



Santa Claus and three of his elves make their grand entrance at the Teen Center, thanks to a courtesy ride from the Prairie City Fire Department.



Kyler Shaw, 9, of Prairie City, is all smiles while he's "on the job" as one of Santa's elves.



Harmony Harper, 5, of John Day, shares her wish list with Santa.

# Sweet season's greetings

## Christmas on the Prairie celebrates 20 years of holiday fun

By Cheryl Hoefler  
Blue Mountain Eagle

**P**RAIRIE CITY – It wasn't exactly a winter wonderland, but everything else about last Saturday's Christmas on the Prairie in Prairie City was merry and bright – and sweet.

The "Candyland" theme this year was evident throughout town, most notably in the Teen Center, where children kept busy through most of the day with crafts, including creating and decorating their own gingerbread houses, an activity organized by Anna Smith and her husband, Tom.

Several merchants got in on the fun, too, and had their own gingerbread houses on display – some designed with the particular business in mind. Those creations were auctioned off at the tree lighting that evening, with the proceeds to benefit Talents and Treasures, organizers of Christmas on the Prairie.

Santa Claus and three of his elves arrived in style on a Prairie City Fire Department engine. Santa spent much of the day at the Teen Center, welcoming a steady stream of young visitors for photos and gift wishes.

Other festivities in town included the American Legion Auxiliary bazaar at the Prairie City School cafeteria and the school FFA auction and dinner that evening.

Christmas on the Prairie started in 1995, mainly as a day of seasonal sales and special drawings among the merchants in town. Santa made appearances, awarded prizes and gave out goodies.

The event has grown over the years, both in the number of activities and popularity throughout Grant County, as the kick-off to the holiday season.

The annual event is organized by Talents and Treasures of Prairie City.

Wanda Winegar, owner of Bar WB and one of the longtime organizers, said, "It's a lot of fun seeing friends get to come together and visit."

"It's an important event for our community," Winegar said.

Melanie DeJong, dental hygienist at Norm DeJong Dentistry, said, "It's great to have fun things for the kids to do."

"Anna (Smith) and her entourage are inspiring the community," DeJong added. "It's great to be part of something fun and creative."

Kyler Shaw, 9, of Prairie City, enjoyed his first stint as one of Santa's elves.

Among other duties, Kyler said he enjoyed getting to ride on the fire engine for Santa's arrival.

But the best part? "That I get to stand by Santa," he said.



Eagle photos/Cheryl Hoefler

Six-year-old twins Jassmin, left, and Sonja Harig of Prairie City share Santa's lap before making gingerbread houses at the Teen Center.



A wide variety of gingerbread houses from Prairie City businesses wait to be auctioned off during Christmas on the Prairie. Proceeds benefited Talents and Treasures, organizers of the event.



Nancy Hitz of Prairie City, second from left, builds gingerbread houses with her grandnephews, from left, Kayden, 4, Connor, 2, and Levi, 2, and their mother, Bridget Botts, all visiting from Gresham.

**“Anna (Smith) and her entourage are inspiring the community. It's great to be part of something fun and creative.”**

– Melanie DeJong, dental hygienist at Norm DeJong Dentistry

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- President Harry S. Truman

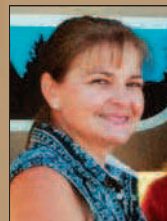
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