



GRAPHIC BY KATHY HUGGINS/ITEMIZER-OBSERVER

By Jolene Guzman, Lukas Eggen and Emily Mentzer  
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — The population of Polk County could hardly be characterized as diverse.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2013 Five-year American Community Survey, the city of Dallas is approximately 93 percent white; Monmouth is 85 percent; Independence is 82 percent; and Falls City's population is 90 percent white.

But does that mean Polk County communities are intolerant of people of other races, cultures and sexual orientations?

Aside from isolated incidents of discrimination, largely the answer might be no.

There's evidence that attitudes are shifting to more acceptance, but there's still room for improvement.

**Dallas and the KKK**

For Dallas, and to a lesser extent, Falls City, some of that work may be in overcoming a persistent reputation of racism or intolerance of outsiders.

Dallas can't seem to shake the ghosts of the Klu Klux Klan, which made its presence felt in Dallas — and many other communities in Oregon — in the

**2009-2013 Monmouth population**

**TOTAL POPULATION: 9,687**  
**White: 8,201**  
**Black or African American: 61**  
**American Indian & Alaska Native: 136**  
**Asian: 299**  
**Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander: 0**  
**Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 1,468**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 Five-Year American Community Survey

**2009-2013 Dallas population**

**TOTAL POPULATION: 14,689**  
**White: 13,680**  
**Black or African American: 17**  
**American Indian & Alaska Native: 140**  
**Asian: 102**  
**Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander: 72**  
**Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 618**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 Five-Year American Community Survey

**2009-2013 Falls City population**

**TOTAL POPULATION: 1,015**  
**White: 916**  
**Black or African American: 0**  
**American Indian & Alaska Native: 30**  
**Asian: 0**  
**Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander: 0**  
**Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 24**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 Five-Year American Community Survey

**2009-2013 Independence population**

**TOTAL POPULATION: 8,608**  
**White: 7,039**  
**Black or African American: 55**  
**American Indian & Alaska Native: 67**  
**Asian: 101**  
**Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander: 0**  
**Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 3,219**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 Five-Year American Community Survey

early 1920s. Stories have been told of secretive meetings, secret tunnels beneath the town that allowed members of the Klan to attend those gatherings undetected, and a long-rumored — and long-lost — list of Dallas residents who were members.

Probably the most common of those stories told is the Dallas High School's mascot, the Dragon, was named after "grand dragons," what the Klan called its leaders.

Sue Rohde, a local area historian, and 1965 graduate of DHS, doesn't believe that is true and that the stories

only began circulating decades after the Klan fell from influence.

"It's amusing to me because I grew up here and I didn't really hear much about it," Rohde said. "I never, ever heard that the mascot was named after the grand dragon. The first time I heard all this stuff was when my daughter moved to town and, her first week or two on the job in Dallas was all these stories about the Dragons and the KKK."

That was 12 years ago, long after Klansman were part of parades in Dallas and other communities in

the 1920s.

While she doesn't believe it's true, Rohde thinks because the rumor is so common, Dallas will be stuck with the story forever.

"I think it's probably here to stay," Rohde said. "I consider it as an urban legend."

That said, Rohde said looking back in the years she grew up in Dallas, while nothing specific was said, she believes there were somewhat wide-spread intolerant attitudes.

She sees that changing.

"I always got the feeling that there were groups of people who felt this way, but it was never spoken," Rohde

said. "I think a lot of the basic ideas that we were raised with are still there, even though, in this day and age, kids are making more and more decisions and are more inquisitive than we ever were."

**Skin-deep differences**

The halls of schools in Polk County are a reflection of the community, where you aren't likely to find many minority students — a fact not lost on students.

To Rohde's point, though, high school students don't seem overly concerned about race.

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**IN YOUR TOWN**

**DALLAS**

Dallas High's advanced theater class ready to become a "story machine".

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**FALLS CITY**

Falls City city council votes to apply for a grant to help cover the cost of a new water master plan.

»Page 3A

**INDEPENDENCE**

Independence Civic Center is ready to get people in the holiday spirit with Christmas Movie Series in both English and Spanish.

»Page 3A

**MONMOUTH**

Author brings romance to alpaca farm in new book.

»Page 13A

**SPORTS**

Tony Olliff finds his calling in coaching Dallas' wrestling team.

»Page 10A

**EDUCATION**

Local agencies learn valuable lessons through active shooter drill.

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**POWER OUTAGE**

Pacific Power responded to an outage that affected 2,243 customers in Dallas and Falls City on Tuesday.

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**Showell 'does everything' in Independence**

By Emily Mentzer  
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Dori Showell exemplifies the spirit of giving each day, whether it is through saying yes to helping a project or friend, or sharing a bright smile and hug.

Showell, 45, has a personal story of triumph, but her accolades stretch beyond herself as she's touched the heart of Independence.

"She does everything," said Cynthia Jaramillo, of the Independence Elks Lodge. "With Dori, you can ask her to help and she's all for it, right away. She doesn't even



question it."

Showell's journey to volunteering started with building the Independence Dog Park in 2011.

While suffering from severe depression caused by multiple sclerosis, Showell

said she started out as a bitter, angry person.

"I realized there was another person who I needed to find," she said. "I started to meet new people, make new friends, smile more, laugh more."

Her love for her four-legged friends overcame her bitterness as she dove into helping raise money to build an off-leash dog park.

"I've always wanted a dog park," she said. "Dogs are amazing. I always said if I won the lottery, I was going to build a dog park and supply the whole police department with canines."

Showell didn't win the lottery, but the city of Inde-

pendence did when she took those first steps to being involved.

"This is one of those stories of someone who got involved with one thing, and is now pretty much involved with everything," said Shawn Irvine, Independence economic development director.

Showell is on the Parks and Recreation Board, the Independence Budget Committee, and the Hop and Heritage Festival Commission. She also is a member of the Central Lions Club and of the Independence Elks, helping with Santa Train and food baskets.

As she got more involved, her health — mentally and

physically — improved. She still has bad days, but said she won't stop.

"I'm afraid if I stop, I'll slide down a road I don't want to go down," Showell said.

Her favorite activity right now is volunteering with Monmouth Independence YMCA, which suits director Natascha Cronin just fine.

"Her personal story is one of triumph anyway, overcoming the illnesses, for her to work through that and help the community is really impressive," Cronin said.

"Honestly, she's one of those people who, if I'm in a pickle for the Y or personally, I know I can call her and she

will help me. She's like that with everyone she knows."

It's valuable to have those kinds of people in the community, Cronin added.

Showell is a big believer that a lot can be done collectively with minimal effort individually.

"Her attitude is always so positive," said Robin Puccetti, Independence library manager. "It makes it really fun to work with her. She never dwells in any of the negative, how things might not work out right. She always has that positive outlook on things, which makes her delightful to work with."

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

wed

Put your vocabulary skills to the test and have fun at Scrabble with Betty at the Independence Public Library. 1 p.m. Free.

Rain  
Hi: 49  
Lo: 42

thu

If you're feeling stressed, Coloring Night for Adults at Dallas Public Library may be able to help you relax. 5 p.m. Free.

Rain  
Hi: 50  
Lo: 40

fri

Need help getting in the holiday spirit? Western Oregon's Holiday Tree Lighting includes a parade and more. 6 p.m. Free.

Mostly Cloudy  
Hi: 49  
Lo: 40

sat

Santa Claus is coming to town — or at least to the Independence Cinema thanks to the Santa Train. 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

Showers  
Hi: 50  
Lo: 42

sun

The Festival Carolers kicks off Trinity Lutheran Church's December Concert Series. Cookies will be served afterward. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Rain  
Hi: 49  
Lo: 42

mon

Musicians of all skill levels are invited to come play with the Willamette Valley New Horizons Orchestra at CHS. 6:30 p.m. \$25.

Rain  
Hi: 50  
Lo: 46

tue

Have a little holiday-themed fun with Reindeer games and crafts at the Independence Public Library. 4 p.m. Free.

Showers  
Hi: 57  
Lo: 47