

Ken Braun has made a career of helping through difficult situations, both as Dallas fire chaplain and mediator.

## Dallas resident Ken Braun has a gift of lending his ears to victims, first responders and others

### Meet Ken ...

**Name:** Ken Braun.  
**Age:** 55.  
**Claim to fame:** Super volunteer. He volunteers for four Polk County Service Integration Teams, the county's Victim Impact Panel, as a fire chaplain since 1997, and more.  
**Favorite food:** Spicy (really spicy) Mexican cuisine.  
**Favorite sports teams:** Seattle Seahawks and Portland Trail Blazers.  
**Favorite Movie:** "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy because "good overcomes evil and the hero is a Hobbit, not a 'superman.'"  
**Something most people don't know about him:** He reads between 80 and 100 books a year and has yet to find food that is too spicy to eat.

By Jolene Guzman  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Ken Braun learned early the importance of listening.  
The Dallas resident, former pastor, mediator and volunteer Dallas Fire Department chaplain still was in college and working as an on-call chaplain for a hospital when his pager went off. It was a sound Braun — and all other seminary students — dreaded because it meant something tragic had happened and he was being called in to counsel one or more victims.  
When he arrived, he met an elderly woman who had been celebrating her best friend's birthday when her friend suffered a heart attack and died.  
Braun couldn't think of



Braun speaks at one of four Service Integration Team meetings he attends.

any words to say that would console her for the sudden loss, so he did the opposite  
"I asked, 'What happened?'" Braun recalled.  
The woman talked for two hours.  
"I don't think I said 10 words," he said.  
Later, the woman's family

contacted him to thank him for being there for her.  
"It's a gift that we give to people," Braun said. "As a chaplain, when I show up people are either dead or their houses are burning down. What am I going to say that will make it better?"  
But he can be compassionate. He can answer questions. He can be honest when people ask if their loved ones are really dead. He can listen.  
Sometimes, it's not only the victims of a horrible accident and fire he helps, but those who come to rescue them.  
"The typical person sees a couple of deaths in their life. We see thousands, depending on how long you are in the fire service," Dallas Fire Chief Fred Hertel said.  
See LISTENER, Page 14A

## Area firefighters burn to learn

Experience provides best possible training for local volunteers

By Jolene Guzman  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — All the commotion on Orchard Drive in Dallas Saturday wasn't what it appeared.  
The house going up in flames wasn't a traumatic event for a local family, but the best training firefighters can go through when preparing for the real thing.  
Firefighters call it "burn to learn," when a house or structure is donated to use for live fire training.  
Saturday, the Dallas and Southwest Polk fire departments sent five crews through one or two fire scenarios under conditions that closely mimic what they would see if called out to a real blaze.



It was fire and rain Saturday afternoon as Dallas firefighters trained in a "burn to learn" in Dallas. Onlookers huddled under umbrellas, watching the small house burn.

"They feel the heat, experience the smoke and limited visibility, and actual fire," said Sean Hoxie, Dallas Fire Department's training officer. For four firefighters, the

"live fire" experience was the last hurdle before they were cleared to fight structure fires.  
April Welsh, Dallas' community service officer, was one of those four.  
Welsh was in the house when the first fire was set. She said the experience was much more intense than any other training, and she had to overcome her natural instinct to move as far away as possible. On her second scenario, she was in charge of the hose and had to go right at the fire.  
"Then, when I got to go back in and fight the fire, it was a completely different experience," she said. "Initially, you don't want to go toward it. You want to go the other way, so it was good."  
See BURN, Page 14A

## IN YOUR TOWN

### DALLAS NEWS

He didn't know it at the time, but Dallas artist Tom Kunke had an early clue at what he would be doing in his second career.  
When he was in elementary school in Dallas, an Itemizer-Observer photographer took a picture of him painting during class while two friends looked on.  
Kunke, 51, recalls that it was around President's Day, so the painting was of George Washington cutting down a cherry tree.  
He still has a copy of the photo. Throughout his first career as a college professor at Warner Pacific College in Portland, he would run across it.  
»Page 7A

### FALLS CITY NEWS

The Falls City City Council has increased the rates it will charge Luckiamute Domestic Water Cooperative in hopes of spurring further negotiations on a contract to sell water to the utility.  
In September 2014, a long-term water sales agreement between the city and cooperative was ruled invalid by a Polk County judge, the outcome of a lawsuit the city pursued to dissolve the contract.  
At issue originally was the length of the contract — 20 years — and a handwritten change made after the contract was approved by both the city council and LDWC board in 2003.  
»Page 3A

### INDEPENDENCE NEWS








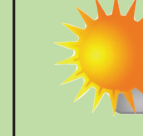
More citizens attended the Jan. 13 Independence City Council meeting with water complaints, ranging from rates to base fees to stormwater fees.  
Water and sewer rates had been on the tentative agenda for this meeting, but City Manager David Clyne said he had to move the topic to the 7:30 a.m. Tuesday meeting.  
Clyne said key people were on vacation or had medical emergencies and weren't available to compile the answers requested on time for the Jan. 13 meeting.  
The issue first came up during a December council meeting.  
»Page 2A

### MONMOUTH NEWS

Fitness is more than just a number on the scale or the reflection in a mirror.  
It's about body composition, risk factors, lifestyle and aerobic endurance — and there's a science behind it all.  
Students at Western Oregon University work in a modern exercise science lab, getting hands-on training on how to help their future clients and patients achieve better overall health, not just a smaller pants size.  
Equipment used to measure fitness includes a metabolic cart and a bio pod.  
»Page 15A

### POLK COUNTY NEWS

More and more law officers are encountering people armed with replica guns.  
Toy guns don't always look like the Daisy Red Ryder BB guns of old these days.  
It used to be standard for toy guns to have an orange tip, making them easily identifiable as fake. But people are removing that tip, or buying replicas never made with the identifier, said Dallas Police Department Lt. Jerry Mott.  
"The replicas we're seeing are not manufactured with the (orange) tip," Mott said. "We're not seeing it."  
»Page 2A

<b>THE NEXT 7 DAYS</b> <b>PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK</b> 	<b>wed</b> Unwind after work or school with a friendly evening of bingo at Rogue Farms Hop-yard south of Independence. 6:30 p.m. Free.  Fog; Mostly Cloudy Hi: 49 Lo: 38	<b>thu</b> Celebrate "The King" as the Dallas Area Seniors Music Jam pays tribute to Elvis Presley at the Dallas Senior Center. 6:30 p.m. Free.  A.M. Fog; Cloudy Hi: 51 Lo: 42	<b>fri</b> It's a key league test for Dallas, as the Dragons host Corvallis in Mid-Willamette Conference girls basketball action. 7 p.m. \$5.  A Few Showers Likely Hi: 53 Lo: 46	<b>sat</b> Take a few minutes to help save a life by donating blood during a Red Cross event at the Monmouth Burgerville. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Free.  Mostly Cloudy Hi: 55 Lo: 44	<b>sun</b> Tune up your voice and check out the From the Heart Community Sing at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Dallas. 1:30 to 3 p.m. Free.  Mostly Cloudy Hi: 56 Lo: 43	<b>mon</b> Learn how to protect yourself from being a victim of fraud during a presentation at the Monmouth Senior Center. 2 p.m. Free.  Mostly Cloudy Hi: 58 Lo: 43	<b>tue</b> Central High's girls basketball team returns to the hardwood for a conference contest against Silverton. 7 p.m. \$6.  Partly Sunny Hi: 56 Lo: 43
--	---	--	---	--	--	---	--