

Students have field day at FFA Ag Field Day

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Humbolt Elementary School students enjoyed petting and learning about livestock on Thursday afternoon, courtesy of Grant Union High School FFA chapter members.

Grant Union senior Drew Lusco brought his Boer goat doe named Spaghetti, who seemed to enjoy the attention of the children as they lined up to pet her.

Lusco told the students about some of the features of a doe including the horns and how they differ from the bucks.

FFA members Raney and Cinch Anderson brought Hereford cattle from their family ranch, and Sage Browning helped them as the students came up to pet the animals.

First-grader Wyatt Lieualen said he was impressed with how big the animals were.

Showing students a couple sheep were FFA members Ellie Justice and Janie Koopman.

“We’re glad to have an opportunity to teach the youth in our community about different agricultural commodities in Grant County,” Justice said.

“They’re really excited and happy to pet the animals, and they’re very interested to learn about these animals,” Koopman added.

The students also learned about chickens, rabbits and pigs, which were also on hand to pet.

Parker Manitsas, who is the FFA Strawberry Mountain District president, said he



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter
FFA member Raney Anderson oversees kindergartner Daniel Palmer as he pets a Hereford from the Anderson family ranch. Palmer’s classmate, Oliver LaFramboise, also enjoyed petting the animal. In back are FFA members Cinch Anderson and Sage Browning.



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter
First-grader Thor Yazzie helps classmate Josie Hollowell heft a large pumpkin she chose from the Grant Union FFA chapter’s ‘pumpkin patch’ Thursday at the Ag Field Day at Humbolt Elementary.



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter
Grant Union FFA adviser Wayne Suchorski (front, right) stands with FFA members, from left, Jessie Stubbs, Rylan Cox, Eli Wright and Wyatt Lemons.

and Isaac Koopman shared what FFA is all about and that the students can look forward to joining in high school, if they’d like.

FFA Adviser Wayne Suchorski, who is also the new vocational/agriculture teacher at Grant Union this

year oversaw the members who helped structure the event.

Suchorski is from Klamath Falls and has 10 years experience in teaching vo/ag.

He said he appreciated all those “who came together to make it a successful event”

John Day fire chief retires for a second time

Smith served John Day for 15 years

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Longtime John Day Fire Chief Ron Smith has retired — again.

John Day City Mayor Ron Lundbom gave an award to Smith for his 15 years of service in the John Day Fire Department at the Oct. 22 city council meeting.

“I have the honor tonight to present our fire chief with a going away gift,” Lundbom said. “I couldn’t be more proud to recognize somebody that has been dedicated his whole career.”

Smith was the deputy fire chief from 2004 to 2009, and a fire chief from 2009 to the end of October 2019. Smith retired from Sandy as the fire chief after 27 years of service before coming to John Day.

“It’s been an honor and a privilege to get to do what I’ve done, and it’s been a hoot,” Smith said. “Just remember, I’m one small cog in a wheel. Your volunteer firefighters are the ones that make this place work. I just get to watch them shine and have me look good.”

In over 40 years of experience, Smith has had the opportunity to deliver five babies in Sandy, be in charge of the rope technical team in Sandy and work with the all volunteer fire department in John Day.

“Working with volunteer firefighters is truly amazing because of the amount of dedication that they have,” Smith said. “Volunteer firefighters face the exact same threat that paid firefight-



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz
John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom, right, handed an award of appreciation to retiring Fire Chief Ron Smith at the John Day City Council meeting Oct. 22.

ers do. When you go into a burning building you’re never truly guaranteed the outcome of that.”

Every day varied as the fire chief in John Day. Some days he was in his office working on paperwork or tending to calls received from the dispatch center, but no matter what came up, Smith made sure that he was prepared.

“I guess there’s really no such thing in my life as unexpected,” Smith said. “Somebody calls dispatch 9-1-1, we get the initial information, and at that time I leave the house going into

a call, I start to run possible scenarios through my brain. If it’s a house fire, what time of day is it? If it’s three in the morning people are usually asleep, if its three in the afternoon people are usually up. What if the house next door catches on fire? You just start running all of these what if questions.”

This mindset helped Smith be prepared for any situation, even if there was no fire to extinguish.

As chief, Smith prioritized firefighter safety, which is something his career is based on. During his time as chief he has never had a fire-

fighter seriously hurt.

“Having somebody die under my watch, under my direction, I don’t know how someone can live with that,” Smith said. “If a house burns down, most everything there can be replaced. If somebody dies in a fire, you can’t replace that.”

Smith said he is not planning to move away from John Day and that retirement will give him a chance to do more fishing.

“Overall, this has been the greatest job in the world. It’s not so much that any one job is better than the other one. After years and years you get to have all the memories to look back on,” Smith said.

Don Gabbard, the current assistant chief, will become the next fire chief when Smith retires.

“If I was walking away with nobody to take my place, I probably would have stayed chief another two or three years,” Smith said. “I can’t walk away from my community leaving the department without the leadership that it needs, but Don is great at all of it.”



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter
Monument Superintendent/Principal Laura Thomas

Laura Thomas leads as Superintendent/Principal of Monument School

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Students and staff at Monument School started the school year with a new, yet familiar, person at the helm.

Superintendent/Principal Laura Thomas was hired last summer to fill the top position at the school, and she’s worked at Monument School District as a teacher since 2007.

“I’ve taught every grade except for first grade,” Thomas said.

Her work has included teaching elementary and junior high classes as well as high school agriculture.

Thomas said she’s developed a strong and positive relationship with the students, staff and community that will help create a smooth transition as she moves the district forward.

“I feel like we’re just one big family,” she said. “Over the years teaching, I’ve had kids say I’m like a second mom.”

She feels those bonds are built because they live in a smaller town.

“I think they’re stronger than living in a larger area,” she said.

The school, in the past two years, has had two superintendents and one interim superintendent.

Thomas said she had an

interest in school administration for a long time, and with the high turnover rate, she decided to work on her master’s of school administration, and she completed it last June.

She said working at the school for seven years has given her insight.

“I already know the staff, the kids and the community,” she said. “It allowed us to hit the ground running when I shifted to the superintendent/principal position. It doesn’t force the students and staff to get to know a new superintendent.”

She said the atmosphere at Monument School is “one of positive change and moving forward.”

“I’m just looking forward to supporting the staff and students and community and making a big impact in their education,” she said.

Monument’s total enrollment is 53 with 29 in the elementary grades, five in junior high and 19 in high school.

Thomas and her husband, Jeff, have two children attending Monument. They have a 10-year-old boy and two daughters ages 6 and 3.

Together Laura and Jeff own Thomas Orchards in Kimberly.

“We’re definitely not going anywhere,” Laura said.

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A snarky makeshift family faces off against evolved zombies and fellow survivors in the American heartland.
FRI & SAT (4:10) 7:10 9:40
SUNDAY (4:10) 7:10
MON-THURS 7:10

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FRI & SAT (4:00) 7:00 9:35
SUNDAY (4:00) 7:00
MON-THURS 7:00

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A huge thank you to everyone who attended, volunteered, and donated auction items to the Blue Mountain Healthcare Foundation Annual Meeting, Dinner and Auction Fundraiser - Campfires & Cocktails this year.

We had over 160 attendees this year and all funds raised will continue to help improve healthcare in Grant County for years to come!

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