



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

### DALE LOVE RETIRES

Dale Love celebrates his retirement Dec. 27 with an old friend, Peggy Kinsey of Mosier, at Hood River Supply. Love, long a friendly fixture at the fuel station at the Heights store, finished 16 years with the store. Friends and co-workers came to greet Love and enjoy cake and refreshments. Love holds the handy notebook he used to record fuel amounts before ringing up transactions. "I'll miss the people most of all," said Love, though he was known for the preferential treatment he gave to canine passengers in vehicles stopping by. Judy Gottschalk of White Salmon noted that people would often stop by the station on walks with their dogs, saying often the dogs would not allow them to get past the place without a treat from Love.

## Locals Wednesday Downtown offers free parking, events

The Hood River County Chamber of Commerce Downtown Business Advisory Committee (DBAC) and the Downtown Business Owners have created a program in partnership with the City of Hood River to invite locals to shop, dine and enjoy downtown with free parking every Wednesday from 3-6 p.m.

Downtown owners, DBAC, the chamber, and city council listened to the community and business partners and learned that the biggest barrier to locals being downtown is the perceived hassle and expense to park, according to Chamber Executive Director Kate Schroeder. Offering a midweek afternoon where locals can come downtown without fishing for quarters or figuring out the parking machine (or shopping longer than expected and getting a ticket) appealed to the

community.

"We know we needed to give something to locals that feels tangible and is about THEM. Many locals want to support Hood River businesses and contribute to our economic vitality by shopping local," said Schroeder.

"We want to recognize and invite community participation in our downtown. In short, we want Locals Wednesday Downtown (LWD) to be about supporting the people who live, work and contribute to our community every day," she said.

The Locals Wednesday Downtown pilot project, approved by the city council, began Jan. 1. Free parking will be available every Wednesday beginning at 3 p.m. during the months of January through May, then hiatus for the summer, and will resume again

September through December. Surveys will be conducted throughout the program to measure response and impacts, said a press release. If successful, the city will consider implementing the program permanently.

Word of mouth will be an important way to share the launch of Locals Wednesday Downtown, said Schroeder. Posters and window clings in downtown businesses will remind locals to think about and plan for Locals Wednesday Downtown and its free parking. A social media messaging campaign and public service announcements will additionally alert the community to this exciting new opportunity to support local businesses.



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