

# Applegater

Photo by Jerry Rainforth

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## Fire destroys Webco mill

The Webco sawmill in Williams, Oregon, was destroyed by fire on January 3, 2012. Responders to the three-alarm blaze came from as far away as Rogue River, and included dozens of firefighters from Williams, Applegate, Rural Metro, and Grants Pass.

The mill operated for over 50 years, closing permanently in the late 1980s. An earlier mill, Brown Brothers Sawmill, that operated on the same site was destroyed by fire in the 1970s. When it was rebuilt—as a more modern sawmill able to cut a log up to 36 feet long—the name was changed to Webco.

The fire may have been caused by a pickup truck exhaust pipe. Alan Wall, a long-time Williams resident, stored straw, alfalfa, two columbines and a grain trailer—all lost in the fire along with the old mill building.

Professional photographer Mikell Nielsen, who lives down the street from the mill, had recently used the site for several photo shoots and, sadly, has shot it for the last time.

See more fire photos on our website.

*Photos by Mikell Nielsen*



## Pilots give back to the Applegate Valley

BY ANDY PALLOTTA

When you are a part of an organization that has major events taking place year after year, it's important to be aware of the needs of the community and the value of "giving something back." I've realized this is a philosophy that many in the hang gliding and paragliding world are putting into action more and more. Everyone knows about the thrill-seeking, action-packed mentality of hang gliding and paragliding pilots. But not everyone realizes the many ways they are helping people in the communities and countries where they enjoy their sport.

Every year, the Rat Race Paragliding Competition draws over 100 pilots, making more than 1,000 flights from the Woodrat Mountain launch as they fly over the beautiful Rogue Valley in southern Oregon. Mike and Gail Haley, who host the competition, had an idea a few years ago to start reaching out to the Ruch, Applegate and surrounding areas in whatever ways they could. A few of those ways include donating money to the local elementary school and founding a fundraiser that utilizes the goodwill of the Rat Race competition pilots. The generated funds have been donated in the name of a local landowner to a Medford hospital for

a premature infant car seat program, and as a scholarship for local students.

That's where I come in. My name is Andy. Every year, during the Rat Race competition, the Haleys host a dinner at their home where the pilots contribute to the scholarship program that helps one or more students in our area get through school. I have gratefully been the recipient of the scholarship for the last three years.



From left to right, organizer Mike Haley, scholarship recipient Andy Pallotta, and Dave Palmer, a supporter of the Rat Race competition.

In 2008, I decided to pursue a nursing career so I started taking classes. Putting myself through a year and a half of prerequisites and now finding a way to pay for a three-year registered nursing program has been financially challenging to say the least.

The pilots always give generously. They show a real sense of goodwill and appreciation for the surrounding

community, which has an encouraging impact on people like me. As a result of their generosity over the last three years, I started a nursing program in the fall of 2011 and amazingly I am virtually debt free.

After nursing school, I plan to continue my education and become a nurse practitioner. Eventually, my goal is to travel and do international medical work in lesser developed countries, "giving back" in the same way shown to me. That's an important thing as far as I'm concerned, and I hope all the pilots will be proud of what is accomplished by their giving.

I am so appreciative of the local flying community and especially the pilots of the Rat Race for helping me get through my college education without all the weight and worry of the financial burden. I hope others will follow the pilots' examples and continue to give back to their communities. Your generosity really is making a difference in the lives of the people in southern Oregon and is making *all* the difference for me.

As an added bonus, I even talked Mike into taking me up for my first paragliding flight, and hopefully not my

See Pilots, page 20

### INSIDE THE GATER

Story of an old tintage.....page 6  
Doomsday 2012.....page 8

Night of the living bedbug.....page 9  
Are you ember aware yet?.....page 11