

## Button, button who's go the button?

Lions Steve Moser and Kathy Zehner explain what badges and pins on their Lion's jackets mean to a group of first- and second-graders at Independence Elementary School on Friday morning. The Lions presented IES Principal Steve Tillery (not pictured) with four Kindles, purchased with club funds. Each year the Central Lions Club chooses a school to donate to.



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

## Good soil key to garden blueberries

When it comes to fruit in the garden, blueberries rule. Favored for their sweet flavor, blueberries are also known for their high level of antioxidants, thought to help protect the body against free radicals and chronic diseases associated with aging.

Highbush blueberries, the most common in Oregon, are perennial, long-living deciduous shrubs with a mature height of 5 to 7 feet, according to Bernadine Strik, a berry specialist for Oregon State University's Extension Service. Attractive as ornamentals, they produce a profusion of white or pink blossoms in spring and colorful foliage in fall.

"You can grow plants in beds, rows, hedges or individually," Strik said. "Dwarf and semi-dwarf cultivars can be grown in containers." Fruiting season in Oregon is from late June until September, depending on the variety.

It's best to plant more than one variety of blueberry, Strik advised.

"Although most northernighbush cultivars are self-fertile, cross-pollination produces larger berries," she said. "And, if you plant two or more cultivars that ripen



**KYM POKORNY**  
Your Garden

at different times, you'll lengthen the harvest season."

Northernighbush varieties grown in gardens in Oregon include, in order of ripening: Duke, Earliblue, Spartan, Patriot, Bluecrop, Jersey, Blueray, Legacy, Chandler and Elliott. The Extension guide "Blueberry Cultivars for the Pacific Northwest" offers descriptions of these and other blueberries.

The plants, which can live up to 50 years, need lots of sunshine and specific soil requirements. When choosing a site, Strik recommended avoiding areas surrounded by trees, which can provide too much shade, compete for water and nutrients, encourage hungry birds and deter air movement around the new plants. The berries grow best in well-drained, light, sandy loam that is high in organic matter and with a pH between 4.5 and 5.5.

Test the soil pH a year before planting. If you need to make the soil more acidic, it can take more than six months. According to Strik, poor plant growth from soil pH that is too high is the most common problem when growing blueberries in a home garden.

If the pH is between 5.7 and 6.5, Strik said lower it by adding finely ground elemental sulfur before planting. The amendment is available at garden centers.

The amount needed depends on how much the pH needs to be lowered and the soil type. More detailed instructions on changing pH, weed control, mulching, fertilizing, pruning, watering and care of established blueberry plants are available online in the OSU Extension publication "Growing Blueberries In Your Home Garden."

If you decide to grow several plants, it's better to group them in a bed or row rather than scattering them around the garden, Strik said. You'll get better results preparing an entire bed, rather than digging holes and preparing soil for individual plants.

Although blueberries require a uniform supply of

water, they will not tolerate poor drainage. Raised beds can provide adequate drainage and aeration if they are from 12 to 18 inches high and 3 feet wide. They can be constructed with wood walls, or you can make hills with just soil and sawdust.

"Before planting, incorporate organic matter such as Douglas-fir sawdust or bark to improve soil aeration and drainage," Strik said. "Yard debris compost often has a high pH — over 7.0, compared to 4.0 to 4.5 of Douglas-fir sawdust — and can be high in salts, so is not desirable for blueberries."

Spread sawdust to a width of about 3 feet and a depth of 3½ inches. To aid in decomposition, add two pounds of nitrogen per 100 feet of row length (10 pounds ammonium sulfate, 21-0-0). Dig or till in the sawdust and fertilizer.

Plant healthy 2-year-old plants from a reputable nursery in October or from March through April.

"Prune off flower buds at planting, and do not allow plants to produce fruit the first season," Strik said. "Be patient. Flower and fruit production hinders growth, and it's important that plants grow well the first year."

## ANNIVERSARIES

### Skelton — 70th

Harlan and Bessie Skelton of Dallas celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary with friends and family.

Harlan Paul Skelton and Bessie Marie Underhill were married April 8, 1945, in San Diego at The Evangelical Church.

Reverend E.C. Schneider performed the ceremony. The couple was attended by Irene Fleming and Otto Lehner.

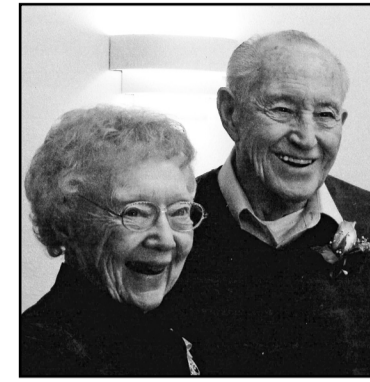
The couple has lived in Philomath, Corvallis and in Dallas the past seven years.

Harlan served in the Marine Corps for a while, and then later retired in 1972 from the postal service in Philomath as a rural letter carrier.

Bessie is a homemaker and was a secretary for Benton County, and later worked at the Horticultural Department at Oregon State University in Corvallis. She was also a substitute mail carrier in Philomath. She retired in 1984.

Harlan and Bessie are active in their church and do some activities at Dallas Retirement Village.

Their family includes Judy Skelton Ikenberry and Wesley Ikenberry of Beaverton. The couple has one grandchild and two great-grandchildren.



## BIRTHS

### Hamblin

Sawyer James Hamblin was born to Brittany Hamblin of Dallas at 1:11 a.m. on March 12 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

He weighed 9 pounds, 2 ounces, and was 21 ¼ inches long.

Sawyer joins Trent, 4, and Sebastian, 2.

Grandparents are John and Calene Hamblin of Dallas.

Great-grandparents are Leon and Alice Beauchamp of Falls City.

### Scheirman

Teagen Jack Scheirman was born to Jonathan and Lisa Scheirman of Monmouth at 3:45 a.m. on March 26 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

He weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces, and was 20½ inches long.

Teagen joins Aden, 4.

Grandparents are Wendell and Doris Trimble of Lebanon, and Jack and Linda Scheirman of Monmouth.

### Metzler

Elise Joelle Metzler was born to James and Amy Metzler of Dallas at 1:07 p.m. on March 28 at Silverton Hospital Family Birth Center.

She weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces, and was 20½ inches long.

Elise joins Samuel, 16, Shilah, 14, Abigail, 10, Ezra, 8, Bethany, 5, and Moriah, 2.

Grandparents are Steve and Anita Bennett of Dallas, and Richard and Charlene Metzler of Monmouth.

Great-grandparents are Norma Bennett of Dallas and Ann Fagnan of Corvallis.

### Cooper

Ava Nichole Cooper was born to Mark and Eve Cooper of Dallas at 12:12 a.m. on March 31 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

She weighed 6 pounds, 14 ounces, and was 19 inches.

Ava joins Kylie, 8.

Grandparents are John and Sandy Howard of Dallas, and Jack and Brenda Cooper of Monmouth.

Great-grandparents are Larry and Anita Dixon of Independence, Alice Rhymes of Monmouth, and Evelyn Bathke of Dallas.

### Harris

Harper IvyLynn Harris was born to Brian Harris and Megan Hoag of Salem at 3:04 p.m. on March 31 at Silverton Hospital Family Birth Center.

She weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces, and was 21½ inches long.

Harper joins Micah, 18 months.

Grandparents are Jeff Hoag of Dallas, Monica Hoag of Salem, Jeff Mexico of Salem, Robin Mexico of Aumsville, and Larry and Trish Harris of McMinnville.

Great-grandparents are Dan and Sharon Hoag of Sheridan.

## MI TOWN

Springtime in MI Town is proof to all of us that Mother Nature has many tricks up her proverbial sleeve, and given the opportunity, she will show everyone just who is in charge. When temperatures soar into the 70s one day and plummet to barely above freezing the next, we're reminded to be prepared for all kinds of weather events and to be flexible in any plans involving outdoor activity.

Our local high school and college baseball teams continue to provide all of us with great entertainment right close to home. Watching and participating in sports activities is a wonderful community spirit-building activity, a chance to see friends and family members, and have a good time.



**PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER**  
Columnist

On Saturday, Monmouth Public Library staff and the Friends of the Monmouth Library are celebrating the dedicated volunteers who provide many hours of service, and do much of the heavy lifting to help keep our library running so smoothly. We've come a long way since the library was established in 1934 — over 50 years ago.

Friends of the Monmouth Library are still accepting gently used books

for their upcoming sale the first weekend in May. There is always a big demand for children's books, so if the kids are now away at college or on their own, perhaps it's time to ask them if you can donate their books that haven't been read in a long time.

For those of us of a certain age (over 55 will suffice), who purchased or have been gifted with iPhones, iPads, smartphones and other electronic devices that everyone younger than 21 can master almost immediately, help is on the way. Kara and Kayah, intern students from Western Oregon University will be happy to walk you through the learning process and take some of the mystery away. You'll be

using these great devices in no time, and be happy to have learned more useful and fun skills. The frosting on this proverbial cake is that the instruction is free. Be sure to call the center at 503-838-5678 for an appointment so that you can be all set for summertime.

We'd like to welcome Dr. Rex Fuller, from Eastern Washington University to MI Town. Dr. Fuller has accepted the position of president of Western Oregon University, effective July 1. Fuller was selected from over 40 applicants, and was one of four candidates who visited WOU recently. Fuller and his wife, Susan are looking forward to settling in our area soon, and we wish them the best in their new adventure.

## PEDEE NEWS

It seems to be birthday time right now. Last Wednesday, Juandeane Skidmore celebrated her birthday with the women at the Pedee Women's Club. They have a great idea: the birthday girl brings her own cake to the meeting, which means no one gets her nose out of joint because her birthday wasn't remembered by the others. Juandeane's cake was amazingly simple and delicious: she beat an angel food cake mix with a 20-ounce can of undrained crushed pineapple, poured it into an ungreased 9 x 13 pan and baked it for 35 minutes at 350 degrees. She served it slightly warm topped with whipped cream. Yum!

Those who gather for dinner and fun at Pedee Church



**ARLENE KOVASH**  
Columnist

on Thursday nights threw a party for Pam Burbank's birthday last week, and on Friday night Suzanne Burbank invited her family over to celebrate Dave's 50th birthday with dinner and pinochle. In addition to us, sons Brennan and Derek came, as well as Derek's girlfriend Ashley Gruzca from Redmond, where she works for Farm Credit. Derek's birthday was yesterday, so we toasted him, too.

Marjorie Robertson ar-

rived home last week from her winter stay at a mobile home park in Brenda, Ariz., east of Quartzsite. She came a little earlier than usual this year because it was getting hot! Her son and daughter-in-law John and Janet Robertson went down, spent a few weeks with her there, and brought her back up. She's well known down there for the zany songs she writes and sings for their jam sessions.

Instead of writing my column last week, I went with Judy Guida to visit Jennifer and Chris Vandenberg at their (relatively) new home in Napavine, Wash., near Chehalis. While there, we went to the Taste of Home cooking magazine's "Cooking School," which they hold

all around the U.S. each year. It was at Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound, a very cool lodge known for its waterpark.

Judy has belonged to a book club for over 10 years now. The women just read a nonfiction book, "Astoria the Pacific Empire," so since one of the women had a beach house near Astoria, they went over to spend the night and tour the Flavel House and the Maritime Museum and, of course, have a seafood dinner. The book described the overland party and the sea journey around the tip of South America to make a fur trading post at the mouth of the Columbia. When the book ends, Astoria is just a few log buildings.

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## You're Invited

### Second Annual Survivor Dinner & Celebration

hosted by Eola Hills Winery  
sponsored by Relay For Life of Polk County  
& Team Perrydale

**Saturday, May 2**  
**at Eola Hills Wine Cellars**

501 S. Pacific Highway 99W, Rickreall



**5:30 ~ Doors open, Meet & Mingle**  
**6:15 to 8:00 ~ Dinner & Entertainment**

Every survivor and guest will be guests of honor. Please join us for an evening of food, fun and festivities. To RSVP your name and the name of one guest, contact Vicki Bailey at 503-623-5241 or vickibaile@aol.com. For planning purposes, RSVPs are encouraged by April 23, but are not required.