

# The Queen of Provolt reigns once again

BY LAIRD FUNK

Tracy Archey; his wife, Barbara Steiner; and their daughter, Audrey, didn't come to Oregon to buy the Provolt Store. Tracy and Barbara thought they'd just visit Oregon for a while, help Audrey remodel a house in Applegate, and then return to their pleasant retired life in New Mexico. After 15 years as a telecommunications engineer with a lot of overseas work, Tracy thought retirement was looking good. But then they saw the store.

**The Provolt Store opened in 1875** and is the oldest continuously operating business in southern Oregon. In 1904, when the owner was upset about "high taxes" in Josephine County, he moved the store from Josephine County across the street to Jackson County.

At that time the store was queen of Provolt's "commercial district." It still was in 2014 when Tracy and Barbara first saw it, but her crown was tarnished, her royal robes in disrepair, and her throne listing. They also saw that she could be restored to her former glory and again be the busy commercial hub of the community, providing quality groceries and other products to residents of surrounding areas. Dreams of what the store could be spurred them on, and they began to make the changes the place had long needed.

**The initial task** was to put the first foundation ever under the store. For 110 years the store had stood on a conglomeration of wooden beams and concrete blocks. "Level" was an unknown concept for decades. But not anymore. While it may not be billiard-table level, at least if you drop a can of soup, you won't have to chase it to the back of the store!

Walking in now, one is struck by the bright, open and spacious new layout of the shelves and cold cases and by a shiny new delicatessen offering delicious sandwiches, daily soup specials and handmade pastries from Audrey's own recipes. The deli also offers cakes, pies, and biscuits and gravy on the weekends. Later in the year they will add sausages, hot dogs and maybe pizzas to the mix. The focal point of the store is the traditional Mayoral Bench, occupied daily by Provolt "Mayor," Wes Hill, who gives his new "office" high marks.

The newly painted and rearranged shelves are chock full of a great selection of groceries, a good many of them organic, priced to be competitive with Grants Pass merchants. Tracy wants to carry as many organic products as possible, including fresh produce from local Applegate organic farms, something new for Provolt. They also offer DVD rentals and keep



Photo, top: Owner Tracy Archey behind the deli counter at Provolt Store.

Photo, bottom: The store's revamped interior.

a lending library/book exchange for the neighborhood. It doesn't stop there as Tracy made clear, explaining with excitement his many plans for the future.

**A locally unique feature** is a 10 feet by 24 feet walk-in beer cooler being built in the back room that will allow Tracy and Barbara to double their beer offerings and free up the cold cases to hold a wider selection of local organic produce, eggs and dairy products. Also in the works are more varieties of kombucha, draught beer, and

wines, which will be available for takeout in containers up to half-gallon growlers.

**The plans don't stop with the inside.** When the weather warms the new owners plan to rebuild the outdoor stage behind the store and convert the surrounding area into a park with picnic tables and barbecues for the neighbors to use. When the facilities are complete, they want to put on family-friendly entertainment events and other activities for Applegate residents to enjoy.

The warmer weather will also give Tracy a chance to start the big job of restoring the building's exterior. After decades of patching up and making do, the store needs help. Tracy is looking forward to giving it that help. Not only does it need a new coat of paint, but also, after years of improper fixing, parts of the wooden structure must be removed and rebuilt entirely. Only when that work is done can the Queen be fitted with her new barn red with white trim "robes" and reassume the role of the commercial monarch of Provolt.

As a daily patron of the Provolt Store since 1978, I can attest to the need for tender loving care for our Queen, and I am overjoyed to see that care happening. I look forward to the new Provolt Store and will be shopping there into the future. I don't know how long that will be, but it is likely to be far less than the next 100 years for which the new owners are preparing the store to survive and thrive. Visit the Provolt Store—you'll like it!

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## JOSHUA MORTON

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Joshua, has played in the school band, and is planning to major in art or music in college. Money for the scholarships comes from sales of Joshua's paintings.

**The fund has accumulated** enough money to award its first scholarship this year. Joshua hopes to have \$100,000 in the fund in 20 years.

Does that sound unrealistic? "Shoot for the stars and land on the moon," as Joshua says.

**Joshua's art is intertwined closely with music.** He does paintings of musicians, though one could just as rightly say he does paintings of music. He paints from photographs, but the essence of the painting is in Joshua's artistic vision that changes the photograph not only into a new medium but also into a new meaningfulness. Jerry Garcia, Phish, Umphrey's McGee, The String Cheese Incident, Dave Matthews—he paints the musicians he likes. The depictions of the musicians and their environments—vividly colorful, brilliantly angled, charged with rhythm and power—splash with unheard music, as though we were there at the concert where the music unifies the crowd and puts us all in a better mood. The paintings do what the concerts do.

Athletics are also intertwined with Joshua's art, not because he paints athletes but because the same ethos applies to his wrestling as to his painting. "Hard work is the reality that leads to the illusion of talent," he tells his students, budding wrestlers and

artists alike. Learning moves in wrestling is like learning technique in art. Both are a "long, slow process with a lot of hard work. It's more about effort than about skill," he says.

**Joshua is not a tell-them teacher** but a show-them teacher. Whether wrestling or painting, he does what he wants his students to do. He gets down on the wrestling mat with the student wrestlers. He wields his paintbrushes on his own canvases in the art room. "It's good for students to see a teacher working," he says. When his students look enviously at his accomplished, professional paintings displayed along the walls of the art room, he reminds them, "Hard work is the reality that leads to the illusion of talent."

You can see more of Joshua's art at <http://joshua-morton.artistwebsites.com>.

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Artist and wrestler Joshua Morton.



Phish in Deep Space by Joshua Morton.

## Josephine County Educational Fund

Fifty years ago some forward-thinking citizens in Grants Pass established the Grants Pass High School Foundation to provide scholarships and grants that would make higher education affordable to area students and their families. Since then the organization has grown to include partner schools in Josephine, Jackson, and Douglas counties and has been renamed as the Josephine County Educational Fund, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational foundation.

The One Sweet World Fund is one of its more than 200 fund accounts, with an accumulated total of over \$4 million. Last year's awards totaled more than \$326,730. For more information visit [www.jocoeducationalfund.org](http://www.jocoeducationalfund.org).

## Pacifica Panorama

# Here's what's happening at Pacifica

• **Trails getting ready for spring.** It's March, and it may look like nothing's happening out there in the forests and the meadows...but it is! Look closely along over two miles of Pacifica's trails, and you'll find buds starting to swell and birds starting to sing.

• **Bird-watching hike with Audubon expert.** Sunday, March 22, 8 am. The warblers should be going through! Some binoculars will be available.

• **Friday evenings.** All free or by donation.

• **The Second Friday of each month is Family Nature Fun Night** at Pacifica from 6 to 8 pm. Each Nature Night will have a theme that will include a movie or book, some science, some games and lots of fun. March's theme will be "animal homes," followed by extreme fort-making! April's will be "animal identification," including making a track to take home.

• **The Third Friday is Movie Night** complete with pillows, sleeping bags and popcorn! Watch for listings on the Applegater's online calendar and Jo's List.

• **The Fourth Friday is Artists' Night.** Everyone is welcome from 7 to 9 pm to work on and/or share a project, read poetry, or just talk and jam. There will also be showings of the thought-provoking *ART-21* (art in the 21st Century), which takes viewers behind the scenes, beyond the museum or gallery experience, to reveal how contemporary art can change how we see our world.

• **The Caterpillar.** This year the theme of the Caterpillar (a unique mobile science-

nature center that visits schools) is "Night and Day: Astronomy and Weather," and it's very exciting. View nebulae on a 40-inch screen, and then draw your own in pastel. Make a star-chart. Learn about moon phases and planets. Do experiments to discover why weather happens. Learn clouds. Do basic forecasting and discuss climate changes. Fun, interesting and important stuff! We'd love to have you visit the Caterpillar.

• **Pacifica Arts Guild new ceramics lab** with two pottery wheels and lots of room for slab work. Open every Sunday from 1 to 4 pm for classes or working on your own creation (\$15-25).

• **Water color and sketching** will be offered by Kathleen Kollock on Saturdays (March 7, 14, 21, and 28) from 10 to 3 pm. Cost: \$35 per session or \$120/four weeks). Other classes available.

• **The Third Annual Nature-Art Sculpture Contest.** This year's contest, display and sale will take place on June 5, 6 and 7. The 2015 theme is "animals." Anyone can participate for a chance to win \$500 in prize money.

• **Pacifica Volunteer Day.** Held on the second Sunday of the month (March 8, April 12, and May 10). Learn how to make a picnic table while you help Pacifica make several that you can enjoy for picnics when you visit. Come at 9 am dressed to have fun and work. There will be refreshments. Pacifica is located at 14615 Water Gap Road, Williams, Oregon.

For more information, contact Peg at 541-660-4295 or [peg@pacificagarden.org](mailto:peg@pacificagarden.org).

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