

# Keizer water fuels Salem response to toxin fears

By KEIZERTIMES STAFF

When Salem needed clean drinking water last week, Keizer stepped up in a big way.

On Tuesday, May 29, the City of Salem warned residents six-and-under as well as medically-fragile adults and pregnant women not to drink the water from their taps. An algae bloom in Detroit Lake led to cyanotoxins being found in the Cherry City's treated drinking water. Cyanotoxins are by-products of certain algae species that grow in water. Salem draws drinking water from the North Santiam River, where the cyanotoxins were detected. Soon help was streaming in from all over, especially Keizer.

Keizer's water is drawn from wells that tap into an aquifer while Salem's groundwater supply flows over the surface and led to the contamination from a lake 60 miles upstream, said Bill Lawyer, Keizer Public

Works director.

Within the first 24 hours of the warning, Keizer businesses were among the first to offer Salem residents free refills of bottles and jugs. Nigel Guisinger, owner of Willamette Valley Appliance, was among the first to offer refills on social media. Soon, dozens of businesses, large and small, were offering similar services and all were being championed by the Keizer Chamber of Commerce. Other retailers brought in extra supplies as shelves throughout the area were scraped clean. WinCo contributed a truckload of extra water that was distributed at Marion-Polk Food Share.

Keizer also began pumping about 3 million gallons a day of fresh water into the Salem water system, said Lawyer. The service was provided as part of an intergovernmental agreement between the two cities.

Keizer's Community Emer-

gency Response Team (CERT) staffed a water station near Carlson Skate Park for three straight days, providing in-car service when the lines allowed.

CERT leader Linda Pantalone said members of the team assisted 470 area residents between Wednesday, May 30 and Saturday, June 2, when the advisory was lifted. Those in need traveled from as far as Stayon to get bottles refilled.

In addition, the city opened up a separate watering station on Bailey Drive Northeast where contractors and emergency services could refill mobile water tanks.

Help even arrived in the form of McNary High School alum Brennen Haskins, who traveled 12 hours and more than 750 miles from Great Falls, Mont., to bring in 107 cases of water. He distributed them from the parking lot of Day-spring Fellowship on Lockhav-

en Drive Northeast.

Haskins graduated from McNary in 2010 and is stationed in Montana as a member of the U.S. Air Force.

"I was already heading this way on leave anyway. I saw a lot of stores in Salem were out of bottled water or had raised the price," Haskins said. "Since I was heading this way anyway and I had a bunch of empty space in the back of my truck, I bought 25 of my own. The rest of it came from a couple of people from the Great Falls area and the base, just people that I knew and talked to. The goal was just to fill the truck mostly and we pretty much did."

Four people pulled up to claim some of Haskins' haul in his first 15 minutes on-site.

By the end of the crisis, thanks were pouring into Keizer from throughout the area. It left Mayor Cathy Clark beaming with pride at a city council



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald  
Brennen Haskins, a McNary alum, drove more than 750 miles on leave from the Air Force and brought with him a truckload of water.

meeting Monday, June 4. "I couldn't be prouder of being part of this community as I am right now. I'm so thankful that this is where I live," Clark said.

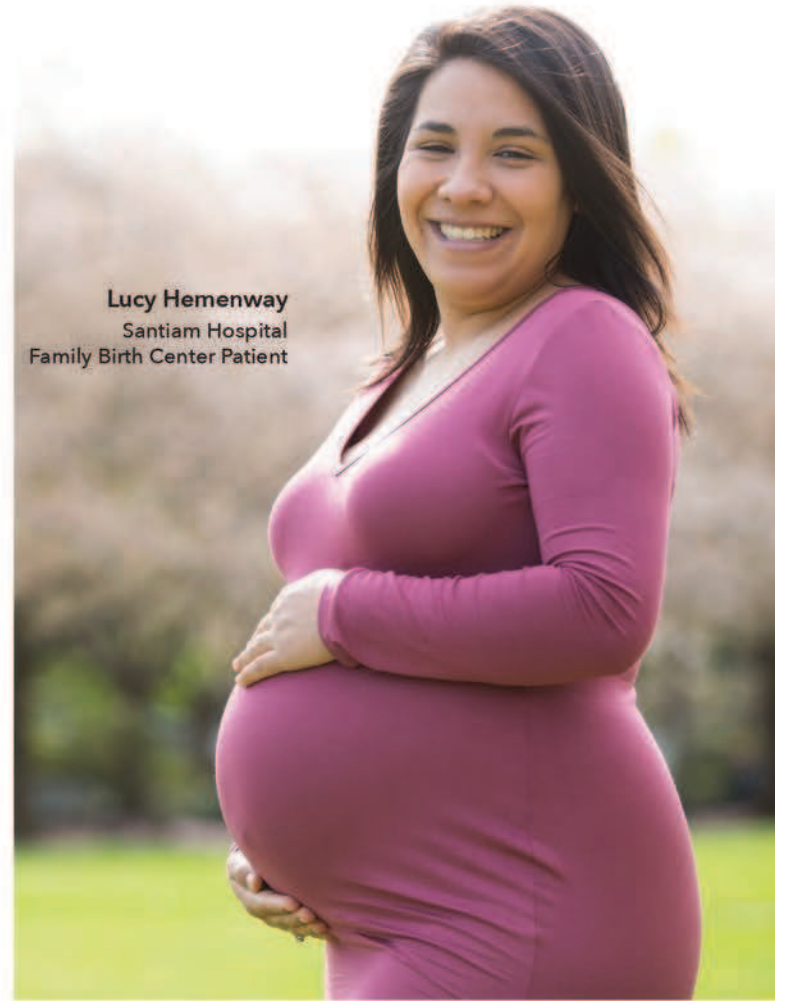


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Photo courtesy: The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

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&  
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