

Echo farmer helps fight Elbow Creek Fire



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Echo farmer Lloyd Piercy poses for a portrait with his Caterpillar D6N Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021, in Stanfield. Piercy recently spent several weeks using his bulldozer to help cut firelines and roads at the Elbow Creek Fire near Troy.

By **BRYCE DOLE**
STAFF WRITER

Lloyd Piercy was looking for a bit of adventure.

Piercy, who turns 70 on Thursday, Aug. 12, recently returned from helping fight the Elbow Creek Fire with a team of more than 400 firefighters in the Blue Mountains near Troy. A self-described adrenaline junky, he drove a bulldozer and cleared roads and cut fire breaks for fire crews.

But it had been more than two decades since he worked for a fire department near Moses Lake, Washington.

"It was kind of fun," said Piercy, a longtime Echo resident and farmer who owns wineries outside of the town.

The fire burned through approximately 22,960 acres in Oregon's Grande Ronde River Valley, according to the Oregon Department of Forestry,

which on Aug. 2 reported the burn was 95% contained. The forestry department also reported it's Type 1 Incident Management Team 3 handed management of the fire to a smaller Type 3 organization on Aug. 3.

After heading up to the town of Maxville, in Wallowa County, to help a friend protect his cows from the wildfires that had begun to sweep through the nearby mountains weeks ago, Piercy got a call from firefighters asking if he could bring his bulldozer to help them in the fight.

For more than a week, he said he was positioned at the heart of the fire, where the embers hopped over the roads and smoke trails ran up the hills among the steep canyons. But when he arrived, he realized most bulldozers were attached with more safety equipment than his. He felt somewhat out of his league,

he said, but he added there were plenty of men around his age driving tractors.

"It's a job for loggers," Piercy said, "not farmers."

One night, he got the opportunity to push a trail with his dozer through what he described as a hotspot.

"It was exciting," he said. "I felt protected because of everyone around me, but I also know there's a level of protection they can't offer you in a fire. A lot of smoke."

Piercy said he was fascinated by the way firefighters used science, weather patterns and other strategies to curb the spread of the blaze.

He also said he was pleased with the efficiency of supporters, noting the large meals his team received throughout the day, which he estimated to be thousands of calories daily. Each morning they received fresh coffee, hash browns, eggs, sausage, cold cereal,

milk and juice. During the day, they ate sandwiches, vegetables, apples, canned tuna, bags of nuts and chips. Every night they received a salad and a warm meal.

"It's logistically amazing," he said.

Restaurants in towns up to two hours away over windy gravel roads fixed meals for the firefighters. Schools received funds for allowing firefighters to camp in their yards. Everybody in town who wanted to work and help out could get a job, he said. They were serious about saving their forests.

"It's an industry," he said. "It energizes those towns."

Although he enjoyed the experience, Piercy said he doubts he'll ever fight a fire like the Elbow Creek Fire again.

"I've realized," he said, "this is probably a young man's work."

Beyond cars, Hermiston dealership cares about people

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
COMMUNITY EDITOR

Rogers Toyota of Hermiston recently made a \$2,000 donation to help area foster families.

The money was presented July 23 to Marvin Hamilton, a recruitment and retention champion for District 9 and 12 (which includes Umatilla and Morrow counties) of the Department of Human Services Child Welfare program. The donation, Hamilton said, will go to the foster parent and child welfare fund. It will be used for the retention of resource homes, event funding and other needs of foster families.

"These funds is what district 12 ODHS office relies on when it comes to purchases of items that are not part of state approved funding but helps the retention and welfare of resource families," he said.

For example, Hamilton said every year there is an Umatilla and Morrow county

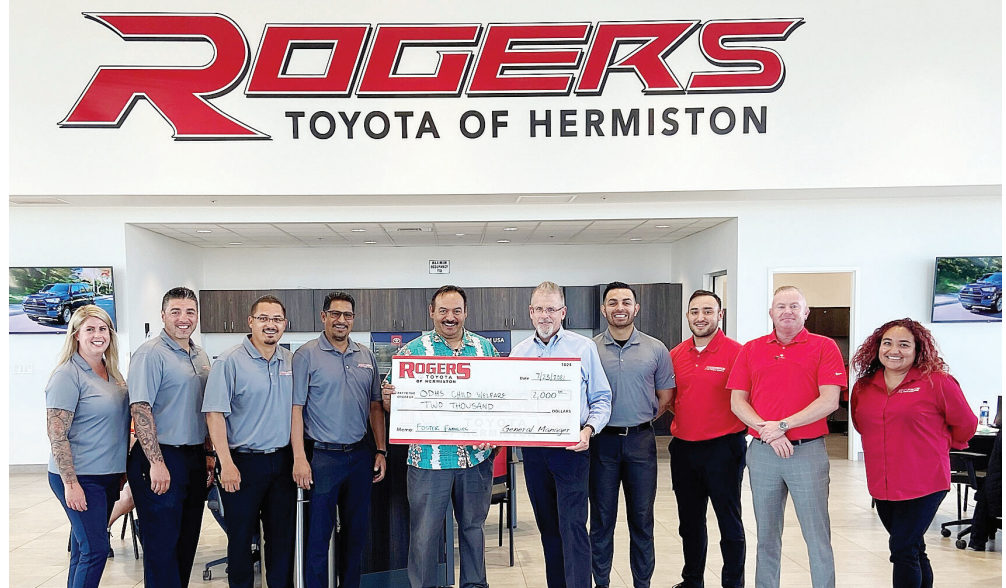
resource parent appreciation dinner. The special gathering is held to recognize the resource families. He said the event expenses add up with renting the hall, catering and entertainment.

"The funds to have such a dinner is a result of community donations and fundraising within the department," Hamilton said.

Rogers Toyota is no stranger to helping the children of Umatilla and Morrow counties, Hamilton said. In addition to donations, they have hosted past fundraisers.

In early April, Hamilton approached Glenn Silaski, the dealership's general manager, about a donation to the child welfare program to provide community support for foster children and families in the area. Hamilton said Silaski saw an opportunity to do more than just a simple donation.

Being a part of the community and giving back is important to Rogers Toyota.



Marvin Hamilton/Contributed Photo

Rogers Toyota of Hermiston recently made a donation to area foster families through the Department of Human Services Child Welfare program. Pictured, from left, are Erica Baker, TJ Valdez, Jose Camarena, Luis Camarena, Marvin Hamilton, Glenn Silaski, Raymond Aguilar, A.J. Garcia, Stevan Coon and Irydiana Zapata.

A family-owned company that's celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, Silaski said the reason they've been around that long is because they stay connected to the community.

"There's so many vulnerable kids out there," Silaski said. "Finding little ways to

make their lives a little more normal has traction with us and our customers."

Silaski recently rallied his professional sales team and with every car that was sold during the month-long campaign, a percentage was earmarked for the child welfare program. The sales staff energetically sold vehicles but with the lingering impacts of COVID-19, Silaski said there weren't as many people interested in coming out to buy a car.

Pressing toward their goal to help area foster families, the Rogers Toyota sales team raised \$1,000. Silaski and his crew didn't stop there, they asked their corporate office to match what they had raised to double the amount donated, which brought the total to \$2,000.

"We plan on making it bigger and better next year, if we don't do something in between," he said. "But we will for sure be giving more in the future."

SHOW & SHINE

2nd Annual

Friday, August 20, 2021

Car Show 4 pm - 8 pm

at Rogers Toyota of Hermiston!

80364 N. HWY 395, Hermiston, OR

PRIZE DRAWINGS

throughout the event!

Live Music by the

BRASS FIRE BAND!

HOT AUGUST

Wheels

OUR BEST PRICES

OF THE SUMMER

ALL MONTH LONG!

Donations accepted.
All proceeds go to:

FREE Registration!

Begins at Noon on Show Day

toyotaofhermiston.com

EVERYONE

GETS

\$700

OFF

ANY PHONE

NO TRADE-IN

Navigate Wireless

1565 N. 1st St., Hermiston, (541) 289-8722

Requires Smartphone purchase (with a value of > \$699) via 30 month Retail Installment Contract (RIC), Everyday or Even Better Plan, and credit approval. Paid via \$23.34 monthly bill credit on a 30-mo. RIC. Additional offers available for smartphones with a value < \$699. Offer valid in select markets only. Taxes, fees, and additional terms apply.

Things we want you to know: 5G capable device required to experience 5G. 5G coverage not available in all areas. See uscellular.com/coverage-map for details. Northwest market is Washington, Oregon and California. Additional terms apply. See uscellular.com/terms for details. Store locations listed are owned and operated by a USCellular Authorized Agent. ©2021 USCellular