

## ESTES RETIRES

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time there, she helped with the family business and stayed busy raising her two sons, Chad and Eric. After a divorce, in 1985, she moved back to Heppner to raise her boys in her hometown.

In fall of that year she started at the Morrow County District Attorney's office as a support enforcement officer.

When a job opened in the assessor's office the following spring, it seemed like a good opportunity.

"Raising my two boys, it was more pay, and it seemed like a challenging job, so I started as an assessment clerk," she says.

Also after returning to Heppner, she became re-acquainted with childhood friend Rusty Estes. The friendship blossomed and they were married in 1988.

In fact 1988 was a busy year for Estes—it was also the year she applied for an open appraiser position, and they year she became certified as an appraiser.

The certification threw a wrench in her personal plans, she recalls.

"All my friends were going to Hawaii, and I had a ticket to go, and they called and told me I had to sit for my exam at that time. So I had to stay home and do that," she recalls. "But that's okay, I was happy to do that."

The missed vacation worked out in the long run; not only did she become an appraiser but in 1990, Estes became the county's lead appraiser.

"And here I've been," she says.

With so much history with Morrow County, she says it's with mixed emotions that she now faces

retirement.

"I'll miss a lot of things. I'll miss the people. Being an appraiser, you're exposed to all the different people in the county. I'll miss that interaction. I'll miss the people I work with, who have the taxpayers' best interests at heart.

"I'm going to miss the challenge of my job," she says, adding that her job includes appraisals of everything from homes to industrial and multimillion-dollar corporate farms. "It isn't often in a lifetime that you get the chance to be exposed to the challenges this job provides."

Despite that, she says it's "time."

"My first priority will be to be available to my grandchildren," she says, referring to four boys and one girl, ages nine to two, in Portland and Caldwell, ID.

"My parents are here, both in their 80s," she says. "I want to be free to spend time with them. It's just a good time to enjoy my life now, at this age.

"Rusty still has to work," she quips.

She has no fear that there will be a shortage of good people to fill her shoes.

"When I look at the young people ready to move into the community, raise their children here, I'm happy to move on to something new and open up a space."

And Estes has no shortage of plans to fill her retirement.

"I love my job. I love being a public servant," she says. "But I do look forward to spending more time with all the other organizations I volunteer with, especially hospice. I will continue to be a public servant in dif-

## CBEC provides options to manage bills

During a particularly cold winter or hot summer, do you open your utility bill with a sense of dread? If so, Columbia Basin Electric would like to work with you.

Coming out of one of the area's colder, longer winters in some time, Columbia Basin Electric says the co-op would like to explore with its members possible solutions to better manage their variable electric bills.

One option the co-op is offering is the Average Pay Plan (previously known as Budget Pay). This plan is not a reduced rate plan for our members. Instead, CBEC describes it as a plan to help even out your payments over a specific period of time. For many consumers, it adds stability to their monthly cash flow.

As a precaution, Columbia Basin asks consumers to note that the Average Pay Plan can be mislead-

ing. If you agree to a fixed monthly payment and think you don't have to monitor your energy usage at all, best think again. Columbia Basin Electric will still be reading your meter, and you might be in for a rude awakening when your Average Pay Plan period ends and you are faced with a True-Up billing. You might owe extra money. Read on.

To qualify for the Average Pay Plan, you need to have lived at the same address for over a year, be current on your electric account, pay on time every month, and sign up during the month of April.

The Average Pay Plan will average your electrical consumption for the period May 1 to April 30 of the previous year, and you will then be invoiced an equal amount on each statement. In theory, the account should build up a credit during the summer months, and will deplete during the

winter months when consumption is typically much higher. No monthly payment can be skipped, and the plan is available only for residential consumers.

Members need to monitor their energy usage on their monthly statements, and watch their total balance that carries over from month to month. Toward the end of winter, if the balance carrying forward is not a credit or is substantially more than the average invoice amount, the consumer will be responsible to pay the difference at the end of the Average Pay Plan period, which is the April billing cycle.

Columbia Basin Electric also says it has multiple bill-paying options available to its members. Members can sign up for Auto Pay, which will automatically pay their invoice directly from their bank account each month. The new Smart Hub program

allows members the option of downloading an app onto their smartphone or other smart device and paying their invoice electronically. The Smart Hub app also has tools that allow members see their bill as soon as it is available, monitor their daily usage, etc.

Members also can use the Pay Now feature on Columbia Basin Electric's website, [www.cbec.cc](http://www.cbec.cc). This feature allows members to make a credit card payment towards their residential account, or to make a payment for someone in need.

"Regardless which payment method seems right for you, please know that the staff at Columbia Basin Electric is here to help and answer any questions you may have," the co-op stated in a release. Consumers can call the co-op for more information, in Heppner at 541-676-9146, or Condon at 541-384-2023.

ferent aspects."

Estes has a history with the local hospice organization that stretches back more than a decade. She first became a volunteer in 2002, right at the beginning of Morrow County hospice, and became volunteer coordinator and trainer two years after its founding.

"Hospice is my heart work," says Estes. "It's so important, and I feel privileged to be a part of it."

Aside from hospice, she also serves as chair for the Morrow County Unified Recreation District and is very involved in her church and in Eastern Oregon Cur-sillo.

And then there are hobbies that she may finally

have time for.

"I have a Native American flute sitting on my mantle that I intend to learn to play," she adds.

Finally, though, she expresses gratitude for the people who have surrounded her these past decades.

"I have always been very appreciative of the county court. I know how hard the court and the other elected officials of this county work to serve the public.

"It's because of their support and commitment that we have a great retirement plan that allows me to go now," she says.

"I'll miss all the people here. The county employees are good people."

## DA's Report

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson has released the following report:

-Steven L. Fox, 51, was convicted of Escape II, a Class C Felony, and was sentenced to three years supervised probation subject to 180 sanction units with 90 jail units. Probation conditions include substance abuse evaluation, mental health evaluation, risk and needs assessment. If probation is revoked, defendant is subject to the 15-18 month sentence. Felony fine was waived.

-Jose Javier Ruiz-Gomez, 22, was convicted of Assault IV - Constitut-

ing Domestic Violence, a Class A Misdemeanor. Sentence of 180 days' jail time was suspended and the defendant sentenced to 36 months' bench probation. Probation conditions include no offensive contact with the victims, mental health evaluation and anger management evaluation. Additional counts of Assault IV and Harassment were dismissed. Fines, fees and assessments totaled \$200.

-Julio Reyes-Garcia Jr, 62, was convicted of Failure to Report as a Sex Offender, a Class A Violation. The defendant was fined \$435.

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Commemorating National Doctor's Day Thursday, March 30th



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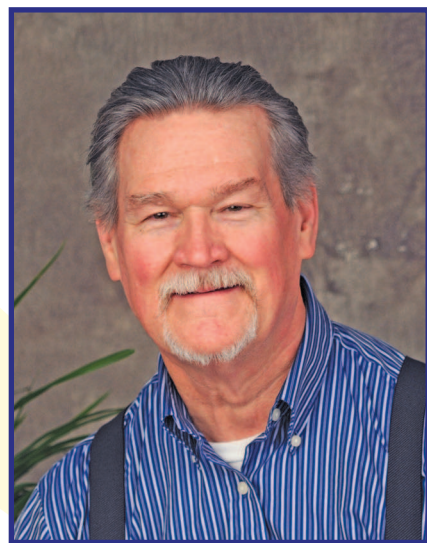
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