

# Local

## Sumpter Valley Railroad seeks more volunteers

• ALL AGES WELCOMED AT RECENT SVRR OPEN HOUSE

BY MEGHAN ANDERSCH  
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“It’s a millionaire’s hobby, but here’s an opportunity to do it for free,” said John Franklin, new volunteer for the Sumpter Valley Railroad. And, after all, where else could you start volunteering and potentially be taught the skills to drive a steam-powered locomotive?

The Sumpter Valley Railroad is looking to recruit volunteers to support its mission of maintaining and demonstrating the narrow-gauge railroad. Not that aspiring to drive the train is a requirement. There are available volunteer opportunities in everything from fixing track to woodworking to painting to administrative support.

A group of volunteers set out to restore the Sumpter Valley Railroad beginning in 1971. They labored to rebuild portions of the railroad, obtain locomotives and train cars, and find donations to sustain the work.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held July 4, 1976, with the railroad operating on several thousand feet of track for a few years.

The track reached Sumpter from McEwen in 1991.

Volunteer restoration efforts and maintenance continue.

The Railroad offered an Open House event on Saturday, June 13th to give persons interested in volunteering a tour and ride on the train.

As Dan Robirds, volunteer and railroad aficionado who led Saturday’s tour put it, “We’re looking for the next generation to take over, whether that’s



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press

Volunteer Daniel Bentz refills the locomotive with water.

retirees or young people.” Robirds said the biggest single donation to the railroad each year is volunteer labor with 150 to 200 hours per week during the summer. He said the railroad could easily absorb three times that amount. Volunteers come in all ages.

Robirds said the youngest volunteer is not quite two. “He smiles a lot and entertains people. He can’t wait until he gets big enough to do more.”

Other volunteers are in their 80s.

Daniel Bentz, Saturday’s fireman-in-training, is 19 and has been volunteering since he was 16. He started volunteering with his dad until he was old enough to come on his own at 18.

Robirds said that women are able to handle any of the same jobs as the men. There is no gender distinction in roles. Robirds said that they are aware of safety for all volunteers, whether young or old. Families with children can also find a place to volunteer. Robirds said, “We’ll be creative and find them something to do, within safety and common

sense guidelines.”

Robirds explained the main role of the operation is, of course, maintaining and running the train. Opportunities here include acting as conductor and visiting with passengers, assisting at the depot, learning the operation of the train (starting out as a brakeman), and helping with ongoing maintenance. For example, the Heisman wood-burning locomotive just finished undergoing routine maintenance and passed her federal inspection. After the Heisman is reassembled, the Mikado engine 20 will go into the shop.

There are volunteer opportunities during the week for those who cannot commit to weekends. These might include fixing track, splitting wood for when the Heisman engine is running, helping with administrative support, or painting. Robirds mentioned the possibility of helping with cataloging and organizing the railroad archives.

There is also a group that does woodworking to restore some of the old and deteriorated cars owned by the railroad. Franklin said

this opportunity appealed to him as he is often on call, which limits his ability to commit to volunteering on the train.

He said it’s nice to be able to come down and work on someone else’s project for a while.

Eric Wunz, Saturday’s engineer, said, “There’s sure a lot of work to do and we would like to have some help with it.”

He emphasized that no experience is necessary, just willingness and ability to learn.

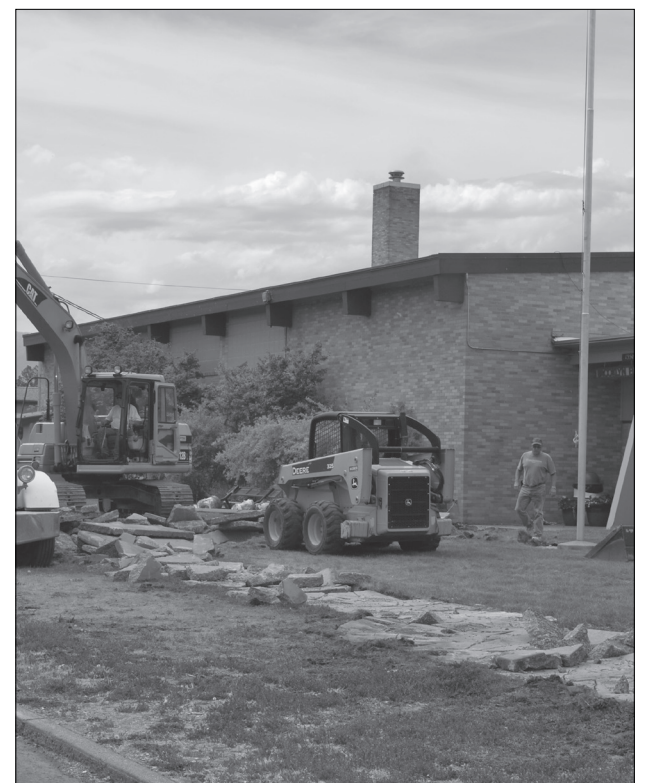
Bentz said, “It’s a lot of fun. Come do it!”

Wunz was quick to add, “It’s fun, but it’s a challenge.” He said that sometimes the equipment breaks five minutes before the train is due to leave and they might be doing good to get it repaired somehow and pull out just five minutes behind schedule.

Interested potential volunteers can contact Linda Raney at 541-894-2268 (McEwen Depot) or 503-949-1328.

Much information on the history of the railroad, membership and volunteering, and train schedules is available at [sumptervalley-railway.org](http://sumptervalley-railway.org).

## Brooklyn gets new bus zone



Brian Addison / The Baker County Press

Contractors JD Stevenson, Richard O’Connell, and 5J Transportation Supervisor Wayne Paxton take out the old sidewalk at the Brooklyn Elementary entrance in preparation for a new sidewalk and bus loading and drop zone.

• NEW MODULARS TO GO IN AT BROOKLYN, HAINES SCHOOLS

BY BRIAN ADDISON  
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Brooklyn Elementary continues to be a work in progress as Baker School District 5J maintenance crews take on a couple new construction projects this summer. Brooklyn’s main Washington Street entrance has undergone a major improvement with a newly installed bus loading and drop zone, a new sidewalk, and newly planted trees. And, the Brooklyn playground shrinks again slightly with the installation of another modular building.

The curb, sidewalk, and the large trees on the south-side of the Brooklyn Elementary School building have been removed to accommodate a new 10-foot wide sidewalk and a nine-foot wide bus loading and drop zone, according to Wayne Paxton, Transportation Supervisor for the Baker 5J School District.

Paxton has been working on the development of the project for several years and said that the cost of the work runs about \$40,000. The project is funded by the school district with a little help from a sidewalk grant from City of Baker City in amount \$1,750.

The three large trees that were removed had become a safety concern and the roots were also pushing up and damaging the sidewalk, Paxton said. The plan calls for the planting of three of four new trees.

The project does away with the muddy area at the entrance to the gymnasium and also allows students to wait for buses from within the safety of the gymnasium.

“It’s a pretty good little project to help improve safety and the front of the building. Nothing has been done for at least 15 years and when that work was done they built the sidewalk around the root-wads,” Paxton said.

JD Stevenson contracted to do the excavation work with sub-contractor O’Connell Excavating, Rogers Asphalt/ Kevin Hampton the asphalt, and Tri-County Concrete doing the concrete work.

While the contract work was underway on Brooklyn’s south-side, school district maintenance crew-members began preparations on the west side for the installation of another modular building.

While the previous three modular buildings were purchased as used by the school district for \$58,000 a piece, the fourth building is brand new and carries a price tag of \$100,000, according to Dan Srack, 5J Maintenance Director.

Srack expects the new modular at Brooklyn, and another at Haines Elementary School, to be installed during the first part of July. “The buildings will both be delivered on the same date, July 2nd, and should take about 10 days to install,” Srack said.

The maintenance crew, on June 15, were preparing to move playground equipment and removing wood chips and soil to expose hookups to the already existing utility lines. The installation of the new modular eliminates another approximate 50-foot by 70-foot section of the playground.

“All the plumbing and power and water utilities are already in place at Brooklyn and at Haines. We just need to expose the hookups. Then we’ll haul in and compact dirt to set the modular on,” Srack said.

This fourth modular building installation has been undertaken to accommodate full-day Kindergarten scheduled to begin at Brooklyn Elementary the 2015-16 school year, Srack explained. “There are 400 kids expected to be attending Brooklyn next year,” he said.

The new modular building being installed at Haines Elementary will set north of the existing modular just off the teacher’s parking lot and near the handicapped ramp.

Other projects planned this summer on the Brooklyn grounds includes installation of a new irrigation system, more fencing, and a new gate on the north side of the building accessing the teacher’s parking area.

## Tesla

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ADK Electric, as a sub-contractor for the Kansas-based global engineering, consulting and construction company Black & Veatch that partners with Tesla, handles the complete construction of the projects, from pouring the concrete curbs to the finishing touches.

Bryce Sarkinen, an electrician for ADK Electric, is part of the crew recently working on the project in Baker City. Sarkinen said, “We did six or seven (Supercharger projects) along I5, north and south. Some are smaller, with six chargers. This is one of the bigger ones, so, this will charge eight cars at one time.”

Sarkinen said each Supercharger provides about 200 amps of direct charging current, which will allow owners of Tesla’s Model S sedan to replenish half their battery in as little as 20 minutes. In as little as 30 minutes, they could have enough charge for 180 miles of driving

range, and in less than an hour, the battery could be fully charged (the range for a Model S is 240 to 265 miles).

The next Supercharger station traveling west is located in Pendleton, at the Wildhorse Resort and Casino, a distance of less than 100 miles from Baker City. After that, The Dalles has one, resulting in complete coverage for I84. The Woodburn, Springfield and Grants Pass stations provide complete coverage for I-5. Later this year, Tesla plans to construct a station in Boise, Idaho, a distance of 127 miles from Baker City. The Supercharger station in Baker City will be displayed on a national map of stations, viewable with Google Maps on the Model S’s 17” touchscreen.

Sarkinen said that the structure for the incoming electrical supply will be enclosed and finished to match the look of the hotel and restaurant buildings, and the eight upright supports will receive sleeves with the Tesla name printed on them, somewhat mimicking the look of a gas pump. The user can view the status of



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

This Tesla charging station, shown here in the early stages of construction, will soon open in the parking area outside the Sunridge Inn.

the battery at the charging connection (which connects directly to the battery), or with a cell phone application, while eating, shopping, etc. The property where the station is located is owned by Carl and Sheila Town of Baker City.

Owners of a Model S also have the capability to charge their vehicle using other methods. One is the

Mobile Connector, which can use either a 120-volt outlet or a 240-volt outlet, at the rate of about 29 miles of range per hour of charging time in a normal outlet. Another option is the Wall Connector, which is installed on a 240-volt circuit, providing about 58 miles of range per hour of charging time. This is the fastest home charging method.