

State trooper comes to the rescue with pizza for hungry high schoolers

BY JUSTIN DAVIS

Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — A broken-down school bus, hungry teenagers and a concerned Oregon State Police trooper all crossed paths on the night of Feb. 11, and the outcome was a win for all concerned.

Trooper William Blood, working out of OSP's John Day outpost, was on patrol that Friday when he came across a disabled Union High School bus on the side of Highway 26 in Prairie City. He approached to check on the occupants, who turned out to be the school's boys and girls basketball teams.

The engine was still running, so the bus had heat, but Blood learned the basketball players would be stuck in the area for some time as their replacement bus made its way to their location from Union. He also learned the kids riding the bus were hungry and that no restaurants or convenience stores were open in the immediate area.

Blood then drove the 13 miles to John Day and found lights on at The Outpost restaurant, but the establishment was closed. But he saw a woman working inside and knocked on the door.

After he explained the situation, the woman agreed to turn the ovens back on and make five large pizzas for the stranded kids. Blood paid for the pizzas — two pepperonis, one Hawaiian, a meat lover's and a combo — out of his own pocket and delivered the food to the hungry kids back in Prairie City.

Blood has worked in law enforcement for 20 years. His first posting was as a police officer in Cornelius, southwest of

Portland, in 2002. From there, he made his way to the Hillsboro Police Department in late 2009. In November of 2018 Blood was hired by the Oregon State Police, and he's been stationed in John Day since early 2019.

Blood has a son on the John Day basketball team, and on Feb. 11 he combined all of his breaks for the day into one in order to go watch him play against Union that evening. Following the game, Blood returned to work and spotted the broken-down bus while on patrol in Prairie City.

"I saw the bus at probably around 9:30 p.m., and the game was long over by then," Blood said.

The bus was parked beside the minimart, and Blood didn't think anything of it at first.

"I thought it was a Prairie City bus coming back into town dropping kids off," he said.

But after seeing it was a Union bus, he realized it was likely having mechanical trouble. He turned around and talked to the occupants to find out what type of problems they were having.

He learned it would be 2½ hours before their replacement bus would be arriving from Union. The Union girls team had played the Grant Union Lady Prospectors early that night and had gotten dinner at the Dairy Queen in John Day during the boys' game. The boys, however, hadn't had anything to eat yet. It was this information that pushed Trooper Blood into action and sent him to The Outpost.

Shirley Taylor was one of the people working at the restaurant that night. She and another



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Trooper William Blood stands beside his patrol car on Tuesday, April 5, 2022. The Oregon State Police recognized Blood for helping a busload of stranded teenagers in Prairie City.

employee were cleaning the restaurant after closing when Blood knocked on the door and asked if there was anything they could do for the bus full of hungry kids in Prairie City.

"He explained what the dilemma was and that these kids were going to be there for a while," Taylor said.

Taylor and her co-worker swung into action, firing up the ovens and making five large pizzas for the stranded kids — even though Blood's request was unique.

"We've helped out a lot of different people over the years," Taylor said, "but nothing like this."

Fortunately, Taylor added, Blood's timing was just right

— if he'd shown up much later, nobody would've been at the restaurant to help the kids.

"It was probably 15, 20 minutes before he missed us," she said.

Blood said it didn't take much convincing to get The Outpost crew to make the pizzas.

"They were happy to do this, and I give them all the thanks in the world for doing that because they certainly didn't have to," Blood said. "They had everything cleaned up and they got it all dirty again."

Union High School Athletic Director Chris Dunlap wasn't at the event, but he was notified that the bus was having issues. As an athletic director,

he said, he was thinking of the kids and their safety.

"When I hear that, the first thought is are the kids going to be OK? Is the bus running and does it have heat?" he said.

The team had planned to stop in Baker City to get a bite to eat on their way home, but the bus breakdown derailed those plans. Dunlap called Trooper Blood's actions a "lifesaver" and said what he did "go a long ways showing small town community and support. It reassured me that people do care about each other and take care of each other, especially in Eastern Oregon."

Like Taylor, Dunlap said he's never heard of anything like this happening.

"I've heard of maybe checking on somebody or running to make a phone call for somebody," he said. "Never somebody to turn around and say, 'Hey, those kids are hungry,' and then find a business that is open, get enough pizzas to feed everybody and then pay for that themselves. I've never heard of it, and I've been around athletics for a while."

Dunlap said the students finally made it back to Union sometime around 1 a.m. Trooper Blood's actions were met with relief and gratitude from the coaches and went a long way toward making the mechanical issues the teams were suffering through manageable.

Dunlap said he never got to speak with Blood personally, but the trooper's actions speak to the nature of people in Eastern Oregon.

"We have rivalries and we want our teams to win, but we still take care of each other when the time comes," Dunlap

said. "We separate those rivalries for the sake of humanity."

Blood said he felt like a "rock star" when the kids saw him pull the pizzas from the passenger seat of his patrol vehicle.

"I stepped onto the bus and I honestly couldn't tell you (how but) the pizzas were gone," he said.

Following the pizza delivery, Blood said, one of the Union basketball players told his teammates to get out of his way because he was "going to give that man a hug," adding "that started the long line of hugs from the kids."

Blood said his own experiences as a high school athlete aroused his sympathies for the stranded basketball team.

"I played sports in high school," he said, "and I know what it is like to be in a small town where nothing is open and you're hungry."

Blood's act of kindness did not go unnoticed by his supervisors with the Oregon State Police.

For his deeds that night, he was awarded a certificate of recognition and two challenge coins, one from OSP's John Day outpost and the other from the agency's Ontario, Burns and John Day area command.

Lt. Mark Duncan presented Blood with the challenge coins and certificate in a brief ceremony at the John Day OSP outpost on Wednesday, March 30, noting that the challenge coins are not handed out often and should be held in high regard.

Duncan said Blood "went above and beyond, showing compassion, and that Trooper Blood represents the Oregon State Police and their core values well."

Council

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In other business during Tuesday's meeting, councilors are slated to:

- Discuss the process of putting on the Nov. 8, 2022, ballot a measure asking city voters whether or not they support the city applying for a railroad quiet zone.

The Council voted 4-2 during its April 12 meeting to ask the city staff to prepare such a measure.

That decision reversed the Council's 4-3 vote on Jan. 25 to apply for a quiet zone.

Heather Sells, one of the four councilors who voted for the motion to pursue a quiet zone, subsequently resigned because she moved outside the city limits and was no longer eligible to serve.

Kenyon Damschen, who was appointed by the remaining councilors to replace Sells, voted in favor of Joanna Dixon's April 12 motion to take the quiet zone issue to voters.

In a staff report for the April 26 meeting, City Recorder Dallas Brockett outlines the process for putting a measure on the ballot, including writing the measure title and publishing a legal notice in the newspaper.

Any registered voter can contest the measure title by petitioning Baker County Circuit Court.

The deadline to qualify for the Nov. 8 election is Sept. 7.

- Discuss and potentially approve the first and second readings of an ordinance limiting where and when people can camp in parks and other public property.

Police Chief Ty Duby proposed the ordinance as a way to potentially curb issues related to homeless people staying on public property.

The ordinance states, in part: "It shall be unlawful for any person to set up tents or any other temporary shelter or to use house trailers, campers or automobiles for the purpose of overnight camping in any city park, nor shall any person remain in any city park after closing hours; provided, however, organized youth groups under competent adult supervision may be permitted overnight camping privileges."

The ordinance prohibits camping on public property between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. daily.

The ordinance defines parks as including the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway. The ordinance also prohibits camping in several other specific public properties, including within 150 feet of any school, preschool or childcare center, or at the Baker Heritage Museum at 2480 Grove St., the Baker County Court-

house, Sam-O Swim Center, the YMCA gym on Church Street and the YMCA Fitness Center on Pocahontas Road.

The ordinance also states that if someone is living in a vehicle, it must be moved at least every 24 hours and for at least the distance of a city block.

The ordinance applies only to public property; people are not allowed to camp on someone else's private property regardless of the zone.

- Hear a presentation from an official from the Baker 5J School District about the district's plan to use an unopened section of Fifth Street, just south of Grace Street near South Baker Intermediate School, as a bus lane. Councilors could approve the installation of stop signs at Fourth and Grace streets, for southbound traffic on Fourth Street and eastbound traffic on Grace Street. That's the in-

tersection where buses would turn right from Fourth Street onto Grace Street. Buses would no longer load and unload along Grace Street on the north side of the school.

- A possible discussion offers the city has received to sell property in the Elkhorn View Industrial Park in northwest Baker City.

- Approve a proclamation designating May 27 as Poppy Day.

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Louis A. Tholen

December 28, 1930 - February 8, 2022

In the wee hours of February 8, 2022, Heaven gained a very devoted angel. He was 91 years old. Louis "Louie" Tholen was born on December 28, 1930, in Oakley, Kansas, to Anton Herman Tholen and Anna Marie (Muehlenkamp) Tholen. He was one of eight children. His sister, Gertrude Brown, the only surviving sibling, just turned 100 years old. His parents and his son-in-law, Rio DeGennaro also preceded him in death.



Louie spent much of his childhood in a one room schoolhouse in Oakley, Kansas, where children were taught from 1st through 8th grade. He then attended 9th grade in Windhorst, Kansas. When Louie was a small child during the Great Dust Bowl, he remembered gathering tumbleweeds with his brother so they could pour molasses on them to feed the cows to keep them alive.

Louie served his country in the Korean War from 1952-1953. While in the Army, he made a lifelong friend named Leroy. He cherished that friendship.

After his time in the military, Louie married the love of his life, Delmonta Bartell. They were married in 1957 and remained married until his death. They had four children together. He was thankful that the fourth one was a boy. That boy would purchase his final business venture (Farm & Industrial Service Co. Inc.) from him in 1996.

In Louie's lifetime he lived in Oakley, Kansas, moving to Klamath Falls, Oregon, in 1970 and finally Baker City, Oregon, in 1972 where he and Del found the community to be a perfect fit for them. In each place he called home, he contributed markedly to his church, family, and community.

As a young man Louie owned Tholen Farm Supply in Oakley, Kansas, from 1957-1968. He decided the family needed a change and moved his family to Oregon. He worked for Pelican Tractor and later for the Ford and Hesson dealership, both in Klamath Falls. Louie started to get calls from other dealerships telling him to bring his tools and he would have a job. His reputation as a valuable and knowledgeable mechanic was well known. Howard and Harold Britton were two of the many people who contacted him regarding his skills. After some discussion, he was invited to come to Baker City the following weekend to see if their company would be a good fit. Louie and Del liked the area, the people, and the

idea of working for Britton Equipment Company. He worked for them for three years. In 1975 Louie opened LT Welding and Repair and closed it in 1981.

He had started talking to Nils Christensen, a fellow Sumpter Valley Railroad volunteer, about a partnership in a business venture. The name Farm and Industrial Service Co. Inc. was chosen and came to fruition in March of 1983. The three years they worked together ended in mutual agreement. Louie liked running a shop business where he fixed everything from Granny's frying pan to a manure spreader.

While Louie recognized his blessed existence, he also acknowledged the personal responsibility he needed to take to address a developing drinking problem. His drinking problem lasted about three years. He spent 30 days in an inpatient treatment center, and then never drank again. He just missed having his 53rd year AA birthday in March of this year. Louie had been a member of AA for all of those years and worked to practice the philosophy and 12-step program to the best of his ability. This contributed to a life of serenity, contentment, and happiness.

Adding to Louie's contentment were the hobbies he enjoyed in his downtime. He loved watching NASCAR racing and other sports, shooting and hunting, and his favorite pastime restoring tractors, vehicles and small engines. He was always willing to share his passion by answering questions, giving advice or telling a good story.

Louie leaves behind his wife whom he shared his life with for 64 years, Delmonta Tholen, daughters, Donna (Ray) Bonneville, Carol DeGennaro, Twila (Dave) Pivnick, Donald (Cheryl) Tholen, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will all miss him dearly.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that you consider donating to the Building Maintenance Fund for St. Francis de Sales Cathedral in Baker City through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home, PO Box 543, Halfway, Oregon, 97834.

A memorial service will be held April 30, 2022 at 10 a.m. at the St. Francis de Sales Cathedral in Baker City. There will be a gathering for friends and family in the church hall after the service. Online condolences can be shared at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

WATCH OUT FOR THE WILDLIFE ON THE ROADS

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