

Camarena named Collections System Operator of the Year

Prairie City employee has been public works director since 2014

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Prairie City's public works director was recognized for his job performance and accomplishments.

Director Chris Camarena said he was shocked when he got the Collections System Operator of the Year Award from Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association because the award usually goes to bigger cities.

"I don't know if anybody here in Prairie City has ever gotten operator of the year before," Camarena said. "Since I've been here, this is the first time."

Camarena has worked with Prairie City's public works department for 20 years. He took over as assistant public works director in 2008 and became the director in 2014.

Camarena was awarded virtually and said it was an honor to be the recipient. He also said the award would not have been possible without the public works team and their hard work.

"They're good at what they do and have a lot of dedication to what they do," Camarena said. "I can't do any of this without them, and I contribute everything to them."

Outside of his job with the city, Camarena also participates in various groups in Prairie City such as the Prairie City Fire Department, emergency medical services, the Prairie City school board and more that makes his work as a public director more rewarding.



Contributed photo

Chris Camarena poses with his award for Collections System Operator of the Year from the Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association.

"We try to work together as a community here and help each other out," Camarena said. "We tie a lot of stuff together like working on projects with the kids at school

and help tie it in with public works."

When the Canyon Creek Complex fire happened in 2015, Camarena said he and several other team members

were firefighters during the incident. They spent days living in a fire truck and doing their duties as firefighters, but when they got back home, work continued as the water facility had to be checked on to make sure it was running during the emergency.

"It doesn't just stop when you flush the toilet or turn the faucet off," Camarena said. "We have to do a physical and visual inspection of our complete system every single day, and making sure water is safe for everybody."

Camarena said he has great relationships with public work directors in other cities.

The goal for Prairie City's public works team is to leave the water and wastewater system better than they found it. Camarena said the team has been working on many improvement and preventive maintenance programs

on the water and wastewater systems.

Camarena said there have been many challenges to overcome in the systems.

"I told the mayor, 'Hey, I wouldn't know how to run a normal system,'" Camarena said. "The city has had issues with their water and wastewater system for years here, but you just keep on truckin' on through it and try to get it fixed."

Along with the manual labor, the job also consists of seeking grant opportunities to help fund the improvements to the systems in Prairie City and their multi-million wastewater treatment project, which replaced failing pumps and aging infrastructure.

Camarena said he is thankful for his job and that the doors and phone lines are always open to answer questions regarding the systems.

SENIOR Outlook

Chester's

Prairie City Seniors

Rose Coombs



"Have yourself a merry little White Christmas" on the Prairie. We hope, huh? We did have snow for our Christmas dinner

meal. But due to unexpected illness, we were not able to keep to the published menu. That's why it says "menu is subject to change." So what else is new this year... But with the able help of our kitchen staff, a meal was prepared and served in record time. Thank you Laura, Tom, and Angie for getting the job done. You can rest for a couple of weeks now! There will be no meal on Dec. 23rd, but we will have one Dec. 30th and that will be spaghetti. Happy New Year!

Back to business, we did have the baked ham and rolls (Thank you BMCC). Also the scheduled veggies which was Brussel sprouts. But the scalloped spuds had to be replaced by plain old mashed potatoes. Sorry about that. I was really looking forward to the scalloped ones, too. Maybe we can get them for sometime in January... And the mini cheesecake was going to be really special 'cause we have these cute little muffin-like baking tins to cook them in that the cooks really wanted to use; maybe for Valentine's Day. But the substitute was really good too, a nice moist cake with red topping (raspberry?) What I'm trying to convey is that when life gives you a lemon, make lemonade! So we did! Roll with the punches and win the fight. I'm so proud of our kitchen staff that did just that. Congratulations all around and Merry Christmas!

Got the Christmas letter written, enclosed in the card, and sent off. People were saying that they were

getting more cards this year than in the past. I find that interesting in this day of instant communication. Yes, you can see their image on the Web, but a card is something you can hold in your hand, for years and enjoy reading again and again. And you don't have to go through all kinds of passwords and instructions to be able to do it. It doesn't get obsolete either! Since there is nothing much worth watching on TV, we have been going through our video library. Have the entire runs of Matlock, M*A*S*H, Hogan's Heros, Roots, Barney Miller, etc. The really interesting one is Remington Steele. The only thing they would have to change to make it work today is to give them all a cell phone. The stories still are engaging and entertaining. Ah, the good old days. Then I decided I'd better see what date Easter is going to be on next year, fist Sunday in April. That got me investigating what I could put together for the ensemble since I'm done with Christmas. (Have to keep looking ahead, don't ya know.) In going through the different songbooks, I discovered several that needed to be taken apart and put into 3 ring binders, so that kept me occupied for a few days. Why do that? So the music will stay flat on the piano music rest. It is very difficult to play both treble and bass line while holding the pages open! Just counted, have 38 books that have their own spiral bindings and 50+ that I have put into binders. You would think that would be enough, wouldn't you? Then there is the 4 drawer filing cabinet that contains all the sheet music. So it takes a while to investigate (ahem) and not get sidetracked...

Ephesians 5:19 "Speak to one another... Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord..."

Judges 5:3 "I will sing to the Lord... I will make music to the Lord..."

well done. 28th Beef an Noodles, Mashed potatoes, Veggies, Cookie. 31st. French Dip with Mushrooms, Onion Rings, Berry hand Pie. Well I'm sure were all looking forward to 2021, with a wonderful new year an much happiness, not Six feet from our friend s an family. May your New Year's be full of blessing.

John Day Seniors

Dusty Harris



Wow Christmas Dinner was shared by all that we received on Monday the 21st. To our Cooks job

Monument Seniors

Soo Yukawa



For those of us who ordered a meal on Tuesday, we enjoyed a delicious dinner of ham, yummy scalloped potatoes (and

you know I really did mean they were yummy for you know I hate cheese), dinner rolls, carrots, and chocolate pudding for our dessert. We thank Terry Cade and Carrie Jewell for all their hard work. What a blessing they are to all of us.

So our reported numbers of patrons coming to pick up their Christmas dinner came to the whopping number of 85 meals ordered and served. Wow, *blink, blink*. I was stunned as you are, as you are reading this I am sure. Ha.

We had Kristi Guimont filling out the paperwork. Bob Cockrell and Jan Ensign counted the money. Ms. Sylvia delivered the meals to the patrons at the door. We thank them profusely also for their time and volunteer service. We can't do without everyone's help.

My fingers are healing up nicely. I started slathering on raw honey from the second day and the wounds have mostly closed. I have no infection whatsoever. I have no broken bones, and I praise the Lord that I didn't lose my fingers! Did you know that raw honey has antimicrobial properties? It also has natural hydrogen peroxide. It did wonders on my hand. It has to be raw

and unprocessed honey. You have to buy the raw honey from your local bee keeper rather than the store. Raw honey that is local can also help alleviate allergies. God has created things to help heal our bodies naturally.

During this time of being an almost invalid, I have been catching up on some new recipes. I tried making beef stroganoff for the first time with the help of my two girls. I learned it of course on Youtube. It was a hit. It was simple enough and did not call for crazy exotic ingredients and it did not take long to make either. I can't believe I took this long to try and make it. The next thing to try and make is chicken fried steak. Hmm, I'll have to let you know how it went. Seems simple enough too, but sometimes those videos make it seem like they are and are deceiving. We shall see.

I hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas! I know that it is a really weird and difficult time for many of us. But be encouraged, we all have been born for such a time as this. The Lord has everything under control and this is just a "shadow of the valley of death". The Lord has always promised to never forsake us or leave us. In fact, while on my way to church this past Sunday, I heard in my spirit these words, "Beloved, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His Might. " We are weak but the Lord is strong. Let us hold fast to His promises for He is our great and mighty God!

Psalm 34:22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.

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