

High Prairie Community Council

Gwen Berry

SAVE THESE DATES

Community Council Meetings, 4th Thursday of the month, starting at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Center.

Needlers Mondays, at 10:30 a.m. Call 365-5288 for more information.

Fire Volunteers, 1st, 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at 7 p.m.

Fire Commissioner Meeting, 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 7 p.m.

Visit the community website (www.highprairie.us) for additional scheduled events and meetings.



STAY IN THE LOOP!

EMAIL:

Put your name on the HP info list by emailing bbparrish@embaramail.com

WEBSITE:

Check us out at www.highprairie.us Calendar, blog, High Prairian, history, and lots more!

FACEBOOK:

Stay up to date with community happenings and join the discussion:

www.facebook.com/groups/180735785338230/

Don't forget to *like* the page.

HP DIRECTORY:

Trade contact info just with friends and neighbors. Add or update at:

www.highprairie.us/general-information/community-directory/

(We can't invite you if we don't know how to reach you!)

SPRING WITHOUT A FIREHOUSE SALE

Spring without a Firehouse Sale is like Aunt Jemima's pancakes without her syrup.

But there it is. For the first time in 19 years, it looks like High Prairie will not be holding its long-time annual fundraiser. UNLESS—a person or people step forward and commit to getting it off the ground. There's still time if someone acts right away. If you are so inspired, get in touch with Sharon (509-365-4429) or Barb (509-281-0933) ASAP!

Because of this, the HPCC Board is interested in hearing and evaluating as many new ideas for fundraising as possible. Without the Firehouse Sale, HPCC won't have the funds to make its usual large contribution to the Fire District and will struggle to cover the costs of maintaining and using the Community Center. If you have ideas for how HPCC can fund its operations, please get in touch with Sharon, Barb, or any board member.

Speaking of Board Members, the Board is now one member short. Two members resigned in January. Audrey Bentz stepped in to fill one vacant seat, and the Board would like to fill the other one. The board members are Sharon Aleckson (Vice-President), Barb Parrish (Secretary), Ken Hansen (Treasurer), Chris Sattem, Bill Downey, Roberta Barkhurst, and Audrey Bentz.

Ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes at HPCC? Among other things, this winter the HPCC Board is working on some essential administrative projects, including updating the organization's bylaws and the Community Center rental procedures and forms. If you're interested in the status of either of those projects, call Sharon or Barb.

The Board has also been looking into getting the floor resurfaced in the Community Center. It hasn't been done since the Center opened in 2010. A bid from a floor business in The Dalles came in at \$2,128 and would require that the floors be finished twice in one year. Barb Parrish writes, "We cannot afford that and we don't need twice in one year. If we had a community member with experience in this area who would be willing to volunteer their time, we could work together to get the job done." Anybody? Volunteers have been responsible for much of the work and many improvements to the Community Center. No reason it can't happen again.

Sheriff Bob Songer will be the guest speaker at the HPCC meeting on March 22. The meeting starts at 7 pm at the Community Center.

HPCC will be assisting with the Firefighter Appreciation Dinner on March 24. Please consider attending. Let's have a big show of support for our friends and neighbors who volunteer their time and effort to make sure the rest of us get the help we need in emergencies.

NOTES FROM OUR CORNER

Audrey Bentz

Our guests leave lots of egg cartons behind. If anyone in the "cackle berry" business can use some, let us know.

Probably most of you know this, but if you need assistance with a dysfunctional computer, DON'T use an online computer "intruder" to claim to rescue you. Stick with a local expert. We recommend Perry Klein of High Prairie who is at Windy River Computers in Hood River. (No, he didn't ask for publicity!) Perry's wife Diane is a volunteer nurse for "Doctors Without Borders," one of the most effective medical volunteer groups in the world!

Jennifer Wykstra's yoga class continues on Wednesday evenings at 6 p.m. at the High Prairie Community Center. The one-hour class is by donation. Come on and limber up.

THE HIGH PRAIRIAN

"All the news that's print to fit"

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 Editor: Gwen Berry
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Contact the editor with news or comments:

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 or 509-365-0025

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Send your name, mailing address, email address & phone number, with a check or money order for \$5.00, to

HP Subscription
PO Box 592
Lyle, WA 98635

Please make all payments payable to: **HPCC**

TIMES SPENT ON HIGH PRAIRIE AND A HIKE TO REMEMBER

Tom Knight

In the late 1960's I discovered High Prairie. The local Game Agent from Goldendale showed it to me. To get there from Goldendale, you had to take the old Hwy. 97 down the hill going towards Hwy. 14 and the Columbia. A couple miles out of town, a small sign pointed to Centerville. That road was gravel (some of the time), full of potholes, and every property line was defined by a sharp 90-degree turn. Goldendale to Centerville (it still had a small store) took at least 45 minutes.

The trip from there to the head end of High Prairie wasn't much better. Here, wheat ranches ended and the timber began. I remember a large, old-growth stand of yellow pine the local turkey flock called their night-time roost.

Prior to the early 70s, the road was seriously treacherous, full of dangerous switchbacks and potholes. The Portland/Vancouver folks had not yet discovered the Prairie as a place for their weekend cabins. Ranches were yet to be divided and the railroad was still operational from Goldendale to Klickitat. I could hike half a mile off the main road and hear only sounds of woodland creatures, or perhaps the plaintive whistle of a train, miles below on the Oregon side of the Columbia.

A lot has changed since the '70s. A new road was built (you can still see the old switchbacks), the Goldendale railroad abandoned, and High Prairie has "been discovered." Lyle is becoming a destination for windsurfers. But High Prairie is still a special place. One of the things that makes it special is the hike down "Swale Creek Rail Trail."

This is an easy hike to see abundant wildflower species and wildlife. It's ideally suited for early morning in the spring months – March through the end of May. [Swale Canyon closes in June or July until fall because of fire danger. -Ed.] A hike on a hot day would definitely be for early AM. The wildflowers won't run away, but chances of seeing wildlife (including turkeys) are at their peak at this time. It goes without saying...TAKE YOUR CAMERA...!!! And a day pack with bottled water. ENJOY!!

Swale Creek Trail

Years ago, in ancient times (1968), when I was a twenty-something, I used to camp at a campground a couple hundred yards upstream from where Swale Creek enters the Klickitat River. We always waved at the railway guys on their speeder going to or from Klickitat to Goldendale. One afternoon, during the spring turkey season, I found myself in Goldendale and, purely by accident, met one of the railroad guys. One thing led to another and I asked if I could hitch a ride to the campground when they were going back to Klickitat.

"No problem," he said and told me where to meet him at the speeder next morning!

So, the next day I had a buddy run me up the hill to meet him and his buddy. During the course of the trip downhill, they said the rail line would soon no longer be in existence as the Klickitat Lumber Mill was going out of business. So much for a tiny town with a single employer...!!!

The guys mentioned the state had plans for the rail bed, once the tracks were removed. Little did I know, but someone(s) had the foresight for something called the "Swale Creek Rail Trail."

The trip was fantastic. Once we left the flat ranchlands outside of Goldendale, I could see timber at the upper part of High Prairie. We crossed over the Centerville Road at Warwick and began losing altitude as Swale Creek dropped toward the Klickitat River. The most impressive thing for me was to view my turkey haunts from a new perspective...from below; timbered turkey draws on one side of the creek and basalt chukar cliffs on the other. The guys stopped the speeder opposite camp where we all had a cold one...or two...!!!

This is the trail segment I would suggest. I don't think cell phones work in the canyon. Have someone drop you off at Warwick and then pick you up at a prescribed time at the campground. [*Harms Road is the closest access point to Warwick and the campground is apparently no longer there; have your ride meet you at the Wahkiacus trailhead instead—ed.*]

For more information, go to <http://parks.state.wa.us/869/Klickitat-Trail> or <https://www.wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/klickitat-rail-trail-swale-canyon#trailhead-map>.



Printed Birthday Card by Ephemera from NobleWorksCards.com

STATE FUNDS SCHILLING ROAD FIRE STATION

Tim Darland, Fire Chief
High Prairie Fire District #14

Fire Commissioners, Fire Chiefs, land donors, secretaries, and volunteers started the project of building a fire station on Schilling Road in 2003 with a vision to provide fire protection service for residences outside the 5-mile radius of the old Centerville Fire Station. Building the new Community Center/Fire Station on Struck Road (constructed in 2009) detracted from the Schilling Road Fire Station Project for several years.

In 2017, the HPFD put in an application to the state requesting \$448,000 for the new Schilling Road Fire Station. We were told we were on the list of projects that had successfully passed the House and Senate, so we were disappointed when Governor Jay Inslee hadn't signed the 2017 capital budget into law by the end of 2017. Representative Gina McCabe's assistant promised to resubmit our 2017 Schilling Road Fire Station request. As luck was on our side, though, Governor Inslee signed the 2017 capital budget into law in mid-January 2018, which included appropriated dollars to build the Schilling Road Fire Station Project. I say luck, but I am here to tell you that many folks have worked very hard to help HPFD plan and secure the land and funds for the station. Arlen and Sharon Aleckson were instrumental in lobbying efforts on behalf of the community to help secure the funds. Department personnel also spent many hundreds of hours to prepare documentation which included several permit applications, request for funds applications, feasibility studies, building specs, drawings, and Conditional Use Permit, to name a few items.

Where do we go from here? The Department of Commerce (DOC) will distribute the funds to HPFD once we submit a final budget and appropriate documentation. The DOC charges to administer the state funds, so essentially we will have a total dollar amount of \$434,000 to build the Schilling Road Fire Station. The Fire Commissioners and Department Officers have spent several days revising building specs and drawings over the last month. The request for contractor bids will be distributed out through local and regional newspapers as well as advertising on a national list called Commerce Business Daily. We are going for the widest dissemination possible.

Once bids are received by April 17, 2018 (April Commissioners meeting), we can complete a firm budget to submit to the DOC. It will take approximately 4 weeks to draw up a contract between the DOC and HPFD. After that contract is received, the HPFD can award a building contract. The HPFD has every intention of building the Schilling Road Fire Station during 2018.

See the online version of the High Prairian for more photos: <http://www.highprairie.us/high-prairian/vol-18-no-1/>



Mt. Hood from Hartland Road.
Photo: Peg Caliendo

STATE AWARD ALLEVIATES BUDGET UNCERTAINTIES

Philip Haner, Fire Commissioner
Captain, High Prairie Fire Department

It has been brought to the attention of the High Prairie Fire Department (HPFD) that since we now have a way of paying for the new fire station, the question might come up about the increased levy that the taxpayers approved several years ago which was intended to fund the new station. I will start by saying that anyone interested in finding the answers to any questions about the Fire District should attend a Commissioner's meeting on the third Tuesday of the month at 7pm in the Struck Road Fire Station. They are public meetings and anyone is encouraged to attend with questions or comments.

Fire Commissioners realized in 2012 that we would not be able to fund a new station, District-wide operations and maintenance, and the added insurance premiums on the Schilling Road fire station without additional tax revenue from district property owners. We proposed a levy increase with the intended increase to our annual budget of approximately \$15,000. The proposed levy would fall within the same range of rates other fire districts in the county collect. In February 2013, the taxpayers in our district approved the increase by popular vote; but as the levy increase was based on a rate (dollars per thousand) and property values dropped dramatically that year, our levy (the total amount collected from property taxes) was lower than anticipated by about \$4,000. This means our new levy increased the fire district budget by \$11,000 per year for a total budget of \$39,410 per year (2018).

Prior to the announcement that HPFD would be awarded the funds from the Washington State Capital Budget of 2017, the HPFD plan was to get a 40-year loan for the Schilling Road Fire Station. That loan would require approximately \$11,000 per year in payments. The loan payments, along with the other standard bills needed to run a fire department, would have left the fire district without a reliable means to provide the maintenance and upgrades to buildings and equipment that are needed and required to keep HPFD running safely and smoothly. The HPFD can now budget these needs including equipment repairs and replacement of apparatus, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA airpicks), turnouts, and other tools without running short of the operating funds needed to keep the District running and High Prairie and its surroundings protected.

Again, I encourage anyone with questions about how the Fire District is operating to attend a Commissioner's Meeting the third Tuesday of each month. Anyone interested in volunteering should attend a drill night either the 2nd or 4th Tuesday of each month. All meetings and drills are at the Struck Road Fire Station.



Photo: Larry Geddis

THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE

Mildred E. Lykens

The Columbia Gorge is so unique,
With varied choices out there.
From sites along the river
To the fun filled County Fair!

I guide my guests to Multnomah Falls,
Stonehenge or the Museum at Maryhill
In this way I share the beauty
That insures them quite a thrill.

Water sports on the Columbia
Have grown to quite a few
From windsurfing to para-sailing
I like to sit and watch the view.

And when I'm sitting out and about
There's a favorite thing I do.
I like to watch the people....
Don't you like to watch them too?

As you've traveled in the Gorge
Have you ever really seen?
How God has made so many shades
Of the color green?

"She Who Watches" is a petroglyph
On the rocks near Horse Thief Lake
Where there's trails to hike, birds to watch,
And salmon to catch and bake.

High cliffs guide the Columbia
Through dams controlling its flow.
As they direct it toward the Pacific
It gives my light bulbs glow.

After God created this beautiful world
And had few things left to forge,
He took a well earned R & R
In His chosen Columbia Gorge!

A TRIP THROUGH SHIELDS DATE GARDEN

Carol Shuster

Neil and I, along with our daughter, Ida, were in Indio, California, for three weeks last month. We were there from February 4th to the 25th. It was a time to get away and relax. All of us had a wonderful time. We are ready to go again. During the time we were there they had a Date Festival, and on one of our excursions we visited Shields Date Garden.



The Shields Date Garden was started in the early 1900s. The trees there are 15 to 90 years old. We learned how dates are grown through a short movie. Though the date palm is a desert plant, it requires as much water as a willow. The natives would say, "A date palm must have its feet in the water and its head in the fires of Heaven." While they keep their date gardens wringing wet, at least 10 feet deep at all times, rain is their worst enemy.

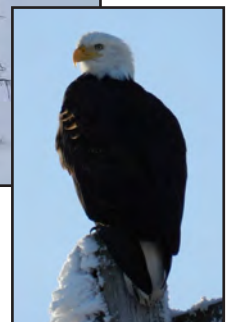
Another interesting feature about the date palm is that nature made no adequate provision to pollinate the female date bloom. Each bundle of dates is pollinated by hand. Pollination is done during February and March.

After the movie we took a walk through a beautiful garden. Not only did we see the lovely trees and flowers, we also saw sculptures depicting scenes of different parts of Jesus' Life. (The garden and sculptures are still under construction.) Each sculpture had a plaque with it explaining what it was and a Bible verse. Yes, I did enjoy reading each one. [You can see more pictures online at www.highprairie.us – Ed.]

Some of the sculptures: From His birth. At the temple at the age of twelve. Talking with the teachers and asking questions. They were amazed at His wisdom at such a young age. His baptism at the Jordan River by John the Baptist. His temptation in the wilderness by the devil. He returned after 40 days and started His ministry. He started by calling his twelve disciples who followed Him. Then came the woman at the well and healing the sick. We saw Jesus during the Last Supper breaking bread. Afterwards we saw Him on the cross. Then came the wonderful sculpture of the EMPTY TOMB on Easter morning. We walked inside that tomb. I seemed to hear the angels say He is not here for He is Risen. The last completed large sculpture was of Jesus after the Resurrection. Jesus Lives today.

MEMORIES OF WINTER

Photos: Peg Caliendo





Responding to a Structure Fire, Pt. 3

In my last Fire Lines article (December 2017) I said I would discuss more fully the firefighters' personal protective equipment, radio use, and what happens between page-out and arriving at a structure fire. After the page-out, volunteers arriving at the fire hall exhibit a single-minded purpose. One or more engines and the 4,000-gallon tender are fired up to build pressure for their air braking systems. Firefighters quickly and deliberately don their structure fire gear commonly called "turnouts". First are the trousers, with sturdy boots positioned in the pant legs, followed by a heavy coat, all of which are made of special fire proof materials. A protective hood is pulled over the head and down the neck, followed by a helmet with face shield and headlamp attached.

Each person grabs their hand-held radio and their face mask with its air line and hustles to the engine. Upon exiting the fire hall, the crew advises Goldendale Dispatch by radio that they are responding. Members (except the driver) strap on the SCBA's (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) mounted in their seat backs. They pull their name tags from their helmets to go on the "passport" board, a message board which the incident commander uses to keep track of firefighters and responding apparatus.

As the engine races to the scene, siren blaring, a discussion about the location of the fire ensues: How long is the driveway, where will tenders be able to take up a position, is there room in the driveway to turn one or more apparatus around? By this point everyone has tuned their hand-held radios to a tac (tactical) channel for a short-range transmission to eliminate interference to any other emergency traffic on the Klickitat County fire channel.

Next, duties are assigned to each firefighter – someone is responsible for pulling the 4" supply line for the tender and anchoring it as the engine drives toward the burning structure. Someone else assists in positioning the engine by directing the driver to back up to a safe location close to the home, followed by setting the two wheel chocks. Others pull appropriate size hoses, based on the size of the structure and fire, and position each hose in the most effective place for the firefighting effort. The driver usually takes the role of the engineer, who starts the pump, regulates water pressure, and connects the 4" line to the engine. The engineer also lays out the chainsaw and other tools that may be needed for entry to the building or through the roof to vent smoke or access the fire. The previous article covered the next steps in the effort to halt the blaze.



If being a first responder sounds interesting to you and you desire being able to help your friends and neighbors in a time of need, please seriously consider joining your local fire department. We are always in need of new volunteers; and this will become even more important when the new High Prairie Fire Hall on Schilling Road is built in the near future. As part of the requirements for the certification which will lower insurance rates in that area, a minimum of six firefighters must be assigned to that hall.

2017 RECAP

Tim Darland, Fire Chief, High Prairie Fire District #14

As the Fire Chief, I have the privilege and honor of leading a highly trained and competent crew who serve as volunteers on the High Prairie Fire Department (HPFD). In review of the 2017 run reports and training rosters, I am always amazed at how many hours our firefighters provide to the community. In addition, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the High Prairie Community Council members and community volunteers, as they have provided invaluable

service to the fire department over the last year.

To Recap 2017 HPFD Activities:

Members responded to a total of 114 emergency calls this last year. Medical emergencies were the majority of our responses, totaling 41. Vehicle accidents were second at 22 responses, followed by 15 wildland fires and 5 structure fires. There were also a number of "good intent calls" in which our firefighters were asked to stand down after responding as other departments gained control of their emergency scene.

HPFD Members volunteered a total of 1,781 hours – 744 hours on emergency response and 1,037 hours spent on training and maintenance activities. The Value of Service to our Community in 2017 totaled \$43,000. Our collected tax revenue for HPFD in 2017 was approximately \$39,000. Money well spent!

Currently we have a roster of 14 members. Please consider joining our department or Lyle's as a volunteer. Both could use more personnel on the roster, men and women. We will train individuals through local on-the-job training and/or through other training opportunities with local fire departments. You can be part of this dedicated group committed to helping their neighbors when called.

Other 2017 HPFD highlights:

HPCC received a Legends casino grant for \$3,000 which went to purchase a set of turnouts for 1 firefighter.

We received a \$2,500 grant from Northwest Farm Credit Services to purchase a thermal imaging camera.

HPCC donated \$6,000 to purchase new turnouts for 2 firefighters with the proceeds from the annual High Prairie Firehouse Sale. I personally want to thank HPCC for the time and commitment it took by community members to ensure the Firehouse Sale happened.

Two new firefighters joined the department; please welcome Greg Haner and Carleen Kemp.

The department applied for state appropriated dollars to build the Schilling Road Fire Station through our local Representative Gina McCabe. The House and Senate passed our

request last April and June, respectively, but as of the end of the year Governor Jay Inslee had not signed the 2017 capital budget into law. (See update on page 3, "State Funds Schilling Road Fire Station").

Quick Announcements:

Please join the Lyle and High Prairie firefighters at the annual Fire Department Awards Dinner on Saturday, March 24, at the High Prairie Community Center. Doors will open at 5 pm and dinner will be served at 6 pm. Thirty seats will be available for community members who want to thank their firefighters while enjoying a catered dinner. RSVP to Barb Parrish at highprairiebarb@gmail.com.

Special Thank You to all the volunteers that supported our recent missing-person search by providing coffee, sandwiches, soda and soup. Outstanding job by everyone, as our subject was found in good condition.

And Finally:

HPFD Commissioner Phillip Haner wrote this recently about the fire district's progress over the last 5 years: "We have apparatus that works, we have several newer apparatus, we have nearly everyone in new turn-outs, we have plans to replace our soon-to-expire SCBAs, we have staff working for the department that is great and doing the proper jobs, we have a substantial amount of reserve money in a savings account for future needs or emergency repairs. I could not be more pleased with the Department."



Shooting Stars. Photo: Peg Callendo

HIGH PRAIRIE ATTAINS FIREWISE COMMUNITY STATUS

Tom McMackin



High Prairie earned its approval as a 2017 nationally recognized Firewise Community. One requirement, for a minimum investment by the community, was met by receiving dollar-value credit for High Prairie residents' participation in fire mitigation activities. These included active involvement in Firewise presentations; work on a project to improve signage for first responders

on Oda Knight Road; participation in a Klickitat County chipping event; and participation in the Washington State Assistance to Land Owners fuels reduction efforts. Thank you!

Now That The Smoke Has Cleared... Last fall's Eagle Creek Fire began 2 September and was declared 'contained' on 30 November at 48,861 acres, but it continues to burn in some remote areas. The cost to date for fighting the fire is \$25+ million. The economic costs to communities and for any recovery efforts will add tens of millions of dollars over a decade or more.

Recent research has identified High Prairie as an area that, in Nature's cycle of renovation by fire, should have a significant fire event every 35 year on average. No one I've talked to can remember the last time we had an area-wide wildland fire. There has been, however, considerable growth in the number of full and part-time High Prairians.

Our own 'Eagle Creek' event is not a matter of 'If?', but 'When?' and 'How Bad?'. The last question is an aspect of our wildfire experience that we can prepare for to help reduce the financial and emotional impacts on our boundary of humans living in open, forested, wild landscapes.

What can you do to make your home and property defensible and ready for when 'our' fire event comes to High Prairie? Get started by incorporating the Firewise 5'/30'/100' protection zones concept into your yard work plans for Spring.

Begin with the **5 foot zone**, *the most important buffer* ~ Look up and around your house/barn/shop/sheds for debris that needs clearing from the roof or next to the structure so embers or flames in the grass can't find an entry point. Make these tasks priorities for your basic fire-defensible space. These are tasks you can complete in the near term.

Start thinking about **the 30 foot zone** ~ Consider this area out from your properties in your extended Spring/Summer yard maintenance plan, remembering that fire in the grass passing to a low hanging bush or branches of a tree could be a ladder for the fire to attack your home.

Create a longer term plan for **the 100 foot zone** ~ Make a plan for the changes over the next year or so that will increase the buffer area, your wildfire 'life raft' that will slow the fire and help first responders guide a fire around your property safely.

Resources are available within the High Prairie Firewise Community and online to assist you with developing a protection plan:

Contact me, Tom McMackin, if you'd like more information on the 'Firewise' and 'Ready, Set, Go!' programs, if you have comments or suggestions, or if you would like to be more involved with the High Prairie Firewise effort. I can answer questions and get you connected with the resources we have available as a recognized Firewise Community. Contact me by email at firewise.onhighprairie@gmail.com or by phone message by calling 509-365-2786.

Online resources:

Firewise – <http://www.firewise.org> or <http://www.firewise.org/wildfire-preparedness/befirewise/home-and-landscape.aspx>

Ready, Set, Go! – <http://www.wildlandfirersg.org> or <http://www.wildlandfirersg.org/Resident>

GARDEN OF WEEDIN INVITES NEW MEMBERS

Gwen Berry

The Garden of Weedin has become somewhat of an institution here on High Prairie. Every summer for many years now, an ever-changing group of enthusiastic High Prairians has brought forth a gorgeous vegetable, herb and flower garden in an old corral along Centerville Highway. The garden membership shifts every spring – some members leave the group and new members come on board.

The Garden of Weedin is a cooperative garden, where everyone works together to prepare the soil, plant the seeds, keep the weeds down, and harvest the fruits of their labor. Periodically the gardeners relax together at a potluck, sharing dishes that spotlight produce from the garden.

There are lots of benefits to this kind of group gardening. By sharing the work and making use of an extensive drip irrigation system, the gardeners can grow more varieties of produce (from Artichokes to Zucchini, says one of the members), and in larger quantities, than would be possible if they were gardening separately. It's more fun, too, because there's almost always someone to chat with over the planting or picking. It's a great way to spend time with friends and get to know new ones.

It's educational, too. Less experienced gardeners learn "on the job" from those with more experience; while those mentors add to their knowledge by doing a little research when questions come up that they can't answer.

There's a real joy in seeing what you've planted sprout and thrive. And there's the produce itself – nice and ripe, fresh off the plant, free of pesticides and full of flavor.

The membership "musical chairs" is happening now, so if this sounds like something you'd like to be part of, send an email to jakesflies@hotmail.com or call Jake at 365-0025. You don't have to be a gardening expert to join the group.



DON'T LOOK AWAY

Rebecca Sonniksen

When I volunteered for the Columbia Gorge Cat Rescue (CGCR), I was prepared to see the sad consequences of people's indifference to the suffering of animals. And, I have. What I didn't expect to see was the flip side to that indifference which is an abundance of kindness.

And, it's not just the stereotypical crazy cat lady; it's young men working in the orchards, it's people helping an elderly neighbor, it's a woman renting a house whose previous renters abandoned their cats, or it's a young girl, whose father rescued an injured cat. It's people of all ages, incomes, and points of

view who have taken it upon themselves to not only help the cats from certain suffering but to help neighbors and strangers in our community.

People who didn't look the other way.

It's not easy trapping or capturing a frightened feral cat but denial doesn't make it better. It makes it worse. Did you know an average cat has 1-8 kittens per litter and 2-3 litters per year? During her productive life, one female cat could have more than 100 kittens. And, a kitten can reach puberty as early as 4 months and the cycle continues. You do the math.

When these cats are brought to the CGCR Clinic held about once a week at the Lyle Activity Center, they are vaccinated, treated for parasites, and spayed or neutered. The clinic is donation-based, so these homeless cats are treated regardless of income. It costs approximately \$50 to spay and vaccinate a cat. On a typical clinic day, there are usually 15-20 cats. Donations are not only appreciated, they sustain the program. CGCR is a donation-based non-profit all-volunteer



organization.

Adult cats are typically returned to their caregivers. When there are kittens they are often placed in foster homes where, thanks to the kindness of volunteers, they are socialized in preparation for the CGCR adoption program.

Truth is, not all the cats find homes. Some are simply too wild, or feral, as they are called. For those cats their survival depends on the kindness of people to provide them with some sort of shelter and food. Ideally, the cats are returned to their original territory to live out their lives. When a friendly adult cat has

been living where a caregiver has been feeding it and seeing to its needs, it is usually better for the cat to stay in that situation. This is called TNR (Trap-Neuter-Release). This program is not without its critics, but it's been shown to be the most compassionate approach/solution to feral and stray cat overpopulation.

However, my point is not to argue the merits of caring-for over killing. It is to say, looking the other way is not a solution.

The first step to getting a cat or cats help is to go online to www.gorgecat.org and to fill out an online spay/neuter appointment form. A clinic scheduler will contact you within 24 hours to schedule your appointment. We lend out humane live traps for a deposit and will show you how to use it when you pick it up. We generally do not have volunteers who are able to trap, but we help in any way possible.

We are entering kitten season, so the sooner you can take action the better. Contact us at www.gorgecat.org and be part of the solution. Be kind and don't look the other way.

The High Prairie
P.O. Box 592
Lyle, WA 98635

THE PROMISE OF SPRING

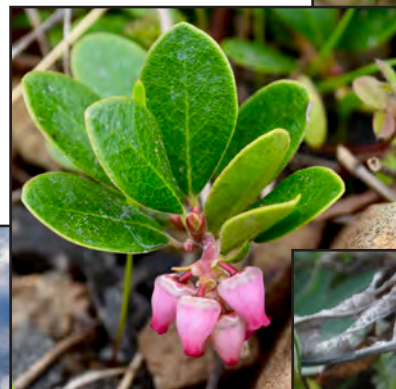
Photos: Peg Callendo



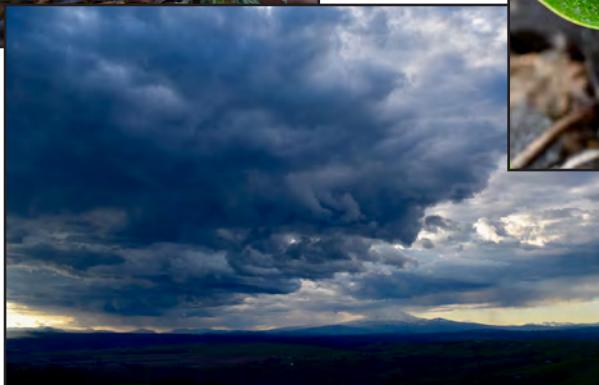
Cut log with lichen, moss & fungi



Kinickinick blossoms



Lady's Slipper Orchid



Spring storm, High Prairie



Yellow glacier lily & oaks toothwort