

From cupcakes to chaperoning

Volunteer of the Year Alice Newman plays major part in fair

By Emily Olson
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Alice Newman doesn't just plan the Umatilla County Fair's annual appreciation dinner. She and her granddaughters bake all 400 cupcakes served for dessert.

She also organizes the kick-off barbecue, works the livestock scales, chaperones the fair court and serves whatever office duties are left unmanned.

"If it needs to get done, I'll do it," she said. "That's what I'm here for."

Newman has been a fair volunteer since 1973, assisting 10 different fair managers. She was awarded the 2016 Female Volunteer of the Year for her dedication. But for Newman, working the fair is about more than just service — it's a family affair, as well as a way to shape the community she loves.

Newman's first visit to the Umatilla County Fair was a welcome break from unpacking moving boxes. She and her husband, Gay, who serves as chairman of the board of directors, moved from Washington the same week the fair opened for what was sup-



Staff photo by Emily Olson

Fair court chaperon Alice Newman helps princesses Kira Krumbah-Kuhar, Karolyn Jones and Janessa Prewitt prepare for the Athena Caledonian Parade on July 9.

posed to be a temporary stay. Gay had a summer contract with Hansell Farms.

The year was 1972. Newman has been to the fair every year since.

Her husband stayed on with Hansell because Hermiston felt like home. In 1973, the two became 4-H leaders. They loved how the program helped the youth develop a sense of responsibility and leadership.

"If you talk to any legislator, they'll tell you that any money we put into 4-H and FFA kids comes back tenfold," Gay said. "They become the kind of people you need in society."

Newman has since worked in various 4-H roles, including food preparation superintendent and Cloverbuds supervisor. After her daughters served on the fair court in 1989, 1992 and 1993, Newman started volunteering as a chaperone, the position for which she spends the majority of her volunteer time today.

For the court's full year term, Newman serves as the woman in charge of up to four princesses. That includes shopping for matching outfits, scheduling parade appearances, coordinating volunteer work and "watching the girls grow," she said.

"The first time you get them,

they're energetic but kind of nervous," she said. Newman coaches the girls on how to present themselves publicly, in everything from posting on social media to giving speeches. One of her recent princesses continued on to become a television show host. Another became a teacher. They all become confident young women, Newman said.

"She's the best court chaperone out there," said princess Kira Krumbah-Kuhar, who has known Alice for over three years. The princesses appear at so many events they often lose count.

Newman doesn't just keep them on track, she's "a kick in the pants," said princess Janessa Prewitt. And she's "definitely a second mom," often guiding the young women through stress relating to family and school, according to princess Carolyn Jones.

Aside from mentoring the princesses, Newman's favorite part of the fair is spending time with her family. All of her 13 grandchildren, ranging in age from 1 to 23, will be in attendance this year.

"Our family vacation has always been the week of fair," she said. For nine days, she'll camp with her husband in RV, watching the grandkids participate in 4-H and enjoy the carnival.

And, of course, she'll be performing whatever last-minute volunteer duties are needed.

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