

Fire destroys Hat Rock home

By PHIL WRIGHT
Staff Writer

Fire burned a couple out of their home Sunday evening near Hat Rock State Park, northeast of Hermiston.

Conni Hull said her parents, Connie and Kelli Maret, ended up at Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington, after experiencing heart trouble in the wake of the fire. Her father suffered from breathing in smoke, she said, and her mother is a breast cancer patient, but both were stable and in good condition at the hospital.

The blaze happened Sunday around 6:30 p.m. at 82276 Hat Rock Road, space 14. Hull said her father was cooking dinner when a lithium battery in a spare room exploded while charging. Connie Maret grabbed a fire extinguisher, his daughter said, but it was expired. He then ran for a garden hose, but that was too short and he had to attach another hose to it.

The Umatilla Rural

Fire Protection District was the lead agency at the scene, and Umatilla County Fire District 1, Hermiston, also responded.

The couple owned five dogs and five cats, Hull said, and two dogs died in the fire. No one has seen the cats, she said, so they might have escaped. A neighbor was caring for the other three dogs.

The American Red Cross Cascades Region is providing resources for the Marets to meet immediate basic needs, including temporary housing and clothing. Hull added family and friends are working out where her parents could live after that.

The home appears to be a total loss, Hull said. Her grandmother left the home to her parents 10 years ago, and they did not have homeowners insurance and live off disability benefits. She set up an online donation account to help her parents at www.gofundme.com/grandparents-lose-house-to-fire.

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Gorham said the district hired six new firefighter/paramedics in order to meet the increased staffing needs that will come with the 24/7 station. Two paid firefighter/paramedics and an intern staff the station.

The building is 31 years old, but this is the first time it will be staffed around the clock. It also went through some upgrades and remodels to make the building more livable. A semi truck hit the station in June 2014, and though no one was inside the building at the time of the crash it hit the area where firefighters would stay. It took several months to repair.

The three district employees staffing the station on Thursday, March 2, were Lt. Nate Stephens, firefighter and paramedic Dan Shult and resident intern Hunter Eynon.

"Before, the closest (fully-staffed) station was Station 21," Gorham said, speaking about the downtown safety center shared with the police station. "You couldn't get any ambulance response out of here until yesterday."

The station has four vehicles, including a brush

Early morning fire puts family out of home

Hermiston Herald

A fire in Hermiston did extensive damage to a duplex early Tuesday morning, putting a family of six out of their home. No one was injured.

Umatilla County Fire District 1 responded at 3 a.m. Tuesday to the 900 block of Orchard Avenue to put out the fire. Scott Goff, a UCFD volunteer, said there was fire, heat and smoke damage in one of the units and smoke damage in the other.

Goff works for the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office, but was speaking on behalf of the UCFD. He said the fire appeared to have been started by a malfunctioning furnace.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Firefighters work to contain a duplex fire in the 900 block of Orchard Avenue early Tuesday morning.

The American Red Cross is providing aid to two adults and four children, according to a press release.

The Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District also sent firefighters to support the effort, Goff said.

truck, an interface truck, a water tender and a medic unit.

Stephens said the district always budgets for new equipment, but didn't purchase any new engines or trucks for the station yet.

"Probably a new engine is needed next," he said.

Gorham said the current staff at Station 22 will stay there for the whole year,

and in January, other firefighters will rotate in.

The increased hours for the station were made possible when the Hermiston and Stanfield departments merged in 2016, creating the UCFD. The consolidation of the two districts resulted in a combined tax rate of \$1.75 per \$1,000 assessed property value for Hermiston and Stanfield

residents.

The merger is expected to generate about \$900,000, which will go toward new staff, replacing vehicles and toward staffing the Punkin Center station full-time. UCFD Chief Scott Stanton said he estimates about \$625,000 of the funds generated from the merger would go toward staffing the station.

IN BRIEF

Longtime beautician goes out in style

Buttercreek Salon is planning to celebrate longtime beautician Kathy Youngman's retirement.

The celebration is Saturday from 3-5 p.m. at Buttercreek Salon, 315 S.W. 11th St., Hermiston. Everyone is invited to drop in and congratulate Youngman.

After attending beauty school in Pendleton, Youngman started working as a beautician in Hermiston in 1973. She bought Buttercreek Salon in 1983. After owning the salon for

14 years, Youngman sold it to Pam Monger. Terri Hymas, the current owner, purchased the salon in 2011.

For more information, call 541-567-2911.

Education foundation offers scholarships

Four scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 each are available from the Hermiston Education Foundation.

The awards will be given to seniors from Hermiston High School who will attend college or university

academic programs. Important factors in the evaluation of applicants include academic scholarship, community service, leadership and financial need.

The application is due by Friday, March 24, with interviews to follow. Applications are available at the high school counseling office or the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, 415 S. Highway 395.

For more information, call George Clough at 541-314-3182 or write HEF, P.O. Box 1096, Hermiston, OR 97838.

Get 'em' while they last

A celebration of 100 years in the making comes to a close Sunday as local Girl Scout Cookie booths shut down for the season.

The next few days are your last chance to buy the eight varieties offered, including Thin Mints, Samoas, Tag-alongs, the gluten-free Toffee-tastic and more. Boxes are \$5 each.

To find a local sales site, visit www.girlscoutsofsw.org/en/cookies/find-cookies.html and enter your zip code.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The Marets' neighbor, Lilli Peterson, took in the Marets' three surviving dogs, Ozzy, Roscoe and Jasmine.

READING:

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Friday of each month, families are encouraged to come in the mornings and read with their students.

Tamie Watkins, a Title I teacher at West Park, said one of the most important things teachers can do to encourage literacy is to give children books of their

own, as many don't have them in their homes.

"If the kids meet their (reading) goals, they get to choose a book to keep," Watkins said. "Books seem to be a very good incentive."

Rick Cotterell, the principal of McNary Heights Elementary School in Umatilla, said the students have special dress-up days for the entire week, and one of

the highlights is a school-wide parade in which each class makes a float based on a book they like. The school also has guest readers in classes throughout the week.

"Each day there's an emphasis on reading, and at lunch, the kids answer comprehension questions and can win prizes," he said. "It's so much fun for the kids."

Cotterell said McNary Heights is below the state average in literacy rates, with more than 60 percent of the student population as English language learners. One of their goals, he said, is to align the intervention process across grade levels, so kids don't have to adjust to a new program each year.

Headings said compared to other schools with challenging populations — high

poverty, high ELL populations — West Park is above average. But compared to the entire state, Headings estimated the school is at or below the average literacy rate.

Watkins said one of the new programs she is using this year seems to be having some success. The program, called Fast ForWord, uses repetition to help kids understand new concepts

and words.

"Kids need, on average, 14 to 30-something repetitions to understand a new concept," he said. "For kids who struggle with reading, that's not enough. With the new program, they get hundreds or thousands of repetitions of the same sound," she said. "We're seeing really nice gains with kids who've struggled in the past."



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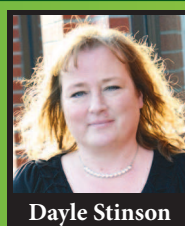
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