

Community Cleanup a success

■ By Jacob Bertram
Columbia Gorge News

At long last, the Rotary Club of Bingen and White Salmon and Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce held the 2021 Community Cleanup event last weekend. The cleanup event, which ran Friday and Saturday, saw volunteers at drop-off sites greet visitors, lift and carry materials as well as make their way through the community, hoisting unwanted items to drop-off sites — and saw visitors to the event dropping off bulky waste or recycling items and gathering such materials for repurposing or reusing.

The cleanup event had stations for yard waste, electronics recycling, scrap metal, and among others, “freecycling,” which allowed visitors to grab items they felt were able to be repurposed or reused in some way. Bingen-based thrift shop Second Hand Rose as well as the Gorge Rebuild-It Center provided valuable support, organizers said, by picking through materials to identify which could be reused or repurposed and sold, in an effort to ensure valuable items don’t just go to waste.

Said organizer and Rotarian Tammy Kaufman, “We want to thank everyone who participated in this year’s event! It was amazing to get back to business following last year’s cancellation due to the pandemic. We were all happy to help clean the community and have the opportunity to see one another in person again.”

Organizer and Rotarian Pamela Zachary-Morneault said that the event was designed to provide people a place to bring items for which they no longer have a use, and for community members to come together and identify what materials can be reused or repurposed so that it doesn’t add to common waste.

“So much of what comes in comes out,” Zachary-Morneault said.

Bicycles for example, are a common item that organizers see each year dropped off by community members, which gives anyone a chance to dig through and find any that can be repurposed or repaired.

“It’s just a random array of things that come down there, but so much of it does find a new home instead of going into the landfill, and that’s just the bottom line,” said Tammara Toppel, organizer and Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce executive director.

It was the first year since 2019 that the cleanup committee was able to organize

and host such an event; last year’s program was canceled amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The cleanup committee met Tuesday to discuss some preliminary findings from last weekend. Toppel told the group, including Rotarians Zachary-Morneault, Dale Connell, Bruce Bolme, Shari Bosler, and Kaufman, that the group recorded 690 volunteer hours between committee meetings and volunteer work through the weekend, a number which was at the lower end of her estimate.

While the results from last weekend’s program are still being processed by the organizers, Toppel did have some interesting insights to share at the meeting.

Toppel said 158 tires were donated to the program, a vast increase from 47 tires collected in 2019. Funnily enough, Connell noted that this year was the first year that the cleanup crews did not hoist away a box TV set. Through their work last weekend, so many items were able to find a new home, from an old point of sales system donated by Everybody’s Brewing to sound systems and everything in between.

Toppel said she is planning to release a survey, coming soon, to send to participants to record feedback on multiple aspects of the event, including whether to continue organizing future programs to be held in May, or to plan for a return during April, when it was traditionally held.

All together, the event raised around \$5,600 for the Rotary club, Toppel said.

Food for volunteers was provided by Ayutlense Family Mexican Restaurant, El Valle Mexican Restaurant, and EAT 14. Sponsors for the program included Beneventi’s Pizza, Mt Adams Orchards, Harvest Market, Everybody’s Brewing, Taqueria el Rinconcito, Feast Market and Delicatessen, North Shore Cafe, Pixán Taqueria and Cantina, Carmen’s Kitchen and Murphy’s Family Watering Hole.

“Community Cleanup is the largest annual hands-on event for our White Salmon - Bingen Rotary Club. Proceeds from the event support our direct costs and planning for next year. Any remaining funds go to the club’s other community service areas like our literacy programs, youth exchange, and the holiday Tree of Joy,” said Kaufman. “We welcome anyone interested in participating to contact us at rotary.club.323@gmail.com or join us for a regular weekly meeting held on Tuesdays at Noon.”



Above, volunteer and Bingen City Clerk/Treasurer Cheyenne Pantoja-Wright operates an excavator last weekend at Community Cleanup. Middle left, volunteers at the yard waste station load up a trailer Friday afternoon.



Middle right, volunteer driver Dale Connell guides volunteer Travis Cieloha to a drop-off site. Bottom left, volunteer Rick George greets a visitor. Bottom right, Pantoja-Wright stays cool, calm and collected while volunteering with Community Cleanup.

Photos courtesy Tammy Kaufman/Rotary Club of Bingen-White Salmon

HRVHS instructor receives statewide community works award

■ By Stephanie Hoppe
For Hood River County School District

Peter Lawson, Hood River Valley High School (HRVHS) community works instructor, received the Statewide Excellence Award at the annual Oregon Statewide Transition Conference in May. Lawson has led the community works program at HRVHS for the past five years, building a classroom with students from a decommissioned fire station.

The Community Works Program at HRVHS, which is a part of the Career and Technical Education (CTE)

program, started with a remodel project where Jack Miller, a program volunteer, taught students construction skills. At that time, the program included six students, compared to the current 89 students.

Lawson said one key component of the program’s success has been getting students off campus and applying what they are learning. The community works program resides in a city-owned building on the



Peter Lawson

Heights in Hood River. The fire department occupied it but was not using it. The City of Hood River, Hood River Fire Department, and Hood River County School District (HRCSD) worked together to create a Maker’s Space for the students to learn and apply what they are learning.

HRCSD provides transportation for students from HRVHS to the firehouse building each day. There are

three class periods offered daily, and some students attend two of those three class periods depending on their course schedule and requirements. Students enrolled in these courses range from at-risk to high-achieving.

Community volunteers are an important part of the program, offering their time and expertise every week.

Students identify both indoor and outdoor projects

they are interested in, including building skateboards, making stained glass, learning how to stucco, basic electrical, making jewelry, screen printing, and building garden beds. Lawson said the community also helps by donating supplies for students to use as a part of these projects.

Lawson began his career in education as a special education teacher. He has worked

for three school districts, including HRCSD. At each of these school districts, his focus has been on helping students build vocational skills.

To learn more about the Hood River Valley High School career and technical education program, including the community works program, please visit sites.google.com/hoodriver.k12.or.us/hrvhs-cte/home.

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