

Canyon City couple 'pays it forward' with Camp Fire relief effort

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

The recent Camp Fire in northern California brought memories surging back for Dean and Courtney Fox, who survived the Canyon Creek Complex Fire south of Canyon City three years ago.

Now the couple has organized a relief effort, gathering new items and gift cards, which they will hand-deliver to those affected by the recent fire.

They will also hold a large-scale indoor yard sale from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 15, at the Grant County Fairgrounds pavilion in John Day. The proceeds will be used to buy more gift cards and other items for the displaced Paradise residents.

Dean said when he and Courtney saw the devastation of the Camp Fire on the news they empathized with the people affected by it.

"We thought, we need to do something to help," Dean said.

The fire, which ignited Nov. 8 and is considered the worst in California's history, affected the entire town of Paradise and other small communities in Butte County, killing 85 people and destroying 14,500 homes and businesses and displacing up to 50,000 residents.

"They helped us when it happened here," Dean said.

"You wouldn't believe the number of people from different states who helped us," Courtney added. "We know how they feel."

Dean said they are thinking of the thousands of people now living in tents and children who will have no Christmas presents.

The Foxes escaped the 2015 fire with little more than the clothes on their backs and their vehicles. No lives were lost in the Canyon Creek Complex, but 43 homes were destroyed.

The couple said they felt numb and in shock after their



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Dean and Courtney Fox of Canyon City have organized a service project to provide relief to victims of the Camp Fire in northern California. The couple, who survived the 2015 Canyon Creek Complex fire, will take new donations and gift cards directly to those needing help.

home burned, and they're sure that is how the Paradise residents are feeling. Dean said they'd now like to "pay it forward."

They started telling friends they were gathering items to ship to the survivors of the fire. Donations began pouring in — more than expected.

The Foxes learned that the needs of those affected by the fire were changing. Instead of paying a freight company to take used items to California, the couple decided instead to hand deliver gift cards and new items and will pay their own fuel cost.

Since they started the relief effort, the Foxes have been in touch with history teacher Dave Vixie of Paradise Adventist Academy, which burned, and his wife, Karen.

The Vixies were able to escape with their car and truck and trailer, which was tightly loaded with their eight large mules.

Dean said Dave and Karen told them they were the second to the last vehicles on a road out of town, and if they had waited 3 more minutes, they would have been on fire. The hair on the mules' backs was singed, Dean said.

The Vixies are friends of Jim and Mary Jensen, who lost their Pine Creek home to a fire in January this year.

When the Vixies came through town during Thanks-

giving week, hauling two mules to a safe place, the Jensens asked Dean if he could spare a bale of hay for the traveling animals.

The visitors also stayed the night with the Foxes. All six ate breakfast together. Courtney said it was a healing experience to visit with them.

"They said, 'It's good for us to see that you've rebuilt,'" Dean said. "It feels good to give them hope, because they see that we've started over."

"It's just weird how things work out," Courtney said. "Who would have thought we'd be able to help?"

Anyone wanting to donate to the relief effort, can drop off cash or gift cards at Pioneer Feed & Farm Supply, the Foxes' business, located at 831 W. Highway 26 in John Day, or call them at 541-575-0023.

The couple said they'd like to receive lightly used items for the indoor yard sale at their store by Dec. 5. Then they and volunteers will spend time sorting the donations. They will accept items up until the time of the sale.

Volunteers who were involved with helping at the Canyon Creek Complex relief center, which was also located at the pavilion back in 2015, will assist.

"They understand it, and that's why they want to help," Courtney said.

Hope 4 Paws has Tree of Hope in Prairie City

Nonprofit assists Grant County cats and dogs

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

The nonprofit group, Hope 4 Paws: Grant County, is hoping to make the season bright for cats and dogs through a Tree of Hope that has been set up at Huffman's Select Market in Prairie City.

To help the dog and cat rescue program, people can choose a tag from the Christmas tree and return the item to the collection basket. The tree will be up through Dec. 28.

The requests range from cat food for kitten fostering to cash donations for the spay and neuter voucher program, which offers discounts on the procedure for Grant County residents' pets.

Hope 4 Paws, which is staffed and run by volunteers, doesn't have a local shelter, but with helpers they rescue, rehabilitate and place abandoned dogs and offer spay and neuter vouchers regardless of financial need. They also trap, neuter and return (TNR) feral cats and offer public education regarding proper dog and cat care.

This year, Hope 4 Paws volunteers trapped 277 cats with the TNR program in Grant County, which included 80 kittens, said Elaine Mezzo who heads up the cat committee, working with Susan Church and Mary Brown.

The program covered nearly every city in Grant County this year.

"We had a really big trap neuter return in Riverside Park in John Day with 100 cats," she said. "The numbers are staggering."

Fourteen cats were also recently trapped in the TNR program on Bridge Street in John Day.

When feral cats or kit-



Contributed photo

Visiting at the Hope for Paws fundraiser booth are, from left, Cashel Toy, Quinn Cowie, 'Miss Sheilah the Cat' and Avery Toy.



Contributed photo

"We get a lot of stray or abandoned kittens," Mezzo said. "We would rather people call us for help or advice — a lot of times people don't know what to do."

She said the spay and neuter voucher program, which is handled through the John Day River Veterinary Clinic, has been temporarily suspended until they receive more donations.

Another Hope 4 Paws fundraiser, sponsored by Pioneer Feed, is coming up this month.

During the "Santa Paws" event, pet owners can have their furry friend photographed with Santa Claus from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 15, at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

"Our budget has been stretched this year," Mezzo said. "Any donations that people can give stay right here in the county."

For more information, call Hope 4 Paws at 541-575-0500 or, specifically for cats, 541-620-3336. The nonprofit's Facebook page is Hope 4 Paws: Grant County.

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