

Hoover Trust donation of \$55,000 fuels crucial kitchen restorations at Mt. Hood Town Hall

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News editor

The countertop requires a plastic covering, the dishwasher doesn't work, and you have to lie on your back to light the pilot light to the stove.

But Mt. Hood Town Hall is a venerable and popular meal site for people of all ages of the Upper Valley, especially in the summer when kids do not have access to school meals.

A major donation made possible by a Mt. Hood woman, whose great-grandfather was President Herbert Hoover, will improve the efficiency and safety of this community resource.

The Hoover Family Trust has given \$55,000 to the Mt. Hood Towne Hall Association for its kitchen renovation project and meal programs. The Association is the non-profit group whose mission is to restore the 101 year old school house along Highway 35 in Mt. Hood, and manage the building as a community center.

The Hoover Family Trust was created by descendants of President Herbert Hoover to continue the President's passion for ensuring everyone has access to food. Leslie Hoover-Lauble is a representative of the trust and long-time Upper Hood River Valley resident. She had this to say about the contribution to the town hall. "Many remember great-granddad (President Hoover) as the Depression President. Very few are aware of the monumental things he accomplished in Europe in 1915-1917 in feeding millions of people in Belgium and in Russia. It is such a pleasure to honor his legacy in a small way by helping the Mt. Hood Town Hall achieve its goal of rebuilding the existing kitchen facilities."

"We are overwhelmed by the generosity of the Hoover Family Trust and its selection of the Mt. Hood Town Hall for this funding," said Kelly Govro, the chair of the town hall association. "It's difficult to describe how important this contribution is to our small non-profit group."

The trust donation will support two important activities at the town hall. A



THE LEGACY OF 'HOOVER LUNCHES'

Herbert Hoover (1874-1964) served as the 31st president of the United States. Hoover lived in Newberg from 1886-1889.

He is best known for bringing on the greatest economic upheaval in history, the Great Depression, but according to history.com, there are two sides to his legacy.

"Although his predecessors' policies undoubtedly contributed to the (Depression) Hoover has borne much of the blame in the minds of the American people. As the Depression deepened, Hoover failed to recognize the severity of the situation or leverage the power of the federal government to squarely address it.

"However, as a mining engineer by training he was a supreme logician, and was appointed by President Wilson to head efforts during World War I in Europe and afterward in Russia to channel food, medicine and other supplies to millions of starving people.

"He earned worldwide acclaim for his humanitarian efforts, as well as thousands of appreciative letters from people across Europe who benefited from the free meals known as 'Hoover lunches'."

majority (\$30,000) of the funds will be directed to the kitchen renovation project. The remaining funds will be used to establish a special account to provide long-term financial stability to the town hall senior meals program and potentially other meal programs that the town hall could establish. Town hall volunteers serve a meal to seniors every Thursday at noon. Hoover-Lauble and her husband Todd began serving this weekly community meal 20 years ago.

"Directing some of the funds to the kitchen renovation hopefully will result in others donating to this critical project as well," said Hoover-Lauble. "And creating a perpetual fund for senior meals and other potential 'direct feeding' programs is great. That most certainly follows the premise that great-granddad felt when it came to the masses having access to food." (See sidebar for some little-known details.)

Mt. Hood Towne Hall Association has been restoring the town hall for nearly 30 years. The last remaining major project is to renovate the entire kitchen area. The

existing facility has numerous significant problems that must be addressed to have a clean, functional and code compliant kitchen which would allow the community center to achieve its full potential.

The association hopes to raise \$100,000 for the kitchen restoration. "The \$30,000 contribution to the kitchen project gets us off to an amazing start with our fund-raising," Govro commented. "It gives us confidence that we will be able to make the kitchen project happen."

When presenting the Hoover Family Trust funds, Hoover-Lauble added, "On behalf of myself, and the other Hoover descendants, it is my extreme pleasure to be able to make this donation to the Mt. Hood Town Hall. The recent members of the board and many volunteers have done so much to make the building so beautiful. What good is it to our Upper Valley residents if it cannot be used because the kitchen is not functional? Please accept this donation as recognition for all the good things the many volunteers have done to restore the town hall."



LONG-TIME volunteers Leslie Hoover-Lauble and Roger Nelson discuss the many needs of the Mt. Hood Town Hall kitchen: an outdated stove (top photo) and non-functioning dishwashing machine among them. Town hall meals are a time of community: by chance Hoover-Lauble and cook Heidi Hansberger discovered they have mutual family members in the valley. Hoover-Lauble tore off a section of napkin to make notes.

Photos by Kirby Neumann-REA

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