

She’s been working on the railroad

By **LAUREN MURPHY**
Of No Adults Allowed

When Rachael Aldridge started volunteering at the Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad (OCSR) in 2017, she couldn’t imagine where it would lead her. Three short years later, she is the executive director and is going to school to get her master’s in nonprofit management.

She got involved with OCSR because of her husband, a train enthusiast, who had been volunteering for a year.

“I had no interest in trains at that time,” Aldridge said. But she eventually agreed to go so they could spend more time together.

Her first day as a volunteer she was hired on as a ticket agent, someone who verifies the tickets and greets the riders. Aldridge continued to move up the ranks fairly quickly.

“All of this just happened in such a short amount of time,” she said.

Though Aldridge began to work at OCSR three years ago, her history with the railroad goes back further. When she was a kid visiting her grandparents in California, they took her on a train pulled by an engine named McCloud River Railroad #25.

“I know most engines just kind of look like an engine, they don’t look like anything special,” Aldridge said.

But after looking at it for a while, she realized McCloud #25, one of the main engines used by OCSR, is the same one that pulled her nearly 20 years ago.

“That’s probably one of my fondest personal memories with the train,” Aldridge said.

Though Aldridge loves her job, it was not where she thought she’d end up. When she started school she was going to be a veterinarian; she went to a pre-



vet program where she was in school for seven weeks. “I hated every single moment of it. I cried ... I did not want to do this,” Aldridge said, which is when her husband encouraged her to pursue something she did want to do.

Aldridge began to pursue American Sign Language (ASL) and special education.

“I thought I wanted to get my ASL degree and go work in the special needs field ... I even dabbled in the idea of being a language pathologist for a while,” Aldridge said.

While she enjoyed it more than vet school, she knew it wasn’t quite right.

“None of that was really a passion for me,” Aldridge said. “One thing I’ve learned to embrace in life is change and how life can change quickly because you never know what’s going to come up ... how your life might look in five years.”

And it was this attitude that lead her to working on the railroad.

After graduating with her ASL degree she worked as a youth pastor. Then she was unemployed, which is when her

husband asked her to volunteer at OCSR.

While working on the railroad is something Aldridge is passionate about, it is not without it’s challenges.

Aldridge is pursuing a master’s degree in nonprofit management which takes up a lot of her time.

“I work very closely with my board members and keep them very updated on my school schedule, my grades, the new projects I’m doing and how it’s going to benefit the organization [OCSR],” she said.

For Aldridge, it all comes down to balance.

“[The board members] are very flexible, but that also means I need to be flexible,” she said.

On busy days at the railroad her schoolwork gets put aside for later, which usually means doing it on her day off.

“You do what you need to do to make things succeed,” Aldridge said.

Another challenge that Aldridge faces is being a woman, and a young one at that. At conferences for railroads, she says there are a few women in high level positions, but most of the women present are there to support their husband’s passions. “[Men at conventions] start quizzing me as if I need to prove my credentials as a railroader ... And that just doesn’t happen with other men.” she said.

Aldridge said that this attitude is something she has to fight within her own organization after she became executive director.

“Someone found out that I was executive director and they said ‘she is going to close this organization before next season.’” she said. “And that hurt because I know that person. I still see them quite often.”

Aldridge said she doesn’t do what she does to prove these people wrong, but instead focuses on doing her best and making OCSR the best it can be, “because that’s what the organization deserves,” she said.

Her advice to young readers is to find what they’re passionate about and make it their priority.

“You need to out yourself first and drive towards your goals,” Aldridge said.

Though Aldridge was not initially excited about trains, she has come to love them — and her job. “I want to stay at this job forever,” she said, though she knows she needs to be willing to accept change.



Got some time? Try making paint

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We made it to spring break! I’m so proud of you guys, you’re doing great.

Time off of school is nice, you can sleep in, you don’t have to do homework, you can stay in your pajamas until 10 o’clock, but sometimes having nothing to do can get boring. I’ve been working on some crafts to kill some time.

Making paint.

Glue is great. 86.1 percent of the crafts that have appeared in No Adults have used glue, it’s essential for crafting.

White glue is typically what we use, because it dries clear, but kids, colored glue is a thing and it looks so cool. You could go to the store and buy pre-made sparkly purple glue, but I think making it would be a lot cooler. I mean, who doesn’t want to play with glitter and food coloring.

What you’ll need:

- Glue
- Food coloring
- Glitter (optional)



Take the top off of the glue and dump it into a disposable cup. Add food coloring and stir until you get the desired color.

Now carefully, you may need to ask your adult to help you, pour the newly colored glue back into the glue bottle. I found the

easiest way to funnel the glue in was to bend the lip of the cup to make a little spout, which helped control the flow of the glue.

Once it’s in the bottle, screw the cap back on and we’re all set.

