

Valley girl comes home to build a future

By Dan Klapheke
IVN Staff Writer

New homes in a new neighborhood are under construction in Cave Junction thanks to a Valley's native's drive and a local team effort.

Barbara Howard, originally of Cave Junction, and husband Donnie have bought 34 lots of an unfinished development on Pomeroy Drive and Retirement Lane. The couple moved to the Valley from Maui, Hawaii, and Barbara said the couple decided to build here because they saw a need, but also because she loved the area.

"I like the community," Barbara said, who grew up in the Valley and graduated in Eugene. "It is a very good community with good people, and I wouldn't give up growing up out here for anything."

The Howards had to track down the property's developer, the late Elton Frank, because it wasn't for sale. Once purchased, Barbara and Donnie went through an extensive list of potential builders, which ended up being Jacoby Construction and Design. Greg Jacoby of Jacoby Construction and Design said he and brother David jumped on board because of the area's promise.

"We were excited just for an opportunity to be part of a project out here that was going to take a good, honest shot of being successful," Greg said.

There are currently three homes being built on the property, and David said the reason is so they can physically show off the designs to potential buyers.

"Without doing that you're just gonna have a really stagnant project that

just sits here and nobody's willing to go in," David said.

Mark Waage, mortgage legal consultant at Willamette Valley Bank, who is attached to the project, said the homes' prices will start low and affordable, but won't stay that way.

"We're the last to recover in Oregon, and so our prices are still affordable, but it won't be for long," Waage said. "And so it just creates a huge push for people to buy before it's too late to buy."

The homes currently under construction are meant to represent the size and price ranges the lots offer, other than the option of custom-designed and built. According to Barbara, the decision to build in the area in general was a big one.

"The reason why we're starting with three is we have plans all the way from 13,030 square feet all the way up to

17,050, and we were the ones that said, 'Hey, we're willing to step across that line and develop in Cave Junction,'" Barbara said. "That was a huge decision."

The property was bought in August of last year and construction began in June. After the three houses are finished, construction will begin on the next three, and then waves of six at a time will be built until the whole development is complete.

Barb said the entire project is expected to be finished in about two years.

Donnie Howard, originally of Pineville, Kentucky, is a power lineman currently taking a year's time off to recover from a work-related injury. In the meantime he and Barbara are watching construction go along, and Donnie said it's exciting.

"I think it's gonna be a



(Photo by Dan Klapheke, Illinois Valley News)

Donnie Howard (left), Barbara Howard, Pete Cuhna, Chris Barnett, Greg Jacoby, David Jacoby, Rhonda Beck and Mark Waage.

great project, and we were the ones who stepped out when nobody else would," Donnie said. "And I think once the houses start getting built, I think people will start coming in here for sure. They just wanna see it, smell it and touch it."

Barbara said the

demographic usually attracted to homes like the ones being built are families and retirees, and she's hoping the project builds up a solid community.

"You could definitely have a mix and have a very good community," Barbara said. "That's what we're hoping for."

Whirlwind Play Festival, take five

Eliot Feenstra
IVN Contributing Writer

As the Illinois Valley slept, eight playwrights were busy at work in the cottage of Rusk Ranch Nature Center creating new plays for performance...the next day.

July 23, the Illinois Valley's fifth Whirlwind Play Festival kicked off, bringing together local residents and families to create an original show for performance on the evening of July 24. The festival invites participants to write, rehearse, and perform original plays along a theme within 24 hours. For this festival, the theme was "The Web of Life," inspired by the Rusk Ranch Nature Center's future gallery exhibit of the same name.

While Rusk Ranch's exhibit will focus on local forest ecosystems, the Whirlwind playwrights took the theme in many directions. Stew Towle, who lives in Williams and Wolf Creek, wrote a series of poetic pieces titled "The Web of Life" which invited the audience

to participate in the metamorphosis of the butterfly.

Ryan Forsythe Elder teamed up with his two sons, Rory and Kailen, to create a humorous play called "A Fly Walks into a Pitcher Plant" in which a fly hooked on Pokémon Go (played by Elijah Ocean) finds himself stuck in a pitcher plant and struggles to escape.

"The Historian," written by Amber Ryan Bruce of Wolf Creek, went in a different direction, portraying a philosophical conflict between "History" (played by Kellyn Gross) and a young revolutionary man and woman who found themselves reenacting a series of classic stories as they tried to figure out how to learn from the past and make meaningful change in the present.

Lindsey Gillette, who also directed and acted in the festival, wrote a short poem called "I See Ghosts on Takilma Road." While she wasn't expecting to write a play, she went home after introductions Friday evening and typed it out.

Kaci Elder and Jen Schneider, a visiting artist from Los Angeles, co-wrote a play titled "When the Other SHU Drops" about an inmate in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay. While the piece was mostly movement, it ended with the butterfly prisoner's (beautifully portrayed by mother daughter pair Alisa & Na'amah Ocean) beseeching request to the audience: "Those on the outside, remember who is trapped on the inside/And please, oh please, never forget about me."

The show was performed on a beautiful Saturday evening at Rusk Ranch Nature Center's meadow stage, followed by a talkback with the audience. Patty Downing, the founder of Rusk, also stepped up to act in the Festival. She said, "It was a pleasant experience for us [to host the Festival]...The literary and intellectual quality of it was juicy and warm... a consciousness raising, humanizing process."

Other highlights included a playwriting workshop with Ezra Phillips (a playwright who is currently working at the Oregon Caves) and wonderful meals from Feral, who donated

his time to support the Festival. Meals are provided for participants all day, as well as dinner for the show's audience. Organizers try to source as much food locally as possible, which included quiche with Siskiyou Alpaca sausage and shepherd's pie with dancefarm herbs, grass-fed beef from Barbara Leon, carrots from Chinook Bar Ranch and Kellyn Gross's garden, and veggies from Alisa Ocean.

The Festival also received generous support from the Josephine County Cultural Coalition.

Organizers look forward to hosting future festivals and a playwriting workshop at various locations in the Valley and drawing new participants into this exciting creative opportunity. "It's super satisfying to collaborate with people in this way," said one participant.

For more information, check out their website at whirlwindfestival.wordpress.com, on Facebook at "Illinois Valley Whirlwind Play Festival," or contact Eliot Feenstra at 412-608-6904.

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