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Sponseller named 4-H agent at MC Extension Service

By Autumn Morgan

The Morrow County Extension Service recently named Claire Sponseller as the new 4-H agent. She steps into the position vacated when Bill Broderick retired on November 30, 2007 after 21 years of service. Sponseller began work as the Morrow County 4-H agent on February 15.

Sponseller moved to the area from Idaho. For the past three years, Sponseller and her husband have lived in Stanfield to split the commute time. Her husband works for Fish and Wildlife in Pendleton.

Claire Sponseller

While in Idaho, Sponseller was an intern and worked at extension offices in Idaho. For the past two years, she has worked at the Morrow County Extension Service as a 4-H program assistant. She holds a bachelor's degree in animal science production from the University of Idaho and a master's degree in integrated resource management from Colorado State.

Sponseller's job involves many responsibilities. She is currently the secretary for the Morrow County Livestock Growers and acts as a liaison between the 4-H program and the Livestock Growers. She also keeps OSU informed of what is going on with the Morrow County 4-H program. She is also in charge of 4-H fairs and camps.

"I enjoy my work," said Sponseller. "I have an open door policy and I want the community to know that they can call me with concerns or ideas."

Sponseller can be reached at the Morrow County Extension Service at 676-9642.

Sheriff Matlack runs for re-election

Ken Matlack recently announced that he will be running for re-election to the position of Morrow County Sheriff.

Matlack attended grade school in Irrigon and moved to Umatilla in 1959 where he graduated from Umatilla High School in 1967. His wife, Donna, was raised in Irrigon and they were married in 1967. The couple, who has raised two daughters, recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

After high school, Matlack attended Blue Mountain Community College and graduated from Eastern Oregon University in 1971 with a bachelor's degree in secondary education. He was a high school social science teacher and coach for two years at Powder Valley High School in North Powder until he was recruited by the Oregon State Police.

In 1974, Matlack joined the Oregon State Police and served as a trooper, detective, detective sergeant, and patrol sergeant. He also served as the assistant station commander at The Dalles where State Police operations were supervised in five north central counties. At the time of his retirement in 1999, Matlack was the outpost commander in Arlington where he supervised state police field operations in Gilliam, Wheeler and a small portion of Morrow Counties. Matlack spent 12 years working in Morrow and Umatilla County as a trooper and detective. He was a graduate of the Drug Enforcement Administration's School in narcotic and dangerous drug law enforcement and a graduate of the School of Police Staff and Command from Northwestern University's Traffic Institute, Evanston, IL.

Matlack has been involved in community service in Morrow County as an elected member of the Irrigon City Council, Morrow County Health District, Morrow County School Board and the Irrigon Cemetery District. He currently serves on the Irrigon City Council and works with the Irrigon Watermelon Festival.

According to a news release from Matlack, some of his accomplishments as sheriff include:

Sheriff Ken Matlack

-The Morrow County Sheriff's Office modified the city of Heppner contract which saved the city of Heppner approximately $ 75,000 by reducing the number of officers from three to two. The city was able to use these dollars for other much needed city services. In 2007, the sheriff's office provided approximately 750 additional hours to the city at no cost and would have given more, but was short staffed several times during portions of the year. The sheriff's office has asked the city several times if this is working or if they would like to hire another officer and the city has said they are satisfied with the cost savings and the police service they are receiving.

-The sheriff's office initiated a contract with the city of Irrigon for one position that provides code work and additional coverage. They also initiated line items in their budget for animal control in both the county as well as Irrigon. The sheriff's office is also providing additional hours to animal control in the city of Heppner as well.

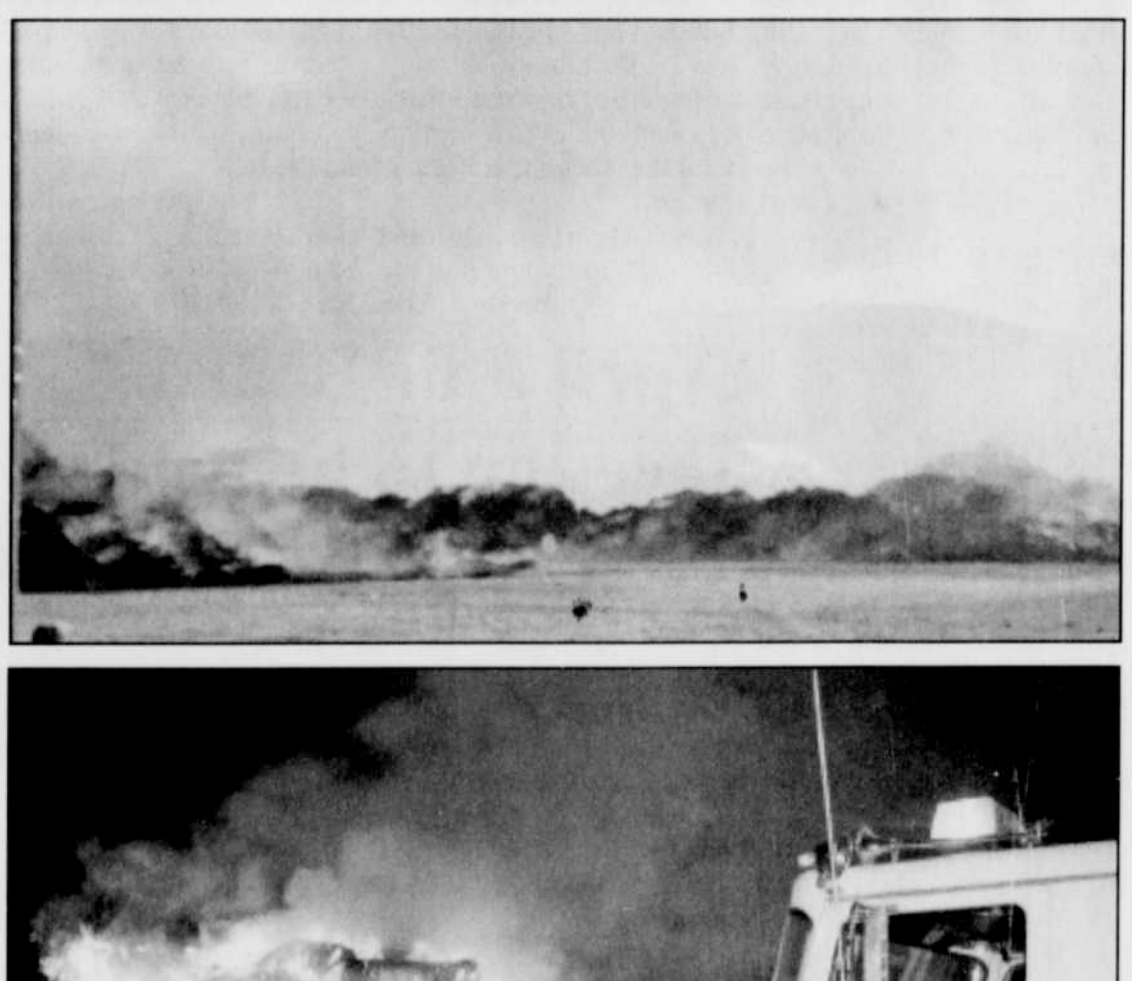
-The sheriff's office initiated a method in their dispatch center that records area checks in various locations of the county as a means to document when deputies have checked outlying areas and roads.

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office currently has six reserve deputies. They continually try to expand their reserve program. The standards are high and a strong commitment is necessary. The sheriff's office continues to look at their reserves first when making hiring decisions for new officers. "Because we select good reserves, we have hired several as full time deputies," said Matlack. "We continue to seek good men and women for the program. When I was elected Morrow County Sheriff in 2004, I made a commitment to the voters of Morrow County that I would be a "working sheriff" and you would see not only the sheriff but also the undersheriff working in the field with the deputies. We have done this, backing up our deputies, taking complaints, making arrests and providing other assistance when our deputies needed it. This will continue if I am elected to a second term as your sheriff."

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office re-negotiated their jail contract with Umatilla County. Because of the re-negotiation, the sheriff's office has been able to increase their beds and lodge more prisoners at no extra cost. While many agencies in Umatilla County often times struggle to find open bed space at the jail, the contract has allowed the sheriff's office to lodge more prisoners.

"As the political season progresses, you will undoubtedly hear rumors and stories about your current administration," said Matlack. "Already false information is being put out. Please, when you hear rumors or stories I encourage you to call me at work at 541-676-5317 or at home at 541-922-5173 so that I have an opportunity to correct these errors or discuss other concerns. Other sheriff's office information will be sent to you in the near future. I am very excited about serving another term as Morrow County Sheriff. I hope our efforts have shown that we are providing the type of service you want and the voters of Morrow County will give us another opportunity to serve you."

Spectacular hay fire lights up night sky



A fire that engulfed several hay stacks at the JVB Dairy near Ione Monday night, resulted in a spectacular blaze that lit up the night sky for miles around.
Calls went out to fire departments around 7:45 p.m. and firefighters from Heppner, Ione and Lexington responded. Firemen worked mostly on containing the blaze into the night, and the next day revealed a smoldering pile of burnt hay.
Dairy owner John VandenBrink was unavailable for comment Tuesday, so the cause and exact tonnage of hay lost in the fire was unavailable. The fire was located away from the milking buildings, home sites and the animals, and no structures appeared to be damaged, and no animals harmed. *-Photos by David and Andrew Sykes*

Morrow County Health Department calendar

Thursday, April 3 – Heppner Clinic 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. (closed 12-1)
Monday, April 7 – Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)
Tuesday, April 8 – Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)
Thursday, April 10 – Heppner Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12-1)
Monday, April 14 – Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)
Tuesday, April 15 – Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)
Thursday, April 17 – Heppner Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12-1)
Monday, April 21 – Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)

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MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

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