

AWARDS

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Instead of an auction, Bonney listened to Dennis Barnett enumerate the many qualities that won him the distinction of Man of the Year. Barnett described Bonney, who owns Hale's Restaurant, as humble, unassuming, knowledgeable and working tirelessly behind the scenes for the betterment of the community. He even compared Bonney to a quote by Mother Teresa about doing good even when others react selfishly.

"Mother Teresa might be a stretch," Bonney said dryly as he accepted the award and thanked his family for helping make everything he does possible.

Scott Purswell, owner and president of Purswell Pump, said he had no idea when he was sitting in the audience that his staff was hiding and laughing together in the lobby of the community center, waiting to come out when Purswell Pump was named the Bob Severson Rotary Business of the Year. He thought presenter Tony Garberg was talking about a different company until his sons — one of which was supposed to be at basketball practice — came out on stage with the award.

"My family, my company, my friends — everyone got me," he said.

He had come to the event at the insistence of a good friend, who said his really wanted to go and it would be much more fun if Purswell and his wife came with them.

"I thought, 'Why is this so important to her?'" Purswell said.

He said in his shock he forgot to thank his staff on stage and acknowledge that it was really the entire company's award, but he hopes everyone knows how grateful he is for them.

Hermiston High School senior Madison Wilson won the Altrusa Outstanding Young Citizens Award. Wilson said she knew she was getting some sort of award,



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Shawn Lockwood was speechless after being named the 2018 Woman of the Year.

but didn't expect the extent of the ceremony.

"I didn't know I had to speak," she said. "I don't like being in the spotlight — I was in total shock."

Wilson was recognized for the things she's done to help others throughout her school years. In eighth grade at Armand Larive Middle School, she and a friend made about 800 Valentines cards, one for each student at the school.

"We wrote anonymous encouraging notes inside them," she said.

Wilson is also studying Spanish, with the hopes of becoming fluent and connecting with those who can't speak English.

Her dream, she said, is to become a third-grade teacher.

"It'll be especially helpful if I come back here to teach, where there's such a high population of Spanish speakers," she said.

Michelle Hankinson, who won the Merit of Honor award for her work in creating Hermiston's 80-plot community garden Lovin' Spadefuls from scratch, said she had been told that the Children's Health Coalition — of which she is a part — was being recognized.

She was shocked when presenter Nora Prutton got up and started talking about her instead.

"I thought, what the heck is she doing?" Hankinson said.

Hermiston High School Distinguished Alumna Jaclyn Jenkins said she knew

about the award before the ceremony. Jenkins, Umatilla County's chief deputy district attorney, said HHS assistant principal Ericka Keefauver called to let her know about the award a few weeks before.

But Jenkins said while she wasn't surprised at the event, she felt taken aback by the award itself.

"I don't feel that distinguished," she said. She thanked her teachers, many of whom she said had helped shape her career path.

Several Hermiston School District staff members were also honored, including a teacher of the year, Amber Utter, and an administrator of the year, Jeff Kelso. The teachers honored for each school, and Kelso, had been announced several months prior, but were asked to stand and be recognized at the banquet.

The educators of the year were as follows:

Hermiston High School: Maureen Crossley, John Fisher

Armand Larive Middle School: Cori Applegate

Sandstone Middle School: LouAnne Patterson

Desert View Elementary School: Darci Wellsandt

Highland Hills Elementary School: Brittany Mustoe

Rocky Heights Elementary School: Laura Woodward

Sunset Elementary School: Kim Sexton

West Park Elementary School: Marci Wattenburger

District: Amber Utter



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

The Buttercreek Boys entertain diners during a 2016 rehearsal meeting at the Chuckwagon Cafe. The seasoned musicians will perform Friday from 6-7:30 p.m. as part of the cafe's farewell party.

CAFE

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Stolz didn't initially have her sights on a career in the restaurant industry. Although, as a young girl doing household chores, she would pretend she was working as a restaurant dishwasher. In addition, whenever Stolz played Monopoly, she wanted to be the banker.

"I liked counting and giving out the money," she said. "At the cafe, I choose to work the late shift and take care of the money."

She studied the Bible and journalism at Multnomah School of the Bible (now Multnomah University) in Portland before heading to the Chicago area. After working from 1972-79 on the editorial staff at Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Stolz returned to Eastern Oregon.

She worked at The Nickel Classifieds, *Hermiston Herald* and *East Oregonian* before heading to the coast in 1981 to work for *The Daily Astorian*, also owned by EO Media Group. After six months, her position was eliminated.

Dorothy and Duane Beason, her mother and

stepfather, suggested she return to Hermiston to help at the Chuckwagon Cafe. The Beasons opened their first Hermiston eatery in 1970. The Chuckwagon, a drive-in, was located at the current site of Panda Inn. A couple of years later when a fire destroyed the structure, they reopened it as the Chuckwagon Cafe where The Nickel is now housed. They built the current cafe in 1979.

In retirement, Stolz plans to continue volunteering in the community. Over the years, she has given back by donating gift certificates, holding fundraisers and supporting such groups as the Boy Scouts of America, a local race car team, the Community Fellowship Dinner and Umatilla High School's first robotics team.

"They named their robot Chuck, which made me cry," she said.

Stolz has met thousands of people. In addition to serving meals, she has hosted free S.O.S. meals for veterans, held Dutch oven cook-offs and offered specials for holidays. She said it's been fun watching multiple generations of families grow up.

"The most amazing people have walked through

our doors every day," she said "I can't think of any other profession that could have been so fulfilling and enjoyable."

Recent hip problems, Stolz said, have slowed her down. Tired and in pain, she decided to sell the cafe. In the fall she put a notice on the cafe's website and got a couple of bites. However, the parties were interested in leasing. When Stolz finally decided to list it, she received two offers in less than a week.

"I decided I wanted to sell it and walk away," she said. "I'm so amazed and I'm so grateful."

While not finalized, Stolz said a couple of sisters plan to turn the cafe into a Texas barbecue.

"I've been 'married' to the Chuckwagon. Who knows, I may start dating, get married, settle down and raise a family," she said with a laugh.

Stolz reminds people to redeem Chuckwagon gift certificates by March 6. For more information, call 541-567-6329 or visit www.chuckwagoncafe.net.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

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