

## The wonderful person behind Jo's List

BY PATSY KING



Jo Larsen of Jo's List

The town of Williams is known to be a very special community: helpful, friendly, concerned with each other and with things that affect us all. One of the great aspects of Williams is its electronic community bulletin board known as Jo's List.

Jo's List isn't just a perk of living there; rather, it's one reason for our strong community. Using Jo's List, people can ask for help and advice, e.g., on how to keep compost secure from bears; let others know that they spotted a cougar on a certain road; spread the word that they are available to work; ask for recommended dentists; let people know that they've seen a loose cow, pig, goat, wandering dog, etc. What a wonderful resource. But what's the story behind Jo's List? How does it work and who's behind it? I found out a couple of days ago when I met with Jo Larsen, the generous and caring person who started it all.

I was curious about how the service started and asked Jo what gave her the idea. She explained that it actually started because of three different Williams-area people who were forwarding information about musical events to their friends. They realized that they were sort of duplicating things, and when they combined lists of people, Jo just naturally ended up doing the information forwarding. It started with just 50 people receiving the information and has grown to 950 subscribers. Wow.

When I asked how much time Jo spends each day, she said that she had been spending as much as three hours daily until recently, when her Internet provider, Outreach Internet, helped set up a system that could handle that many messages and do it more efficiently for Jo. Now when people receiving an email want to reply, they can hit the reply button, and their message will go to the person who wrote the original notice. Before the recent change, if a person hit the reply button, Jo herself would get the message and then have to forward the answer to the right person manually. Even with the improvements, Jo is often online four times a day forwarding information. She's been doing this service for so long that she's not even sure just how long, but somewhere between six and ten years.

I was curious how it actually worked and what Jo did each time she set out to pass along the information. First she checks to see who has requested to be added or deleted to the list or who has email address

changes or has gone on vacation, and she updates all of that. Then she deals with all the incoming messages that people would like posted. Jo reads every single one to be sure it is not derogatory or political, and also to be sure it's not over one megabyte, which would be unworkable for all the subscribers on dial-up Internet service. The few messages that still come to her on the old system must be forwarded to the new system. Then out they go to the email accounts of the subscribers.

All sorts of diverse information has been shared over the years, but what Jo loves the most is being able to reunite lost pets with their owners and helping find homes for animals. Also quite rewarding is connecting people with the services they need. It certainly helps create a sense of closeness and helpfulness in the community. Jo says, "One aspect I particularly like is that it unites such a broad spectrum of the community. All have a common love of rural life, and it's people helping other people. It's a bit like standing and chatting over the back fence." I could certainly feel Jo's enthusiasm and generosity even after all these years of her spending hours at the computer!

Of course, this is Jo's community and has been for the last 25 years. She and her husband bought their south-facing hillside property 25 years ago around the spring equinox. While living in the somewhat rainier Willamette Valley and visiting a friend who had moved here, they blundered upon a notice for a house for rent in Williams. They rented it, then sold their old place and eventually bought acreage here. Gardening, and roses in particular, are Jo's passions, and as time passes, massive gardens have grown in raised beds all over their hillside. Most of the plants have stories and meaning behind them because they came from friends and relatives over the years; some tiny cuttings are now full-grown thriving plants. So even Jo's garden is about people.

People matter, community matters and animals matter—I think that's why she has kept up the marvelous Jo's List all these years. We in the community are so lucky to be connected in this way. Jo doesn't charge for her time or service, but contributions are always welcome and can be mailed to Jo Larsen, PO Box 286, Williams, Oregon 97544.

Patsy King  
pking888@gmail.com

## A few words from Applegate Valley Fire District #9

BY BRETT FILLIS

I always appreciate the opportunity to communicate with the public regarding various topics that are important during the course of the year. The following are several topics that are important.

### Recruiting new volunteers

If it seems like we are always recruiting new volunteers, we are. In the last several years we have put forward more effort in recruiting volunteers because our numbers have been declining, and in some areas declining to the point where it was beginning to affect operations. I am proud to say that this last recruiting drive near the end of the year was very successful—perhaps the most successful campaign ever. Volunteer numbers in the west end of the district, particularly Provolt and Applegate, were reaching critical levels.

We just concluded this year's basic firefighter academy. We began with 13 recruits and ended the academy with 11 new firefighters. Historically we end up graduating around half of the applicants. This was an excellent effort and we appreciate those individuals who came forward and have taken this important first step in helping their community.

So with all of that, are we done recruiting? Recruiting is never really over. We will always be looking for new volunteers every year to compensate for normal turnover as it occurs. We also have a few stations that can use more help. Our newest station, Station #7 on Griffin Lane, and several of the eastern stations are in need of additional volunteers as well.

### 2011 Awards Banquet

Our awards banquet was held on February 3 to honor those who made above-average contributions to the district in 2011. It was held at the Applegate Community Church and the awards ceremony followed a nice meal that was provided by our auxiliary organization, the Friends of the Applegate Fire District. The following awards were presented:

Hall of Flame Inductee: Fred Secco

Spirit Award: Rob Underwood

Rookie of the Year: Dick Rodgers

Medical First Responder of the Year:

Cris Usher

EMT of the Year: Tailse Goodnough

Activity Awards:

- Over 100 Alarm Responses: Bob Ettner, Dick Rodgers, Rick Koppen

- 85% or better drill attendance:

Bill Dunlap, Jack Lynch

Spouse of the Year: Debbie Ziegler

District Employee of the Year:

Carey Chaput

Officer of the Year: Jeff Hoxsey

Firefighter of the Year—Joint Winners:

Lindsey Evertt and Anthony Ryan

Chief's Award: Greg Gilbert

Years of Service:

- 5 Years: Daniel Boyajian and Greg Paneitz

- 10 Years: Greg Gilbert, Bill Dunlap, Jeff Vinyard, Rick Koppen

- 15 Years: Fred Secco

- 20 Years: Cody Goodnough

### Friends of the Applegate Fire District

This is our version of the Fire Department Auxiliary. This group was started in the mid-1980s and has been primarily responsible for organizing and preparing the fine food we have had at our annual awards banquet, summer picnic

and Christmas party. The Friends also provide support in the way of food during larger-scale emergencies of

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longer-than-normal duration. This group has also raised a tremendous amount of money over the years to buy certain equipment that the district couldn't afford from its normal budget. By my estimation, this group has purchased in excess of \$85,000 worth of fire and rescue equipment since their inception, raising most of the money through the annual yard sale in September, and in the early days running Bingo both at the Grange and at the Josephine County Fair. Although the group has curtailed a lot of the old fundraising methods, they continue to work on ways to raise funds and provide support to the firefighters throughout the year.

The Friends are like most organizations—they need new members to keep them strong and viable. The majority of the group has been involved for over 25 years and newer members are a minority. The group currently meets once a month and is looking to change to an every-other-month format. If you have an interest in becoming a member, don't hesitate to contact the district office at 541-899-1050 and find out more information.

Brett Fillis • 541-899-1050

Fire Chief

Applegate Valley Fire District #9



Award winners at Applegate Valley Fire District #9 annual banquet.