



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

John Day Police Chief Mike Durr, the new school resource officer at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School, stops to chat with students during lunchtime Sept. 24.

Building trust between cops and students

Chief Durr is Grant Union's new school resource officer

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Students at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School may have wondered what was up when they saw a police officer greeting them on the first day of school.

But within a few weeks' time, they grew accustomed to the smiling face of John Day Police Chief Mike Durr, Grant Union's new school resource officer.

"At first, the kids all looked the other way when I passed them," he said. "But they got used to me pretty quickly."

Durr stands out in full uniform, from handgun and Taser to radio and body camera. But he's there to initiate a bond between students and law enforcement that's meant to last long into adulthood.

Freshman Billy Radinovich, whose mother once worked as a corrections deputy for the Grant County Sheriff's Office, gave Durr a hug in the hallway as another school day ended.

Radinovich, who's known Durr for years, said students at Grant Union initially viewed him with suspicion but soon were used to him being around.

"They'd never seen a cop in here before," she said.

SRO program

The school resource officer position partly grew out of recent public discussion over arming teachers, Grant School District 3 Board Chairwoman Chris Cronin said. Former school superintendent Curt Shelley initiated the SRO process, she said.

"We heard unanimously during that discussion that a school resource officer was a positive move," she said.

The school district had an SRO program in the past. Learning John Day could benefit by partnering with the school district to share the cost made a lot of sense, Cronin said. The board approved implementation of the program by consensus, she said.

The SRO currently is operating under a memorandum of understanding as details of the contract continue to be worked out, Grant School District Superintendent Bret Uptmor said. He said he had an initial meeting with Durr and discussed general ideas

about how the program would operate. The program will be reviewed sometime in the future, he noted.

As set up now, the SRO will be at the junior-senior high school at the start of school in the morning, at lunch and at the close of the school day. At least one officer will be present at home sporting events, Uptmor said.

The SRO contract does not cover Humbolt Elementary School because it's in Canyon City and outside of the John Day Police Department jurisdiction, Uptmor said. That doesn't stop the SRO from giving presentations at Humbolt or responding to emergencies as mutual aid, he noted.

Uptmor recalled the success of the SRO program in Ontario when he worked there from 1991 to 2011. During that time, four different officers held the position. An SRO's role is not to supervise over student "shenanigans," he noted.

"School staff are responsible for monitoring that kind of activity," he said.

School security

The SRO's presence will add a level of confidence by students and staff that the school is safe, Uptmor said.

The officer will also be present to deal with any illegal activity.

Uptmor said he believes high-profile school shootings elsewhere in the country have an impact on students. Adolescents tend to have sheltered lives and can be frightened by these national events.

It's part of the growing up process, he said, and as a school leader he needs to portray a level of confidence. Students need to know that the kids responsible for school shootings are not like them, and that the school will protect them.

But the role of the SRO is more than stopping an active shooter. Thinking back to the early implementation of SROs, Uptmor recalled that one of the goals was to break down the "us versus them" divide, to get students comfortable around law enforcement and to understand that police officers are real people with real social qualities.

"They need to know that when they need a police officer, they will come and help," Uptmor said.

An SRO can also inspect school facilities and make recommendations to improve security. The Grant School District board in August added providing safe and secure schools to their list of priorities, Uptmor said.

Dispatcher recognized with Life Saving Award

Second award in nine months for Lovell

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

For the second time in nine months, 911 dispatcher Savannah Lovell was recognized by the city of John Day for her professional handling of an emergency call to the John Day Emergency Communications Center.

Last March, Mayor Ron Lundbom presented the Golden Stork Award to Lovell for providing assistance in the emergency delivery of a baby girl on Jan. 21.

The city recognized Lovell again Sept. 25 with a Life Saving Award for her "quick and professional performance in the line of duty" following a 911 call reporting a fire at the Strawberry Village Apartment complex in Prairie City.

"The emergency 911 call that Savannah answered would have been unintelligible to the untrained ear, as it was a hysterical caller screaming that there was a fire at a local apartment complex with babies still inside," Dispatch Manager

Valerie Maynard said in her award letter.

Two young girls died in the Nov. 30, 2017, fire, but four other members of the family were transported to Blue Mountain Hospital, and one was transported by air ambulance to another hospital.

"Although this was a tragic incident that emergency responders hope to never have to experience in their career, Savannah responded to this quickly and calmly, getting the appropriate responders on scene in the shortest time possible," Maynard said. "Savannah's actions during those early morning hours, when most are at home sleeping with their families, saved lives and homes on that day."

Born and raised in Grant County, Lovell graduated from Grant Union High School. She left another job in 2015 to become a dispatcher.

"It's more interesting than an office job," she said.

Lovell said she's looking forward to working in the new 911 dispatch center that will operate out of the John Day Fire Hall starting January 2019 after the Intergovernmental Council takes over management of emergency communications from the city.



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John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom presents 911 dispatcher Savannah Lovell with a lifesaving award.

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SHOOTING THE BREEZE

Reloading: Is it for you?

By Dale Valade
For the Blue Mountain Eagle

Not too many years back, shooters endured two buying frenzies where ammo became scarce. Demand was at an all-time high, and manufacturers struggled to maintain the dimly low supply.

Hoarders and preppers were mostly to blame, although, as usual, it was regular folks that suffered most. Many were the conversations I overheard where plinking, practice and target shooting sessions were nearly quelled altogether for fear of not being able to replace what was used up. While many were wringing their hands and dabbing sweat, I was able to reload to keep myself in a steady supply of ammunition.

To get started requires quite a bit of equipment. But with magnum cartridges going for \$50-100 per box of 20, reloading will save some money, but only if you don't shoot often. If you're the kind of shooter that gets three to four years out of a box of ammo, reloading is definitely not for you. While the individual components are more economical in bulk, the truth of it is: When you can afford more ammo, you will shoot more ammo.

Handloading is quite assuredly an addiction. Everyone I know, without exception, that has taken up this great pastime has begun to shoot more as a direct result.

Once you have bought all of the necessary equipment, you will need a place to reload. A cool, dry place is necessary if components and equipment alike are going to be stored and used there.

Extreme temperatures and moisture can rust equipment and ruin powder and primers. Proper storage and cataloging of your cartridges will ensure a longer shelf life and greater safety.

Reloading is potentially very dangerous. Each time you pull a trigger, you are experiencing a chain of events called a "controlled explosion." This explosion takes place inches away from your face. It's a scary thought to be sure. While munitions

manufacturers are not immune to error, they have dozens of quality checks in their assembly processes to insure optimal safety and performance. Inversely, you hand-load at your own risk.

Distractions will cause you to make mistakes, some of which can be fatal. Always avoid multi-tasking. I cannot say strongly enough that you should never under any circumstances drink alcohol or smoke while handloading. The "why" here is obvious.

The main reason to hand-load is the ability to greater utilize the versatility of your firearms. You could construct multiple loads featuring bullets that aren't available in factory ammo. Or perhaps you'll find a single load that your rifle loves and shoot that one "general use" load for everything.

As a seasoned reloader, I enjoy this hobby thoroughly. I've been reloading for over 20 years, and still the additional knowledge of the science of ballistics and firearms continues to educate and delight this correspondent.

Don't be surprised if you get overwhelmed early on. There is a lot of information out there. Regardless of what you may have heard, buy and adhere to the information within modern reloading manuals.

Not infrequently, component construction is changed or updated; data from the 1960s may not be within pressure limitations if used with 2018 components. As a general rule, default to the manual of the bullet manufacturer you're using.

Handloading is a great hobby. Ask a friend or relative who reloads to give you a tutorial. Whether you want more accuracy or better performance, or perhaps you want to keep an older gun in ammunition, I recommend you take up handloading.

Have you been loading your own for a long time or are you relatively new to this hobby? Shoot us an email at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com.

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a deep love for handloading, hunting and shooting.

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All proceeds of this raffle go directly to Graham and his family. The prize for the drawing is a gun safe with a prize inside; both items are collectively valued at \$2,000. Tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20 and Graham will draw the winner on or around Nov. 15.



Donated by your family at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church and her missions. Thanks!

Jim Ennis would like to express his appreciation to all who helped at his tractor accident in Fox. Ambulance crew, ER personnel and doctors/nurses. Thank be to God for you all! This community is blessed to have such great volunteers and professionals.

For cards and letters to Jim, please mail to the East Cascade Retirement Community, C/O Building E. (Skilled nursing) 175 NE 16th St., Madras, OR 97741