

Polk County
Itemizer-Observer
Volume 142, Issue 27 www.Polkio.com July 5, 2017 \$1.00



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Jon and Susan Brewster built their home to be ideal to continue studying astronomy.

Reach for the sky

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — In the hills just outside of Monmouth, Jon and Susan Brewster built their home with one thing in mind: astronomy.

With the Great American Eclipse around the corner, it's no coincidence that their property is situated perfectly, nearly on the center line for optimum viewing.

"When we found this property here, we said, 'Yeah, we can do astronomy here for a long, long time,' and we're right dead-center for the eclipse, or pretty close," Jon said. "And it's been great."

Jon and Susan said they'd always had an interest in astronomy, but didn't begin developing the hobby until Halley's Comet made its appearance near the earth in 1986.

"As a kid, I was involved in (astronomy)," Jon said. "Back in the '80s, we got this (telescope) and controlled it with our comput-

er. It was a little rough." Jon has worked as a software engineer since 1977, so programming his telescopes comes easily.

"When we first got that little telescope out there, we unboxed it and put it together," Susan recalled.

The directions that came with the scope said to find a bright star and tell the telescope the name of that star.

"We look at this bright star, and it turns out it's Saturn," Susan said. "And we can tell it's Saturn right away because it has ears on it. And it was overpowering; it was spiritual; it was crazy. This is real."

From then on, the Brewster's commitment to astronomy has grown.

"We have enjoyed this hobby so much," Susan said. "It keeps us home at night."

Technology has come a long way since the 1980s, and so has the Brewster's astronomy hobby.

The couple built a home around the infrastructure for an observatory, some-

thing Jon learned more about while working for two years as an engineer at the observatory in Mauna Kea, Hawaii.

After traveling back to Hawaii to view the total solar eclipse in 1991, the couple began to more seriously prepare for the Aug. 21 eclipse.

In 1991, none of Jon's photos turned out. This time, he's more prepared, with a filter on one telescope for the partial eclipse, another telescope programmed to photograph the totality, and a drone to capture the crowd of about 100 people invited to the Brewster's property for the spectacle.

"A lot of the feel of the eclipse — there's the scientific stuff and the wonder of it all, but really the crowd response is quite interesting," Susan said.

The environment changes during totality, Susan said. Birds nest down and stop singing. The temperature drops. Planets and bright stars are visible.

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EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Jon and Susan Brewster still use their first telescope to view the stars at their home outside of Monmouth.

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

City looks at street repairs in a new light.
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INDEPENDENCE

Fourth of July festivities begin at Riverview Park.
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MONMOUTH

Apple Box Theater set to perform "Arabian Nights."
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POLK COUNTY

Polk County's Intentional Use of Deadly Physical Force Planning Authority approved revisions to its response plan Thursday evening.
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SPORTS

The Monmouth-Independence Fourth of July tennis tournament returns.
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Full moon Sunday can serve as practice

Itemizer-Observer staff report
POLK COUNTY — Want to take a photo of the eclipse?

Make sure you're prepared for that once-in-a-lifetime shot.

Those wanting to photograph the eclipse should begin searching for a solar filter for their camera now. Without a certified solar filter, you could destroy your camera — and your eyesight.

Similarly, practicing before the eclipse will help improve the quality of eclipse shots. The sun and the moon will appear the same size in the sky, which is why the moon will be able to completely eclipse the sun on Aug. 21. To practice, try taking pictures of the full moon this weekend, Saturday, and next month on Aug. 7. This will give you an opportunity to work with adjusting exposure levels as well.

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Events center awaits decision

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Owners of a proposed event center on Polk Station Road just outside of Dallas are awaiting a Polk County Hearings Officer decision on an appeal of its conditional use permit.

The Polk County Planning Department approved the conditional use permit on May 1 for a home occupation on the 20.5-acre property that is zoned "exclusive farm use." The permit would allow two buildings on the property to be used for the center: a main venue with room for maximum of 100



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

The proposed event center awaits an appeal decision.

guests and a second building with restrooms, a changing area for wedding parties and a catering kitchen.

When reached by phone last week, property owner

Jim Voges said the plan is to mainly host weddings, but it's being called an "event center" so not to exclude other types of events.

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A Falls City 'Fourth'



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Some patriotic kids take part in the Falls City parade on Saturday. For more photos from Falls City, Independence and Monmouth, see Page 5A.

<p>THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK</p>	<p>wed</p> <p>Stay active and play some pickleball at Roger Jordan Community Park. All ages and skill levels are welcome. 9 a.m. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 86 Lo: 57</p>	<p>thu</p> <p>Come enjoy a tasty bite to eat or find your latest treasure at the Polk County Bounty Market, held each Thursday. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 83 Lo: 56</p>	<p>fri</p> <p>Today's a perfect day to make your favorite pasta dish to help celebrate National Macaroni Day!</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 81 Lo: 57</p>	<p>sat</p> <p>Check out some of the area's best white wine offerings at the Great White Wine Festival at Left Coast Cellars. Noon to 7 p.m. \$25.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 82 Lo: 55</p>	<p>sun</p> <p>Why not indulge your sweet tooth today? Today is National Sugar Cookie Day!</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 82 Lo: 55</p>	<p>mon</p> <p>Looking for a way to give back? Help spread bark chips and pull weeds at the arboretum at Dallas City Park. 6-8 p.m.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 81 Lo: 52</p>	<p>tue</p> <p>Learn more about the Great American Eclipse at a workshop at Chemeketa Polk Center in Dallas. 6:30 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 80 Lo: 52</p>
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