

JIM

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Dalles and Biggs in Oregon, and Bingen and Goldendale in Washington (and has lived in nearly all the communities; these days, he and wife Marilee live in Hood River) — in what is never a 9 to 5 gig. While his main office is located at the Hood River Marina Way McDonald's, he's often on the road. Once a week, he travels to each of the locations to meet with supervisors and managers, field questions regarding company donations, make equipment orders and listen to customer feedback. Oh, and fix any broken equipment, regardless of the time.

"It's near a dull moment at any point of the job," he said.

His days begin early at home, "pulling up figures and taking care of the many emails that come my way," he explained. "I try and take care of this before leaving for one of the restaurants. My day may not end until late in the evening, depending on what is going on, or when traveling through the Gorge, stopping at each location ... keeping tabs on the 250 employees we have throughout the year, looking over the food and labor costs of the stores with the managers, keeping the equipment running property, and helping out on the floor when the need arises."

He's quick to point out that he doesn't do it all on his own. Each location has a general manager, department managers and shift managers, and he has two "out-standing supervisors" in Sonia Ariaza and Amanda Dwyer.

Whatever he's doing, his favorite part remains working with and talking to customers.

"I have no problem going out and cleaning tables in the restaurants," he said. "It's another great way to mingle with the great customers we have."

He especially enjoys chatting with "the regular coffee crowd" who come in each day, and those traveling through the area.

"I love to ask customers where they are from if they look like they might be traveling," he said. "All have some great stories to tell, or they ask about our area and I love to promote the Gorge."

On Saturday evenings — and sometimes Sunday mornings, too — Dummer can be found at St. Mary's Catholic Church, where he sings in the choir, as he's done for 19 years. He comes from a musical family, the fourth out of five children, all of whom sing and play instruments (Dummer plays trumpet and baritone horn). "I have never taken any singing lessons — the people I have sung with over the years were my instructors, and I continue to sing at St. Mary's just about every Saturday night," he said. "Sometimes I get to sing with the 10



Photo by Trisha Walker

JIM DUMMER, Director of Operations for Gorge-area McDonald's, makes an espresso in the restaurant's coffee bar.

a.m. choir, and if I'm visiting my parents in Dayton, Ore., I will sing with the 9 a.m. choir at St. James in McMinnville."

Dummer is also actively involved in the Knights of Columbus. He is currently in the middle of his third term as the Grand Knight for the Mid-Columbia Council 7292, and second term as Faithful Navigator of the Fourth Degree from the Columbia River The Dalles Assembly.

"This keeps me rolling," he said. "These two groups are what keeps me alive to strive to lead them as the Grand Knight or the Faithful Navigator. Without them, I would not be doing what I do each week."

His biggest accomplishment as a Knight has been raising funds to send sweat-pants to wounded soldiers in Afghanistan six years ago. "This was a moving experience. It represented all four areas of what we stand for: Unity, Patriotism, Fraternity and, most of all, Charity. I will always remember what we had accomplished," he said.

When he's not at a McDonald's location or singing, he's most often found working in his yard. He's known in his neighborhood for turning restaurant pieces into yard art.

"The old tree that sat in the play place in Hood River was removed two years ago, and I took the leaves and use them as planters. Just a unique way to keep the old

apple tree alive," he said.

He doesn't think any of what he does is special, but he does think the people he works with are. "It's the people I get to work with that are special. It's the people I get to lead in meetings, the people I get to lead in song at church, the people I get to sing with. It's the people I get to be around each day that are special," he said.

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BUSTER IS BACK

Jeff Mueller starts a new coat of paint on Buster, the "State Street Bear," who hibernated for a couple of weeks while Mueller did some repairs including removing some rot and filling it. Buster has been an ursine sentinel for years at 9th-and-State, as Mueller, pastor at neighboring Immanuel Lutheran Church, gives Buster (and his sidekick, Buddy) a new saying or greeting each week. Buster stood as polar bear for a few months after Mueller gave him a white primer coat, but Mueller planned to return him to regular, brown bear duty, as of Saturday.

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