

Applegater

Photo by Linda Kappen

SUMMER 2024
Volume 17, No. 2

Applegate Valley Community Newsmagazine
Serving Jackson and Josephine Counties — Circulation: 13,500

Celebrating
~30~
Years

ASK THE GATER

Applegater reader Lillian Stewart, concerned about emergency services, asked the Gater what is available in times of need in our rural communities.

Were you prepared for our winter weather?

BY LAURA DUEY

When unusually heavy snowfall smothered the Applegate in March, trees fell and power lines snapped, leaving some of us trapped in our homes with no power or telephone service. While snowstorms of this magnitude are rare, the Applegate is also susceptible to wildfires, earthquakes, and random dead trees falling across utility lines and blocking driveways.



Trees downed by our winter storm on China Gulch Road in Jacksonville. Photo: David Fisher.

What can you do in case Mother Nature cuts off your normal communications and transportation, particularly if you or someone in your household is disabled or has limited mobility? Above all else, prepare.

Representative Pam Marsh and the Aging and Disability Resource Connection

of Rogue Valley recommend registering with the Rogue Valley Disaster Registry and the Applegate Valley Fire District (AVFD) Community Connect, where you can note special needs about your See **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**, page 5.



Community volunteers at the RVPBA's pile-burning workshop in Williams. Photo: Alex McGlasson.

Building community bonds before an emergency

BY AARON KRIKAVA

As we prepare for the approaching fire season—readying our go-bags, cleaning gutters, and moving firewood away from our homes—we should also make sure our most valuable asset in an emergency is in good working order: our neighborhood and community relations. Communities come together to help and support each other in deeply meaningful ways when disaster strikes. Developing those relationships *before* they are needed will reduce the damage in an emergency.

One of the most valuable neighborhood tools in a wildfire situation is a simple phone tree. Having a well-laid-out structure of who calls whom along the chain can ensure all the neighbors get the message of what to prepare for and when to evacuate. There are incredible digital and online tools for communicating evacuation levels, but experience has shown they can get overloaded. Many folks in the Applegate don't have cell phone reception, many folks don't have landlines, and some folks don't have any electronic communication at all. Knowing your neighbors, and knowing who needs to communicate with them and how, can help to ensure everyone gets out safely. Now is a good time to give your phone tree a test. Maybe someone has moved or gotten a different number, so it's important to update phone trees as new landowners and renters come into the community.

Testing your phone tree is a great opportunity to plan a neighborhood

potluck. Sharing a meal and connecting with neighbors is the very basis of building community. Developing and maintaining these relationships now will enrich your day-to-day life and pay dividends in an emergency. Along with chatting about local issues and updates on our lives, we can share grant opportunities, local volunteer groups we enjoy, or our current land projects. Perhaps you and your neighbor could give each other a hand on your projects and get them completed quicker. "Many hands make light work." We all enjoy our privacy and individualism, but communal labor-sharing has always been a cornerstone of rural life.

In addition to making work quicker and more enjoyable, working together can make it safer too. When burning piles or using chainsaws, having another person around is always a best practice. Communities that work together to reduce fuel loading are more resilient when a wildfire does occur. Fire doesn't stop at property lines, so helping your neighbor clean up their property will help protect yours. Groups like the Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association (RVPBA) and Firewise USA help to support and facilitate this sort of community wildfire preparedness.

RVPBA supports landowners in organizing prescribed burns on their property, helping connect community members, and educating them on the safe and effective use of fire as a land-

See **BUILDING BONDS**, page 17.

FIRE DEPARTMENTS ANNOUNCE AWARDS

Applegate Valley Fire Department ceremony held in March

The Applegate Valley Fire District (AVFD) held its annual awards ceremony on March 22 at the AVFD training building in Ruch.

Firefighter awards represent recognition for the bravery and dedication of—and sacrifices made by—individuals who serve in one of the most demanding and essential professions. These awards acknowledge exceptional acts of heroism, leadership, and service within the firefighting community. They honor those who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to protect lives, property, and the environment from the devastating effects of fires and other emergencies.

And the awards go to...

Mark Chaput Spirit Award:

Jacob Heckerman

See **APPLEGATE FIRE AWARDS**, page 3.

Williams Fire Department celebrates firefighters with chili cook-off

People from all around the Williams community joined forces on May 4 to celebrate our Williams Fire Department firefighters—and to savor some award-winning chili! Each year, the Williams fire station holds a chili cook-off hosted by the Williams Fire Department Support Team and judged by the local community. The winner of the chili cook-off moves on to the Regional Firefighter Chili Cook-off, which will be held later this year at Jackson County Fire Station #5 in Phoenix, Oregon.

Five firefighters entered our chili cook-off this year, each presenting a large pot of mouth-watering chili enhanced with chopped onions and other herbs, shredded cheddar cheese, and cooked

See **WILLIAMS FIRE AWARDS**, page 3.

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