

Polk County
Itemizer-Observer
Volume 141, Issue 47 www.Polkio.com November 23, 2016 \$1.00

Falls City's do-all mayor

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — Terry Ungricht's routine begins with arriving at city hall in Falls City at 6 a.m.
"That gives me a couple of hours of work without disruption," he said. "If we have a water main break, I'm in the ditch and driving the dump truck. That's why I like to show up early — that gives me a couple of hours to work. Then you open your email or the phone starts ringing."

His official title with the city of Falls City is mayor. It's safe to say that is an understatement of the responsibility he's taken as the city contends with limited funding. He is the city's mayor, the city manager, a public works assistant, volunteer organizer and grant writer.

He does all of that with little background in public administration — he served as a city councilor for two years — and no financial compensation.

"Mayor Ungricht volunteered to serve as city manager so he could help remove roadblocks keeping Falls City from moving forward and help the city save money," said City Clerk Domenica Protheroe. "This is exactly what he has done."

By filling the role of city manager, which requires him to work about 50 hours per week, if not more, Ungricht is saving the city about \$82,000. His work on infrastructure improvements in town — water, sewer and streets — no doubt will save the city more money. Ungricht does it with the municipal equivalent of clipping coupons: Applying for grants and seeking partnerships with other cities or agencies.

A retired railroad conductor and lobbyist on behalf of his union, Ungricht said he's versed in "government speak" and another trick



Falls City Mayor Terry Ungricht has a lot more on his plate than the traditional duties of the office. He serves as city manager and can be found helping public works and writing grants for city projects.

that has been useful. "I know how to twist arms," he said, smiling.

Protheroe can tick off a list of the successful grants Ungricht has applied for or has assisted in applying for on behalf of the city in his first term. His first was a HEAL Cities grant used to repair and upgrade the 119 steps that connect downtown to the Falls City Elementary School neighborhood.

The city has received grants to pay for water treatment facility plans, an income study for households served by city sewer services, street paving, expanding Michael Harding Park, and one under consideration for sewer system upgrades.

Federal and state grants will pay for a replacement bridge on Mitchell Street crossing Dutch Creek which washed out in December 2015. Ungricht established a



partnership with Polk County to manage the project.

Ungricht has plans for the city, in partnership with the county, to receive more grant money to pave streets in town. That way the city can use state grants to small cities to pave frequently used gravel roads.

"I have a lot of goals for the city, mainly infrastructural," Ungricht said. "My thing is to try to look 10 years out."

City Councilor Jenn Drill



In addition to administrative duties, Ungricht also is active in the community, here at July 4 events.

said his foresight is appreciated.

"I think he's made a huge impact, not just personally, but financially," she said. "He's able to look at things as a whole and not just his own agenda."

She added he's good at rallying people for a common cause.

"He brings unity to our community," she said. "It comes down to having a heart for the community."

See MAYOR, Page 8A

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

Water and sewer rates set to increase next year.
»Page 2A

FALLS CITY

Falls City High School changes its grading policy.
»Page 12A

INDEPENDENCE

Minet finds a fix to slowing service.
»Page 3A

MONMOUTH

Western Oregon renews its strategic plan.
»Page 5A

SPORTS

Western men's basketball depends on newcomers.
»Page 11A

Remember safety when cooking

Itemizer-Observer staff report
POLK COUNTY — With Thanksgiving just a few days away, State Fire Marshal Jim Walker is reminding Oregonians to keep fire safety front and center when cooking and preparing holiday meals.

"When friends and family gather at this festive time of year, don't let it be marred by tragedy," says Walker. "By following a few fire prevention tips, you can keep yourself and loved ones safe."

From 2011 through 2015, there were more than 4,000 cooking-related fires in Oregon causing nine deaths, 228 injuries, and more than \$37 million in property loss.

- Cooking safety tips:**
- Keep a close eye on your cooking; never leave cooking food unattended.
 - Keep your cooking area clean, including stovetop, burners, oven, and exhaust fan.
 - Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, dish towels, and food packaging away from your stovetop.
 - Wear clothing that will not dangle onto stove burners and catch fire.
 - Keep pot and pan handles turned inward on the stove to avoid bumping them and spilling hot foods.
 - Heat cooking oil slowly and never leave it unattended.

For more information: www.oregon.gov/osp/SFM/Pages/cookingsafety.aspx.

Holiday programs need assistance, donations

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Two organizations serving those in need this Christmas — Dallas Christmas Cheer and Dallas Adopt-a-Family — are gearing up to spread some holiday joy and they need your help.

Dallas Christmas Cheer already is seeing strong support from various food drives in the area and will receive the proceeds from a new fundraiser, the Dallas Glow Run, early next month.

"It just continues to blow our minds," said Sue Lamb, Christmas Cheer's secretary and treasurer. "The program truly belongs to the community. I have never seen volunteers come out like this."

Christmas Cheer delivers food boxes on Christmas



Dallas Christmas Cheer volunteers gather on Christmas Eve to pack and deliver food.

Eve, with volunteers showing up at LaCreole Middle School to pack boxes.

You don't have to wait that

long to lend a hand, though. Food drives are underway at several local organizations and businesses.

For information about where to donate, go to Dallas Christmas Cheer's Facebook page.

The Dallas High School leadership class kicked off the drive by collecting 7,650 canned food items.

Lamb said Monday that about 100 families were signed up and she expects the organization will collect enough food to provide for many more.

"We would love to serve 300 families," she said.

Dallas Adopt-a-Family had signed up 143 families for assistance as of Monday. It is expecting about 250.

The program provides food and gifts for local families.

Melissa Baurer, director of social services at The Salvation Army, said 102 of those families have been adopted, so more families, businesses and organizations are needed to meet.

See CHRISTMAS, Page 8A

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

wed
Central hosts a Senior Thanksgiving lunch at the CHS cafeteria, with entertainment by the Main Street Singers.
Noon. Free.

Rain
Hi: 50
Lo: 45

thu
Happy Thanksgiving from our family to yours. Many organizations will host a traditional turkey dinner today. See Page 6A for details.

Rain
Hi: 49
Lo: 43

fri
Ditch the big shopping on Black Friday for a low-key tour of Polk County's wineries, who have specials all weekend.
All Day. \$5-\$10.

Rain
Hi: 48
Lo: 42

sat
It's Small Business Saturday! The perfect excuse to get to know your local, neighborhood shops.
Hours vary.

Rain
Hi: 48
Lo: 40

sun
Today is the busiest travel day of the year as people make their way home from Thanksgiving Day events.

Rain
Hi: 49
Lo: 44

mon
Explorer Ferdinand Magellan began crossing the Pacific Ocean on this date in 1520.

Showers
Hi: 51
Lo: 43

tue
Because the spending isn't over and the need is great, today is Giving Tuesday, a time to help those charities in need.

Showers
Hi: 52
Lo: 42