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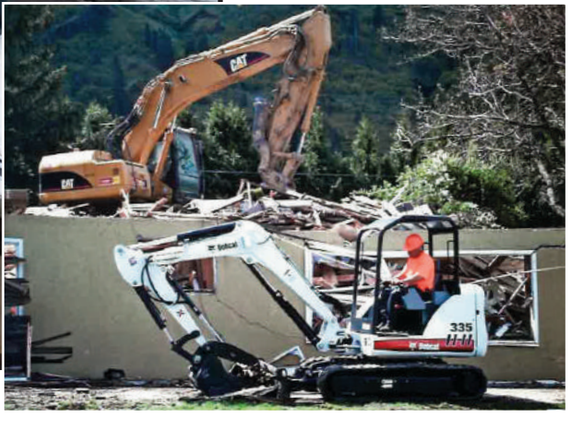

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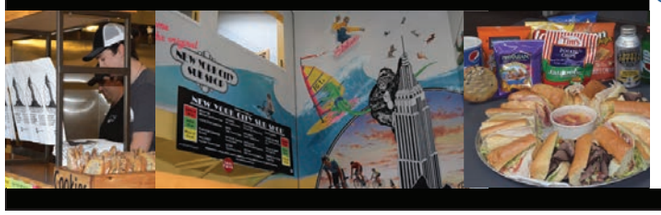

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Not Pictured: Chris Eaton, Robert Sanchez, Kevin Silva, Matt Wilkes, Don Hall, Jesse Eaton, Tom Lexa, Tony Gonzalez, Olivia Russell, Jared Elvestrom, Andrew Hall, Tyrell Townley.

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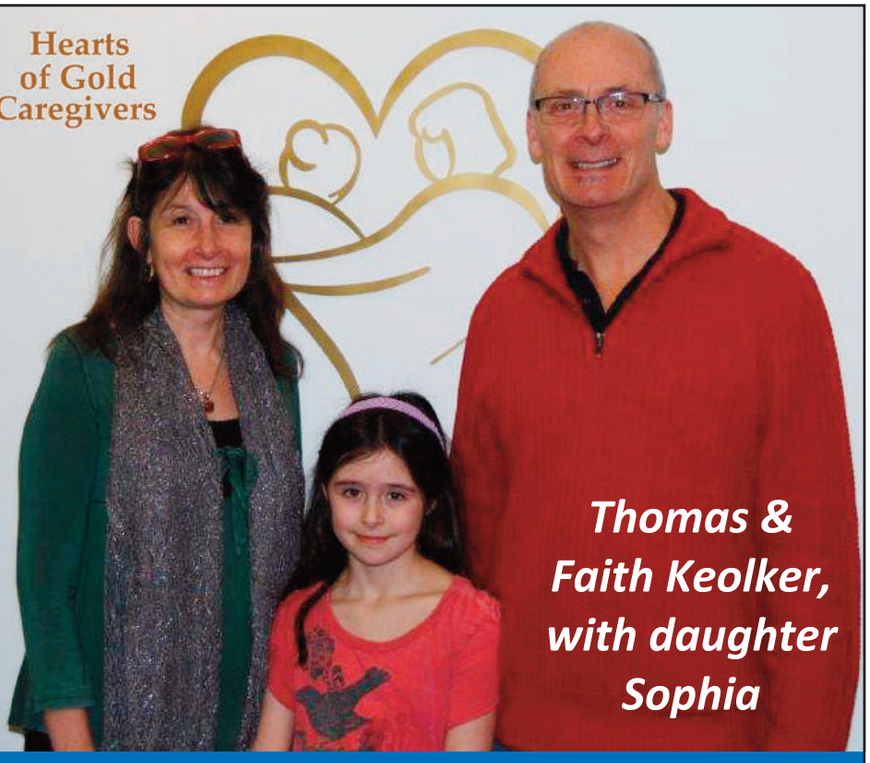

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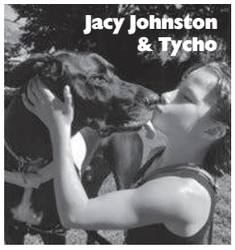

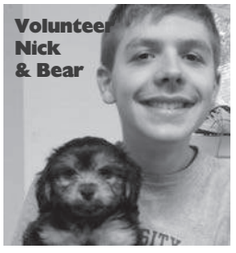

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Wally Ingram, posing in his shop at 1311 13th Street on the Heights in Hood River.

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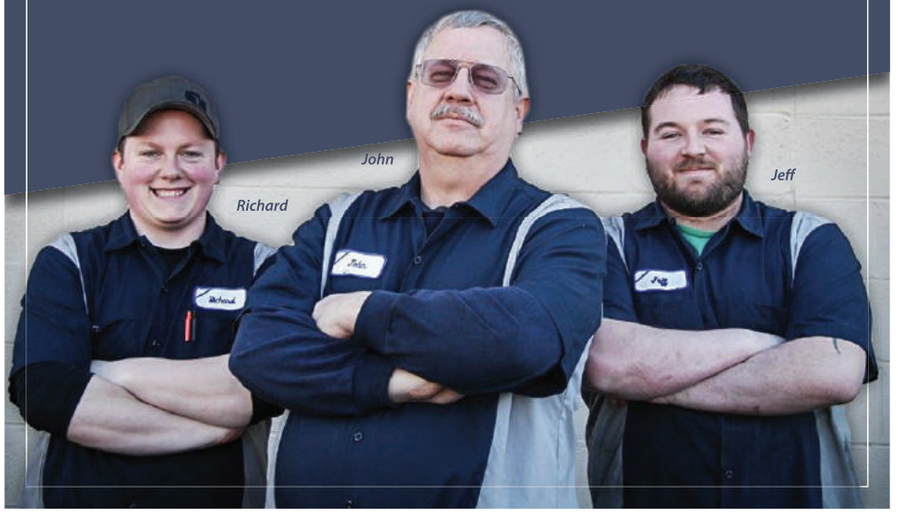

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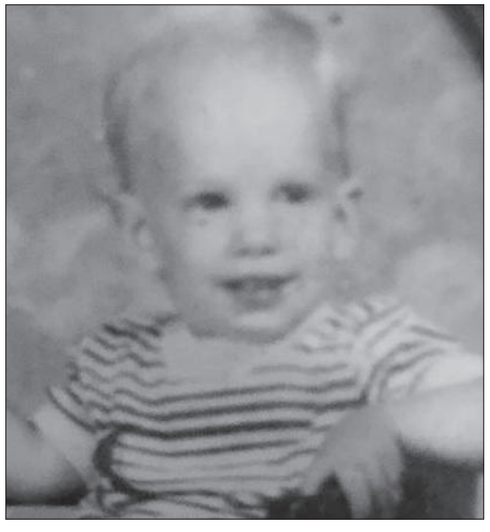


John Melesko

TRISHA WALKER
News staff writer

John Melesko has owned Hood River cornerstone business Doug's Sports since Jan. 1, 2011 — and how he came to be its owner is quite the story. Melesko first worked at the store as an employee from 2003-2006, when he and wife, Rebecca, came to Hood River from the east coast. When son Liam, now 12, was born, "I was adamant about moving back east to be closer to my family," he said.

"That only lasted a couple of years before we moved back."

While his wife was able to transfer jobs, for him, the move was a leap of faith.

"I didn't know what I was going to do," he said. "I came to say hello to the gang here at the store one day, and they asked me what I was going to do. I said, 'I don't know,' and they said, 'Want to purchase the store?'"

It turns out that was exactly what he wanted to do, and he bought the business from founder Doug Campbell, who had listed it for sale.

Founded in 1984 — and housed in what is now the Double Mountain seating expansion on Fourth Street — Doug's Sports is the oldest (or, at the very least, one of the oldest) windsurfing retail shops in the Gorge. These days, it's more of a "lifestyle" store, Melesko explained, for skiers, snowboarders and skateboarders, including a complete ski and snowboard service shop.

He enjoys the different hats he gets to wear as owner — everything from custom ski boot work ("I love doing that; there's nothing better for people than skiing with happy feet," he said) to budgets.

"And the employees are like an extended family here," he said. He employs 18 total, five of whom are fulltime.

While snow and ice have cramped some business downtown, for Doug's, it's been fairly steady.

"For us, it's been very good. It's interesting — the snow detracts from people coming in, but that being said, we have the winter items people need to survive this year," Melesko said. "So far, we've had a very good winter."

Having a master's degree in education — he was a teacher in Connecticut — Melesko focuses his donation efforts towards schools.

"Any school fundraiser, we are attached to it," he said. "People are starting to come in and thank us for that."

He's noticed more and more Portland residents coming to Hood River for the day, and that has helped the downtown area.

"The great thing about Hood River is that it comes down to location, location, location," Melesko said. "It's an experience (Portlanders) can enjoy — do an outdoor activity, then come shop and eat. You can do it all within a five-mile radius. Put all of that together, and it creates a great day trip."

Mark Russell

PATRICK MULVIHILL
News staff writer

Mark Russell, manager of Les Schwab Tire Center, has spent almost 25 years working for the company — five branches in total — but he chose to set down roots in Hood River.

Russell was born in Eureka, Calif., and has lived in various towns along the west coast. After graduating from high school in Port Townsend, Wash., he took up a position in the U.S. National Guard.
While based in Spokane, Wash., his technician duties included working on KC-135 military aerial refueling aircraft.

After his military experience, he took his first job at Les Schwab, an automotive and retail company. The decision was influenced primarily by family ties, he said. "They kind of sucked me into the cult," Russell joked.

In 2008, he moved to Hood River. He currently oversees the Les Schwab branch at 3140 Cascade Ave., which has about 29 employees. One of his favorite aspects of daily work is engaging with the team, a mutually enriching experience. "I support them and they support me," he explained.

He also enjoys interacting with customers, a daily part of work at Les Schwab. The customer service aspect can be a challenge, he said, but he enjoys that aspect of his career,

In all, Russell's 24 years working for Les Schwab has "given me a thousand life lessons."

Russell, 45, enjoys outdoor activities with his family: his wife, Shawna, and their daughter Olivia, 19, and Brandon, 20. The family enjoys spending free time together and going on the occasional vacation, such as Disneyland.

"I absolutely love Hood River," Russell said. The town affords plenty of his hobbies, such as hunting, fishing, skiing, and snow activities, he said.
Russell said the company typically requires employees to move in order to be promoted, but he's ready to stay put at his location — he's "done moving," and plans to keep calling Hood River home.

Mark Whitehead

BEN MITCHELL
News staff writer

After graduating high school, Mark Whitehead was presented with a choice by his parents: either go to culinary school, or join the Air Force.

"I thought about it for about 30 seconds, and culinary school won out," he says.

That ultimatum from his parents many years ago has helped inspire a love of cooking for Mark Whitehead, proprietor of Ahi's Ohana Catering — a catering company based in Hood River.

Whitehead grew up in Eugene, and attended school (the one mentioned above) at the Western Culinary Institute in Portland, where he honed his cooking skills. For the past 15 years, though, he has been catering in the Gorge.

Through his catering company, Whitehead offers a variety of different menu options, reflecting his eclectic taste. Ahi's Ohana's menu lists everything from "manchego cheese with quince honey, roasted strawberry, almonds," to "dynamite salmon with Dungeness crab, garlic aioli, soy ginger glaze," and "island style pork with avocado, corn, tomatoes, cilantro pesto" to "gaucho fired ribeye with crispy potato salad, spicy BBQ sauce."

Hungry yet?

Whitehead concocts his dishes in a leased kitchen space on Hull Street and though his cuisine derives its inspiration from many different parts of the world, the ingredients themselves are close to home. "We utilize mostly local farmers and fishermen to feature in our catering menus," he explains.

"I have a passion for Spanish, Hawaiian and Northwest ingredients when I make up my menus. We personalize all of our menus depending on the client's needs and tastes."

Like many other catering companies, Ahi's Ohana Catering is busy primarily in the summer months catering outdoor weddings, but Whitehead says his business also provides its services for wine dinners, lunches, business meetings, and birthday parties, noting that they are "a full-service catering company."

Whitehead has used his cooking skills to give back to the communities in which he's lived. In Eugene, he helped work at the local food bank and cooked breakfast for 200 people. In Hood River, Whitehead has volunteered with the food bank, as well as its Empty Bowl program. He also cooked for young cancer survivors in Hawaii as part of the Athletes 4 Cancer camp run by Hood River's Tonia Farman (who also runs the annual Kiteboarding 4 Cancer event in Hood River).

It was there the name for his catering company was born. At the camp, everyone receives power names and Whitehead was given the name "ahi" which means "tuna." As for "ohana," that means "family."

Whitehead lives in Hood River with his wife, Sophie, who is a second-grade teacher at Mid Valley Elementary in Odell. They have a daughter, Gabriella, who graduated Hood River Valley High School in 2014 and is now a junior at the University of Oregon, where she plays the baritone in the school marching band.

Miranda Bray

KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News staff writer

Good things just keep germinating for Miranda Bray. Bray owns River Daze Café with her husband, Cary. They celebrate five years as café owners in March and 20 years of marriage this year.

"We love doing it and we're thankful for all the customers," Miranda said as she took a break in the café during the remodeling project in early February. The seating area is expanded, and the kitchen and counter layout will be altered, but not much will change, menu-wise, other than that new sourdough Miranda's cultivated.

"It's busy. It's fun. It's busy. It's rewarding, I like doing it, doing a pretty good job at it," Miranda said of running the cafe. "Feeding people is fun."

Miranda and Cary have a shared love of snow sports, which is how they met, and of agriculture, which they do together at their home in Snowden, Wash., growing their own vegetables and herbs for River Daze. Sons River, 11 and Cody, 6, "like to come in here and run around, and eat waffles.

"The Internet is better than Snowden and there's more Pokemon."

Miranda was born in Truckee, Calif., and lived around Lake Tahoe until age 4, moving to Auburn, Calif., where she graduated from Placer High in 1994. After high school she took a year off and went and played on the mountains, with Cary, both working at Squaw Valley as lift operators.

"We met right after high school, through mutual friends," Miranda said. Cary grew up in Donner Lake, outside of Auburn.

Miranda moved to Arcada, Calif., attending Humboldt State University for her two-year General Education degree. Cary was right there with her, attending nearby College of Redwoods "studying agriculture, which led me into farming," he said. ("Kind of foggy, living down there," Cary said, referring to the weather conditions and, perhaps, the passage of time.)

The Brays came to Hood River in 1996, moving in with Cary's brother, Aaron and, lived with him over the summer. "Cary stayed, I went back for one more semester at Humboldt State, and in December 1997, returned to Hood River.

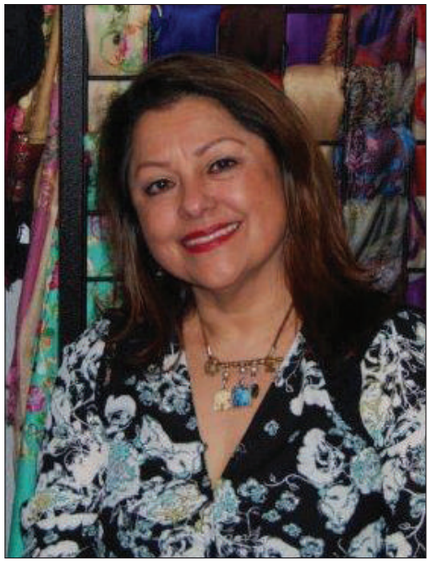
"Twenty years later, here we are," Miranda said. Miranda first worked at Holstein's, then went to Portland State, for her degree in biology, graduating in 2002; she traveled back and forth, and worked at Eliot Glacier Brewery (now Solera) for three years. Since 2006 she's kept busy with River and Cody, growing vegetables, and running the restaurant, including helping out with an early passion: baking.

"I've always baked. I started baking as a kid," and her first job in high school was in a bakery. Miranda said she does "about half the baking now. "I used to really enjoy the pastry side but lately, the bread side," she said. "I'm playing around with sourdough at home, and thinking of bringing it here, a true sourdough.

"We're going to see what the customers think, if it's something they want," Miranda said, pointing to its advantages: easier to digest, which appeals to those who want to reduce gluten in their diet. She explains, "it's pre-digested in a sense, and some of the enzymes convert components in the wheat to a more digestible phase."

Asked if running River Daze was what she envisioned 22 years ago when she met Cary, she said, "No, but I think we both fell into our true passions. I didn't envision it, I used to talk about having a place, a restaurant, 15-20 years ago, I'd say, 'this is what I'd have on the menu,' but I didn't think I'd do that, going to school for biology.

"What I like personally is it allows me to use that science mind and that logical side as well as being creative, and I get to make people happy, which is always a nice thing."



Bertha Logsdon

GRACE WHITMORE
News staff intern

Bertha Logsdon's experience with retail started when she was a young girl helping her grandmother with her bakery in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Since then, Logsdon has "always had something to sell." Her love for jewelry and clothes, for retail, and for people lead her to open the BGorgeous Boutique in the Oak Mall, almost two years ago.

The shop is known for selling extraordinary clothing for women of all ages. "I wanted to bring unique clothing and unique gifts," said Logsdon, "so you can find yourself not dressed like anyone else." The boutique also sells many kinds of accessories and jewelry as well as clothing.

Logsdon's story is as unique as anything you can find in her boutique. She grew up in Ecuador and immigrated with her family to Florida in 1962. She then returned to Ecuador to live with her grandmother and continue her education for three years because her parents noticed that her and her brother were forgetting their Spanish. "They wanted us to be truly bilingual," said Logsdon. "It's important to know two languages."

She moved back to Florida and graduated high school, later visiting a cousin in Hood River and falling in love with the town. From then on, she knew this was the place she wanted to live. She eventually married Lester Logsdon and raised daughters Jessica and Jecinta in Hood River. "I think I was always looking for a small place. I like the quietness. Everybody knows everybody and people are so caring," said Logsdon.

Caring for and talking to people has always been a priority for Logsdon, and it's one of her favorite parts of day-to-day work at BGorgeous. "I love to be able to help, enjoy, and visit with people," she said.

Logsdon appreciates the chance to interact with people from all over. "I cater not only to tourism but also for my locals," she said. "It's important that locals can get things at affordable prices." In addition, she strives to include local works in her selection of products. "I always invite people that are local to bring in their art."

Customers can choose from a variety of handmade jewelry by local artists Stephanie Johnston, Keely Ftawicki, and Logsdon herself, who sells a line of jewelry with beading and silver clay.

Logsdon still visits family in Ecuador, and really "enjoys the culture there." She also enjoys bringing back fun items to sell at the boutique whenever possible, adding to a collection of products that you won't see at any other shop in Hood River. "What (the customers) love is that it is all really unique," said Logsdon.

Although retail is one of Logsdon's passions, she can also be found with her husband enjoying many other activities in the outdoors of the Columbia Gorge. "We love to fish and go camping. There's just so many beautiful places!" said Logsdon. "We enjoy very, very much the outdoors."

Logsdon is proud to be following in the footsteps of her grandmother, mother, and aunt who all worked retail. "I'm doing something I was raised with," she said, adding that it's always been something she's wanted to do and is glad to finally have the chance to run her own Boutique in a town that she loves. The lessons from her grandmother's bakery in Ecuador have certainly paid off.

Wally Ingram

KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News staff writer

"My father was a rock hound, and I am a pebble puppy."

In Wally Ingram's shop, Security Systems Technology, you will find rows of bright, uncut keys, new locks and other equipment, along with boxes of used locks and latches, and evidence of Ingram's true passion: unusual geological items.

Ingram, born in 1943 in Walla Walla, Wash., collects pennies, which he flattens and embosses with images of Multnomah Falls, Cascade Locks, Bonneville, and Hood River, and sells in his shop.

But his main collecting is minerals including thundereggs, petrified rocks (and scat), and sand — he stores hundreds of vials of sand, some he collects himself, others brought to him by friends from their travels, in a custom cabinet at home.

Asked, "Why sand?" he replied:

"Because it's lighter than rocks."

The sign on his door still says "Ye Olde Lock Shoppe," the former name of the shop founded in the 1960s. He bought it in 1999, what he calls "a transitional year" in 20th century America.

"The former owner had one sign taken down, it was 1999, Y2K, and they were on a binge of sign changing for the new century, with that they were ready to go into another era, and they took down one sign but didn't have time to take down the one on the porch," Ingram relates. He is the third owner, continuing a coincidental tradition of Seventh-Day Adventist ownership of the business, after Ralph Staley, who bought it from Jay Dudley, who opened it originally downtown where the Hood River Hobbies shop is on Third Street. It has been in its current location, 1311 13th St., since 1986.

"People know it as Ye Old Lock Shoppe – the older, mature people," jokes Ingram, who enjoys working with many long-time clients.

"I meet a lot of good people," Ingram said. "I talk a lot. My attention span is pretty short, and in three minutes, I get done with what I'm doing, I get my accolades — I get my money – and I move on to something else."

Ingram moved from the mountains near San Bernardino to buy the business, which he learned about in a Seventh Day Adventist publication.

"The ad said, 'Locksmith shop for sale in beautiful Hood River.' Where's Hood River?" Ingram said. He and Diane took to the area immediately. (She died three years ago.)

"Diane fell in love with the trees," he said. She grew up in Peru as a missionary's daughter, in the highlands of Andes, with no trees, and when she moved back to U.S. she loved being among trees.

He was married the first time for 30 years, and spent 20 years with Diane, who was also a printer.

Ingram graduated from Seventh Day Adventist's Auburn Academy, near Tacoma, having attended six grade school in the Mt. Rainier area as his mom worked alternately as a realtor, tax preparer, cook, and other jobs.

"I lived in the towns of Alder, Eatonville, Elbe, Packwood; Mom moved near Tacoma, and gave me the choice of coming with her or staying to finish the year. I said, 'No, I wanted to stay with my friends,' and I was farmed out and finished my eighth grade year."

He attended Walla Walla College, majoring in Industrial Arts, with an emphasis on printing, and taught at Laurelwood Academy in Gaston, near Forest Grove. (Seventh-Day operates many academies or schools, including Mid Columbia Adventist School, a K-10 school in Hood River. Between his relatives and Diane's, the families shared a total of 600 years of attendance or employment at Seventh Day Adventists churches and schools.)

He taught at Adventist schools Lodi Academy, Calif., Mt. Vernon Academy in Ohio, and, in 1981-87, Far Eastern Academy in Singapore, and came back to Loma Linda University, in California, where he was assistant manager of the print shop. After cutbacks of 200 or so workers, he went to work as a commercial printer, then took job as ranger at youth camp near Bernardino.

He said "teaching high school, there's no return on your time, no accolades coming in. You taught kids algebra but I've never met a kid again after he left my class. You just don't get that much recognition, unless you're in sports." Ingram laments the gradual loss of shop classes in high schools. "And now they're nibbling away at art and music."

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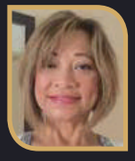

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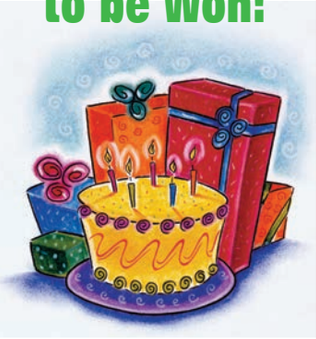

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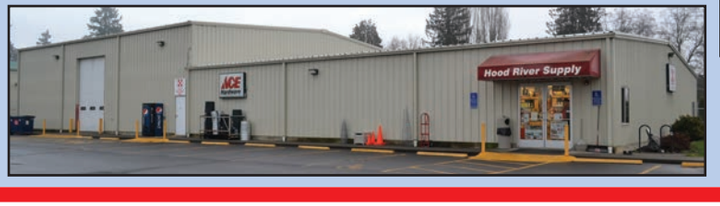

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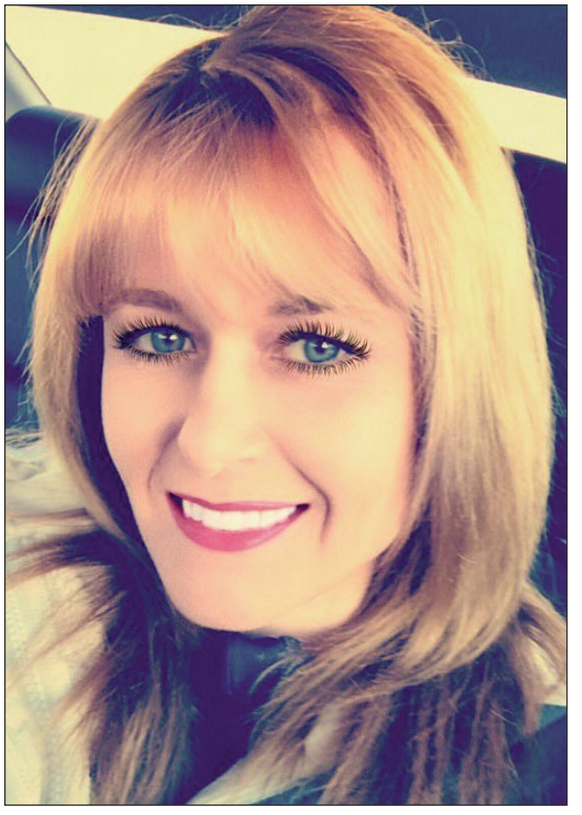

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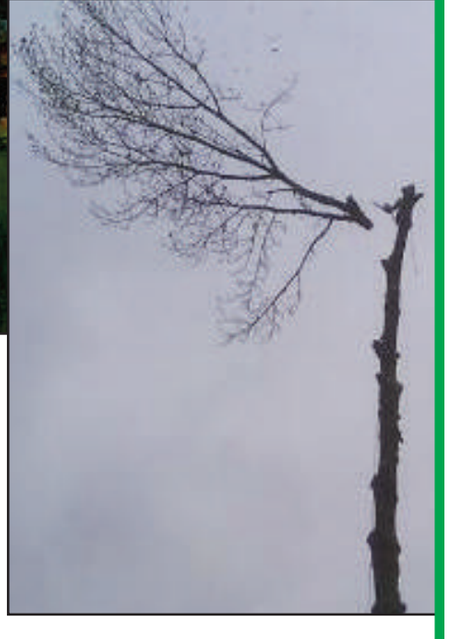

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