

FIRE

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out on the sidewalk.

Meanwhile, Detweiler had gained access to the Shelton family's apartment where he encountered thick black smoke. According to apartment manager Carl Stinnett, Detweiler got on his hands and knees and began to crawl around beneath the smoke. He heard a groan, saw a foot and dragged a child out of the burning apartment, Stinnett said.

"He rescued the 4-year-old boy," Stinnett said.

Detweiler and Steven Shelton, the eldest son, tried to get to the second floor but were turned back by the blaze.

"Allen said he couldn't get up the stairs," Rynearson said. "I respect him for what he did."

Battling the blaze

The fire department received an alarm at 2:43 a.m., Rynearson said. The Prairie City firefighters arrived on the scene at 2:50 a.m., he said. That was a good response time, he noted, adding that he called for backup from John Day as soon as he realized where the fire was.

Two Prairie City engines were joined by two engines from the John Day Volunteer Fire Department, along with ambulances from Prairie City and John Day, several fire department command vehicles and the Grant County Sheriff's Office and John Day Police Department.

The Sheltons' apartment was engulfed in flames by the time firefighters arrived, Rynearson said, with flames visible through the first floor windows and thick black smoke coming out of the second floor.

The firefighters were unable to gain access to the second floor of the Sheltons' apartment because of the burning stairway and turned instead to going through Tirico's bedroom wall next door. But it was too late for the two little girls.

Rynearson said only Building B in the four-building apartment complex sustained significant interior fire damage. Firefighters were able to protect the other buildings from the fire. John Day firefighters returned to the John Day fire hall around 8:30 a.m.

No firefighters were injured as they fought the blaze, Rynearson said.

The investigation is ongoing. Deputy State Fire Marshal Dave Fields was at the site Thursday morning. The cause of the fire has not been released.

The aftermath

The Strawberry Village apartment complex is owned by the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority, based in La Grande. Dale Inslee, director of asset management, and Greg Givens, asset manager, immediately drove to Prairie City when they learned about the fire.

"This is a tragic incident," Inslee said. "We're trying to do whatever we can to help the families."

The Northeast Oregon Housing



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Firefighters cut a hole in the wall of a unit at the Strawberry Village apartment complex in Prairie City Thursday morning. An overnight fire killed two members of a family residing in a unit in Building B.

Authority is a nonprofit entity that operates subsidized housing for federal or state agencies, Inslee said. He said the Strawberry Village complex was inspected Oct. 12, including testing smoke alarms.

"The state inspects these units regularly, and they meet all requirements," Inslee said.

The apartment complex was insured for replacement costs, and the damaged building will be rebuilt if necessary, Inslee said. Stinnett said the complex was remodeled in 2013.

Tirico will be put up in a motel while she finds a place to live. She was allowed to return to her apartment to retrieve things, and she said she had renters insurance.

Two of Shelton's boys will be staying with a host family while their mother and brother remain hospitalized. Blue Mountain Hospital and Blue Mountain Home Health & Hospice are collecting items to make the boys more comfortable, hospital district employee Krista Qual said.

Items sought include clothes, Playstation 3 games, hygiene products and snack foods, such as pizza, chicken nuggets, fruit snacks and cookies. The children wear XXL and medium shirts, size 40-42 and 34 pants and adult size 13-14 and 10 shoes.

Qual said people can also bring frozen dinners or foods that can be refrigerated. Items should be dropped off at the home health and hospice office, 422 W. Main St., across from the Squeeze-In Restaurant in John Day.

For more information about what the children may need, people can contact Qual at 541-620-8127, but she said personal and medical information will not be provided. She requested people

RESORT

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Instead, they moved away, and Campbell purchased a veterinary hospital in Portland in 1987. He grew the business into Banfield Pet Hospitals, which leased space from PetSmart, with 750 hospitals in 42 states, the United Kingdom and Mexico.

Campbell sold the business and retired a decade ago, about the time he purchased the Silvies Valley Ranch as a real estate investment.

During his time away, however, the counties' economies fell from the best to the worst in the state with the implosion of the lumber industry. He said Oregon State University's dean of forestry told him, even with a virgin forest that had never been harvested, newer technology would allow sustainable logging in the area to be completed by only a few hundred people — not nearly enough to bring back the economic prosperity of his youth.

"You really just need to create a stronger economy," Campbell said. "What's going to be the economy here?"

Community focus

On 90,000 acres of private land with an additional 50,000 acres of federal grazing allotments, Silvies Valley Ranch is a working operation with 2,700-3,500 head of cattle and 1,700 meat goats — all certified organic, Vice President Colby Marshall said.

Marshall, also originally from Burns, formerly served as deputy chief of staff for Rep. Greg Walden but said, after spending time with the Silvies team, he and his wife knew they wanted to raise their children here.

"This is a hometown project, so there's a passion to help those communities we come from," Marshall said.

Campbell said local contractors and materials were used to construct and make upgrades for the resort and golf course. It took six years — instead of one or two with help from outside contractors — but the goal was to help the local community, he said.

In August, the business employed 93 people: about half for the resort and golf course, a quarter for construction and a quarter for the ranch, Campbell said. Next year, when the resort is fully operational, another 30-40 employees will be needed, he said.

With the increase in property value, Campbell said the construction already completed would add significantly to Grant County's tax base, even before building any of the 500 vacation homes approved by the legis-



Eagle photos/Sean Hart

Silvies Valley Ranch Vice President Colby Marshall sends a target down the line at one of the shooting ranges at The Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch. The Retreat features three shooting ranges: rifleman, sharpshooter and pistolero.



Guests and staff enjoy a cocktail before dinner in the bar at The Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch.

lature for the property. He said the goal is to sell 5-10 per year, which would be needed for the resort to "break even on a cash-flow basis."

Marshall said they plan to market what the property has in abundance: beautiful vistas, recreational opportunities and quiet.

"It's a new frontier for recreation. It's a new frontier for tourism. It's a new frontier for golf," Marshall said. "If we can attract people here, we can maybe start changing the economy in a positive way."

Economic opportunities

For The Links, course designer Dan Hixson created a reversible course — the first to be started in 500 years, Campbell said, though a course in Michigan was completed before it and several others are now under construction.

The two 18-hole courses share some fairways and greens, and staff alternate between them daily to offer golfers a more diverse experience. Hixson designed the "big, wide course with lots of architectural challenges" to be enjoyable for different levels of golfers.

"We knew we had to have a quality that would draw people from markets all over," Hixson said. "It's really cool to think about people coming to Eastern Oregon who have lived in Oregon their whole life and have

never been here."

The Links also features a nine-hole, par-3 course, and a seven-hole challenge course is under construction.

To avoid competing with courses in Burns and John Day, the course is not priced for local customers — \$290 with a required cart — but residents who are members of the local clubs can golf for \$110. The course can also accommodate more than 80 rounds per day, Campbell said, but the resort only has 34 rooms, potentially boosting the demand for lodging locally and encouraging local economic activity.

"There's a lot of opportunity for people to piggyback on this," Campbell said. "The communities are going to have to learn how to cater to everyone."

The resort features shooting ranges, but not a trap range because Seneca already has one. Local art is displayed, but guests who want to see more will have to travel to local galleries. Tours of the ranch will be offered, but it's not a dude ranch, Campbell said, so others could provide a more hands-on ranch experience for visitors.

"There's a lot of places that certainly aren't as pretty as Grant County that have thriving economies from destination tourism," Campbell said. "If we can bring in people from outside the state — or the country — that's new money."

PHONY

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"It's a relatively difficult scam because you need to be referred by a Realtor,"

Jessup said. "If a house inspector misses bad plumbing or bad electrical work or dry rot, then the homeowner will be stuck with a lot of repair work."

Jessup said it was typ-

ically up to each county's district attorney to prosecute the case, but if necessary the board could refer the matter to the state attorney general.

"He called our office and asked me to offer a deal," Jessup said. "I made an offer that he couldn't accept. With 58 misdemeanor charges, he could go to jail."

According to Patrick Rectenwald at the Oregon Construction Contractors

Board, confirmed illegal house inspections performed by Gregory Mason Miller included 21 in Deschutes County, 19 in Grant County, 13 in Harney County and one each in Malheur, Wheeler and Jefferson counties.

"Miller admitted his guilt in these cases," Rectenwald said, adding that he hasn't admitted his guilt in other cases.

Rectenwald said several people in Grant County described the difficulty in finding a house inspector who would travel to their area, but Gregory Mason Miller was quick to respond to a request.

Sarah Johnson of Kimberly said Gregory Mason Miller inspected her home after the Realtor involved in the sale "recommended this guy and said she's been using him for inspections out in this area for years."

Johnson said the Realtor was present during the inspection, which cost about \$350. When the Realtor was notified of the scam, she passed the information on to Johnson, who notified the state board. Johnson said the Realtor "claimed no responsibility because we hired him" and because she had left the real estate company that handled the sale.

The real estate office also claimed no responsibility, Johnson said. When she called the office, she said, she was told that house

inspections "really were pointless and it's the appraiser that influences your purchase." She also said she was told "we shouldn't really worry about it (because) he probably knew his stuff."

"This was in response to me saying that we bought the home based off a clean inspection report," Johnson said.

Johnson said she's hoping her home really is in good shape.

"Lesson learned," she said. "Do your homework."

Rectenwald said he has received hundreds of emails from real estate offices providing information about Gregory Mason Miller and jobs he performed.

"They're very upset," he said.

Anyone who has information about a man doing construction work under the name Gregory M. Miller and Oregon Construction Contractors Board No. 110411 is asked to contact the Grant County District Attorney's Office at 541-575-0146.

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