

Applegate responds to COVID-19 crisis

BY JEANETTE LETOURNEUX, TOM CARSTENS, AND BERT ETLING

The coronavirus crisis has brought out the best in so many people in our valley. Our community members have rallied valiantly and come to the rescue of many, demonstrating typical Applegater ingenuity and generosity.

Applegate Valley businesses, often supported by generous donations, have stepped up with generosity and open hearts during this pandemic to help people in our community.

And individuals have donated time and materials to help make sure healthcare providers have the equipment they need to cope with COVID-19.

Local nonprofit organizations have stepped up their efforts, too. A Greater Applegate (AGA) started posting Oregon Health Agency updates on its community website, applegateconnect.org, along with news about community business

and employment resources and tools to connect people in need with people with resources. (For more, see the AGA column on page seven.)

Examples of business generosity include these two (for more, see BizBits on page twenty):

- On April 12, the Applegate Lodge (541-846-6082) started providing free Sunday dinners from 5 - 7 pm to anyone in the Applegate community, thanks to many donors.

- The Applegate Country Club (541-846-1666) offered delivery of a free bag of groceries to seniors. The Senior Care Package has been a huge success, thanks to all the contributors. The Country Club is also providing free lunches to kids.

Applegate residents, in turn, have supported local businesses through donations to support their efforts, by shopping at essential businesses while practicing safe behavior, by purchasing gift cards (in effect, a short-term,



While wearing masks and keeping the recommended six feet apart, Cathy Rodgers, board chair of A Greater Applegate, at right, delivers a \$500 momentum grant to Cyn Torp, proprietor of the Applegate Country Club, to support the club's delivery of complimentary pizza and salad to the elderly during the shelter-in-place period. Photo: Yolanda Jaime.

interest-free loan to the business), and by joining community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs at local farms.

Face-mask maker

Local residents have also helped out with making "PPE" (personal protective

equipment) for use both by the general public and health care providers.

Applegate resident Gary Conner has been churning out face shields for the local medical community. Gary takes materials

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Related news: See the COVID-19 content roundup on page five



A Lomakatsi crew member ignites piled slash from an ecological thinning operation during a controlled burn on private land near Jacksonville. Photo: Tom Greco.

Forest restoration workers practice social distancing

BY PAUL FATTIG

In the quarter of a century Lomakatsi has existed, the nonprofit group dedicated to forest and watershed restoration as well as wildfire mitigation in Oregon and Northern California has overcome countless natural challenges in the form of drought, flood and wildfire.

But nothing prepared it for the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have never faced anything like this," stressed executive director Marko Bey, who founded the group in 1995. "Right after we started, we had the '97 flood. But we responded and did landslide stabilization and revegetation work. And we have responded with wildland fire crews and engine crews to fight wildfires. But this pandemic is a new kind of challenge."

On top of the pandemic is the potentially historic 2020 fire season which began May 1 in Jackson and Josephine counties, marking the earliest start in the region since 1988. Lomakatsi transitions its ground crews into wildland firefighters at the start of fire season.

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Triple whammy: no morels, a long fire season, and a virus

BY SANDY SHAFFER

It was only mid-April, and we were already seeing Brian Ballou (the ODF's spokesman) on the evening news talking about the number of "runaway burn piles" and why residents should be preparing *now* for fire season. On the scanner I was already hearing a lot of alarms for grass fires, and landowners whose burn piles have escaped control.

Ryan Sandler, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Medford, said in late April that "we're not going to get big enough storms this time of year to make up" for the lack of a snowpack. But a recent trip to my special morel mushroom site in the middle of April signed the deal for me: not one tiny handful of mushrooms all spring! Yup, it's going to be a long, dry fire season this year.

So, Mother Nature is short of water, but the real kicker for us this year is the double whammy of reduced rainfall *and* the coronavirus! I say this because loads of slash pile burning and prescribed burns in our region *had to be canceled this spring*

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