

Columbia River Gorge Business Review



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provides stimulus

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February 2013

Covering Gorge Business

Volume 5, No. 2



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Windseeker endures, enjoys price of fame

TV show *Restaurant Impossible* features a, sometimes, searing look at The Dalles business

By **KATHY URSPRUNG**

CRG Business Review

THE DALLES – Patty Taylor is surrounded by smiling restaurant customers in the Windseeker dining room as another patron takes a photo.

It's not the first time today and it probably won't be the last. Such is the daily life of a new reality TV show star.

"It's been poppin' today," Taylor says. "People have been coming in. One called me over to the table and asked, 'Could I please stand up and give you a hug?'"

As one of the latest stars of "Restaurant Impossible," Taylor graciously complies.

Taylor, the general manager, and Veta Bingman, the Windseeker's owner, were front and center in the popular Food Network program, which stars Chef Robert Irvine. A group of about 50 people gathered at the adjacent Portside Pub on Jan. 16 to watch Irvine heap both criticism and suggestions on the restaurant and its staff.

The attention started as soon as the show ended. The same night, the Windseeker received calls from Florida, Oklahoma and Massachusetts from people making plans to visit. The calls have continued since.

Unfortunately, so have the crank calls and rude blog posts that apparently go hand-in-hand with national fame.

What people saw on TV was a mere fraction of what went on behind the scenes, Taylor says, and she and Bingman offered a glimpse behind the curtain of reality TV.

"There were a lot of things that went on when they were here that never ever hit that TV," Taylor says. "They were filming us for two days straight."

Focus during a big portion of the show was less on the food than on tensions around management issues: on Taylor wearing too many hats and Bingman being unwilling at times to hand over the restaurant management reins to her manager.

"He couldn't find anything wrong with the food — or not much of anything," Bingman said, "so he had to find a drama point and go with it."

Problems with food are often the drama point in the popular show.

Early in the show, Irvine seemed convinced that the problems lay with Taylor, but changed his mind after most of the employees supported Taylor in a confidential vote involving new potatoes (Taylor has a new nickname among employees: "Four Potato Patty") and Taylor's tearful concerns about Bingman's soft heart and its financial cost to the restaurant.

"It was kinda painful; it was hard," admitted Taylor, who prefers a more stoic attitude. "They have a way of drawing it out of you."

Like most reality shows, "Restaurant Impossible" thrives on interpersonal conflict, so interactions between Bingman, Taylor and Bingman's daughter came under the microscope. But Bingman and Taylor both agreed, they may squabble about small matters, but on important things they are a united front.

"I've worked for her for over 10 years total," Taylor said, noting that Bingman sought her out to return to the restaurant several years ago. "We had a mission of starting to bring the restaurant out and about."

Most of what happened during the two-day shoot occurred outside Bingman's and Taylor's hearing.

"We were prisoners in my little office," Bingman said. "We couldn't hear nothing, couldn't see nothing.

Any time there was interaction, we had

See TV SHOW, Page 9

Hood River hosts a career fair Feb. 11

HOOD RIVER – There will be a career fair Feb. 11 at Hood River Valley High School from 1:30-3:30 p.m. The fair will include representatives from colleges, trades, the military and businesses.

From 5-7 p.m., the college and trade representatives will return to

meet with parents and students. Guidance counselors will be giving a presentation about preparing for college and starting the search and application process from 7:15-8:30 p.m.

For information, contact Wendy Herman at 541-387-5034, ext. 1, or wendy.herman@hoodriver.k12.or.us.



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Ask the Experts

Tax incentive offered to business, individual

HOOD RIVER – As an incentive for completing energy efficiency upgrades the Oregon Department of Energy has issued the Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District a tax credit of \$15,012.

As government entity, the Parks District does not pay taxes so the ODOE allows the agency to sell the incentive to a business or individual that does pay taxes for a minimum of 67 cents on the dollar. This means the Parks District can sell its tax certificate good for \$15,012 (\$3,002 per year for five years) for a minimum bid of \$10,066.08 (paid all at once) to a business or individual.

The Parks District will be accepting sealed bids until 2 p.m. Feb. 7.

Bids may be dropped off or mailed to the Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation office.

Bids will be opened Feb. 7. For details call 541-386-1303.



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The legal issues behind caregiving

Here are some points to consider when taking control over the legal responsibilities for your relative in need of care.

- Find a lawyer who can help you establish a will or estate plan for your relative. A lawyer can also provide strong advice on other key developments in the life of your loved one.
- Look into the possibility of becoming the power of attorney for your loved one if they become incapable of caring for themselves. Often a durable power of attorney can provide better coverage instead of a simple one.
- A living will can provide an end of life decision for your loved one should they become terminally ill. This pivotal paper can tell a doctor just how much or how little care the person wishes to receive.



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What is the birthstone for February?

February's birthstone is amethyst, the beautiful purple variety of quartz, the majestic color of royalty.

Purple reminds us of the lavender flowers and our local lavender farms here in the Gorge area.

Amethyst has been used in jewelry since ancient times and is still plentiful today. Amethyst and the color purple are thought to be calming and relaxing. There are many colorful stories about the

history of amethyst and it is so beautiful.



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Insitu stays put with expansion plans

Bingen Point building will house the company's production and administration departments

By **SVERRE BAKKE**

CRG Business Review

BINGEN – Insitu Inc. announced last month that it is staying put in the Columbia River Gorge, and plans to break ground this spring at Bingen Point on a 120,000-square-foot concrete tilt-up building that will house the company's production and administrative departments.



Steve Morrow

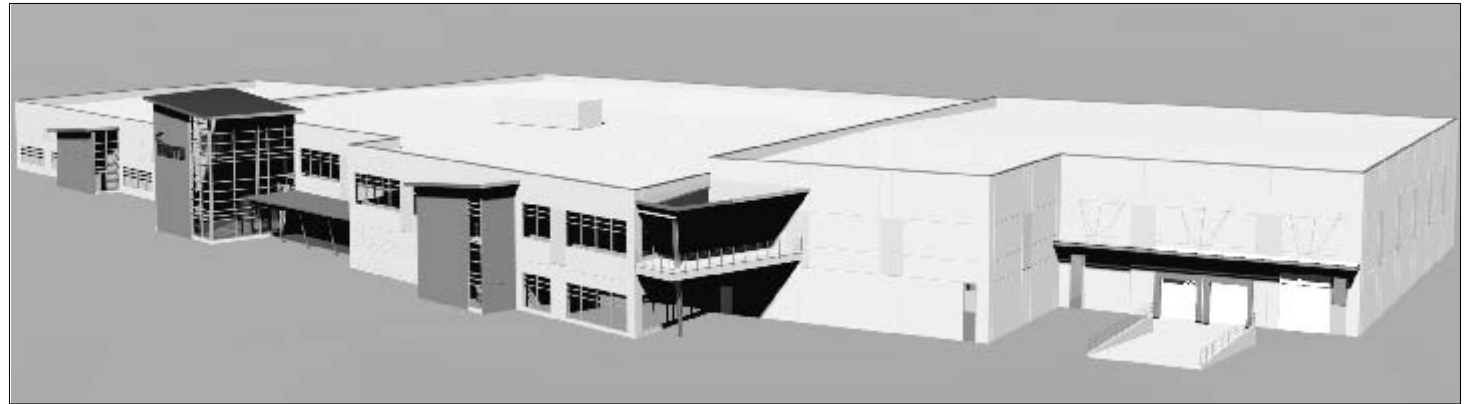
The announcement — made by Jill Vacek, Insitu's director of media relations, at the Port of Klickitat office — comes more than three years after Insitu stated its intention to stay in the Gorge by calling for

ideas for a business campus that would encompass most of Insitu's operations.

Klickitat County Port District No. 1 officials and Insitu representatives completed negotiations in late December and agreed on a 50-year ground lease that covers two lots and 8.06 acres of the Bingen Point Binding Site Plan, facing the Columbia River, and includes up to three 10-year extensions.

If all goes according to plan, as many as 180 Insitu employees could move into the 550-by-260-foot building as soon as mid-2014, according to Jennifer Taylor, Insitu's facilities director.

"We really wanted to stay where we started," Taylor said of the company's decision to centralize operations and build its new facility at Bingen Point.



Submitted design

Insitu will break ground in 2013 on a 120,000-square-foot production/administration building at Bingen Point.

Vacek agreed with Taylor's sentiment.

"Insitu employees live here in the Gorge. Many of them have bought homes in local communities and are here to stay, and we're just excited to be part of this community."

Many of the 180 employees mentioned above will be relocated to Bingen from Stevenson facilities Insitu has been leasing from the Port of Skamania. When all is said and done, Insitu facilities at Bingen Point will house as many as 250 employees.

"I can't tell you how thrilled we are that we will be breaking ground at Bingen Point this spring to build our new facility," said Steve Morrow, Insitu's president and chief executive officer. "We appreciate the community's patience through the selection process and are especially grateful to the Klickitat County commissioners, the Port of Klickitat, and state and local government for putting it all together."

Morrow added, "This facility will be our sole location for all of our production operations, allowing Insitu to be

more efficient, competitive in the industry; and it puts us in a great place for future growth opportunities."

Insitu is one of Klickitat County's largest employers with 800 employees, and accounts for 29 percent of total county payroll, and 15 percent of the five-county Mid-Columbia region's payroll, according to Wayne Vinyard, chairman of the port commission. He said Insitu's economic impact on the county and the Gorge cannot be overstated.

"What a great success story," Vinyard noted. "I'm just so proud of this company and how far it's come in the last several years here."

The Port of Klickitat and Insitu have a longstanding business relationship that goes back some 17 years. In 2003, the Port broke ground on a \$1.2-million building at Bingen Point for Insitu that the company moved into in 2004. At that time, said Vinyard, Insitu had 43 employees.

"This is a home-grown company that was the Port's first tenant at Bingen Point back in 1996, when this building

we're sitting in was constructed," Vinyard noted. "We've been with them every step of the way as they've grown and needed more space for their operations, and we're glad we were able to come to agreement to make this new building happen."

Mildren Design Group, of Tigard, which specializes in concrete tilt-up design and manufacturing facilities, is the architect for the building project. The developer is real estate development and investment firm Trammel Crow Company of Portland. The financial institution behind the ground lease is Lexington Company. Estimated cost of the project was not disclosed.

The building — nearly two football fields long and almost one football field wide — will be designed and constructed to achieve a Gold or Silver LEED certification, LEED standing for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a standard for eco-friendly design, construction and operation. The U.S. Green Building Council devel-

See Insitu, Page 7



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Ice, snow help keep Hood River native busy

Apple City Auto Body technician usually goes from one dent to another this time of year

By **ESTHER K. SMITH**

CRG Business Review

HOOD RIVER – This time of year, cars are sliding into each other, into guardrails and into ditches. And that means plenty of work for Kevin Long.

Long, 24, works as an auto body technician at Apple City Auto Body, on the Heights in Hood River. Each week or so he gets a new “project,” and this week it’s a Chrysler PT Cruiser with front-end damage.

“The frame is OK, but the core support is damaged,” he said.

By the time he gets the vehicle the damage has already been assessed, an estimate is written up and needed new parts have been ordered.

“I tear it down, write a supplemental

report (on any damage not visible from the outside), repair it and get it ready for paint,” he said. The whole process for this car should take him 38.4 hours, according to the work order.

Right now the Cruiser is up on a frame rack and Long is measuring its “strut towers.” He attaches a giant caliper-like tool which is connected to a computer monitor that guides him in bringing all the contact points back to their original places.

When it has been squeezed and



Esther K. Smith photo

Kevin Long takes a crumpled vehicle and makes it pretty again.

pulled back into shape by the other specialized equipment, Long will start putting it back together, his favorite part.

“It’s kind of like a big puzzle,” he said. “And every car is different.”

In the process, some parts will need patching and sanding, while others will be replaced with new ones,

but Long and his three fellow auto body techs do it all, start to finish (except painting).

Long has been working for Apple City for four years, having started out

there washing cars. His training has been done through a series of “I-Car” classes in Portland. The wall of the company’s reception area is filled with the certificates he and the other techs have earned.

While the weather outside may be bringing him more work, inside, life doesn’t change much day to day, except for the variety of vehicles he works on. His hours are regular, the shop is well-lit and temperature controlled, and at the end of the day he can go home.

In his off-time the Hood River native can be found volunteering with the Wy’East Fire District in Odell.

Springtime is the busiest time of year in his line of work, he said, which makes sense, given what happens during the winter. So there will be lots of projects coming up, no doubt. But Long derives great satisfaction from making a broken car whole again.

“It feels really good,” he said.

Cascade Locks hires veteran administrator in Zimmerman

CRG Business Review

CASCADE LOCKS – Gordon Zimmerman is ready for a fresh start.

The new Cascade Locks city administrator is currently learning the ropes of the job and getting back in the saddle of a city administration job after a year off.

Zimmerman, who was hired by the city in December and started this month, brings decades of experience to the job, and previously served as the city administrator in several towns across the state.



Gordon Zimmerman

Most recently his eight-year tenure in Oakridge ended in a storm of controversy in December 2011.

Zimmerman resigned following the city discovering in June of that year that it had a \$420,000 budget shortfall and its reserves had dwindled from

nearly a million dollars to under \$4,000.

According to the Eugene Register-Guard, the city was forced to lay off numerous employees and borrow against future tax revenue to pay its bills.

Zimmerman resigned in December 2011 — with three councilors voting to reject his resignation in favor of termination. The controversy also led to an attempted recall of the city’s mayor and three council members.

A forensic auditor’s report of the city’s finances said that the city had spent far beyond its means, and that numerous transfers for city business which led to the shortfall “couldn’t have been a surprise” to Zimmerman, according to the Register-Guard.

Zimmerman said he spent most of the last year remodeling his kitchen, “falling in love all over again” with his wife and clearing blackberries from the property of his Oakridge home.

JOB DEVELOPMENT WITH THE PORT

THE PORT OF HOOD RIVER is pleased to announce that Pocket Fuel, the maker of portable, high energy snacks, has leased 5,486 square feet in the Halyard Building across from the Hood River Waterfront Park.

Pocket Fuel will join



current building tenants Real Carbon and Pfriem Family Brewers by mid-summer. The Halyard

Building is expected to be fully occupied by late 2013. Three lease opportunities are currently available in other Port buildings:

- 7,500 s.f. of light industrial space in the Odell John Webber Business Park
- 1,000 s.f. of light industrial/office space in the Maritime Building on Portway Ave.
- 1,400 s.f. of high quality office space in the Visitor’s Center Building on East Port Marina Drive



Illustration Courtesy of Key Development

To learn more contact the Port at (541) 386-1645. E-mail inquiries may be sent to porthr@gorge.net

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Cutie Pie keeps locals local **Insitu**

Cutie Pie consignment store heads into its fifth year in downtown Hood River

By **BAILEY McMANUS**

CRG Business Review

HOOD RIVER – Erika Doring's New Year resolution is to "make Cutie Pie the most fun and satisfying feel-good shop for your family."

Doring owns the children's store Cutie Pie, on Fourth and State streets. The shop will start its fifth year in business in July.

Cutie Pie carries everything from children's sports equipment to children's books and clothing. The store is about 90 percent consignment and there are more than 300 local families who consign with Cutie Pie. They provide clean, high-quality items

that are affordable with the intent to get use out of people's items instead of purchasing brand new items.

"By doing so they are reducing waste, and educating people on the importance of getting good use out of the items we've already purchased," Doring said.

"It is important how consignment gets people to think about consumer habits," said Doring. A strong local economy is very important, and by shopping at local stores this brings the money earned back into the community.

Doring's overall goal for Cutie Pie is to make the store mainstream, pleasant and satisfying. In soon starting her fifth year owning Cutie Pie she will be working even harder to provide great service to her customers.



Kirby Neumann-Rea photo

Cutie Pie owner Erika Doring has more than 300 local families who consign clean, high-quality, affordable items.

Continued from Page 5

oped the rating system in the late 1990s.

The Klickitat County Planning Department issued a final mitigated determination of non-significance for the project's environmental impact on Dec. 10, 2012, per the State Environmental Policy Act and the county's Environmental Ordinance.

While the new building is being constructed, employees in Insitu's procurement department will be at work in a 10,800-square-foot Boeing surplus building that sits on a lot (leased from the Port) adjacent to the building where Insitu got its start in 1996.

Taylor said the temporary building will remain in service for at least the next two years. "It will be a holding place for us until the new building opens up," she noted.

Port officials pointed out last week that Insitu's building project is moving forward because of investments the Port began making in the late 2000s in Bingen Point infrastructure improvements, with the support of state funding agencies and the Klickitat County Board of Commissioners.

"The contractor started work in 2010 and it's taken three years to return a result," said Port Executive Director Marc Thornsbury.

Koch has an interim role

By **BEN McCARTY**

CRG Business Review

HOOD RIVER – When the Port of Cascade Locks brings on a new general manager at some point in the coming year, that person's job description could look a bit different than that of his or her predecessor's.

Former Port Administrator Chuck Daughtry, who resigned Dec. 31 after 12 years on the job, amassed a significant amount of power during his tenure, handling everything from the day-to-day operations to economic development and marketing.

Late last year the port hired Gary Rains to take over the economic development responsibilities and then hired former AmeriCorps worker Holly Howell to handle marketing duties.

Additionally, the port commission launched a review of its general manager policies, which Port President Jess Groves said will likely be reflected in what the general manager is asked to do.

"There may be a different idea of

what kind of manager we need," he said.

The port is just getting the ball rolling on hiring Daughtry's replacement. Groves was set to meet with port staff this week to begin figuring out a timeline for the search.

In the meantime, a familiar face around Cascade Locks will be serving in the GM role.

At the end of the month Interim City Administrator Paul Koch will slide over from the city to the port and assume interim general manager duties there.

Until Koch wraps up his duties with the city, he is serving as a consultant to the port and the port commission voted to allow Groves to perform the duties of general manager as necessary until Koch is on board.

For Koch the job will represent his first time working for a port, and also the first time he has moved directly from one job to another within the same community.

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Union Pacific starts \$13.2 million project

The railroad investment started last month near Troutdale and will be completed in April

CRG Business Review

ROSEVILLE, Calif. – Union Pacific Railroad will strengthen Oregon's transportation infrastructure by investing approximately \$13.2 million in the rail line between Troutdale and The Dalles, according to a company press release. The project, which is funded by Union Pacific with no taxpayer dollars, began Jan. 7 and is scheduled to be completed in April.

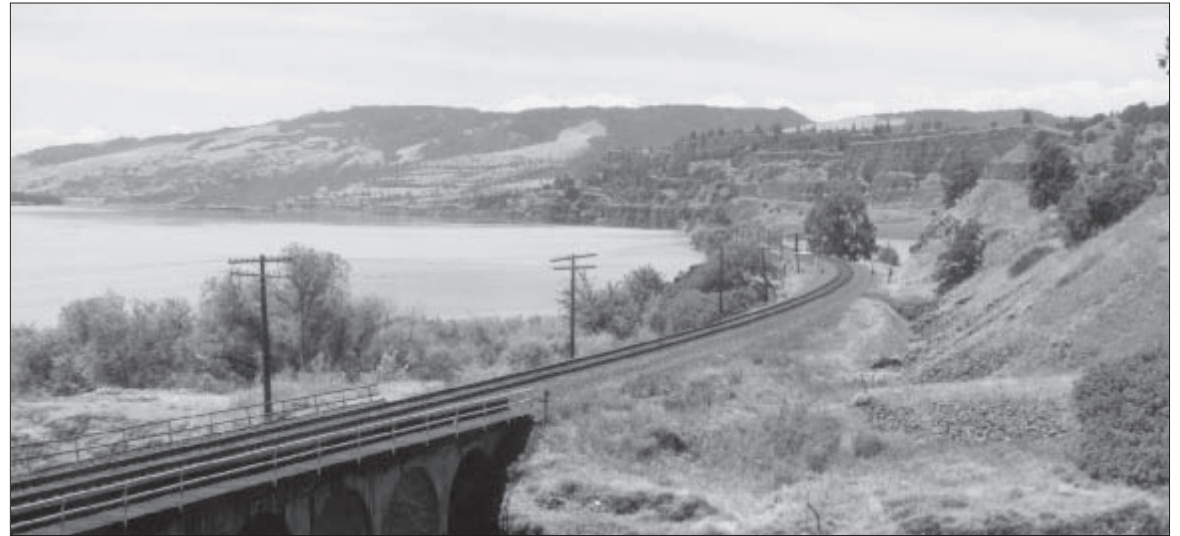
The railroad will replace nearly 91,000 railroad ties, install more than 30,000 tons of rock ballast and replace five switches. In addition, crews will renew the surfaces at 32 road crossings. The project is one of nearly 1,500 Union Pacific will complete across its 32,000-mile network this year to help improve train operating efficiency, reduce motorist wait times at crossings and enhance safety.

"Union Pacific helps link businesses

with consumers, suppliers and markets across the nation and around the world," said Scott Moore, public affairs regional vice president, Union Pacific. "In addition to helping move customers' goods more safely and efficiently, our investments support communities by reducing traffic congestion, facilitating industrial development and, promoting economic expansion."

Improved and additional freight rail capacity helps reduce highway congestion and contributes to a cleaner environment. One Union Pacific train can take up to 300 trucks off America's roads, and Union Pacific can move one ton of freight nearly 500 miles on a single gallon of diesel fuel.

Union Pacific Railroad is the principal operating company of Union



Jesse Burkhardt photo

Union Pacific is upgrading its rail lines between The Dalles and Troutdale.

Pacific Corporation. UP Railroad links 23 states in the western two-thirds of the country by rail.

From 2007-12, Union Pacific invested nearly \$18 billion in its network and operations to support America's transportation infrastructure, including a record \$3.7 billion in 2012. The railroad's diversified business mix includes

agricultural products, automotive, chemicals, coal, industrial products and intermodal. Union Pacific serves many of the fastest-growing U.S. population centers, operates from all major West Coast and Gulf Coast ports to eastern gateways, connects with Canada's rail systems and is the only railroad serving all six major Mexico gateways.

Dr. Harpole joins Skyline Hospital's board of directors

CRG Business Review

WHITE SALMON – Skyline Hospital has added Dr. Vern Harpole of Lyle as its newest board member representing the eastern portion of Klickitat County. Harpole was appointed to the board at the December meeting when Dave Elkins retired.

Skyline CEO Robb Kimmes said: "(Harpole's) experience and expertise as a physician will be very helpful as the hospital continues to move forward."

Outgoing, 15-year board member Dave Elkins said, "Skyline has a strong board and a new capable CEO who can and will take Skyline to the next level during these difficult times in health care."

"As a patient, I was incredibly impressed by Skyline Hospital and the physicians of the NorthShore Medical Group," Harpole said. "I'm happy to serve on the board of Skyline and do what I can to keep

both Skyline and NorthShore moving in the right direction."

Harpole was raised in Bend, practiced as a family practice physician in Omaha, Neb., and spent 20 years as flight surgeon and family practice physician with the Coast Guard in Omaha. After he retired from the Coast Guard, he returned to the Northwest where he spent the next 12 years with Kaiser Permanente in Longview, Wash. He retired (again) and moved to the

Gorge about six years ago to enjoy the sun and wines of Lyle.

Today, in addition to serving on Skyline Hospital board, he's actively involved in the Lyle community reviving the old school, works part-time as the county health officer for the Wasco County Health Department in The Dalles, serves as the physician director for NORCOR and the physician supervisor for a no-insurance clinic in Hood River. So much for retirement.

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Contractors from Terray Harmon Painting and Gary Denney Floor Covering work on restaurant facelift

By **KATHY URSPRUNG**

CRG Business Review

THE DALLES – While the Windseekers' management spent some time in the hot seat on "Restaurant Impossible," the local contractors came away with a positive experience.

"My biggest thing is that they were very well organized," said Terray Harmon of Terray Harmon Painting. "They had a plan; they stayed with the plan; and all the people involved in the crew were not just a show-type crew; they all worked their tails off.

"The thing I was most impressed with is that the builder, Tom, and the decorator, Lynn, are just bluejeans and T-shirt

workers ... They weren't sitting in lawn chairs outside."

The local crews also worked hard to see the project completed in just two days.

Harmon said his crew worked until about 11 p.m. the first night, then returned the next morning at about 6 a.m. to finish the job. The crew from Gary Denney Floor Covering had the opposite schedule, coming in at around 11 p.m. and getting done at about



Kathy Ursprung photo

The crew from Terray Harmon Painting worked behind the scenes at Windseeker Restaurant.

weren't too many people around."

Denney is a fan of the show and watches it regularly.

"Everybody has the same problems all the way across the country, it seems like," Denney said, noting that is true

4 a.m.

"We had a good time," Denney said. "It was a lot of work, but everybody got along really great; although we were there in the middle of the night and there

of both the restaurant and the floor covering issues, and many of them are personnel-related.

While Denney mostly worked at night, Harmon had a chance to rub elbows with some of the show's stars. He had good things to say about Robert Irvine, the show's host, who was willing to sign autographs and even pen a special note to Harmon's grandson, who is interested in cooking.

"He is very quick and to the point," Harmon said of Irvine. "Basically, he does not beat around the bush. He's not really a demeaning person, but he only has Tuesday and Wednesday to get this done. He didn't have much time."

For the most part, the show's crew let the local contractors do what they needed to do without interference, Harmon said. "Although, if we needed something done, they did their best to get it done."

TV show

Continued from Page 3

to go outside and be debriefed." They were also miked while in the office, so people outside could hear what they were saying to each other.

While the show's publicity, both after the shooting last fall and after the show aired last week, has brought more attention and more customers to the Windseeker, Bingman and Taylor say the road toward change is a slow one.

As manager, Taylor is still wearing too many hats. "I'm wearing about two less hats," she said. And Bingman has been unable as yet to afford to hire a payroll service, as Irvine recommended.

"It might be something we can do in the future," she said.

The one immediate change was the professionally decorated dining room, which now features a rustic fireplace and warm, muted colors designed to complement the view of the Columbia River just outside. Both Bingman and Taylor love the outcome.

While the show appearance has brought the restaurant more notice, it hasn't been without its price. One of the reasons Bingman said she wasn't able to implement the payroll service after the shooting was because of the \$3,500 bill for food and alcohol for the reveal dinner. They also had to keep their entire staff on payroll for the two-day shoot, which added to the overhead.

The cost of the remodel was paid for by the show itself, but will be counted as added income on the Windseeker's taxes this year.

"It isn't all flowers and roses," Bingman said. "All in all, when you look back at the experience, it was interesting. Let's face it, it's good for The Dalles to have some celebrity."

Of course, Bingman and Taylor would love for people to experience the Windseeker for themselves.

"I hope people will give us a chance, and not make early assumptions and don't be critical when you walk in the door," Bingman said. "Come in with an open mind and let us know what you think about us."



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Mom, daughter decide to go country

Western-theme merchandise fills Dee and Kacie Davidson's Gone Country store

By **KATHY URSPRUNG**

CRG Business Review

THE DALLES – When mother and daughter Dee and Kacie Davidson launched Gone Country late last year it was both a long and winding path and not very far at all.

Not far because Kacie is rounding out a year as Fort Dalles Pro Rodeo Queen and the western lifestyle is close to home for both Davidsons. A winding path because this is the fourth location where Dee has sold her western-themed merchandise, but the first time she has had her own location.

She started around the time Kacie graduated from high school as a remedy for empty nest syndrome.

"I was afraid I wasn't going to have enough to do with my daughter in college out of state," Dee said.

At first, Dee displayed her merchandise at Total Body Salon in downtown The Dalles, then at Savvy Seconds and eventually at Hughes Feed and Grain until it closed down.

Last fall Dee and Kacie decided to take the plunge with a downtown location of their own.

"We decided to try, even with this economy, to have our own space," Dee said.

But finding a space that fit into their budget was another challenge altogether until they called the number for the Specialty Shops location owned by Gary Honald.

"It was the only place we could find



Kathy Ursprung photo

Mother and daughter Kacie, left, and Dee Davidson have launched Gone Country at 406 E. Second St. in The Dalles.

in town for such a small business," Dee said. "Nowhere else in town would be able to operate."

Specialty Shops is a standard-sized storefront that has been partitioned into small spaces for businesses like Gone Country. The space, as well as the ones adjacent to it, have been recently insulated to improve the energy efficiency and cut utility costs. The renters split the utilities, Dee said. She wants to get the information out to the public in the hope other small businesses might be able to find what they need there.

"(The Honalds) have been great to work with," she said.

The Davidsons have rented three of the small spaces to display not only

their own merchandise, but some from local artisans that they display through a co-op agreement. They would also be interested in the possibility of helping future tenants on a cooperative basis.

"We would love to help get everything filled," Dee said. "The rent is more than reasonable for smaller spaces."

Gone Country offers a variety of western-themed merchandise including belts, T-shirts, scarves, handbags and other leather goods. The Davidsons also carry the products of a variety of local artisans including custom jewelry by Rob Pizzola and custom furniture and frames made by Roger Johnson. His illuminated shadowbox coffee

tables are a great showcase for western décor and memorabilia, Kacie said.

"Our main focus is to target the area," Dee said. "If you live here and work here, you can afford to shop here."

Their other goal was not to compete with other stores in town. They try to offer merchandise that is significantly different from most of what is offered at other western stores in town like Belle Star and Tony's. In fact, Kacie is a former employee of Tony's, but had to give up the work during her year as rodeo queen.

Particularly notable among the merchandise is a display case of vintage turquoise jewelry.

"My grandfather bought the turquoise," Kacie explained, "and it was last on display at my great-grandfather's saddle shop in Hood River 30 years ago. After he passed away, everything has been in suitcases."

Pizzola appraised the jewelry.

"He was able to go through, take a look at the quality and price it correctly," Dee said. He also loaned the Davidsons a century-old oak store display case in which to display it. "Some of the pieces are signature pieces signed by the maker."

Pizzola isn't the only person in the Davidsons' corner. They said they have had help and offers of support from a variety of other local businesses and people.

Vicki Wolf has helped them arrange displays and otherwise decorate the shop.

"Her whole family calls her Martha Stewart West," Kacie said.

Gone Country is located at 406 E. Second St., Suite 2, in The Dalles.



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Cascade Locks Ale House opens taps

New owners savor stories and differing kinds of spirits at former Pacific Crest Pub and Hostel

By **JULIE RAEFIELD-GOBBO**

CRG Business Review

CASCADE LOCKS – A quartet of hopeful beer enthusiasts is setting down new roots in Cascade Locks at what was formerly known as the Pacific Crest Pub and Hostel.

The old name is out and the new, Cascade Locks Ale House, is in with Shelley James, Suzanne Jackson, Mike James and Wayne Slagle joining forces as new owners.

“We bought the building and the land,” said Shelley James, the weekday manager of the pub and restaurant.

Workers used the building, according to James, during Bonneville Dam’s construction period. It has also served as a brothel and boarding house. She believes

it was built in 1904.

The Ale House may also be host to a few unusual, long-term guests.

“I won’t go upstairs by myself,” said James, who is respectful of the building’s reputation of being haunted.

“There was a boarder who lived up there when it used to be Suzie’s Suds Locker and it got so that he refused to go up there. He would see and hear things. He wasn’t the only one,” said



Julie Raefield-Gobbo photo

Shelley James is co-owner of the Cascade Locks Ale House.

James. The upstairs currently remains empty with no immediate plans to investigate the origin of the ghost stories.

James would rather focus on the present and plans for the future.

“Our current special-

ty is pizza. We make our dough fresh along with the sauce,” she said.

James notes that plans are in the works to start a small brewery at the site within the next year or so, but a good selection of tapped and bottle beer

is already available. The Ale House also sells a zippy, bottled horseradish sauce — a patented recipe — which is a favorite of locals and tourists alike.

“We ship cases of this all over the country,” James said.

James took on the business proposition with her best friend and former co-worker, Jackson, after having worked together for their last three jobs. They talked their “behind-the-scene” partners into the idea.

“We both worked for U.S. Bank and two jobs together before that,” said James. “Suzanne is still at the bank and works here on the weekends. I’m here pretty much full time.”

To drop in and sample the pizza, the beers or the homemade salmon chowder — or perhaps to take your chances with a ghostly encounter — the Ale House is open every day except Tuesdays 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., with Fridays and Saturdays open until 11 p.m.

Next Gorge Soup dinner event is Feb. 5

HOOD RIVER — The next Gorge Soup will be Feb. 5, and diners and presenters are welcome to sign up.

Gorge Soup is a dinner event where people buy tickets, come to dinner and eat soup with other Gorge community members. While they eat, they listen to quick presentations given by people who are starting a new business, creating a new nonprofit or developing a new community solution.

At the end of the dinner, everyone votes for their favorite idea. The win-

ner gets the ticket money to use to make his or her idea a reality.

Gorge Soup began in 2011 and has thus far produced three events for adult entrepreneurs and one for Gorge area students in grades K-12.

Last year’s season resulted in a total of five new ventures receiving a total of more than \$7,100 in support. Organizers say that at least three new Soup events have begun in Portland and Seattle, inspired by Gorge Soup.

Newspapers sold

SALEM – Eagle Newspapers Inc., which owns the Columbia River Gorge Business Review, sold the Woodburn Independent, Canby Herald, Newberg Graphic, Wilsonville Spokesman, Molalla Pioneer and Madras Pioneer.

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A different way to build a playground

Cooper Spur Mountain Resort restaurant reconnects by hosting monthly fundraising dinner

By **KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**

CRG Business Review

HOOD RIVER – Joe Silliman wants “community” to be the common ingredient in everything served at Cooper Spur Mountain Resort restaurant.

Since taking over as chef of the Meadows-owned restaurant in December 2011, Silliman has seen business steadily increase, and he wants the upper valley community to look upon the restaurant as its local eatery.

Silliman, a veteran of various Hood River County restaurants, as well as the Meadows Ski Patrol, moved to the area seven years ago. He and his wife, Laura Spinney, live in Parkdale and have a son, Reed, 3.

The Vermont native loves what the area, and his restaurant, have to offer.

“In everything we do, building community is part of it,” he said. “We wanted to form a partnership with our community.”

On Christmas Day, the restaurant served a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, free to anyone in the community who needed a meal.

Last month was the start of what Silliman said will be a new Parkdale tradition: a monthly dinner to help Parkdale Elementary School. The restaurant donated 20 percent of all food revenue to the school to help with the playground redesign and upgrade.

Nearly 60 diners filled the tables, which Silliman and server Rose Rhodes had placed primarily in “family-style” groups. Indeed, families arrived and, mainly at the kids’ urging, pushed tables together so that 8-15 people gathered at four different tables, along with groups of four.

The parents talked as they sipped beer and wine, and the kids drew pictures and played games with crayons and butcher paper.

Silliman said that he and Jake

Bolland, executive director of finance for Meadows, “looked for ways to get back involved.”

“He’s been responsible for our voice back up at Meadows, what our needs are and how to best communicate those,” Silliman said.

“He’s been a great asset for Cooper Spur.

“We needed to get back in touch with the community,” he said. “There’s a sense I don’t understand that our association with Meadows puts a distance between us and the local community, and I’m trying to break that barrier, become part of the conversation at the dinner table, so to speak.”

He said that Parkdale parent and friend Alison Betzing were talking at a kid’s birthday party “and we were both looking at ways to do what we were talking about,” and Betzing suggested the monthly dinner.

He met with her and Principal Kim Vogel and together they developed the idea.

“They needed someone to adopt the idea, and we were willing,” Silliman said. “We were tickled. We live two blocks from the school, and what affects our children affects our community. As a new parent I have a new understanding and appreciation for that. It’s just the right thing to do.”

Betzing said, “We’re a small community, and I think Joe is wonderful to step up first with the community dinner.

“We wanted to do a partnership, they’re willing to do the third Thursday. It’s a great thing for Parkdale Elementary. It also gets us out



Kirby Neumann-Rea photo

CHEF Joe Silliman, who lives in Parkdale, wants the Cooper Spur Resort and the upper valley community to forge a closer connection.

with good friends, so it’s nice.”

Silliman feels a sense of responsibility for the restaurant and its role in the community.

“There is history in these walls and people have very fond memories of this place, and I’m not trying to regain that, I’m, trying to write a new

positive chapter.

“What’s going to be exciting to me tonight is seeing people who may or maybe have never been in here togeth-

er or maybe they have and they’ll look around and say, ‘I haven’t seen this many familiar faces in this place in 10 or 15 years.’ That would be so cool.”

While the chairs and table were arranged (and rearranged again) for communal dining, Silliman said it is important with the third-Thursday meals to accommodate all tastes.

“For me it’s about everyone in here getting the experience they want. There’s intrinsic value in it and there’s personal value as well, and people stand to gain from it what they wish, and it’s my job to see that happens.”

The renewed openness is part of Meadows’ larger plans for the resort.

“We have plans; things that have to fall into place, but we are hoping to rebrand our image, bring some modern touches to our operation,” Silliman said.

“We could really stand to use our

See FOOD, Page 14

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Businesses look to cash in on acclaim

White Salmon River is one of the world's top destinations for 2013 according to *New York Times*

By **BEN MITCHELL**

CRG Business Review

WHITE SALMON – Vernazza, Italy. Koh Phangan, Thailand. Constantia, South Africa. Waiheke, New Zealand. The White Salmon River, United States of America.

What do all of these places have in common? They are all on *The New York Times*' "The 46 Places to Go in 2013," a list published last month that notes the must-see travel destinations in countries all over the world.

The White Salmon River came in at number 13 on the list, in between number 12, Montenegro ("A Balkan gem that's small, spectacular — and cheap," a writer for *The Times* crowed), and number 14, Hvar, Croatia ("Explore

the quieter side of a jet-setter's haven," said another writer). The Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro — set to host soccer's World Cup in 2014 and the next Summer Olympics in 2016 — came in at number 1.

Bonnie

Tsui, a freelance author who lives in San Francisco, wrote the entry about the White Salmon River, which she billed in her brief article as "a whitewater paddler's dream come true," due to the completion of Condit Dam



Adam Lapierre photo

Husum Falls may be one of the reasons the White Salmon River was described as "a whitewater paddler's dream come true."

Big Island (Hawaii), Hawaii; Houston, Texas (an entry that has predictably drawn some scathing criticism from commenters on *The Times*' website); Washington, D.C.; and Jackson Hole, Wyo. Besides the natu-

demolition work last fall. Tsui did not immediately respond to requests for comment from *The Enterprise*.

The White Salmon River is one of seven destinations listed in the U.S., including the Adirondack Mountains, N.Y.; The

ral splendor of the White Salmon River, the skiing at Red Mountain Resort in Rossland, British Columbia, was the list's only other entry to represent the Pacific Northwest.

The list has created quite the buzz in White Salmon in the week since its publication. The article has wound up on the Facebook pages of Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Husum whitewater rafting company Wet Planet (which was given a brief mention in the article), the Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce, and likely many more.

Avery Pickard, executive director of the Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce, said that the organization is "extremely excited" about the river being recognized by one of the largest news organizations in the U.S.

"We're on the list, on the map, and very proud of our rushing White Salmon River," she said.

Children's Place expands; daughter joins mom

CRG Business Review

Our Children's Place now offers full-time child care for children ages 12 months and up as well as after-school care.

"Teacher Janet" Davis's daughter, Kristen, has joined her in the business. Under her mother's supervision, Kristin will develop the toddler program. She worked as a Mother's Helper beginning at the age of 8, and has cared for children as a personal nanny as well as a volunteer soccer coach and camp counselor.

Since graduating from Hood River Valley High School, Kristin has stud-

ied child development and psychology in pursuit of her nursing degree.

"I have been planning on this expansion for the past two or three years," Janet said. "With Kristin's excitement to develop our toddler program I knew the time was right."

She said the transition from a state-registered facility to a state-licensed childcare center was seamless.

"Many of the guidelines required were already in place and we passed the inspections with flying colors," Davis said. With the business side of the changes in order, now is time for the fun part, she said.

"Kristin has full creative liberty to mold the new additions into a program not provided to Gorge parents at this time," she said. "I will be overseeing the program, of course, but Kristin has ideas that I wouldn't have thought of. All I can say is parents will be very happy and a little spoiled."

"I am ready to get the program rolling and see the reaction of parents in our community," Kristin said. "I have a feeling they are going to love it."

Our Children's Place is located on the Heights in Hood River, on the corner of 13th and Taylor streets.



Submitted photo

"Teacher Janet" Davis and her daughter Kristin are teaming up at Our Children's Place.



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Mary Davis



Matt Herriges



Pam Jensen

Chamber honors Optimist Printers, others

The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce honors top businesses, citizen volunteers for 2012

CRG Business Review

The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce held its annual awards banquet last month, and Optimist Printers, owned by Matt Herriges, was selected business of the year for 2012.

Each year the chamber board recognizes a business that best represents excellence in service, management, business practices and community participation. Optimist recommitted to downtown The Dalles by moving into a renovated historic building this past year.

Optimist was established in 1906 as a weekly newspaper and job shop with a subscription rate of \$1.50 per year. The business has changed ownership four times over the past 100 years. Herriges has been in The Dalles since 1981.

Dr. Frank Toda, president of Columbia Gorge Community College, was selected as 2012 outstanding man of the year. Toda has been lauded as a

visionary leader — his commitment to integrity, service and excellence has put his campus “on the map” as a National Center of Excellence. Toda helped develop a national model for rural healthcare training and the first wind technician training program on the West Coast.

The enrollment of Columbia Gorge Community College has doubled during his tenure and a \$30 million investment in capital infrastructure has been made. In his role as president, Toda has also been an instrumental part of The Dalles Community Outreach Team, which has brought approximately \$20 million in federal funding to The Dalles and Wasco County.

Luise Langheinrich, of Lines of Design, was selected 2012 outstanding woman of the year. Langheinrich serves on Chamber committees and is an active participant of The Dalles Main Street Program. She is a strong supporter/promoter of downtown The Dalles. She also teaches at Columbia Gorge Community College.

Dolores Habberstad, owner of Hazel Phillips Travel, came to The Dalles in the 1970s and owned a business by 1980. She was selected as outstanding business professional.

management staffers Matthew Rhon and Cynthia Steele, manager.

“Everyone here has to be willing to wear different hats,” Silliman said. “We’ve got to be willing to step up and put out a little extra effort.” (Earlier, Rhodes helped Rhon clean the entry carpet.)

In addition to doing the ordering, planning, and much of the food prep, Silliman strives to make himself available to guests as much as possible when he is not cooking.

Volunteer of the year honor went to Mary Davis of the Fort Dalles Museum.

Jessica Nesbit, a senior at The Dalles-Wahntonka High School, was selected the distinguished outstanding youth. She volunteers her time with the First Christian Church youth groups and vacation Bible schools and done mission work to Los Angeles and Mexico.

Sandy Macnab was the agricultural achievement honoree. Macnab was one of the first to develop an independent applicators training program

in Oregon. Last year he was inducted into the County Agent Hall of Fame by the National Association of County Agriculture Agents. He is the 25th member selected for this recognition and the second one from Oregon.

Other honorees included:

Ron Rails, who helps spearhead the chamber’s Business After Hours each month, was selected as ambassador of the year; Pam Jensen, who was selected board member of the year; the chamber’s marketing/tourism committee.

Food

Continued from Page 12

connection with the community of Parkdale. Even though we’re donating revenue, this is revenue we wouldn’t see on a Thursday night. The idea with (family style) is get this place filled twice.”

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Why not? Take a bath, have a baby

190-gallon birthing tub allows for water births at Columbia River Women's Clinic and First Impressions in The Dalles

By **KATHY URSPRUNG**

CRG Business Review

THE DALLES – As anyone who enjoys a warm bath knows, warm water has the power to relax and to ease pain.

That's the idea behind the new water births offered through Columbia River Women's Clinic and First Impressions at Mid-Columbia Medical Center.

"Water births are done all over the world," said Mandi Morgan, certified nurse midwife. "Most large hospitals do them. But we are the only one in the Gorge.

"We are just embracing a natural process of birth and allowing women to have another choice."

It means women now have the opportunity to experience natural childbirth (without pain medication), while enjoying the pain-relieving effects of water.

Why are they beneficial?

"One, they are low-intervention and allow women to move about freely in the water and choose their own position," Morgan said. "Two, the water helps relax the muscles and it is shown to speed up the labor process. It helps the brain release its own oxytocin, which increases contractions."

Relaxation can play a key role in the process, Morgan said.

"Whenever we are more relaxed, our perception of pain is less."

The hydrostatic pressure and buoyancy of the water can add to the comfort factor by allowing the mother more latitude to find the most comfortable birthing position.

Births take place in a 190-gallon inflatable birthing



Mark Gibson photo

Columbia River Women's Clinic's water birthing team, from left, Dr. Analene Pentopolous, certified nurse midwife Mandi Morgan and Dr. Brian MacArthur with one of two available pools for water births.

tub at First Impressions. The deep tub submerges the mother to her chest. The infant goes from the warm, liquid surroundings of the womb to the warm, liquid surroundings of the tub, then is guided up to the mother's chest, either by the mother or with help from her labor coach. Exposure to air then stimulates a breathing response.

"You partner can get in the tub as well," Morgan said.

The process is overseen by a health care provider; either Morgan or one of her partners, Dr. Analene Pentopolous or Dr. Brian MacArthur.

"They are there to guide and support the delivery, if needed," Morgan said, "but in most cases the mothers will deliver the babies themselves."

During a water labor and birth, the mother may not always be in the water the entire time.

"She may get out every hour or hour and a half to use the bathroom, walk around or use other methods of comfort," Morgan explained. "Then, when she feels ready, she can get back in the water."

Cora Sawyer had a water birth for her son, Ethan. In a recent issue of Well Aware, she said water birth was gentler on her body throughout labor, delivery and recovery.

"Giving birth in the water seemed natural, peaceful, calming and simple," she said. "With water birth, needing pain relief didn't even cross my mind."

She said the water birth gave her a greater sense of control over the birthing process.

Candidates for water birth are moms who have experienced a normal, healthy pregnancy without complications. Their babies need to have a normal heart rate and no signs of distress.

Conditions of pregnancy that may preclude water birth include more than one baby (twins), breech births, suspected prematurity, presence of infection, heart disease or insulin-dependent diabetes in the mother, or the desire for epidural pain medication.

Providers like Morgan say being present during a water birth, where a baby is delivered in a natural and more comforting way, is always an honor.

"A bunch of us nurses said we wish we weren't done having children," Morgan said.

However, even if a woman is medically eligible for water birth, it's not for everyone. Some people may prefer having pain medication, or may have other reasons for not wanting a water birth.

Even those who start the water birth process may choose to discontinue and switch to another method of birth.

Port of Hood River moves ahead with basin planning

CRG Business Review

HOOD RIVER – The Port of Hood River has submitted a grant application to ODOT's Active Transportation Section to fund the preliminary engineering needed to prepare for construction of the Nichol's Basin segment of the Hood River Waterfront Trail.

The port's grant application seeks \$108,700 in federal funds from the Transportation Enhancement-Oregon

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee 2012 Combined Solicitation program. Public comment on all applications was held via an online survey through Jan. 31.

The port's trail project is listed in the survey as: "#62 Port of Hood River: Hood River Riverfront Trail: Nichols Basin Segment."

The proposed trail will be located on the west side of the Nichols Basin, beginning at the Event Site

and terminating at the port's Lot 1 southern property line, on the southeastern corner of the 65-acre business park. The trail segment will be approximately 1,160 feet.

The trail's conceptual design was developed in tandem with the Lot 1 planning work, to function well within the proposed development that will occur in the vicinity of the trail.

The trail design prioritizes design standards for a multi-use trail.

Accessibility, connectivity to existing trail segments, functional layout, recreational access, and connections to the adjacent business park were part of the design program's strategy to meet the transportation and economic development goals for the trail.

The current trail concept provides a minimum 10-foot wide hard-surface trail with grades that meet current accessibility standards.

BPA hires Drummond as its administrator

CRG Business Review

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Energy Department has chosen Bill Drummond to be the new administrator for the Bonneville Power Administration. As BPA's administrator, Drummond will be responsible for managing the non-profit federal agency, which markets carbon-free power from Columbia River hydroelectric dams and the region's one nuclear plant.

BPA also operates most of the surrounding power grid, distributing wind and other energy to the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

"Bonneville represents the best expression of public vision and achievement; collaborative relationships, environmental stewardship and a commitment to operational excellence," said Drummond. "I am grateful for this opportunity and look forward to my new role at BPA."

Drummond's leadership of BPA is part of a larger strategy to help lead the 21st century transformation of the nation's electricity sector. According to the BPA press release on Drummond, "reliable and affordable electricity is a foundation of economic growth and a resilient electric grid also helps to better protect our national security."

Drummond currently serves as BPA's deputy administrator and has worked in the energy industry for more than 30 years.

"The leadership of BPA is critically important because America's continued global competitiveness in the 21st century will be significantly affected by whether we can efficiently produce and distribute electricity to businesses and



Bill Drummond

consumers, seamlessly integrating new technologies and new sources of power," said Secretary of Energy Steven Chu. "I look forward to working with Bill Drummond to help lead BPA's transition to a more flexible, resilient, and reliable electric grid and establish much greater coordination among system operators in partnership with its customers."

"Drummond has had a stellar track record during his time at BPA and throughout his career in the energy sector," said Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman. "I am fully confident in his ability to provide the highest level of leadership and service to BPA's customers, constituents, and employees."

Drummond holds dual degrees; one in forestry from the University of Montana and one in economics from the University of Arizona. He began

serving as BPA's deputy administrator in October 2011, and his duties included providing strategic leadership and executive management to the agency.

In addition to his responsibilities as deputy, he oversaw the agency's general counsel, and the departments of compliance and governance, risk management, internal audit, public affairs, finance and corporate strategy functions.

During his 30 years in the energy industry, Drummond has been a leader on many regional task forces and committees, including the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, Northwest Wind Integration Forum and Northwest Energy Efficiency Task Force.

Nationally, he has served on committees of the American Public Power Association and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Watershed coordinator will retire this spring

CRG Business Review

HOOD RIVER — Steve Stampfli, coordinator of the Hood River Watershed Group, announced last month he will retire in March.

Stampfli, a Husum resident, was hired in 2005 by the Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District. He works with agencies, landowners and businesses to coordinate land and water conservation projects in the Hood River valley.

Stampfli made the announcement at the HRSWCD annual meeting, held at

OSU Extension office.

HRSWCD will revise the coordinator job description, then advertise the position by early February, and attempt to hire a new coordinator by the end of February.

"I'm really sad and sorry to see you go, but of course, we know you're still here," said Watershed Group chair Chuck Gehling. "It will be big shoes to fill. You and I have worked very loosely,



Steve Stampfli

and you're sort of the memory of everything. You're the one to go to. You've made great accomplishments."

Stampfli said he will make a gradual exit and assist the SWCD in finding a replacement and helping with the transition.

"I don't want to leave the work entirely so chances are I'll stay involved in natural resource management on some level. I also feel a responsibility to one project, the Odell hydro dam decommissioning; and I will volunteer time to make sure that happens, to remove that major barrier from Odell Creek."

Stampfli said his major focus in his remaining two months on the job will be the ongoing transfer of 400 acres of land along the Hood River associated with the decommissioned Powerdale facility from PacifiCorp to Columbia Land Trust and Hood River County.

Wasco Soil and Water Conservation District is also taking applications for a watershed coordinator. Kate Marick, formerly a HRSWCD intern, recently accepted a stewardship position with Columbia Land Trust, according to District Manager Anne Saxby.

Bookkeeper gets one-year jail sentence in \$94,000 theft

CRG Business Review

THE DALLES — Lori Fiegenbaum, 51, last month entered a guilty plea to the theft of \$94,441.62 while she was the bookkeeper at Columbia Gorge Discovery Center.

Fiegenbaum was directed by Wasco County Circuit Judge John Wolf to report to the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facilities by 5 p.m. Jan. 14 to begin serving a one-year jail sentence. She cannot earn

"good time" reductions for the time behind bars and will be on probation for 60 months once she is released.

While on probation, she will be under court supervision to pay back the remaining balance of \$84,441.62 on the funds she admitted to stealing between January 2006 and December 2011. She has already paid \$10,000 of her debt in exchange for being able to remain outside jail following her arrest in September 2012.

Fiegenbaum is prohibited during probation from working as a bookkeeper or in any position that oversees financial records. She cannot join any civic organization that requires membership dues or attend charitable fundraisers. She is not allowed to set foot on the center's property and cannot have contact with past and present employees or board members.

Wasco County District Attorney Eric Nisley said the terms of the settlement

agreement between the state and Fiegenbaum were intended to focus her energies on getting money back into the coffers of the Discovery Center.

The center is the interpretive site for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and also serves as the Wasco County Historical Museum.

Fiegenbaum was employed by the center in 2005 and let go in early 2012 after anomalies in financial statements were discovered.

'No' prompts Zack to start his own company

Seed money from a hole-in-one at Indian Creek Golf Course leads to HMK, a Hood River-based snowmobiling company

By **ADAM LAPIERRE**

CRG Business Review

HOOD RIVER – In hindsight, life-changing twists of fate are rarely as obvious as the one Kirk Zack had on his birthday in November 1995. Playing a celebratory round of golf at the Indian Creek Golf Course, Zack teed-up on the 10th hole, took a swing and sunk the shot most golfers go their entire lives without sinking. At the time a hole-in-one had a \$1,000 payout.

Zack and his son, Colson, were recently in Aspen, Colo., for the largest extreme sports festival in the world — the X Games — where HMK, the snowmobiling company Zack founded in 1999, is on the world stage.

“Life is pretty funny sometimes; how it throws things like that at you,” Zack said last month from his uptown Hood River office nicknamed the Garage Mahal. Stacked with enough sporting goods to make any fun-loving adult feel like a kid in a candy store, the oversized garage is home and world headquarters to HMK; an abbreviation for the snowmobiling term “highmark.”

“I had a friend who wanted to get sleds together, but I didn’t have the money to buy one,” Zack said. “I used the money from that hole-in-one to buy my first sled since leaving Wisconsin five years prior. We rode all over on those things exploring the area and using them for backcountry snowboarding. It’s like they say, sleds are the poor man’s helicopter.”

At about the same time, Zack was working for Heelside, a former Hood River company that specialized in snowboarding boots and boards. With



Adam Lapierre photo

HMK at X Games: Kirk and Colson Zack pose for a photo with Best Trick gold medal winner Joe Parsons.

gear technologies improving by leaps and bounds, Zack saw advances being made in the snowboard industry that were needed in snowmobiling gear as well.

“It all started with a prototype boot I made based on new snowboarding boot technology but designed specifically for snowmobiling,” Zack said. In another life-changing twist of fate, Polaris, the company he pitched the design to, told him the design would never work. “Looking back, that’s the best thing that could have happened to me. If they had said yes, the brand would be theirs and HMK wouldn’t exist.”

HMK’s boot line exploded in popularity and was

fueled by the paralleling evolution that snowmobiling was undergoing. The image and function of the brand expanded quickly, and before long the letters HMK could be seen on jackets, pants, gloves, helmets, packs and an array of other soft goods.

“Who would have thought that things would lead to this,” Zack said, flipping through HMK’s latest product catalog. “We have our own complete line; we have five full-time employees and work with more than 20 factories. It’s hard to believe it all when I think about it. I had an old “Surf the Gorge” poster in college and I always said I was going to live there someday. But I never would have believed that something like this would happen to me here. It’s humbling to think about.”

Along with being one of the busiest months of the year, January is also the most exciting for Zack and HMK. Since snocross racing was introduced to the X-Games in 1998, snowmobiling has grown into a fan favorite of the annual extreme sports festival, and Zack has had a front-row seat to the action for several years.

“I was a judge for a while, but my role this year will be more of support,” he said last week, while getting his decked-out HMK truck and trailer ready for a 27-hour drive to Aspen. “I’ll help organize the judges and keep the flow running smoothly and will have our trailer on hand as a support for athletes and course workers.”

In the last few years of Winter X, course racing has taken a back seat to the edge-of-your-seat freestyle and best trick contests, which feature athletes flying and flipping through the air in ludicrous fashion on high performance sleds.

Contests were televised around the world. The HMK brand was all over the snowmobiling events, and Zack was on the sidelines of the course, proudly representing Hood River at one of the biggest sporting events on the planet.

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- ◆ Many Upgrades • Shop/Garden Shed
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- ◆ Open Floor Plan • Family Room Up
- ◆ Quality Custom Finishes

RMLS # 12033479



Hood River • \$230,000

1017 25th Street

- ◆ Clean & Tidy - 3 Bedroom
- ◆ Many Updates — FA Heat & AC
- ◆ Large Lot • Fenced Backyard
- ◆ Excess Parking • Attached Garage

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- ◆ Level Building Site • Irrigation
- ◆ Mid-Valley Location

RMLS # 12352795



Hood River • \$315,000

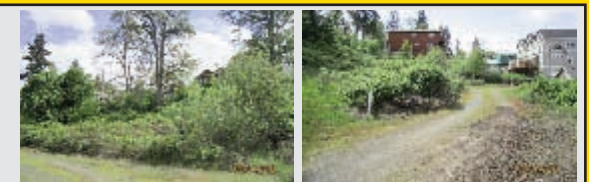
831 Country Club Road

- ◆ Rural Westside location on .61 Acres
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Close to town - Hood River

NEW LISTING



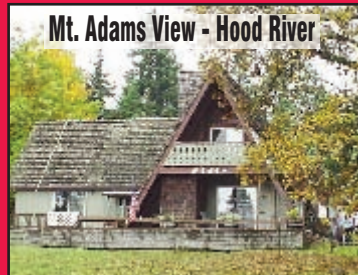
\$255,000 0.26 acres, 3 beds, 2.5 baths, 1884 sqft, bonus room above 2 car garage, large deck & patio area. RMLS 11152851



Mt. Adams View - Hood River



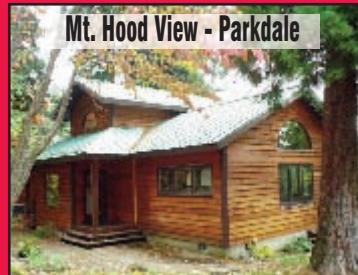
\$400,000 1.22 acres dividable, 3 beds, 2.5 baths, 1730 sqft, additional 2+ car garage/storage. RMLS 12056394



Mt. Adams View - Hood River



\$325,000 Darling Chalet on 1.74 acres, 3 bed, 2 bath, 1772 sqft, detached garage/carport. Close to town. RMLS 12094855



Mt. Hood View - Parkdale



\$399,000 Cedar, custom timberframe chalet. 3 beds, 2 baths, 2145sqft, 5.03 acres. Borders Trout Creek! RMLS 12582935



Downtown Condo • Hood River



\$300,000 1 BR, 1 BA, 797 Sq. ft. Contemporary condo in the heart of Hood River. Private, Secure, elevator access. RMLS 12566594



Mt Adams View • Odell

NEW LISTING

\$150,000 3 acre parcel with mountain view. Private end of the road setting. RMLS 13278612



Beautiful View • Eastside

\$450,000 20 acres with 10 acres in pear production. Nice valley & Mt. Hood view. RMLS 12308779



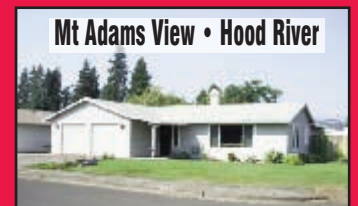
Cottage • Odell

\$189,000 2 bed, 1 bath, 1320 sq. ft. .85 acres. Nice territorial views, shade trees & pasture. RMLS 12242440



Mt. Hood View - Parkdale

\$248,000 Immaculate triple wide home on .8 acre. large shop/garage, 3 beds, 2 baths, 1982 sqft. RMLS 12140634



Mt Adams View • Hood River

\$329,000 3 beds, 2 bath, 1714 sqft home on .22 acre. 23'x30' & 14'x28' garage/shops. RMLS 11445135



Dbl Mtn Views • Hood River

NEW PRICE

\$279,000 Newer established 2+ acre parcel. All utilities to parcel to start building your dream home RMLS 12200692



Large Lot - Hood River

SALE PENDING

\$150,000 Building opportunity close to town! House is not habitable, .83 acre URI, dividable RMLS 13845211



Spectacular View • Hood River

SALE PENDING

\$499,000 Large house w/golf course, valley & Mt Hood views. 3 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, 3009 sqft. RMLS 12229377



Mt. Adams View - Westside

SOLD

\$260,500 Large lot 1.14 acres. Manufactured home with basement, 3 beds, 3 baths. RMLS 12528288



Mt. Adams View • Westside

SOLD

\$536,500 Views of the WA hills and Mt. Adams. 4 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, 2941 sqft on 2+ acres. Large shop. RMLS 10090107