

Dorena from A1

while hunting for a cheap fire engine through online classifieds.

The 1962 Ford C850 fire engine had found its way to a property near Loon Lake between Elkton and Reedspport.

Holt said a sign on the truck's door had read "East-side Fire Department," suggesting the truck was once in the service of the small Coos Bay neighborhood of the same name.

ting unused on the property for some years and the owner had no use for it.

"He just gave it to us for free when we told him it was for the community here," said Holt.

After acquiring the truck, Holt began the laboring process of restoration, utilizing local volunteers to clean and repair the vehicle bit by bit. Sitting so long in disuse, the truck's 500-gallon water tank had accumulated significant blockage.

"We had to take the lid off and shovel about 75



COURTESY PHOTO

Dorena's newly refurbished community fire truck, owned by resident Dan Holt.

pounds of rust and dirt out of it," said Holt.

Now nearly two years on, Holt believes the vehicle is in good mechanical condition and ready for action.

An attempt to put the fire engine on display in a parade last Saturday, however, did not portend a sunny outlook for the revamped truck. The vehicle seemed to stall before it could make it to the parade's staging grounds.

In the end, Holt realized a faulty fuel gauge indicated that there was gas in the tank when it had in fact run dry.

Now gassed up, and seeming to be in working order, Holt said he is offering the truck's services to the community.

"You can run five hoses off of it if you want to, which should put out a fire

pretty fast," said Holt.

Though there are other fire truck owners in the area, Holt's is currently the only one on community offer.

"Any house in this 'fire district' that has a fire, we plan on going and trying to put it out," he said.

Holt counts this "district" as a 15-mile stretch from Dorena Dam to Diss-ton, including both sides of Dorena Lake.

Part of Holt's reasoning for the service is the community's distance from any firefighting responders.

Fires have also occurred in Dorena and the surrounding area with some frequency.

Many residents expressed concern in 2018 when three households went up in flames and South Lane County Fire

and Rescue (SLCFR) protected Dorena Elementary School, but seemed to make less effort to protect the houses.

According to a statement released by SLCFR at the time, the fire was contained to 12 acres.

"SLCFR response included resources from North Douglas Fire EMS and Goshen-Pleasant Hill Fire," the statement read. "The Dorena area is not protected by a structural agency."

As part of an agreement with the South Lane School District, SLCFR provided structural protection to Dorena Elementary School. Three structures, several outbuildings and vehicles were burned in the fire.

While the SLCFR ambulance service area is about 800 square miles, the fire service area is around 132 square miles, putting Dorena residents outside the district.

To address this, SLCFR began offering rural residents a "fire suppression agreement" which would guarantee a response if they pay a tax of \$1.85 per \$1,000 of property value.

Several dozen of those contracts have been signed. Though this offer may be attractive for some, others such as Holt are skeptical about response times.

"It takes them maybe half an hour to get out here very far," he said. "It isn't practical."

Holt feels that fires in the area are a frequent enough occurrence that the community could benefit from access to its own firefighting source.

At age 79, Holt is hoping volunteers more youthful than he will be willing to offer their time and energy.

"I have asked for volunteers and so far just one neighbor has volunteered and he's just about as old as I am," Holt said. "If we had younger people, it would be better."

Holt started sitting in on Goshen Rural Fire Protection District classes to learn how to effectively put out a fire, though the onset of the coronavirus pandemic put a stop to those outings.

"So if we can get any volunteers, I can teach what little I know," he said.

The fire truck needs at least two people to operate.

"It needs one person to watch the water pressure and how much is left and it needs another person to use the hose," said Holt.

Liability, however, Holt admits is an issue, highlighting that volunteers would be operating at their own risk as there is no insurance coverage.

Holt said he is counting on the good nature of those he might potentially help to refrain from litigious action.

"The thing is, I don't have any insurance and I've just asked people, 'Please don't sue me,'" he laughed. "I'm just doing it as a favor to the community. If I can help, I'll help. But there are things that can go wrong. I realize that."

For more information, Dan Holt can be reached by phone at 541-946-1445 or by email at danholt-video@gmail.com.

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FRIDAY 71° 51° Partly Cloudy	SATURDAY 55° 44° Rain
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