

Canyon Creek 4-H Club delivers truckload of donations and hope to fire victims

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Earlier this month, the Canyon Creek 4-H Club delivered a truckload of donations and a handful of gift cards to fire victims in Lincoln County.

The club swiftly stepped up last month and solicited donations and had them dropped off at Pioneer Feed and Supply. Items included personal hygiene products, clothes, blankets, and \$1,700, which club leader Laura Brown used to purchase the gift cards.

Brown said she wanted the club members to deliver the donations personally.

She said she met Norma Jean, a volunteer at the Rose Lodge Grange Distribution Center, after posting on Facebook her club's intentions of hand-delivering the donations they had gathered to a drop-off center.

After getting connected with Jean, Brown said three club members, her son Trey, daughter Ava and Brooke Taynton, made the trek to the other side of the state. Brown said, despite just three members making the trip, every member of the club participated in the donation drive.

"You have to walk the talk," Jean said about Brown insisting the kids deliver the donations. "That's the best way to teach kids."

Brown said the club did not travel through any of the devastated areas. However, they did meet and talk with an evacuee.

Trey said the experience gave him a greater awareness and empathy for the fire victims.

"It was heartwarming," he said. "I have never been through anything like that."



Contributed photo
From left, 4-H member Trey Brown, fire volunteer Norma Jean, 4-H member Ava Brown, 4-H member Brooke Taynton and 4-H club leader Laura Brown drop off a truckload of donations to fire victims in Lincoln County.

"IT WAS NEIGHBOR HELPING NEIGHBOR. RESIDENTS WERE TRYING TO GET THEIR PETS OR THEIR POSSESSIONS."

—Norma Jean, a volunteer at the Rose Lodge Grange Distribution Center on the fires in Oregon

Taynton, whose family was among 43 who lost homes in the 2015 Canyon Creek Complex fire, said the experience was why she made the trip.

"I know how they feel," she said. "A home is where you're safe."

Brown said it became emotional when the club presented Jean with the cards because she had not told

Jean the club collected monetary donations.

Brown said the experience was about paying it forward to others and keeping things in perspective.

"It really makes you appreciate what you have and what is really important," she said.

Jean said there had been no warning when they evacuated the town.

Many, she said, escaped with barely the clothes on their back.

"It was neighbor helping neighbor," she said. "Residents were trying to get their pets or their possessions."

Jean said the Grange Hall has a "personal shopper" who spends time with people who ask "probing questions" to find out what they need.

Jean said the gift cards made it possible to help an 80-year-old man get work boots.

She said when she asked him what he needed the boots for, he said he'd "lost everything."

"He said, 'I have nothing left but what you see, but I've got to go to work.'"

Jean said he works for a company in the area and is back to work with a brand-new pair of boots.

Taynton's mother Courtney Fox said, when she and her family lost their home, the little things, like boots, helped them have a semblance of normalcy.

"It's about getting back to normal," she said.

Fox said long before the Canyon Creek fire, she would read to Taynton, then 7, every night.

After arriving at the Grant County Fairgrounds with little more than the clothes on their backs, Fox said that it did not dawn on her that the books she and Taynton had read together were gone.

Sifting through a pile of donated books, she said she came across a copy of the "The Kissing Hand," one of their favorites. The book tells the story of a mother raccoon comforting a child raccoon nervous about its first day of school by kissing its paw. The book has been used to provide reassurance for children dealing with difficult transitions and situations.

"We had always read it before," Fox said. "And it was one of the ones that burned."

Fox said she and Taynton kept the tradition going as the family rebuilt their home.

"I was trying to keep it together," she said. "I did not want to lose the one thing we shared."

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2 Corinthians 5:17

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Fox Community Church..... 3 pm
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Full Gospel- Come Grow With Us
541-575-1202 Church
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SATURDAY SERVICES

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Head Elder 541-575-2914
Bible Classes (all ages)..... 9:30 am
Worship 11 am

LONG CREEK
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541-421-3033

Head Elder 421-3468
Bible Classes (all ages)..... 2 pm
Worship 3 pm

Living Word Christian Center
59357 Hwy 26 Mt. Vernon

Celebration of Worship
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Youth: 0-6th Grade

Midweek Service
Thursdays 6:30pm
Youth: 0-6th Grade

Jr./Sr. High Youth Connection
Wednesdays at 6:30pm

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541-932-4910
www.livingwordcc.com

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church
Corner of S Canyon Blvd and SW 2nd

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139 N.E. DAYTON STREET, JOHN DAY
541-575-2180

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Sunday Youth Group 3 pm
Thursday Celebrate Recovery 6 pm

Pastor Levi Manitas
cornerstonejohnday@gmail.com
ccfjd.org