

JEEPS from page 1A

"I put an email out and everybody gathered together one morning. We had around 17 Jeeps show up that first time," he said. "We typically run anywhere from nine to 20 Jeeps on a run."

Jeeps R Us gathers on the second Saturday of each month.

"We schedule a run or we stage someplace here in town together, and we take off on a backroads tour," Applebee said. "We're not hardcore off roaders or anything like that, but we do have a group of members who like to go out on the dunes as well. They do that on a regular basis."

The "Dunes Squad," as he called them, typically goes out mid-week to avoid weekend crowds.

"We have scheduled a couple events where we've

taken novices like myself out and tried the dunes to see if we would like it or not," he said.

Unfortunately, that is how Applebee learned of a problem with the front axle of his Jeep Wrangler. His fellow club members had to help him out of a few sand traps out on the dunes.

"I got it fixed and then took it out on another event that did just fine," he said. "A lot of the members in the club are very eager to help each other."

The club's rides often include traveling on trails, lesser-known roads and the highway to. So far, their trips have included taking North Fork Road up to Yachats and Richardson Road down to Swisshome, as well as driving around Mapleton, Smith River, Ada and Siltcoos Station.

"I always try to do about

a two or three hour run, and then people come back to town and they kick tires. Some of them meet together for lunch afterwards and things like that," Applebee said.

First, the club is a vehicle to get out on the road, but it also allows people to bond over their Jeeps and the experiences they make from driving them. All ages have joined in, with one family bringing their kids along for the ride.

Club members also try to include non-backroad events, like a poker run and scavenger hunt.

"That was a lot of fun, because a lot of these folks are fairly new to Florence. So it gave them a chance



SIUSLAW NEWS FILE PHOTO

Cal Applebee (driving) is often seen around Florence in a historic Jeep, especially during parades and at events.

to get out and about and see what's out there around the Florence area," Applebee said. "But then the funny thing was, there were some of the locals who've been around here their whole lives, missed some of the clues."

Jeeps R Us is not a formal club, with officers or membership dues.

"The real emphasis is Jeep owners and Jeep enthusiasts," Applebee said.

The club does have a logo and Facebook page, but Applebee focuses more on the monthly events and a "Jeep Junc-

tion" newsletter that goes out once a month.

"It has articles on members and their Jeeps, heritage-type information on vintage Jeeps and how Jeeps evolved," Applebee.

Up until he retired from being the director of OCMM in 2019, Applebee wrote the "Military Heritage Chronicles" as part of Siuslaw News' monthly Community Voices section. In it, he often wrote about his vehicles and Jeeps in particular.

"I counted up the other day, and I have had somewhere around 33 or 34

Jeeps in the last 27 years," he said.

Some of those are historic military Jeeps, which other club members also have. Those are just a little bit harder to get to highway speeds, Applebee said.

"When we did the Veterans Honor Cruise back on Veterans Day, 22 Jeeps participated in that," he said.

Other vehicles were part of the November cruise, held last year in place of Florence's Veterans Day Parade. The club teamed up Rhody Cruisers and Rods N Rhodies for the event, which drove around Florence and past area retirement homes.

The same car groups are looking at ways to celebrate Independence Day in July.

"We're going to do another cruise and we're going to call it the All-American Cruise," Applebee said.

The plan is to start in Florence, drive around a designated route and end with a tailgate party.

"It's just a way for everybody to get together drive their rigs," Applebee said. "That'll be open anybody who wants to participate."

The club's events are contingent on the state's guidelines and restrictions under the COVID-19 pandemic. But with participants driving their own vehicles, a vehicle club is one way to maintain social distance and limit indoor gatherings. After all, "off road" is about as far from the indoors as you can get.

If people want to get involved with Jeeps R Us in Florence, they can contact Applebee at cal97439@gmail.com to get added to the email list.

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