

'Fish guy' settles in as Joseph librarian

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Joseph's new librarian Eric Shoudel, 43, enjoys finding information for a patron.

Eric Shoudel was looking for a job that was a little more social than his former jobs in fisheries when he applied to be the new librarian in Joseph.

One might not think of the librarian as a social butterfly, but compared to being "kind of locked away in a little research room in fisheries," it's practically living in the middle of the street.

"I'm looking forward to being more in touch with people who live in the community," Shoudel said.

Shoudel started the job in mid-November after Geneene Kingsford wrapped up 22 years as librarian.

Kingsford left some big shoes to fill.

"Geneene knew collection development and her collection in that tiny library is every bit as good as the one in Enterprise," said Enterprise Librarian Denine Rautenstrauch. "She did an awesome job and I'm going to miss her horribly. Her summer reading program was done on her

own time, 100 percent volunteer. They paid her to be there 20 hours a week and she put in 40 for sure."

After just a few weeks on the job, Shoudel is still find-

ing his feet — let alone filling big shoes — but he intends to make his mark.

Shoudel came to the county "chasing a permanent job with Oregon Department of

Fish and Wildlife back in 2010," he said. After three years with ODFW he moved to Nez Perce Fisheries for another two years. Now he's made the transition to librar-

ian. That switch might not seem like a logical progression, but Shoudel doesn't see it as a leap. He's been a bookworm all his life and always liked libraries, he said.

"It's not a stretch," he said. "Also, I've worked in a lot of databases and done computer stuff and I guess that would be my main qualification for the (library) job."

That technical savvy is coming in handy. Computers are an essential tool for today's libraries — interlibrary loaning, ordering, managing subscriptions, purchasing, etc.

And the city wanted a tech-savvy person who could help out customers who came in to use the three computers available to the public.

Shoudel, 43, is a single man with no other responsibilities, so he's able to meet his basic needs with part-time position for the time being. He'll be looking for other part-time work in his off hours, and says he got a lot of brewery experience in Hood River and will be looking at doing some night cellaring

for a local brewery.

The Joseph library is only open from noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, though there are some fun scheduled activities that take place in the library after school for grades 1-4; Mandy James of Enterprise supervises those activities.

During regular hours Shoudel does a booming business in local books about the county and best-sellers by famous authors.

"Those are really, really popular," he said.

And, of course, everyone has their favorite author and wants to read their way through that author's full catalog.

Patrons also can take part in all of the same fun events going on in Enterprise, including Battle of the Books and getting ready for The Big Read.

This year's Big Read is Thornton Wilder's "Our Town." Shoudel also has four copies of another good Wilder book — "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" — available.

Oil competes with biomass costs for Enterprise School District

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

It's a good thing the Enterprise School District spent \$100,000 replacing their oil heater back in 2010 — a reliable fuel source for the biomass system has proven to be hard to come by. The issues the district faces, in addition to proper storage, are trucking fees and regular delivery.

"I still haven't got a contract on biomass," ESD Superintendent Brad Royse said at the Dec. 7 school board meeting. "I'm still working, still confident we will get a contract on that. The number one thing they're stating is what they've stated for two years — we need storage on site."

The school board and administration have had "lots and lots of discussions" as to how to address the lack of storage, but so far have not identified a plan that doesn't involve a bond issue, Royse said.

A quick fix discussed in the past was simply storing the wood chip fuel in a semi-trailer, but other companies have attempted that and had the fuel freeze into a solid block and then expand and damage the truck trailer.

"Fuel has got to be inside, and it's got to be heated," said Royse.

Two other issues are regular delivery and the cost of transport.

"I've had three meetings (with engineers) since the start of the year and we've still got nothing," Royse said.

Local biomass was expected to be readily available at the time the plant was installed in 2008, but development of a reliable and economical source has been slower than expected.

However, Royse was able to report that at least one new source of woody biomass has been located in La Grande and that the district will be experimenting with the new company's product soon.

When in full operation, including loan payments on the biomass plant and building, the system costs the school district \$106,594 per year, according to Royse. That expenditure is expected to continue until 2024.

When the project was first developed in 2007 engineers from McKinstry Company expected the district to realize dramatic savings by switching to biomass. Based on 2007 energy consumption and oil

prices — according to McKinstry's audit — Enterprise School District was paying approximately \$147,900 per year when oil cost \$2.90/gallon and predicted the district would save nearly \$100,000 per year by making the switch. The district never realized those kinds of savings.

The district now pays approximately \$2.15 per gallon for oil fuel.

Both the Grant County Regional Airport and the Blue Mountain Hospital installed systems in 2011. The hospital system cost \$411,000 and

was projected to save approximately \$50,000 per year in heating costs.

Since then John Day's Prairie City School and Grant Union Junior High/Senior High School (2012) also have switched to biomass heating.

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Student of the Week

Gabriel Connolly
Enterprise Seventh-Day Adventist School

This is Gabriel Connolly's first year at Enterprise Seventh-Day Adventist School where he is currently in 7th grade. Gabriel enjoys soccer, science and working with sound systems. He is recognized this month for his excellent academic work that consistently places him on the Honor Roll.

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