

Soil

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a master's in business management from Central Michigan University. Delano credits his academic success to his late wife, Dorene, whom he married before shipping out to boot camp in 1960. Delano said Dorene took care of their five kids as he immersed himself in his studies. In 1981, the family took a vote and moved back to Grant County from Bremerton, Washington, after Delano retired from the Navy. After returning to Grant County, Delano said he needed to feel like he was working for a significant cause. And that, he said, was what the SWCD gave him. After contributing in what he described as a small way to America's victory in the Cold War, Delano said the SWCD gave him the same feeling he had in the service that he was part of something bigger than himself. Shaun Robertson began working with Delano in 1997, when Robertson moved back to Grant County from Idaho to build the Warm Springs



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

Ken Delano tinkers with a sword maker in his shop in Mt. Vernon on Monday, Jan. 11, 2022. People close to Delano refer to him as a renaissance man for his many talents and diverse interests.

Tribes' John Day Basin program. The two continued to work together on a close professional level for the next seven or eight years, and Robertson said their personal relationship endures to this day. "When I speak of the John Day conservation program, I tell peo-

ple that contemporary agency and NGO staff find their work easier only because they are standing on the shoulders of great pioneers and Ken is one of the largest," Robertson said, "which most people probably wouldn't perceive because he's so humble and unassuming."

THE DELANO FILE

NAME: Ken Delano
RESIDENCE: Mt. Vernon
OCCUPATION: Retired manager of the Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District, which he led from 1988 to 2007
ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During Delano's tenure, the SWCD oversaw nearly 150 permanent fish-diversion projects on private property
EDUCATION: Delano holds a bachelor of science in engineering physics from the University of Kansas and a master's in business management from Central Michigan University

According to Delano, his "ace in the hole" was that he had worked for a handful of the landowners in the area and had already earned their trust. "They knew me personally," Delano said. Robertson noted that Delano built credibility for every organization and person who worked cooperatively with the district. According to Robertson, not one of them working in the John Day Basin today would be where they are without the foundation he constructed. Jeff Neal, a retired fish biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said he was tasked in the late 1980s with spearheading a variety of fish conservation projects. Because of Delano's efforts on hundreds of fish-passage diversion projects, Neal said, the Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District became the envy of the rest of the state and beyond. "Having the quality of the Grant County program led by Ken Delano ended up being a model for 100 other counties, not just in Oregon, but other states," Neal said.

Pit Stop

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one affiliated with the Elks Lodge. Caughlin told them that they would need to talk to the board. Another area mentioned by Walker Macy as a place for large rigs to park was on Canton Street. Alicia Weatherbee-Griffin, owner of Earthly Home Natural Market across Main Street from the Pit Stop, said that she is concerned about foot traffic crossing the street because a curve essentially makes the intersection "a blind corner." Another issue merchants had with relocating parking for larger vehicles off Main Street was the concern that travelers would continue to the next town if they could not park on or near the main drag. "They're not going to stop," said Tia Barreuteia, owner of the Outpost Bar and Grill. "If you make the RV people go far enough away, they're just not going to stop and eat at our place, they're going to go on." One suggestion that Tory Stinnett, Grant County's economic development director, had was to potentially bring in the Grant County People Mover to provide a shuttle service.



Contributed Photo

This image shows some preliminary design concepts for the Pit Stop.

Adair said that bringing in the People Mover a half-mile out of town might not work, but it could be helpful in other places. "I think we need to

look at the big picture and put all of it together," Adair said. While no official decisions were made regarding the Pit Stop, Adair

asked for a show of hands at the meeting. It appeared as if a majority of those in attendance were not for the food cart idea, but some were open to the idea of

using the space as a multi-use area for events such as a farmers market. The recently built bathrooms at the Pit Stop came by way of a \$35,000 grant through Travel Oregon's Destination Ready program for an outdoor plaza and restroom project last year, according to Green. Before submitting the grant application, the City Council considered two different designs and opportunities for the city-owned property but opted to first provide restrooms, parking and a multipurpose area, instead of an alternative plan for a parking lot with four spots for food trucks. While Travel Oregon's press release about the grant award mentioned a community "pit stop" with food truck stalls, improved parking, and new public restrooms in John Day, the scope of the application and funding was limited to building bathrooms, Green said. However, he added, the council talked about the potential for a multi-use site, which could include food trucks, farmers markets, or other services in the future. The city is continuing to gather public input about how the space should be used. Downtown merchants can email their suggestions to Adair at merchants@1188brewing.com.

DAs

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show the number of examinees per year steadily dropping — approximately 12 fewer attorneys each year pass the bar based on a simple linear regression model. In 2020 the pandemic ushered in a "diploma privilege," which allowed newly graduated law students to bypass the bar entirely and receive their license. But even then, only 343 attorneys were minted in Oregon that year. It was the lowest admission number since 1972, when just 310 attorneys passed the bar exam. Lower numbers alone don't make shortages — they need to be coupled with a higher number of lawyers retiring or leaving the field. And that is exactly what is happening. According to a 2017 economic survey released by the Oregon State Bar, nearly 20% of respondents said they had planned on retiring by 2022. But perhaps the biggest reason why

lawyers have given the cold shoulder to Eastern Oregon attorney offices is salaries in the rural Wild West have not been able to compete with the metropolitan areas. The 2017 bar survey shows an average Oregon lawyer can expect a salary of \$105,000 per year. Eastern Oregon attorneys will see \$84,000. Portland attorneys, however, will earn \$125,000, or nearly 20% more than the Oregon average and roughly 50% more than those working in Eastern Oregon. But those averages, which cover all attorneys, still are higher than the advertised salary posted for many Eastern Oregon counties. Union County, which has one open position, offers a starting salary of just more than \$56,000 a year. Morrow County, which has no deputy district attorney at the moment, advertises \$68,400 per year with the ability to earn up to an additional \$30,000 per year by doing county and city work. Umatilla County pays up to \$77,000 for an entry-level deputy district attorney. Wallowa County's open position

advertises a yearly salary of just over \$52,000 for a newly minted lawyer. Frolander said the salary for a prosecutor was raised recently, but has yet to attract any prosecutors to join the team in Wallowa County. While the district attorney's office waits for applicants, the lack of qualified staff to prosecute cases means cases sometimes don't receive the attention they deserve. "There are cases that I have resolved for less than I wanted to," Frolander said, "and there have been cases I've declined to prosecute due to resources." Frolander also said the coronavirus pandemic had created a traffic jam of cases that has yet to clear, further impacting the office's ability to prosecute crimes. "Prosecutors should be able to make decisions on whether to pursue a criminal action, based on the merits of the case, rather than on the resources available," Carpenter wrote. "However, that is exactly the position many prosecutors in Northeastern Oregon are in at the moment. The lack of available dep-

uty prosecutors and the lack of funding to attract the qualified applicants leave us in the position of making resource based decisions every day." **Soldiering on** Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson is used to working on holidays or late into the evening. His phone and laptop are never too far out of reach, just in case the sheriff's office or the police need a search warrant reviewed or a suspect charged. However, he's not used to doing it alone. "When it's only two, when you have one gone you definitely feel it," Nelson said. The Morrow County District Attorney's Office held on to a full staff through most of the pandemic, unlike Nelson's colleagues in Umatilla, Wallowa and Grant counties. That meant the rolling backlog of cases caused by the court shutdowns in 2020 never had a chance to metastasize into growing problems, like those felt in Wallowa County.

"We really went through the COVID-19 thing fully staffed, so I do think we were in a better position than any of the other counties, because while COVID affected everybody, we weren't also dealing with a staffing shortage at the same time." But Nelson, like district attorneys across Northeastern Oregon, is used to the challenges and the duty that is asked of them. Nelson noted that despite working through every holiday — especially now with his office short-staffed — his troubles are eclipsed by the officials and public he serves. "Anytime law enforcement is working, I have to be working too," Nelson said. "If there's a single officer out there that might need to have a search warrant reviewed, I need to be available. If it's a weekend and someone gets picked up on a warrant, I need to be available. But I'm going home at night. I'm with my family at night. You know, there's law enforcement officers out on the street, and they have it harder than me. At the end of the day, I'm a lucky guy."

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