

**SIUSLAW VALLEY
FIRE & RESCUE**

Moving mountains during the 'Upriver Academy'



BY PETE "BOA" WARREN
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(Note: What follows is a correspondence regarding our recent Upriver Firefighter Training Academy, which I'm sharing with permission from Andrea Still, a Volunteer with Swisshome-Deadwood Fire Department)

Three Saturdays of training doesn't seem like much. When you read about the Upriver Academy that Siuslaw Valley invited our local volunteer fire departments to participate in, you may have wondered, "How

much can you really learn in three days?"

I questioned it myself, when Boa [Warren] and Jeff [Larson] from SVFR came to Swisshome to tell us about the Upriver Academy and see if we wanted to participate. I asked Jeff, "Is it hard?"

His answer scared me and sticks with me, and probably will for a long time because it's an answer you can apply to almost any situation you may find yourself facing.

He simply said, "It's as hard as you make it."

I'm writing this as a volunteer who participated, and I'd like to make sure everyone knows that over the course of three days, we moved mountains.

Three local departments participated: Deadwood Creek Fire and Swisshome-Deadwood Fire departments.

At first, many of us were basically strangers. The oblig-

atory introductions ensued, but even in those brief, awkward moments when we were almost strangers, there was an air of acceptance, mutual respect and the general vibe of "We're all in this together."

And for the next three Saturdays the most amazing thing happened. We had a whole lot of problems! Bad hoses, malfunctioning equipment. But everyone kept a level head and our four departments were able to work as one group of like-minded individuals to find solutions to every issue we found. It wasn't Deadwood Creek or Swisshome-Deadwood or the big guys from Siuslaw Valley — it was just a family.

I asked what felt like a thousand stupid questions and they were met with answers I would expect from a brother or father: gentle, kind, compassionate and informative. Not just, "Do it this way" but

instead, "This helps us when we do it this way, and here's why."

For all you Backdraft fans, I regret to disappoint you that not one of them said "You're doing it wrong!" ala Kurt Russel.

Everyone who came up to volunteer their Saturdays to teach our departments were happy to be there — happy to teach, eager to help and amazing people to learn from. They were a group of people from all walks of life — military, college educated, wildfire and Coast Guard, just to name a few — and the knowledge they passed onto our departments is immeasurable. The bonds they helped form between our departments, everything we learned together, everything they taught us will undoubtedly save lives, homes and property for years to come.

We went from being four

separate departments who barely knew each other's names let alone their engines, tenders, and pump capabilities, to one group of people who can confidently work together for the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

What did it do for me, specifically? I went from being a volunteer who has been too scared of getting in the way to someone who can turn the pump on, run a hose by myself, know where to attack a fire, which adjustments to make to the nozzle according to the type of fire I encounter.

I know how to put on an air pack and how to use it.

The author of one of my favorite books, Cheryl Strayed, once said, "Find what you're afraid of and do it anyway."

I was afraid. I did it anyway — and it changed me.

Not only did our depart-

ments move mountains, but I moved mountains within myself. If you still find yourself asking how much can one accomplish in three days, I am here to tell you — with the right people by your side — you can do a lot.

It's really only as hard as you make it.

— Andrea Still

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PRESSRELEASES@THESIUSLAWNEWS.COM.

Rosalie Johnson named Peace Harbor 'Volunteer of the Year'

Rosalie Johnson was recently named the PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center Volunteer of the Year.

The PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center volunteer team consists of 117 members who volunteer in a variety of areas at Peace Harbor: the lobby, same day surgery, hospital gift shop, patient advocacy and more.

Johnson has served as a volunteer at Peace Harbor since 2002.

She has served in many areas: counseling, medical records, the gift shop, chair of fundraising, chair of the Gallery Hall, Co-Chairing the duties of the Roster, and currently co-chairing In-Service. She served for two years as Volunteer President of the Board, and has volunteered close to 1,000 hours of her own time this calendar year.

"PeaceHealth is so blessed



COURTESY PHOTO

to have the quality and number of volunteers who give of themselves. I have nothing but gratitude for the body of volunteers that followed my lead for two years, and the respect they bestowed during my tenure," Johnson said of her award and her time serving as a volunteer. "How blessed I have been to

interact with so many folks in so many situations: some good,

Rosalie Johnson (right) is presented the Peace Harbor Volunteer of the Year award by Michelle Diffenderfer of Peace Harbor hospital (left).

some better than others, but always with resolutions best for all concerned.

"This award has been the most special thank you a person might receive. These 15 years have been such an interesting and challenging period of my retired life.

"I wouldn't change any of it," Johnson added.

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GIVING BACK

NON-PROFIT SPOTLIGHT

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF FLORENCE OR

Q: Describe your organization.

A: Soroptimist of Florence was founded February 14, 1972. Over the years our club has helped found the Senior Booster Club, The Florence Events Center, funding commitment for Peace Harbor Hospital, and the Siuslaw Public Library. Our international organizational focus is to improve the lives of women and girls, which we support locally as well. This focus is highlighted by our holding three Human Trafficking information seminars. Our scholarship programs are Dream It Be and Live Your Dream Awards and graduating high school girls. Five HS Girls received five thousand dollar scholarships each, another two received three thousand dollars each and one for two thousand dollars for college or technical school education. Our annual sponsored Christmas Basket food and toys distribution has been helping disadvantaged families in the Florence/Mapleton area for over thirty years. The Mother's Day gift baskets are filled with personal care items for new moms given through the Caring Pregnancy Center.

The financial support we give to SOS, Boys and Girls Club, Senior Center, and other local service organizations, helps make their programs a reality. The community building projects include: Peace Harbor Hospital, the Siuslaw Public Library and Florence Events Center, which are a benefit to all citizens, making our community a safer more pleasant place to live.

Q: What are your greatest accomplishments so far, this year?

A: Our club year runs July thru June, so during that time this club year, we've held two fund raisers that make our projects possible. The annual Rose Sale incorporates sales of a dozen roses to recipients that are hand delivered throughout the Florence and sometimes Eugene areas. The Bras for a Cause event was a rousing success that promoted businesses who paid for a table the event night, created a bra to be sold live auction and in some cases a gift basket to be sold at silent auction. Dinner for those attending is included in the ticket price as is a bottle of wine to share among those at each table. A dessert auction capped off the evening with numerous delicious offerings that were auctioned by table. These two projects funded several of our other projects and three of the scholarships given out in May.

Q: Do you have a personal story that describes the impact your organization has had in the community?

A: Our club participates in Live Your Dream, a monetary assistance awarded to a woman who is head of household and pursuing education to further her career or obtain a degree for a new career that would help support her family. One recipient used the money to purchase a car so she could get to Eugene for class, one used money to pay for child care and another used the funds to purchase a computer. We were able to make these women's lives a little bit better.

Q: What is your current greatest need?

A: New Members; Members make the impact on the community and create the atmosphere that makes our projects a reality. I'll host any woman who is considering membership to lunch during the club year. Just call me!

Q: Describe your organizations personality in three words.

A: "Comradery", "Compassion", "Impact".



Nancy Bosket (LYDA Chair) with Christine Newlan and Kayla Stenke, and Shasta McMullen (President)



Carol Bennett(SI), Brandy Dalbeck, Korina Shipstad, Destinie Tatum, Celie Mans, Claire Waggoner, Taylor Coolidge, Elyssa Rose and Nancy Bosket, (SI Chair)

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