No one was ordering new vessels or repairing existing ones."

The shipyard turned its attention toward the government, bidding on naval vessels and public projects, such as car ferries and an ice-breaking tug to be used on the St. Lawrence River.

Gulf Island Shipyards won those bids and is in production for naval salvage vessels large enough to tow an aircraft carrier; three ferry projects for North Carolina and Galveston, Texas; and research vessels to be used at three locations for the National Science Foundation, including one at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium at Cocodrie. 212008001

"As a shipyard, we've only been around 13 years," Christian says. "Now we're the largest division in the company."

Christian attributes much of the success to the company's ability to change with economic conditions. The shipyard division began building passenger and cruise vessels, then casinos and offshore deep-water supply boats in the 1990s and, since 2015, government vessels.

"It's a cyclical business, but I'd like to say that it's the products that are cyclical," Christian says. "We've now pivoted to new construction in markets more tied to transportation than oil and gas."

With the influx of new projects came expansion.

Gulf Island Shipyards' campus south of Houma sits on 1,000 acres on both sides of the Houma Navigation Canal, with sections of the property remaining in its natural state or undeveloped. A large swath of land near the company's offices was

raised 4½ feet and fortified with pilings and rock to make way for construction of Navy vessels.

South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association provided new transformers and stations "to power up the whole area," says Huntington "Blair" Downer, a project manager at the shipyard.

The company builds the Navy's T-ATS towing, salvage and rescue ships in modules, working in stations throughout the yard. Pipes, technology and other interior parts are installed in each module, then the modules are pieced together, beginning with the ship's bottom and working upward. Once the ship is assembled, it is transported to the massive dry dock where it is launched and moved offshore for testing, Blair explains.

Three boats can be manufactured at a time.

"It's a jigsaw puzzle," Blair says. "It takes roughly two years to build a boat from start to finish."

On a recent visit to the shipyard, modules were being worked on at every station.

"We're at a point where today everything is coming online at the same time," Christian says. "It's an exciting time to come from gloom and doom in 2016 to getting all these contracts in place. We are now seeing significant progress."

The success of Gulf Island Shipyard is a bright light in a dark economic market for many who have worked in Louisiana's oil and gas industry.

"It's unfortunate to see the oil and gas industries in dire straits," Christian says. "You wish the best for them, but you can't hold out hope that you'll build vessels for them."

This year still brings challenges for the company, with the COVID-19 pandemic and oil price fluctuations, but Christian sees smooth sailing ahead.

"It's been a challenge to hold on," he admits of navigating 2020, noting he managed to keep employees on staff. "But we're very optimistic about our future." ■

ABOVE: This module at Gulf Island Shipyard is one of many that will be pieced together to become a naval salvage vessel.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Gulf Island Shipyard owns a 1,000-acre campus south of Houma where the company builds different types of vessels.

Gov. Kate Brown, pictured here in a February 2020 pre-pandemic photo, met with leaders of Oregon consumer-owned utilities in July via Zoom. PHOTO BY LYNN HOWLETT

Utility Leaders: Dams Help Protect Most Vulnerable Oregonians

In a virtual meeting with Oregon's governor, utility leaders put a human face on those who benefit from Lower Snake River dams

By Ted Case

On July 29, eight consumer-owned utility leaders met via Zoom with Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and her key natural resource and energy staff regarding operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System and the importance of the Lower Snake River dams.

The meeting was organized between the governor's office and representatives of the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities and the Oregon People's Utilities District Association.

Representing Oregon were Libby Calnon, Hood River Electric Cooperative general manager; Todd Simmons, Tillamook PUD general manager; John Dietz, McMinnville Water & Light general manager; Bob Durham, Wasco Electric Cooperative Board of Directors; Keith Hormann, Forest Grove Light & Power general manager; Fred Flippence, Harney Electric Cooperative general manager; Debi Wilson, Lane Electric Cooperative general manager; and Roger Kline, Northern Wasco PUD general manager.

Gov. Brown wrote Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee in early 2020 and claimed "the science is clear removing the earthen portions of the four lower Snake River dams is the most certain and robust solution to Snake River and steelhead recovery."

This change in position by the state of Oregon was met with surprise by consumer-owned utilities that rely on the Snake River dams for affordable, reliable electricity for more than a quarter of the state's population.

The July meeting was scheduled for the governor's office to provide an update and for utility leaders to provide vital information about the dams. On page 5 is a letter sent by the eight aforementioned Oregon utility leaders to Gov. Brown summarizing the meeting and thanking her for her interest. ■

August 4, 2020

Governor Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street Suite 254
Salem, OR 97301-4047

Dear Governor Brown:

Thank you for meeting with us on July 29, 2020, to discuss the vital importance of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) and the Lower Snake River dams to the people of Oregon. As leaders of eight consumer-owned utilities (COUs), we are part of a program that serves over 1 million Oregonians in every corner of our great state with affordable, reliable—and nearly carbon-free—electricity. With all the demands on your schedule, it is truly impressive you could find time to hear our viewpoints about how retaining the Lower Snake River dams aligns with many of your priorities as Oregon's governor.

We discussed how the removal of the Lower Snake River dams could undermine one of your centerpiece environmental initiatives: a low-carbon future for Oregon. As you know, the Columbia River System Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) concluded that breaching the dams could create a staggering 9% increase in power-related emissions around the Northwest. We noted the importance of a reliable electric grid in the Northwest. The FEIS concluded dam breaching would "more than double the region's risk of power shortages." Furthermore, we reminded you of our commitment to salmon recovery through a multi-billion-dollar effort to improve fish passage at the dams, which is meeting targets of 96% survival rates for migrating juvenile fish.

However, we spent most of our brief time together highlighting how removal of the Lower Snake River dams is counter to two of your main priorities: a thriving statewide economy and protecting vulnerable communities and communities of color. Breaching the Lower Snake River dams would have long-term, major, adverse effects on power costs and rates and, as noted in the FEIS, the "rate pressure could be up to 50% on wholesale power rates." We attempted to put a human face on those Oregonians who would bear the brunt of these rate increases: businesses and industries that help drive our state's economy—and vulnerable Oregonians who can least afford higher electricity bills. As you contemplate Oregon's response to the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the future of the Lower Snake River Dams, we hope you will consider the following Oregonians in your decision-making process:

- The large number of Hispanic families in the Upper Hood River Valley who work in the agricultural sector in farms and cold-storage facilities who help put food on the table for Oregonians.
- Industrial and agricultural workers—including Oregon's wine industry—in McMinnville and the surrounding areas. Industries like Cascade Steel are large employers and provide family-wage jobs and can only remain competitive with low-cost power.
- Vital industrials along our Oregon Coast, such as dairy farms, lumber mills and commercial/sport fisheries. The margin for milk and lumber is relatively tight, making affordable electricity exceedingly important.
- The Warm Springs Indian Reservation has suffered economic dislocation after losing two major employers. Any increase in power rates would be extremely detrimental to the Warm Springs residents and would make the possible reopening of Kah-Nee-Ta Resort even more difficult.
- Urban families in the Portland Metro area served by COUs have been impacted by the housing crisis and face economic hardship. For instance, families in Forest Grove have a 53% household rental burden; and in the school district, 60% of the kids receive free and reduced lunch.
- Rural families in places like Oakridge that were significantly impacted by the downturn of the timber industry have never recovered. The Oakridge School District is the fifth-poorest in the nation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Frontier Oregon families in areas served by Harney Electric Cooperative, which provides electricity to 1,200 members over an immense 20,000-square-mile territory that is bigger than several states. Many are on fixed incomes, in agriculture or are members of the McDermitt Indian Reservation and could face a power increase of nearly $3,000 a year with the loss of the Lower Snake River dams.
- Technology industries such as Google data centers that represent an over $2 billion local investment in areas around The Dalles. These energy-intensive companies rely on the low-cost, carbon-free energy provided by the FCRPS.

We very much appreciate your administration's initial commitment to the Flexible Spill Agreement that is embodied in the Final Environmental Impact Statement's Preferred Alternative. We urge you to support the Final Environmental Impact Statement, which seeks to meet multiple resource needs through flexible spill operations developed by your staff.

Finally, we are hopeful that our productive meeting on July 30 was not a singular event, but rather, the start of a new, long-term partnership between the COUs and the state of Oregon.

We look forward to working with you and having meaningful input into the Four State Process outlined by your team.