



MALE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

THROUGH LUKE'S LENS



Contributed by Luke's Photos

Not once has Robert Luke accepted payment for his photography.

"I've had people offer me money, but that doesn't happen," Luke said. "I refuse. It is my gift to the community."

First begun as a childhood hobby, Luke's photography is now an integral part of Hermiston events, including his work as Umatilla County Fair's volunteer photographer. His diligence over the years earned him the Umatilla County Fair Male Volunteer of the Year award for 2016.

"This is someone who understands the fair is more than one week," board member Gay Newman said at January's Umatilla County Fair Appreciation Dinner. "He's a man who a lot of people in town call the historian and he does so through his craft of photography."

Luke's curiosity in photography piqued in sixth grade when he used an old black and white camera and made contact prints from them. In eighth

grade, Luke's parents bought him his first camera, an Argus A4 35mm, and later a Minolta single-lens reflex camera.

Luke, 72, has passed on his photography interest through multiple generations in his family. His son, Jason, picked up on his dad's hobby and started a wedding photography business, which Robert assisted with. Some of Robert's grandchildren, all seven of whom are boys, have also taken an interest in the craft.

Thirteen years ago when his grandson, Calvin Kloer, was in kindergarten, Luke bought his first digital camera. Kloer frequently tagged along with Luke to take photos as a kid, before getting busy with school, cars and girls, Luke said.

Now, another grandson, Luke Banes, is Robert's latest study. Banes regularly assists Luke with shooting Hermiston Chamber of Commerce's "Breakfast of Champions" event.

"He's still at an age where it's an

interest of his," Luke said.

When he's not teaching kids about photography, Luke can be found shooting many Hermiston events. He annually shoots the Funfest, iCan Bike Camp, Northwest Run/Walk for Epilepsy and Relay for Life, besides a 2013 absence when he was recovering from open-heart surgery.

When August rolls around, however, Luke puts in countless hours shooting the Umatilla County Fair. Luke routinely arrives early every morning before the fair opens. Once the crowds enter, Luke mostly takes pictures of kids at the fair and the animals they're showing off.

Luke enjoys volunteering in the community by shooting events, but receiving the volunteer award holds special meaning for him.

"You take a lot of pictures and you get thank yous," Luke said, "but when an organization recognizes you, you know you're appreciated."

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Back Row (left to right): Michelle Cardenas, Oscar Fuentes, Dr. Deep Dhillon, Jessica Bruce, Denisse Sanchez and Ester Delepaz

Front Row (left to right): Perla Mejia, Mellissa Renner, Merlyn Madrigal, Daniela Campos and Jessenia Gonzalez

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