

Meet our new fire chief

BY SANDY SHAFFER

Early in January I sat down with our new-but-possibly-temporary Fire Chief Chris Wolfard to talk about the future for our Applegate Valley Fire District #9. I was a bit nervous, because I'd never really taken the time to know Chris all these years. I always communicated with the past fire chiefs directly if I had a question or was planning my next article for the *Applegater*. I respected that other district employees had plenty of work to do in between responding to calls, and no one ever knew when the next emergency call might tone!

I was nervous because Chris had been the Applegate Valley Fire District #9's (AVFD #9) operations chief for as long a time as I had lived here in the Applegate Valley. And as such Chris had worked under both past fire chiefs—Brett Fillis and Mike McLaughlin. At that time, I'd not communicated with Chris much. I initially found him unapproachable, but I soon found that I'd been wrong.

Chris's background is nothing but impressive! He graduated with a fire science degree from Rogue Community College in 2000, just about the time his wife, Serena, gave birth to their only child, Ashley.

So, Chris began looking throughout the fire districts in southern Oregon towns for possible open positions. Chris quickly was hired as a full-time shift officer with the (local) Phoenix fire department. Shortly after he'd settled in, he started taking more classes and eventually graduated with a bachelor of science degree in fire service administration in 2016.

In 2003 Chris began working as the Applegate Valley Fire District #9's operations chief for Chief Brett Fillis (and later for Chief McLaughlin). So over the past 20 years Chris has been a fire officer and an EMT- intermediate (Emergency Medical Technician) for the AVFD#9, with many of us having seen him caring for our family members. Chris has also been an active member of the National Interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams (IMT).

Nowadays, Chris is certified as a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Fire



Fire Chief Chris Wolfard in his office.

Officer II, an NFPA Instructor II, an Oregon EMT-Intermediate, a Haz-Mat On-Scene Incident Commander, a Type II Planning Section Chief, and a Rope, Water and Vehicle Rescue Technician. (Whew! Hope I didn't forget one!)

But wait—there's more! Chris says he is on track to complete his NFPA Fire Officer III certification in this next month! After that he will take on the NFPA Fire Officer IV. (Is your head reeling with all of those acronyms?!)

And yes, there is still one more detail: Chris also took on grant writing 22 years ago, and he is proud to be able to say today that he has brought in more than \$2 million dollars to the Rogue Valley! All of this funding was earmarked for fire equipment, training, apparatus, staffing, and a comprehensive health and wellness program for fire districts in the Rogue Valley.

In closing, I personally hope that whoever is currently studying and/or making the decisions regarding our fire chief position for the future has read this piece. They might have learned why Chris Wolfard should remain our fire chief!

Sandy Shaffer
sassyoneor@gmail.com

Your community needs you

BY CHRIS WOLFARD

The past few months have been an exciting time for the Applegate Valley Fire District (AVFD). We've added over a dozen new members to our roster of responders. This is the largest influx of new personnel we have seen in many years. Out of those who graduated in December from the Rogue Community College Firefighter 1 Academy, we recruited three firefighters. In the current Firefighter 1 Academy, which is being hosted here at AVFD, we have nine more new recruits who are on track to graduate March 3. Also joining our team is an emergency room (ER) doctor who is lined up to respond with us to 911 calls. Lastly, we've been fortunate enough to have three previous members return to our team to continue and/or restart their volunteer careers here in the Applegate.

Our member roster is currently 43 strong, including 36 volunteers and seven full-time personnel. Whether you want to fight fire, respond to EMS (emergency medical services) calls, or drive and operate a water truck, we offer a full range of volunteer opportunities. We're sure to have a spot for just about anyone willing and able to serve this community. You do not need any prior experience in emergency services to join our team. You will receive the training you need when you join our

district. We also provide all the uniforms, personal protective equipment, and tools for the job.

Obviously, most people join our organization so they can help their fellow citizens in times of need. One of the greatest feelings in the world is giving back to your community and knowing that you've made a real difference. Volunteer responders also enjoy a sense of accomplishment, achievement, and pride while learning new skills and making new friends.

As we enter spring, we will be offering basic wildland firefighter training to prepare new recruits for the upcoming fire season. We are looking for help at all seven of our stations. If you're at all interested, *now* is the time to sign up and join our family of active firefighters who are dedicated to the safety of the Applegate community! It all starts with you simply calling 541-899-1050 for an application, filling it out, and turning it in.

If you have an interest in joining our team, but have questions first, feel free to call or stop by District 9 Headquarters at 1095 Upper Applegate Road.

I look forward to meeting and talking with you.

Chris Wolfard
Interim Fire Chief
cwolfard@applegatefd.com

Applegate Valley Fire District has three board seats open

BY DANIEL PELISSIER

There are three seats on the board of directors of the Applegate Valley Fire District up for election on May 16. All three are for four-year terms.

The filing period ends at 5 pm March 16. Because the fire district spans two counties, candidates must file with each county. The form may be found on the Jackson County Elections website. The cost is \$10 to file.

We all tend to take the work of special district boards for granted, but they cannot work without the citizens of the district stepping up and taking part.

Please see the Jackson County website at jacksoncountyor.org/clerk/Elections/Elections-Office for more information.

Daniel Pelissier
pelissierdr@gmail.com

■ FIRST NATIONS

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competitors (the newly established "Americans") could beat them to it.

Next came the southern Oregon gold rush. By the early 1850s, placer mining had commenced along the Applegate River, Sterling Creek, Forest Creek, Murphy Creek, Slate Creek, and, later, Williams Creek. The Applegate Trail brought in white entrepreneurs from the east looking to capitalize on gold and promising agricultural pursuits. To increase settlement in the Oregon Territory, the federal government initiated the 1850 Donation Land Claim Act, which offered "free" land (to men only), in exchange for a commitment to cultivate the land for four consecutive years. Then came the Homestead Act of 1862, which provided further incentive for the flood of Euro-Americans to lay claim on the land of the Da-ku-be-te-de.

As the conflict over land use and territory increased between the new white settlers and the Native people, the Rogue River Wars intensified and raged from 1852-1856. Captain Robert Williams, for whom Williams is named, led battles in the name of the United States against the Native people they sought to displace. Camp Spencer was established near the

mouth of Williams Creek from which Oregon Mounties launched their attacks. When the war was over, the Da-ku-be-te-de, who had survived the war, disease, and forced removal from their homelands, were moved far away to the Grand Ronde and Siletz Reservations.

In their absence, much has been lost: their language, land-based knowledge, traditions, and culture. Their descendants are today members of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz and Grand Ronde. As current stewards of the lands, let us take time to acknowledge the people who preceded us and to welcome them home when they return.

Evelyn Roether
evelynkr@gmail.com

Resources: (1) *LaLande, J.* First Over the Siskiyou: Peter Skene Ogden's 1826-1827 Journey through the Oregon-California Borderlands. *Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon, 1987.* (2) *McKinley, G. and D. Frank.* Stories on the Land: An Environmental History of the Applegate and Illinois Valleys. *Medford, Oregon, 1996.* (3) *Pullen, R.* Overview of the Environment of Native Inhabitants of Southwestern Oregon, Late Prehistoric Era. *Bandon, Oregon, 1996.* (4) *Williams Creek Watershed Council.* Williams Creek Watershed Assessment. *Williams, Oregon, 2000.*

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Back in Time
Growing up in the Applegate



by
Evelyn Byrne Williams
with Janeen Sathre

Editors
Laura Ahearn, President, McKee Bridge Historical Society
Diana Coogler, Chair, Applegater Board of Directors

\$20

A compilation of 50 "Back in Time" articles,
by Evelyn Byrne Williams with Janeen Sathre,
previously published in the *Applegater* newsmagazine.

Available at Rebel Heart Books, applegater.org, or contact Lisa Baldwin at leeb.97527@gmail.com.
When shipped, add \$5. All proceeds benefit the *Applegater*.