

Ward installed as chamber president

Ward and Bremner are the chamber's 'Energizer bunnies'

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

About 130 people showed up at the John Day Elks Lodge for the Grant County Chamber of Commerce's annual installation dinner on Nov. 8.



Bruce Ward

Rancher Jack Southworth, serving as master of ceremonies, recalled how Grant County looked 80 years ago when the chamber was first organized and how much has changed.

State Sen. Ted Ferrioli delivered a short talk filled with humorous quips and later led the installation ceremonies for Bruce Ward as the chamber's new president and for the chamber's board of directors, including new directors Sally Knowles and Elaine Livran.

Ferrioli began by noting that Grant County is home to this year's 2A state volleyball champions.

"I find it amazing how often athletes of Grant County take top honors," he said.

Ferrioli, who is leaving the Senate to take a seat on the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Council, said he relied on groups like the chambers of commerce for information to take to the legislature — especially considering the size of Senate District 30, the largest in Oregon — and he urged chamber members to continue what they do.

"You are the heart of the community," he said. "You probably don't realize how



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, left, reads the script installing Bruce Ward as the new president of the Grant County Chamber of Commerce at the John Day Elks Lodge Nov. 8. Outgoing President Jerry Franklin watches from his seat.

much power you have."

John Day City Manager Nick Green, who spoke to the chamber a year ago shortly after moving here from the Seattle area, tried to provide a thumbnail history of the city's accomplishments over the past year in less than a minute — but he needed a 30-second extension.

Looking forward, Green said he will issue an executive vision document in January and the first of what he plans to be an annual state of the city address in February. He said he hopes the address will elicit public feedback.

Green said a design contract for the Innovation Gateway project will be signed in March, and a new river trail will be dedicated in the spring. He also said he wants to figure out a way to replace the public swimming pool.

Chamber Office Manager Tammy Bremner described a busy year that just concluded, which included tens of thousands of visitors during the eclipse and the Rainbow Gathering. She said the chamber planned for 10,000



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Rancher Jack Southworth was the master of ceremonies at the annual Grant County Chamber of Commerce installation dinner at the John Day Elks Lodge on Nov. 8.

eclipse visitors, but more than 20,000 showed up.

"It was a great success because we planned ahead," she said, noting that the chamber later received numerous emails and letters from visitors thanking the community for a great experience in Grant County.

Bremner said about 3,000 people have downloaded a

travel app from the chamber's revised website, adding that about 2,000 came from China.

"That's probably because of the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site," she said.

Ward said his strategy for promoting tourism to the Grant County area would be based on promoting John Day because of the city's name recognition across the United States. He said he wants to link John Day to its sister cities of Ontario, Vale, Prairie City and Prineville and to promote Highway 26 as the preferred scenic route across Eastern Oregon.

Outgoing president Jerry Franklin characterized Bremner and Ward as the chamber's "Energizer bunnies." Ward presented Franklin with a plaque in recognition of his longtime support of the chamber.

Ferrioli recalled how the outgoing president put John Day on the map in 2010 when a white supremacist group attempted to establish a headquarters in John Day: "Jerry Franklin told the skinheads to go to hell."

New interim super hired for Monument School

Michael Lane seeks improved communication

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle



Michael Lane

Monument School District No. 8's newly hired interim Superintendent/Principal Michael Lane began work Nov. 6.

Lane, from Richland, Oregon, came out of his five-year retirement to take on the position.

Previously, he worked for 10 years for the Port Orford/Langlois School District where he had various roles, including superintendent the last four years before retiring.

Lane said the district had about 300 students, a little bigger than Monument.

He started his new position this week with goals to keep relations between the admin-

istration, staff and community positive with open communication.

"The staff already seems to naturally want to move toward improved communication," he said. "I'm an interim, making sure we are compliant and taking care of the kids until a permanent superintendent is hired."

Lane said he appreciates the warm welcome he's received from the community, adding the staff is "polished and professional" and the school board is student-focused.

Lane replaces Ron Friehe who left the interim position a few weeks after the start of the school year.

Earl Pettit, who was superintendent/principal at Monument School for seven years,

left in June for a position with Cove School District.

Monument school board president Jeff Thomas said Lane was recommended as a highly qualified candidate.

"He had good references from OSBA (Oregon School Board Association)," Thomas

said. "He had a long track record of good performance as a superintendent and in past districts. ... We're glad to have him on board."

Monument's next school board meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 16, in Monument.

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The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Grant County Safe Communities Coalition coordinator Debi Hueckman, left, stands with presenter Natalie Marti, who shared with students the tragic effects a drunken driver had on her family.

Woman shares far-reaching impact of drunken driver

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

More than 325 Grant County students and staff members heard how Natalie Marti's life was affected when a drunken driver crashed into her family's car nearly 15 years ago.

On Nov. 7, Marti spoke to Grant Union and Prairie City students in John Day, and Dayville and Long Creek students in Dayville.

Grant County Safe Communities Coalition member Debi Hueckman was instrumental in bringing Marti to the area. Hueckman said it's important for young people to realize how the choices they make can affect others.

She said that Marti, who is from Meridian, Idaho, speaks two to three times a week to students and victims impact panels.

Marti became a widow the night of Feb. 27, 2003, when she was 23 years old. The car she and her husband, Shawn, and their 5-month-old daughter, Sage, were in was hit by a drunken driver who was traveling the wrong way on the freeway at 98 mph.

Her husband and daughter died on impact, and she suffered a traumatic brain injury, among many other injuries, which left her in a coma for three weeks and on life support. The drunken driver, who lost his hand and forearm in the crash, is serving 18 years in prison, and could face up to 40 years.

"He made the choice to drink," she said of the drunken driver. "He made the choice to drive under the influence. Are you going to take the chance to make the choice to drink and drive, being a weapon on the road? The choices that we make are ultimately

our responsibility."

Marti said that when the drunken driver's girlfriend and brother told him he caused the crash, he said there was a huge pain in his heart and he asked for their forgiveness.

"Raise your hand if you are 15 years old," Marti said to students at the Grant Union gym.

Several arms shot up. "That's how old my daughter would be," she said.

She said others were affected by the tragedy, including her parents, her husband's parents, the first responders and the drunken driver's family — he had a 1-month-old baby at the time of the crash.

"I hope I can add every single one of you as someone impacted in such a way that you'll never do it," Marti said.

She said it took six years to recover from the traumatic brain injury and she still suffers in other ways. People have told her she's "lucky to be alive," she said.

Her thoughts were, yes, "lucky" to have heartache the rest of your life, she said.

"After depression ... I realized I do want to live," she said. "I want to live to help other people to not feel what I feel."

This is the second time in four years Marti has shared her message with Grant County students. Hueckman said she was impressed at how Marti has turned something devastating into something impactful.

"As the holidays approach, this is a good message for everyone," Hueckman said. "Never be under the influence and drive, and that doesn't always have to be alcohol, it could be drugs such as marijuana."

For more information on Marti, visit NatalieMarti.com.

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