



The Speth house before and after the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

TEAM SPIRIT

Area coaches, sports community rally around wildfire victims

By Angel Carpenter
and Eric Singer
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — As coaches, it's easy to make enemies with other teams, coaches and players along the way.

But when the house owned by Grant Union High School coaches Steve and Shae Speth was destroyed in the Canyon Creek Complex fire, other area coaches tossed aside their rivalries to help out.

Basketball coaches Brian Pickard (Weston-McEwen), Mitch Thompson (Irrigon), Jeremy Rosenbalm (Hepner) and Brennan Whittaker (Culver) have teamed up to put together a relief effort to help the Speths get back on their feet.

It included coordinating donation drop-off locations in each of their towns for clothing and other necessities for Steve, Shae and their two sons Eli and Trejan; the Speths also have a grown daughter, Caity Bellamy, of Omaha, Neb.

Steve coaches boys basketball at Grant, and Shae coaches volleyball there.

For a few of the coaches, there was no second thought on what to do after hearing the news.

"I saw Steve's Facebook post (after the fire), and I immediately thought we should do something," said Thompson. "I texted Brian (Pickard), and he said the same thing."

Aside from donations of clothing and necessities, two Go Fund Me accounts have been set up to gather monetary donations, one at GoFundMe.com/JohnDaywildfire. These accounts have already received more than \$7,000.

Donations also may be made to Old West Federal Credit Union, to the Speths and other fire victims.

Pickard said people have been constantly contacting the organizers and wanting to help in any way they can.

"It sorta snowballed into what it is now," he said. "It's just one of those things, to do whatever we can to help out."

Shae said her family was grateful for the new clothing. While they received

more than enough pants and shirts, etc., they still need some shoes.

They contributed the extra clothing received to the donation center in John Day for fire victims, located at the old Blue Mountain Junior High School library.

The Speth family has found a house to rent in John Day while deciding where to live permanently.

"We've just been overwhelmed and humbled by all the support we have received, both material and otherwise. We are just trying to get some sense of home and normalcy for the boys," Shae said.

To inquire about how to help the family with shoes or other items, contact Shae or Steve at speths@century-tel.net.



Contributed photos

The Speths enjoy a family trip earlier this summer to the I-80 Lincoln Memorial near Laramie, Wyo. From left, Trejan, Eli, Steve and Shae.



A melted glass, basketball hoop still stands next to where the Speth's home was.



The Speths survey the aftermath of the Canyon Creek Complex fire that destroyed their home south of Canyon City. From left, Shae Speth and her sons, Eli and Trejan.

Wildlife move out of fire-torched areas

Hunting season remains open in western Murderers Creek unit

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Deer, elk, bears and other wildlife have moved out of the areas burned by the 74,744-acre Canyon Creek Complex fire. Others, however, didn't make it out.

The fire also will affect hunts, mainly in the Murderers Creek unit.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife district wildlife biologist Ryan Torland said his office has received several reports of elk that died in the Canyon Creek fire.

He said the sheriff's office also had reports of deer on the side of the road that had been killed by the fire.

The extent of wildlife killed by the fire isn't known at this time, Torland added.

"With the severity of the fire and how fast it has moved, it's likely we had more mortality of wildlife than a normal wildfire, due to the extreme nature of the fire — fast-moving and spotting ahead," he said.

"There are going to be short-term losses to wildlife," Torland said, but he expects green growth to return that will make good deer habitat.

Whether the fire was hot enough to sterilize the ground, Torland didn't know.

"Generally, within a few years, grasses and shrubs start moving back in," he said, adding it usually takes deer "a few more years to move in."

In a small sample of deer he's followed, including one collared deer, the animals have stayed close to the fire perimeter.

A black bear that had raided a chicken coop was shot by the property owner, whose home is outside city limits, south of Canyon City.

"Their food source has been removed," Torland said, adding this particular bear had been seen by the landowner previously.

Torland said the hunts will stay open during hunting season. Currently, archery season

is open.

But hunters who consider camping within the closure area of the fire need to be aware of the boundary, Torland said. "It's (closed) for a safety concern."

He said there was no reason to close hunting season due to the fire.

"There are lots of other areas to hunt," he said.

The fire is within the eastern portion of the Murderers Creek unit, but hunters can take advantage of the western portion, he said.

"Buck rifle season starts Oct. 3 through 14 and at this time, we're not planning any changes to the hunting season," he said. "They still have the western portion."

Campfires, including charcoal briquette campfires, are prohibited with Phase C in place on the Malheur National Forest. Smoking is permitted inside enclosed vehicles, buildings and designated recreation sites.

Other restrictions include no offroad/off-trail vehicle travel, no internal combustion engines and no chainsaw use.

There are still areas to hunt in the West Grant County muzzle-loader season, Oct. 17 through 23, in the Beulah unit.

For the first season bull for Murderers Creek, Oct. 28 through Nov. 1, hunters will still have the western portion of the Murderers Creek unit.

"The one we are concerned about is East Murderers Creek second season elk hunt, from Highway 395 South, east of the highway on Nov. 7 through 15.

"It's still a ways off, and, obviously, right now everything is under a closure. We may have some changes to that hunt — we'll be watching it closely," he said.

He said people with more questions may contact him at the Canyon City ODFW field office at 541-575-1167.

"We'd like hunters to be safe out there and be respectful of the closure areas and closure orders," he said. "They've put that in place for a reason."

Grant County teams are ready for competition

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Warm up those clapping hands and fine tune the cheers — fall sports are on the way.

On this week's schedule of events, Grant Union will host an invitational volleyball tournament, beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 29, with Prairie City, Dayville/Monument, Baker and Crane among the nine invited teams.

The games will be in the new and old gyms of Grant Union Junior-Senior High School in John Day.

This will be Grant Union's second time on the court; another game will be on Friday in Crane.

Shae Speth is Grant Union's head coach with assistant coaches Rhonda McCumber, Shanna Northway and Steve Speth.

Prairie City's volleyball team is coached by Louanne Zwegardt and assistant coach Lance Zwegardt. The team will host the Prairie City Tournament, Saturday, Sept. 5.

Dayville/Monument has a

new athletic director, Tiffnie Schmadeka, who also coaches the co-op volleyball team with Kristi Emerson.

Long Creek has a co-op volleyball team with Ukiah, led by head coach Melinda Scarlett.

Area football teams are back on the grid with season games next week.

Grant Union, led by head coach Jason Miller and assistants, have a game on the road in Athena on Friday, Sept. 4, against Weston-McEwen.

Prairie City/Burnt River, coached by Darrel McKrola and assistants, will host Spray/Mitchell, Sept. 4.

Dayville/Monument, coached by Nathaniel Ashley and assistants, will travel Saturday, Sept. 5, to the Dufur Classic in Dufur.

Cross country teams start their season this week.

Monument's team, with coach Chuck Thomas, will attend the La Grande XC Time Trials at 4 p.m. Friday, Aug. 28.

Grant Union, with coach Sonna Smith, will attend the Sunday, Sept. 6, Runner's Soul XC Festival at 10 a.m. in Hermiston.

Brothers Run gets canceled

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The 2015

Brothers Run, planned for Saturday, Sept. 12, has been canceled, according to the organizers.