



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

## FIRE TRAINING AT EXPO CENTER

All Hood River County fire agencies participated Wednesday in a nighttime exercise at the Hood River Expo Center on the waterfront, one of the few times in recent years that more than a handful of people have been inside the building. Teams of four firefighters cut holes in an interior metal door while other teams drilled for entering a smoke-filled exposed space. Meanwhile, other teams practiced rescue and extraction of an injured person, using the HRFD Tower 3, a ladder engine which enables the agency to get to roofs of multi-story buildings. A fog machine, like those used in haunted houses, replicated smoke, and LED flashers stood in for flames, giving the exercise the feel, if not the heat, of an actual fire. The Expo Center which was built in the 1980s and formerly hosted events such as Harvest Festival. It has been empty for the past year, since Full Sail moved its warehouse back to its expanded downtown location, though the Hood River Warming Shelter is temporarily using the north section of Expo through March 8.

## BUSINESS

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of this stuff (because they've traveled to Mexico), but some will walk in and walk out — they don't know what it is." Everything is made from scratch with fresh ingredients. Shredded fruit, including mango, cucumber, coconut, jicama and papaya, are typically sprinkled with chili powder — "Most Hispanic people like anything with chili," Sylvia explained — but the cups can be made to order, with or without the

spicy topping.

"We can improvise anything," she added. Besides antojitos, Tropicali Fruit features juices and sorbets — one of their biggest sellers is mango de nikita, or mango sorbet. "People cannot get enough," Sylvia said, noting the store goes through 12 three gallon ice cream buckets of the sorbet each week. This summer, the couple will add a freezer to sell popular Mexican ice cream flavors, coconut, guava and mango among them. Weekdays after 3 p.m. are the busiest times, as are

weekends. Phone orders are common — and so are customers coming from The Dalles. Because of the shop's popularity, the couple hopes to expand to The Dalles with a tentative March 2016 date in mind. Tropicali Fruit is located at 1217 12th Street and is open Tuesdays through Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The store is currently closed on Mondays, although Sylvia expects that to change this spring. For more information, call 541-399-7400.

## MELODI

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As care coordinator, she "keeps pieces from dropping when you have this diagnosis and have to see all these doctors," she said. "I've always loved the teaching part of nursing and getting to know the people, their stories and how I can help them," she said. "I like helping patients make their own good decisions." Still, oncology can be tough. "You get close to the patients," Johnson said. "Most nurses have the personality trait, they want to try to fix things, and it's disheartening when you can't make it all better. You're there to support." Her schedule varies a bit depending on if Mark is in Salem versus Hood River. But even when he is home, he may not be. "It depends on what he has for meetings," she explained. She's usually at Celilo by 7:30 a.m., with an occasional 7 a.m. meeting. After a full day of work — Monday through Thursday — she exercises before heading home. If Mark is home, she exercises before work. He's the cook in the family — "he's a very good cook and doesn't mind it," she said — but when he's in Salem, she's as likely to grab a bowl of cereal for dinner as anything. While Mark's position is considered a part time job — and he's paid as such — it's really full time, she said. It's her 36 hour workweeks that primarily pays the couple's expenses. "One thing you kind of forget is he has to apply for his job every two years and raise his own funds," she said. She's not a big fan of campaigning — Mark is often gone and she has many oblig-

ations to fulfill as his wife, from chamber of commerce events to nonprofit fundraisers — but she enjoys talking with constituents and learning about their lives. "I love to talk to people," she said. "I find out what their story is, what they do for a living. You find commonalities with whomever." "This is a very diverse district — there's a lot of different opinions," Johnson added. "It's an advantage: Not only do you need to work harder, you get to work harder to meet more people and see different walks of life, see the varying opinions, look at both sides of things." The first year Mark was in Salem — 2011 — wasn't bad "because my daughter was a senior and still at home and active in everything. I had a little comrade." The second year — 2012 — was harder. Though it was a short six week session, it was also the winter an ice storm hit the gorge, and Johnson found herself snowed in, without power for four days, and melting snow to flush the toilets. A neighbor plowed her out, but she was still homebound and alone because of icy road conditions. "I can laugh about it now," she said. When her kids were younger, Johnson volunteered with SMART, at their respective schools, and served on the Young Life board. These days, her volunteer work "usually has to do with cancer." She volunteers with Relay for Life every year in both Hood River and The Dalles. She's also very involved with the Christian Missionary Alliance, where she attends church. She serves as a deaconess and helps with "the fussy stuff that makes a church," such as cleaning or making meals for those in need. She set up communion and subs in the nursery or

children's ministry, two positions she previously held. Johnson graduated with a pre-nursing degree from Western Washington University and received a BS in nursing from Washington State University's (then) Intercollegiate Center for Nursing Education, located in Spokane, in January 1981. The Johnsons were married in 1980 and came to Hood River in 1981, about 10 months after she received her nursing certification. Why Hood River? Mark grew up in Parkdale, and the two moved to the area so he could work construction with brother Jim. He started Mark Johnson Construction in 1985, a business they still own. Johnson's parents were both public school teachers, as are her sisters. She broke that mold. "When I came along, I have to do things a little different," she said. Though her parents expected her to take higher level classes, she pulled a mere C+ in her upper level science class. When she told her teacher at a career fair that she wanted to go into nursing, she was told, "That's for kids who are good in science." She didn't listen. "You put your nose to the grindstone and you can do anything," she said. And despite not being "particularly stellar" at science, it's a career she feels good about. "You can encourage someone through a difficult situation and then go home and feel like you've really done something, that you've made a difference in someone's life," she said. "It would be hard to work in a job where I felt I wasn't making a difference. "I think anybody can make a difference no matter what you do. You just be the best you can be."

## DOG

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rescue dog in a shelter, where it was determined that he may have the right stuff to become a narcotics dog. "By the time's a dog's two, two and a half years old, they have to kind of have a certain criteria after their puppy phase where they still have got that play drive... and he's one of those," Paulsen explains. Luke was taken in by the Sherman County Sheriff's Office, where he served as a drug dog for several years, trained by officers to sniff out marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. HRCISO decided to start their own program after the deputy handling Luke transitioned out of that responsibility and the dog was offered to HRCISO at no cost. He may not look like your stereotypical police K9 — a German Shepherd or a Malinois — but Paulsen says looks don't matter, noting that he's even heard of Cocker Spaniel drug dogs. "There's a lot of dogs that actually can't do it," Paulsen says, "but it really doesn't matter so much as their breed, but more their behavior."

Luke is also smaller than the aforementioned breeds, but Paulsen says that factor works in HRCISO's favor. "He's not a big dog, but he's just the right size, honestly, to be able to get places we need him to get to: underneath the floor compartments of vehicles, underneath the steering compartment, places like that... common areas where people might hide illegal narcotics," he explains. Paulsen, who's been with HRCISO for five years, says he's always been interested in service and working dogs and wanted the chance to work with Luke. He began training with his current partner this summer, under the tutelage of local resident Phil Thaler, a retired California Highway Patrol officer. "He's done dog work since 1985, so he's well versed," Paulsen says of Thaler. "Without him, the county wouldn't have been able to start this program successfully, because he's donated all of his time." Paulsen says other local entities have also helped support the program, including Gifted Groomers, Gorge River Dog Wash, Hood River Sand and Gravel, Little Bit Ranch Supply, Coastal Farm



Photo by Ben Mitchell

**LUKE THE K9** chases a tennis ball thrown by Deputy Travis Paulsen out behind the Hood River County Courthouse. The tennis ball is Luke's reward when he makes a drug find. "He goes crazy for it," Paulsen says.

and Ranch, Hood River Alpine Vet, Robert Stewart Construction, and Tum-A-Lum Lumber. Luke's food is also provided at no charge by pet food company Science Diet. Paulsen is paid a stipend to take care of the dog and house him at his own home. Luke, however does not get a paycheck. "His reward is a tennis ball," Paulsen says. "He goes crazy for it; it's what he wants." After training with Paulsen throughout the summer, Luke took the test required by the Oregon Police Canine Association and passed his first time, likely made easier thanks to Luke's "hundreds of hours of training under his belt," suggests Paulsen. Despite all that experience, Paulsen is still required to spend a minimum of four hours per week continually training Luke, which usually involves him hiding a piece of cotton that has been sitting in a bag of drugs, soaking up the odor, and then placing it in bags, boxes, luggage, around the courthouse, in tow yards. There is always an item or two that does not contain a drug scent to make sure Luke is signaling correctly, and the routine is mixed up "to make sure we're keeping the dog on his toes."

When the dog finds a drug odor, he either sits or lies down — he's not an attack dog, Paulsen notes — but learning the dog's other body language is an ongoing process, according to Paulsen. "When your dog is on drug odor, you notice all the things they do besides alerting," he explains. "I have to look at his tail, at his rib cage, watch his breathing... there's so much more than

just the dog sitting. You have to observe everything." Luke has proved adept at noticing things officers might not pick up. Paulsen points to an incident during one drug investigation where Luke signaled on a seemingly innocent-looking Pepsi can and upon further examination, Paulsen determined it had a compartment in it that had been used to conceal drugs. Paulsen says the dog isn't brought out in random situations and is only used when there is a "reasonable suspicion" of a drug violation. But besides his sensitive snout, Luke's presence alone can cause suspects to fess up, knowing that it's hard to fool a drug dog. "Just having him available at a moment's notice is huge, because just having him and letting people know, 'Hey, we have a drug K-9,' that in and of itself has helped in some situations," Paulsen says. Additionally, HRCISO uses Luke for PR, sending him out to schools with deputies for drug education programs. He'll also offer assistance when the local police department needs a drug dog. So far, Paulsen estimates Luke has found several pounds of marijuana and 5 or 6 ounces of meth, along with small amounts of coke and heroin in his tenure with HRCISO. He hopes the experiment will continue to go well. "With Luke and me, the first couple years are very imperative to see how things go, to see how it's working," he says. "I was very fortunate and felt privileged that I was the first person that could facilitate that sort of program here," Paulsen adds. "Hopefully it will be a long-running program that's continued on down after I'm not involved."

## TRAIN

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railments, OPB reports that tar sands oil concerns emergency response planners due to its sticky consistency, making cleanup difficult if the dense substance, known as bitumen, spills into a waterway, and then sinks to the bottom. The announcement of the tar sands shipments comes at a time when conversations about oil trains have been reinvigorated both on a regional and national level. Earlier this week, national news outlets reported a CSX tanker train carrying oil from the Bakken shale formation derailed in West Virginia, causing explosions and fires that burned for days, resulting in people evacuating their homes. The news also caused concern for Oregon U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, who referred to the delay between the start of the shipments and when the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality learned of them as "unacceptable." Even before this announcement, both Wyden and his colleague, Sen. Jeff Merkley, pushed for federal legislation strengthening reporting requirements for fossil fuel shipments, requesting that shippers notify first responders when trains carrying 20

or more carloads of flammable liquids — crude oil or otherwise — roll through their communities. On a regional level, legislation has been introduced in the Washington State Legislature that would impose an "oil spill response tax" on oil terminals in the state that receive crude oil shipments by rail. The bill, SB 5057, would also mandate that the Washington Department of Ecology provide grants to emergency responders that would be used for training and equipment related to an oil spill response. According to a report in the White Salmon Enterprise, a local delegation, including Stevenson City

Councilor Julie Mayfield and Hood River City Councilor Peter Cornelison, recently traveled to Olympia, Wash., to testify in support of SB 5057 and a related bill, HB 1449. The cities of Stevenson and Hood River, along with The Dalles, have passed resolutions in recent months addressing concerns arising from oil train shipping and their potential public safety and environmental impacts on the Gorge. They join several other cities up and down both sides of the Gorge that have passed similar resolutions over the past couple years.

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**Join James Nygren, current professional pitcher for the Miami Marlins organization on Sunday, February 22 for a fundraising clinic at the HRVHS hitting facility.**  
 Donations will be directed to the Hood River Junior Baseball organization and used to maintain and improve Collins Field.  
**Time: 9am-11am for ages 8-11 and 11am-1pm for ages 12-15.**