

Caliene Smith receives July Yard of the Month recognition



Above: An irrigated sagebrush is a dominant feature of Caliene Smith's home on Jones St. in Heppner. Inset: Smith stands by one of her huge hanging baskets, which she purchased at MCGG/Green Feed & Seed. -Photo by Kay Proctor

By Kay Proctor

A home with an irrigated sagebrush by the front steps has earned July Yard of the Month recognition.

Caliene Smith rents her home on 570 Jones from her son Dave Jaca and daughter-in-law Jennifer Hughes Jaca, who lived there previously. They jokingly refer to the large plant as a "Bonsai Sagebrush" since it requires continuous trimming to hold its growth in check. It's worth the extra work because of its welcomed shade and earthy scent after a good rain.

The house was built in 1893 and survived the Heppner flood of 1903. It was a rental for a time before Caliene moved in six years ago. She has personalized

the yard in several ways with help along the way. Dave, Jennifer, and grandsons Tim and Mike pitch in. Leon Bowles mows and does some yard work. Charlie Grabeel planed lumber for construction of the tall wood fence.

Every square inch of the yard and every single flower container are watered by an extensive drip system that Caliene envisioned and Charlie installed. It runs the entire length and width of the lot, with varying heights. Consistent irrigation from the automatic system has resulted in healthier trees, shrubs, flowers, and lawn. Large hanging baskets thrive on the regular watering.

The soil seems "pretty good" and she has used Miracle Gro in a hose-end sprayer. Deer have been a challenge and even broke a portion of a wood fence trying to jump in. A taller wood fence keeps them out now, but they bed down right next to it. Watchdog Agnes does her best letting them know that they are not welcome.

A side patio with deep shade, cool breezes and privacy is Caliene's favorite area. It's paved with bricks from the house's original chimney, and a barbecue grill sits nearby that Caliene "burns things" on.

Tomatoes take up a row in the back while strawberry plants fill up a side yard bed. The many flower beds Caliene has added or expanded are full of old-fashioned annuals and perennials such as hollyhocks, zinnias and poppies. Her favorites are peonies, and she grows some of an extraordinary flame-red color with gold centers. Geraniums do well under her care, too.

Growing up on a ranch in Arock, OR, Caliene moved to Heppner about 10 years ago. She worked at Heppner Family Foods for seven years and has been

the drive-up teller at Bank of Eastern Oregon for the past three years. Previously she worked at Cortex Gold Mine in northeast Nevada.

She remembers "always gardening and having a yard," probably because she was raised in a farming/ranching community. A sentimental reminder of her high desert life is a "Welcome" stone by the front door carved with her maiden name, "Stitzel." Every so often, Caliene gets to watch her son J.T. participate in ranch rodeos in that area, enjoy the company of her other four grandchildren, and sit with family to listen to and tell stories.

Yard of the Month recognition is sponsored by the



This welcome stone carved with her maiden name is one of the distinctive features of Smith's yard. -Photo by Kay Proctor

Heppner Volunteers, MCGG-Green Feed & Seed, and the City of Heppner. Contact Kay Proctor for further information.

Chamber lunch meeting

The next lunch meeting of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce will be an all entities report on Thursday, Aug. 3, in the Heppner City Hall conference room.

Cost of lunch is \$10; Willow Creek Diner will cater. RSVP is required at 541-676-5536 no later than the Tuesday before to guarantee food and seating.

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. A request for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodations for persons with disabilities should be made at least 48 hours before the meeting to Sheryll Bates at 541-676-5536.

Youth volleyball camp next week

The Heppner Mustang volleyball program will host a youth volleyball camp for incoming fifth through eighth graders Aug. 1-3 from 5-6:30 p.m. in the Heppner Elementary gym. The cost will be \$25, and the camp will focus on basic skills and having fun.

Anyone with questions, contact Coach Wilson at 541-256-0126.

Sheriff's Report

April 11: -Morrow County Sheriff's Office and Boardman ambulance responded to an 18-month-old in Boardman who had a needle containing meth break in his arm.

-Morrow County Sheriff's Office and Boardman ambulance responded to a male "going a little crazy" in Boardman; RP advised they were trying to keep him calm. The patient refused transport.

-An RP in Irrigon requested contact from a deputy at Irrigon City Hall. The subject advised he didn't want the info to go over the radio as it was a major issue and he didn't

want it going over the air so they could run.

-MCSO received report of a safe broken open and dumped along Pole Line Road in Boardman.

-MCSO received a complaint regarding juveniles getting high in Irrigon.

-An RP advised MCSO that her medication was taken from her suitcase sometime between Portland and Irrigon. Subject requested phone contact.

-MCSO received a complaint from a woman in Irrigon who stated her husband got a restraining order against her and was refusing to let her see the kids.

EARLY LEARNING CENTER

-Continued from PAGE ONE vice District (IMESD). Funding for this collaboration was made possible by the Port of Morrow, with some grants from the state as well as partner contributions. The capital costs approached \$2.1 million.

The center is named in honor of Gary and Kathy Neal, longtime residents of Eastern Oregon. Gary is the general manager for the Port of Morrow, where he has worked since 1989. Through her 17 years of service on the IMESD Board of Directors, Kathy said she has come to realize the great importance of early learning in the lives of children.

"I really believe that providing a strong foundation for our youngest children is what they need to be successful in school and life—data shows this. We need to be giving our kids the best opportunity we can from the beginning," Kathy said.

Kathy Neal said the center came to fruition through a shared vision of many individuals in the area: business professionals at the Port of Morrow, Morrow County commissioners, IMESD Superintendent Dr. Mark Mulvihill, BMCC President Cam Preus, Umatilla-Morrow Head Start Director Maureen McGrath and the team there, other educators and support from the state of Oregon through Representative Greg Smith.

"That's the way we get things done in Eastern Oregon—it's never one person. We are really good at collaborating and sharing resources to accomplish what we want," she said.

The Neal Early Learning Center will be the site for several programs. One is a preschool program of the Morrow County School District (MCSO) for three- and four-year-olds, a free program open to any families in the school district. Dirk Dirksen, superintendent of the MCSO, said the new center offers a positive step for educating the youngest students in the county.

"We are trying to shift some of our resources to the earliest learners, because we know if they are ready for kindergarten, they are reading well in third grade, freshmen are on track and more students are graduating," Dirksen said. He said he appreciates the efforts of

all the partners to make the center a reality and looks forward to working together to maximize the center for community needs. The school district also offers preschool programs in Irrigon and Heppner.

Umatilla-Morrow Head Start will manage the facility and operations including three classrooms, an adjacent infant/toddler room hosted by BMCC, as well as home visitors, parent educators and child and family advocates. The IMESD's Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education program will have a classroom, too.

"This site signifies how deeply the community values its children and their future," said McGrath. "It's a place to learn, to grow, to connect and ultimately to succeed."

The proximity of the Neal Early Learning Center to the Boardman Workforce Training Center is not lost on Kathy Neal and Dirksen. They said having a place to educate adults alongside a place to educate the children of those adults is a definite asset.

"It's all about supporting a community of learners, whether they are three- or four-year-olds or 35- and 50-year-olds, the connection between facilities and partners like BMCC, schools and businesses is tying that effort together," said Dirksen.

Training and supporting employees for work in the area is crucial, Kathy Neal said, and having the Early Learning Center for those families makes a stronger community, and entices young people to return to Morrow County to work and live.

Gary and Kathy Neal's son and his family recently moved to the area to raise their family, and their three-year-old grandson will be in the first class at the center. "We are 100 percent sure the learning center is going to make an impact in a really positive way," Kathy Neal said.

The Neal Early Learning Center will have its official opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony on Wednesday, Aug. 30, at 3 p.m. For more information about Morrow County School District's preschool program, visit www.morrow.k12.or.us.



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