

# Applegate Lions Club: Forged by fire, molded by big hearts

BY TOM CARSTENS

“We’re a bunch of guys who know how to do things,” says Rich Halsted, a retired Marine and current president of the Applegate Lions Club. Founded by a group of middle-Applegate farmers, builders, heavy equipment operators, and businessmen, this organization has been quietly serving our valley since 1975.

We commonly associate the Lions with eye health, but that’s not how this club began. It had its genesis when the Krause ranch house burned to the ground. At that time, the Applegate Valley had no fire department, so no structure in the valley had a remote chance of surviving a fire. Phil Krause set about to change that—he organized his neighbors into a citizen fire department. They put water tanks in their pickups, strapped on water packs, and, using landlines and CB radios, started a neighborhood network to put out fires before they got out of control. How did

they find the fires? They watched and sniffed. Whatever worked!

This hardy group of 53 Applegaters eventually coalesced into the Applegate Lions Club. Bill Macy was their first president.

Pretty soon, club members chipped in and bought a 1940s-era LaFrance fire engine. This engine, augmented with their own pickups, permitted this herd of nascent firefighters to cover the whole Applegate Valley. Training sessions often ended with some pretty rowdy, beer-fueled water fights.

In 1981, the Lions acquired a piece of land on North Applegate Road. In an effort spearheaded by Murray Crowe and Warren Buscho, the club volunteered their time, expertise, and materials to build Applegate’s first fire station on that property, next to the library. They still meet regularly at Station #1. Until recently, the Lions always had a club member sitting on the Applegate Fire District board.

Today, the Lions continue their mission of service to our community, like cleaning up the Missouri Flat Cemetery every year, picking up litter along Highway 238, or building the shelters at school bus stops you see scattered about the middle Applegate. Many of our residents’ roofs were generously installed by Lions.

They also support our schools. In a project headed by Tuffy Decker, they volunteered their time and equipment to construct the Applegate School’s athletic track. They do periodic maintenance when needed. And the Lions support both the

Applegate and Williams schools’ music and athletic programs.

Every year, the Lions offer two \$750 scholarships through Hidden Valley High School. One is the Bill Macy Memorial Academic Scholarship, awarded to a deserving college-bound senior. Maria Cross, last year’s awardee, went on to attend Oregon State University, majoring in biology. Maria hopes to become a veterinarian. Conner Wright took the Jim Bottroff Memorial Vocational Training Scholarship, which he used at Lane Community College, with the goal of getting into aviation technology.

You may have tasted a Lions’ yummy barbecue meal at an Applegate event—maybe at McKee Bridge, Cantrall Buckley Park, or Buncom Pioneer Days. Did you know that anyone who needs event support can request it from the Lions Club? All you have to do is email Rich Halsted and ask (rich.halsted@gmail.com). They’ll not only put together a scrumptious meal, but, for a small fee, they’ll put up their 40-by 60-foot circular tent for you. They like to support weddings, family events, dinners, memorials, etc. Meal proceeds support the club.

And, yes, our Applegate Lions *do* support vision health in our valley. Every year, they sponsor a free vision screening clinic for all the students at Applegate and Williams schools. For those in need, they’ll pick up the tab for glasses or other optometry care. Any old glasses to spare? You can put them in a special bin located at Rosella’s Winery on Missouri Flat Road.

Lions President Rich Halsted says they’re willing to support any worthwhile community project. Have something in mind? Let Rich know.

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Thanks to Mary Warrick, Larry Hogan, Larry Buscho, Dan Sayer, and Rich Halsted for their contributions to this article.



Cooking up a mean barbecue at the Cantrall Buckley Golden Jubilee in 2018 (from left): the late Tom Kurth, Marcos Martins, Rich Halsted, the late Bob Baise, Rex Garoutte, and Steve Rapp. Photo: Tom Carstens.



Applegate Lions founding members Chuck Elmore and Larry Hogan pose before the club’s 1975 charter. Photo: Rich Halsted.



Lions Club President Rich Halsted and Treasurer Don Sayer in front of their meeting hall at Applegate Valley Fire Station #1. Photo: Tom Carstens.

In the late 1970s, the late Alan Wall (driving the engine) and Bill Meyer (standing) pose with Applegate kids (right to left) Stacy and Kelly Krause, Polly and Eddie Meyer, and two unknown children (do you know who they are?) by the Lions’ kiddie train. Photo: Lions Club archives.



## POSTCARDS

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was taken at the French Gulch cabin.” She points out that the photograph of the Jacksonville courthouse shows streetcar rails and an old telephone pole on the corner.

Historic postcards can be poignant reminders of the past. Mary has one of her Uncle Francis, who died of polio just after graduating from college. “It’s a picture of

him on his horse when he was four years old,” she says, describing it to me on the phone. “He has a stick to make the horse do what he wants. That horse might have been one of the last carriage horses. The Buckleys were famous for the carriage horses they raised. And then automobiles came along...carriage horses were no longer needed...”

Though we were talking on the telephone, I could imagine Mary at that

moment, looking fondly and sadly at that postcard, a reminder of the old days—of her uncle who died so young and the family business that was doomed by history.

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A postcard (right) from Mary Mikkelsen’s collection shows a pair of horseback riders.



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