



Hanson Trio visits Keizer

ABOVE: Willamette Lutheran Retirement Community hosted the Hanson Family Trio for a special concert Friday, May 26.

LEFT: Audience members applaud after a song.

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Nathan Bauer, Rich Michael, Mark Caillier and Bob Shackelford set a new fence in place at Rickman Community Garden.

New fence to keep out bad neighbors

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

As a new fence went up around the Rickman Community Garden Saturday, May 27, Peggy Moore wanted to kiss every post and hug each of the five volunteers who made it possible.

"We needed this so bad. Whenever we've talked to the other gardeners, this was the thing they wanted most," Peggy said. Peggy and her husband, Jerry, are the garden coordina-



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald

Volunteer Danny Dietz splices together sections of fence.

The garden, which sits west of the Keizer Civic Center in Chalmers Jones Park, makes gardening possible for 17 local families without the space to do one in their own yards. Unfortunately, theft at the garden made the fence a necessity. But the youth hanging out at the nearby skate park weren't the problem.

"The kids might climb up on the roof of the shed, but we've caught a number of neighbors who come into the garden with plastic shopping bags and pick whatever they want. And it's not just one person, it's different people over and over," Peggy said. "We have one family that plants strawberries and hardly got any last year."

Moore said she caught one person with two plastic bags of produce and, when she confronted the woman, it turned out she had also taken seedling plants that were intended for the gardeners. On another occasion, the same "dedicated thief" was seen pushing another plastic bag down the back of her pants to avoid a confronta-

tion. And that wasn't even the most brazen of the incidents.

"I was working on my bed last year and I was trying a new kind of tomato and they were coming in big and green. A man came by and told me that he just went down to the South and had fried green tomatoes and they were so good. He said he was going to come back and get some of the tomatoes on my plot," Peggy said.

Peggy told the man that the produce belongs to the gardeners who pay for their spaces and he walked off. When Peggy and Jerry came back to water their plot within the following 48 hours, all the green tomatoes were gone.

That was one of the more frustrating parts about the fence, Jerry said.

"It's taking a \$3,000 fence to keep four or five people out of the garden," Jerry said.

Most of the spaces in the community garden are taken by low- and fixed-income families, and Peggy said she keeps a waiting list for when plots be-

come available. The new fence will have two gates, one large enough to accommodate a vehicle and a smaller one, with coded locks for gardeners to access when needed.

The garden is truly a community effort, when the plot owners have excess, it is typically donated to Simoka Place. Peggy and Jerry recently built a raised garden bed for a plot owner with mobility issues.

"Now she can just sit on the side of the bed and do her gardening," Jerry said.

The fence was made possible through a \$1,700 matching grant from the Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and numerous smaller donations.

"We went to a lot of the smaller family-owned businesses and we got a lot of \$10 and \$20 donations from a lot of people," Peggy said.

Rotary Club of Keizer volunteers Mark Caillier, Bob Shackelford, Nathan Bauer, Rich Michael and Danny Dietz pitched in to install the fence.

While looking for financial support, Peggy and Jerry also received a donation of wine barrels from Willamette Valley Vineyards. They plan on turning them into herb gardens.

"We're always looking for the plants we can take out of the individual plots - like squash that take up a lot of space - and put into community beds," Peggy said.

Her next project is finding someone with shepherd hooks and hanging flower baskets to put up inside the fence to attract pollinators.

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