

# Local

## Community Connection receives grant for veterans' transportation

By Gina K. Swartz

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A \$45,000 grant designed specifically for a rural community aimed at providing transportation for veterans to and from medical appointments has been received by Baker County Community Connection.

The grant for Transportation of Veterans in Highly Rural Areas (HRTG) was awarded through Baker County, and Community Connection qualifies for the funds as a sub recipient.

The grant also has afforded Community Connection the hiring of one new employee to oversee the program. Jodi Tool has been selected for the role.

The transportation provided is not intended to be competitive with the DAV van, which provides a similar service, but offers an expanded range and another option for local Veterans to obtain the medical care they deserve.

The grant allows for Community Connection to utilize any of the vehicles in its fleet. "If we have the need to be wheelchair assessable we can use one of the vehicles with the ramps, if they are ambulatory we can use one of our mini vans," Tool said.

No new vehicles were purchased for this program. Unlike the DAV the destination can be any medical facility in Oregon, Washington or Idaho. The DAV van offers transportation only to a VA hospital

and destinations are very limited.

The service allows any honorably discharged veteran and a companion transportation to get to appointments. The grant allows for this service to be provided to the veteran free of charge.

A small fee may be charged to companions of the veteran being transported but that ride will be accommodated, any fee would be figured on a case by case basis. According to Tool the grant period is from August to August, however Baker County Community Connection did not receive their portion of grant money until November.

Tool wants to get the word out as quickly as possible that this program is available. "We are trying to make this as successful a venture as we can to prove that it is in fact needed, we all know that it is needed but we have to prove to them that it was needed and we don't know what their requirements are."

The program is not held to simply Monday-Friday. "We will make sure that if transportation is needed say on a Sunday, they will have transportation," assured Tool.

The grant allows for transportation of any veteran rider in Baker County "If we have someone in Halfway, Sumpter, Huntington anywhere in the county that needs transportation it will be available to them." To get the word out Tool is working with me-



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Jodi Tool has been hired to head up a program aiding transportation for local veterans.

dia outlets, has brochures and flyers she has placed at DMV, the employment department, doctor's offices and clinics.

A mass mailing is being planned as well said Tool. "Everyone who has a mailbox is going to get a postcard with information about the program." She is also counting on word of mouth to get the program the attention it needs. Walla Walla County was awarded the same grant. La Grande was just a little too large to qualify.

However, as Tool explained, "If we are going to Walla Walla and someone in La Grande is in need, we are going to pick them up. Or if we are taking a Veteran to Boise to St. Luke's and we have a non-veteran needing to go to St. Alphonsus down the street we are going to use

the same bus. We are going to use this grant appropriately but we are also going to make sure we get as many people the medical care that they need."

Although rides are not limited to Monday - Friday, Community Connections office is available to schedule rides Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. and can be reached by phone at 541-523-6591.

Tool added, "Our veterans earned this so we are going to do everything we can to make it as successful as possible. We want this to be a continuing grant." Tool expects to be part of the process applying for the next grant, which was originally initiated by former county VSO Jane Chandler and Community Connection County Manager Mary Jo Carpenter.

## EIS workshop held Monday

By Todd Arriola

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On Monday, Mary Anne Nash, Public Policy Counsel for the Oregon Farm Bureau Federation, presented a "Constructing Effective Comments For Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)" workshop, held in the Commissioner's Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

The workshop had around 25 attendees, including County Commissioners Bill Harvey and Mark Bennett, and County Planning Director Holly Kerns. The workshop's focus was the effective submission of public comments on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Transmission Line Draft EIS (DEIS) specifically, and the submission of comments under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Nash, who works in Salem, and has family ties in central and eastern Oregon, introduced herself, and said, "What we're going to do today is break down the NEPA process, help you understand where the agencies are coming from, what they're supposed to do, what the purpose is of what they're doing, and then with that, how you can most effectively respond."

She gave a slideshow presentation on the County's interactive Smart Board, titled "Constructing Effective Comments Under NEPA," and described what NEPA is, and what federal agencies must do under NEPA. The main points were: 1) A federal agency, under NEPA, is required to prepare a detailed statement of effects for major federal actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. 2) Agencies must consider alternatives to their actions. 3) Agencies must use an interdisciplinary process to develop alternatives and consider affects. 4) The public must be allowed to engage in the NEPA process, and responses to comments on the NEPA analysis are required by agencies. 5) The NEPA document is required to be concise, written in plain English, and must allow readers to determine what actions are being considered, and what the impacts of those actions are.

A comment from the crowd was made immediately after the first slide, that the last bullet point isn't indicative of what the community is experiencing, noting that the B2H DEIS is several thousand pages long with highly technical data, and it's difficult for readers to determine considered actions and impacts of those actions. Nash said, "That is the reason, actually, why I put that in there, because, I can't tell you how many NEPA comments I've gotten, where one of our first comments is, 'I can't really tell what you're doing here.'"

Nash described the purpose of an EIS, which is a document used for projects that may have a significant impact on the environment, and detailed the different elements of an EIS, including purpose and need, alternatives, affected environment, and environmental consequences.

She said it's important to use as much detail and clarity as possible, for example, using headings, clearly connecting cause and effect, citing specific sections of the EIS, pointing out inadequacies, and providing as much factual support as possible. Economic impacts are important and should be stated up front and clearly, but, "In my experience, environmental impacts tend to weigh more heavily," in a NEPA analysis, she said. If there are specific data available concerning investments, loss of income, etc., she said these should be included. The more factual support that can be provided, the better. And she added, "Don't rant."

Nash said if there isn't the time to fully read a document, "I would say, focus on the key pieces," like the alternatives evaluated and the discussion of effects, and a review of the attached maps, which would help focus on impacts to properties under each alternative.

She said there is power in numbers, and if comments made by others are relevant to one's case, to incorporate them into their own comments.

The group discussed addressing the issues of purpose and need for the project in the comments, and Nash read an excerpt from the Executive Summary of the DEIS: "The B2H Project is neither required to support any particular new power generation project nor justified by any particular existing power generation project. Rather, the B2H Project would meet IPC's (Idaho Power Company, the applicant) obligations to meet Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Oregon Public Utility Commission, and the Idaho Public Utility Commission requirements. IPC would meet these requirements by providing a high-capacity connection between two key points in the existing bulk electric system, adding capacity to transmit electricity during periods of high demand and accommodate third-party transmission requests." She noted the phrasing was "interesting," and said whether there's actual purpose and need could be addressed in the comments.

Preferred and alternative routes for the project were discussed, including methods of addressing them in the comments. Mitigation, environmental effects and consequences, and direct and indirect effects were discussed. Nash gave an example of a rancher who had compiled extensive data about the projected losses to his operation for the purpose of submitting comments in the past, but that level of detail isn't expected with every comment.

After the comments are received, they're reviewed and there will be responses to all of them, though this may be done according to category and similar comments may be grouped together. Once the DEIS is finalized, a final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) will be issued. The ROD will detail the procedures for an appeal, for any party wishing to do so. Appeals are generally limited to issues raised in one's comments, so, it's important to include as much detail as possible when commenting.

Information can be obtained at boardmantoehemingway.com, and comments can be sent to comment@boardmantoehemingway.com, or mailed to the BLM by close of business on Thursday, March 19, 2015.

## — OBITUARIES —

### Lew Robbins

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He was preceded in death by his wife Darlene Robbins; parents Leicester and Inga Robbins, father-in-law and mother-in-law Austin and Grace Robbins; Uncle Delbert Viken; brother-in-law Elbert Wells.

Memorial services will be held March 21, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. at the Baker United Methodist Church, 1919 2nd Street, Baker City, Oregon with Pastor Ralph Lawrence and Pastor Elke Sharma officiating. Inurnment will follow at Mount Hope Cemetery. Reception will follow at the Senior Community Connection Center, 2810 Cedar Street, Baker City, Oregon.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Lew Robbins Memorial Fund, c/o Baker High School, 2500 E Street, Baker City, Oregon 97814. These funds will be used to purchase and update Vo-Ag welding and mechanics equipment.

### Jack A. Yaggie

Baker City, 1922-2015

Jack A. Yaggie, 92, died February 26, 2015 in Baker City, Oregon.

A public Celebration of Life service is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. Saturday, March 21 at Gray's West & Company Pioneer Chapel with Pastor Shawn Thatcher officiating.

Jack was born on December 26, 1922 in Johnsonburg, Pennsylvania to Fred and Minnie Mae

Yaggie.

He graduated from high school in Bradford, Pennsylvania.

After graduation Jack joined the Navy.

He enlisted as an apprentice seaman in May of 1941 and served honorably for 27 years retiring as a Senior Chief Petty Officer in July of 1968.

His Navy career was extensive; serving in aviation and aboard over 8 USS vessels. He was a survivor of the Battle of the Corral Sea while stationed on the USS Lexington which was the first ship sunk during the battle.

Jack was proud to have served his country and liked to share his experiences with others.

After retiring from the Navy, Jack worked for the postal service as a mail carrier and also worked for the San Diego Tribune Newspaper.

He married Barbara Yaggie in San Diego, California.

His hobbies included boating-particularly to Catalina Island, deep sea fishing, gardening, walking, motorcycle riding, swimming and during his younger years lifting weights and boxing. He also loved to write and read poetry.

Jack was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Barbara Yaggie; daughter-in-law, Debbie Summers



Jack Yaggie

and son in law Gordon Summers.

Jack is survived by two daughters, Frances Yaggie of Baker City and Dale Laskowitz of Maryland; son, Michael Yaggie of California; brother, Darrell Yonker of Pennsylvania and sister in law, Lois Yonker of Pennsylvania; and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Contributions may be made in memory of Jack to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and Wounded Warriors Project through Gray's West & Company Pioneer Chapel 1500 Dewey Avenue Baker City, Oregon 97814.

### Geraldine Brooks

Richland, 1934-2015

Geraldine "Gerry" Ann Brooks, 80, died on Saturday, March 7, 2015 at her home in Richland, Oregon.

Gerry was born on November 26, 1934 in Tacoma, Washington to Charles and Ethel (Meadler) Thompson.

She was raised in Tacoma, attending elementary schools and then graduating from high school there as well.

Following high school, Gerry attended and later graduated after a four-year internship with Tacoma General Hospital, as a registered nurse.

She met John "Jack" Brooks in Trona, Cali-



Geraldine Brooks

fornia, where they both worked at an industrial plant.

Gerry was the industrial plant nurse there for 30 years.

Gerry enjoyed her time at the ocean, and spring salmon fishing.

She loved helping anyone and everyone in need, her friends, neighbors and did so willingly with kindness and never for any monetary gain.

Gerry also enjoyed getting outside to garden or being indoors, canning.

She was preceded in death by her parents and brother, Welton Thompson.

Gerry is survived by her husband of 39 years, Jack; daughter, Leslie Walker; son, Wade Greist; step-daughter Debra Leo and seven grandchildren.

Jack would like to thank all of the friends for coming by the house to visit, because every time they (you) did, it put a smile on her face.

She died peacefully at the home she loved and was able to do so with the loving care of daughter, Debra.

For those who would like to make a memorial donation in memory of Gerry, the family suggests the Eagle Valley Ambulance through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home and Cremation Services PO Box 543 Halfway, OR 97834.

Online condolences may be shared at [www.tamispi-nevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.tamispi-nevalleyfuneralhome.com).