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From horses to city hall: Longtime Ione resident honored as grand marshal



Linda LaRue on the porch of the family home in Ione. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

By Andrea Di Salvo

“I’m still surprised and puzzled as to why I got this honor,” admits Linda LaRue, Ione’s 2025 Fourth of July Grand Marshal. However, those who selected her aren’t puzzled. LaRue has been a fixture in Ione and its celebrations for decades.

LaRue was born in Enterprise and raised in the small town of Lostine in Wallowa County, Oregon. She was the youngest of eight children. Her parents ran a small dairy, milking around 26 cows and selling the cream to a Wallowa creamery. The family kept busy on the farm, but there was still time for horses.

“Horses were my life,” says LaRue. “It was a great way to grow up.”

She attended school in Lostine, graduating as valedictorian in a class of about five. They were among the last who graduated from that school. The high school shut down and merged with Wallowa and Enterprise high schools two years after her graduation.

CDA in ‘wait and see’ mode over fire annexation
Public records policy gets an overhaul

By Andrea Di Salvo

Columbia Development Authority Executive Director Greg Smith reported last week that the CDA is in “wait and see” mode as far as annexing the development authority’s Morrow County property into any fire district.

With Boardman Fire Rescue District and Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District in dispute over rights to the annexation, the CDA and Morrow County have both pulled back from any action on annexation. The Boardman and Irrigon fire departments have agreed to let the courts settle the case.

Smith said he expects it to be mid-July before an update is available. The best-case scenario, he said, puts any fire district annexation after Labor Day.

The current restraining order Irrigon has filed does allow for the “status quo” for emergency services, so there will continue to be fire coverage for the entire property. Boardman will serve the industrial lands on the Morrow County portion of the CDA property, while Irrigon will cover the 640 acres to the north, Smith said.

When one of the board members raised the question of Irrigon Fire’s plans to build and staff a fire sta-

Rather than going straight to college, LaRue married her high school sweetheart, Del LaRue, and started a family.

“I tell people I shopped around a long time to get this name,” she quips.

They were soon joined by children Robin, Shawn and Michelle.

Del was a teacher, so when the Lostine school shut down, the young family moved to Wallowa, where he taught and coached. They then moved to Fossil. They spent four years there before settling in the Ione area when their children were in the second, third and fourth grades.

They spent the next 54 years in their adopted home. All three of their children graduated from Ione High School, and Del built a successful career as a teacher and coach, especially for track.

“He used to tell the kids, ‘I’ll work with you, and you’ll be successful if you work hard,’” LaRue remembers. Her husband is still remembered and

tion near the property, Nic Kotz of the Oregon Military Department (OMD) responded that they plan to use an existing OMD building, equip it with an engine and staff it during the day shift, but that staffing had not yet happened.

“We’re still in the working-out phase on that,” he said.

Another topic on the board’s mind was the issue of formalizing a policy for public records requests.

“I want the public records request at a level that provides simplicity and ease for the public to submit their requests,” said Smith. “In addition, I want a policy that is open and transparent and is uniform.”

Previously, the CDA had not charged any fees for records requests. In recent months, however, a rise in requests apparently strained the CDA’s staff resources, prompting the formalization of a policy.

Smith had previously presented a draft document to the board. June 24, he presented a new draft that had been reviewed by news outlets and the CDA’s legal counsel.

The draft listed information that the person requesting documents needed to provide. It also provided a general timeline of five

honored through the Coach Del LaRue Scholarship.

Meanwhile, LaRue found her own career path. She started out driving a school van to pick up students where the regular bus routes didn’t go. She then drove larger activity buses for a while. Finally, she took on a part-time job at Bank of Eastern Oregon’s Ione branch, processing monthly statements.

When someone retired and left an opening in the bank, LaRue transitioned to full time and worked out of BEO’s Heppner location.

“I always liked to tell George Koffler I was second in charge and hot on his trail,” she remembers.

She ended up retiring from the bank after 35 years.

“It was a great career,” she says. “I had a hard time retiring, but I’m glad I did.”

After retirement, she and Del moved to Arizona, where they spent four or five years. When her husband passed away, she says some people asked her where she was going to go.

“Home,” she replied. “Here. Ione is home to me.”

She still lives in the house she shared with her husband and children. She says it’s not *exactly* the same house they moved into—David Allstott had to do extensive rebuilding when they discovered the walls were made of old ammunition boxes, which were starting to warp and rot. She recalls that, in the process, he had to remove a window he had just in-

stalled.

As a joke, Alstott told her people had asked why he removed the window, to which he’d replied, “Well, you know, when they don’t pay their bills, you have to take it back out.”

Always on point, LaRue told his she’d been asked the same question and replied, “Well, you know, bad workmanship, you’ve got to make them take it back out.”

She doesn’t live there alone, though. She says that when her husband passed away, her daughter decided she needed a dog. She now shares her long-time home with her eight-year-old West Highland Terrier, Sophie.

LaRue has also been involved in various aspects of the community since first moving to Ione. She helped organize the Fourth of July event early on, but backed off her involvement as it grew and new generations rose to take over responsibility, or as she puts it, “moved up the chain from being the kids.”

In fact, she has been an integral part of the planning for so long, she and Del were grand marshals at one point. She says she pointed that out, but one of the current organizers said that was before they had been born.

Now, she says she attends the Fourth of July as a “regular person.”

“I can still answer questions, but I’m not technically on the committee,” -Continued to PAGE EIGHT

one person’s public records requests.

He also mentioned that, with the Malheur Enterprise closing, requests seemed to have declined.

“That doesn’t mean it’s not going to occur again,” he added.

Smith said it was important to news agencies that the fees be up-front, consistent across the board and as affordable as possible.

“The CDA will make every effort to keep its fees reasonable,” said Smith. “However, excessive, duplicative or vague requests cost the taxpayers money.”

That said, the draft pol- -Continued to PAGE FIVE

Ione Fourth of July celebration schedule PAGE 7



-Contributed photo

Blue Mountain Junior Girls’ Softball are District Champions

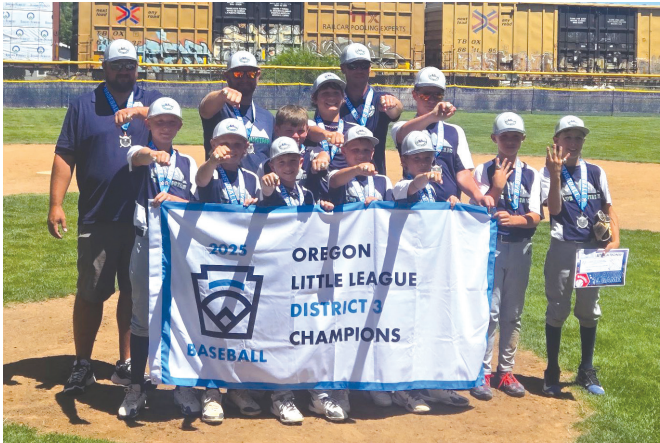


L-R – Rachel Allen, Kamryn Dickenson, Isa Payne, Gracie Putman, Braelyn Perry, Tymber Longgood, Emily Spike, Harper Coiner, Tim Dickenson, Brynley Allen, Sydnee Wade, Matison Hendrix, Sylver Longgood, Emily Bonner, and Josh Coiner. -Photo by Melissa Coiner

The Blue Mountain junior girls’ team beat Union County 11-10 on Monday, June 30, to earn a spot in the state tournament. The state tournament is in Madras Oregon July 12-14.

The Blue Mountain team consists of players from Heppner, Echo, and Stanfield. The team is coached by Rachel Allen, Tim Dickenson, and Josh Coiner.

Little League takes district championships



Blue Mountain Little League 12U All-Stars baseball team. -Contributed photo



Blue Mountain Little League 10U All-Stars baseball team. -Contributed photo

A community of sheep ranchers and wheat farmers emerges

Ione, Oregon, became a bustling community and remains an active town

Steve Lent, a Crook County historian, authored this story published on June 20, 2025, for Southwest Connection (www.swconnection.com)

Ione is located along Willow Creek about 30 miles south of the Columbia River in Morrow County. The lush rangeland grasses -Continued to PAGE EIGHT

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