

Familiar face to lead the parade

Lou Lyons is certainly not a new face at the Umatilla County Fair, but he'll be front and center as grand marshal as the fair celebrates "New Faces, New Places" at the 2017 parade.

Lyons came to Hermiston to work with Elmer Georgeson at Elmer's Irrigation in 1989 and quickly joined in the company's tradition of involvement in the fair and rodeo. He said they always did "little things with the fair" but their biggest involvement has always been with 4-H and FFA — something that Lyons continued when he took over the business.

That involvement includes giving 400 tickets to 4-H and FFA youth to the Thursday night rodeo and sponsoring the calf dressing event, where high schoolers from the various chapters compete to see who can get a T-shirt on a calf the fastest. The winning chapter gets a \$1,000 check from Elmer's Irrigation, hats and their name on the calf-dressing trophy.

"They get out there and chase those calves and it's a great time to watch," Lyons said.

He said Elmer's Irrigation also buys three or four animals from the youth auction each year and gives the meat to their employees. They do the same for the Morrow County Fair and Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo, and also support other youth events such as sports booster fundraisers.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Lou Lyons, center, accepts the 2017 Umatilla County Fair grand marshal title while Dan Dorran, left, looks on.

"I think it's important to support the youth," Lyons said. "We're serving and investing in the future of our community."

He added that he loves guiding youth involvement in agriculture because it imparts important life lessons.

He's looking forward to visiting the new fairgrounds and hopes that much of the community will also show their support by visiting the Youth Ag exhibits or purchasing

animals at the auction.

"Fairs and rodeos are about the kids," he said. "Plus, it's a lot of fun."

The real thanks goes to customers in the community who support Elmer's Irrigation, enabling him to sponsor these events, he said. Lyons is not big on being in the spotlight but said he was honored to be asked to be the grand marshal.

The Aug. 5 parade will follow the same route around the old fairgrounds, with line-ups starting at Hermiston High School at 4 p.m. The parade starts at 6:30 p.m.. Those looking to participate must register by July 28. Visit www.umatillacounty.net/fair for more information.

Other faces

- **Warren Smith**, male volunteer of the year, has done "odds and ends" for the fair since the 1970s, including work on the sound system, the rodeo, and building stronger gates for the pigs.

- **Alice Newman**, female volunteer of the year, has worked through the years on everything from coordinating exhibitors to serving as a chaperon for the Umatilla County Fair Court. (See PAGE 8)

- **Shelco Electric**, business partner of the year, which supplies electricity to the fair.

BBQ competition serves up tasty thrills



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Karlos Oneal piles grilled veggies on a BBQ beef sandwich at the Piggly's BBQ stand at the Umatilla County Fair last year in Hermiston — the last at the old fairgrounds.

It's not just stomachs that are expanding. This year's backyard barbecue competition will be bigger and better, featuring an additional category: bloody marys.

The Backyard Barbecue Competition is always a crowd pleaser, according to fair board chairman Gay Newman.

Twenty teams of up to four chefs (aged 21 or older if they'll be participating in the alcohol portion of the competition) can enter in any and all of seven divisions. Teams provide their own barbecues, tools and flavors. Fair sponsors provide the main food, all of which is grown or raised in Umatilla County.

The divisions include onion, potato, lamb, beef, pork spare ribs, bloody marys and blueberries (for dessert). All items must be prepared on a barbecue.

Teams must enter in all seven divisions to

be eligible for the grand prize, a brand new barbecue courtesy of Ranch & Home. But there's opportunities to win in each division as well, with \$300, \$200 and \$100 cash prizes.

"That means a single team could win up to \$2,100," Newman said. In addition to the fortune, there's the fame. Winning recipes are often published in the newspaper, as well as the promotional materials of sponsors. There's glory to be had, too.

"There's always a bit of trash talking," Newman said. "It's a lot of fun."

This year's will be held on Aug. 9, kicking off at 9:15 a.m. with the cook's meeting. The first dish turn-in takes place at 12:15 p.m..

The entry fee is \$40 per team. To register, visit www.umatillacounty.net/fair, pick up a packet from the fair office or call 541-567-6121.