

Business Notes

Insurance is her business, helping others is a major part of her life

When Bunny Girt started the Cornelius office of State Farm Insurance in April of 1984, there were a lot of things missing. Among the missing elements were a desk, filing cabinet, employees and clients. Technically, she didn't even have a business. A little history will explain that situation.

Girt has worked for State Farm for 39 years and was their office manager in Beaverton, when she was asked to open a new office in Cornelius. While she wanted to do something different, taking on the job of establishing an insurance office in a community where she was unknown would be a daunting task for most people. Before she could even hang a sign for the office, she had to have the names of at least 1,000 people who would let her give them a quote on an insurance policy.



Bunny Girt's laugh is as infectious as her smile.

In rented space, with nothing but phones and folding tables, Girt, assisted by family and friends, started cold calling – by phone in the evening and door-to-door on weekends. About ten weeks later, she had 1,000 potential clients and the office

was officially open.

Continuing that same work ethic, Girt saw clients in the evening or on weekends, and not just in Cornelius. She drove to Banks or Buxton or Vernonia, wherever and whenever was convenient for her clients. Today, she has two full-time and two part-time employees.

From 1984 until this year, she stayed in the same rented office, then moved across the street and down the block to 1229 N. Adair, into a nicely remodeled, 2-story building that was once a residence. Having her own office building is the fulfillment of "a dream" for Girt. Now, in addition to bright, spacious offices, the second floor includes a large conference room that she opens for a Thursday morning Bible study group, or for other community gatherings.

On the personal side, Girt grew up in Cedar Hills and attended Linfield College on a music scholarship. After graduating from Linfield, she moved to Los Angeles where she lived with an aunt who was a vocalist and voice teacher. But Girt decided that the performing life was not for her. She went to work for a large insurance agency and found that insurance was a perfect field for someone who loved people and math. Along the way, she returned to Oregon, married, divorced and raised two daughters.

She still enjoys music, especially playing piano in retire-

ment homes. She has also been an active volunteer in efforts to promote her adopted home of Cornelius. That activism was recognized when Girt was named Cornelius Chamber of Commerce volunteer of the year in 1997 and citizen of the year in 1998.

If you are looking for insurance - life, auto, health, fire, business, liability - and don't like a high pressure approach, you'll be comfortable with the people in Bunny Girt's State Farm office. The phone number is 503-357-3131, or see their ad in *The Independent*.

Outstanding work honored at 9-1-1 awards event

Columbia 9-1-1 celebrated outstanding contributions of public safety partners and staff at their annual recognition ceremony at the District facility on September 18, and on October 10, at a District staff meeting, for those staff members who could not attend the recognition reception due to illness.

Operations Manager Lee Knowlton was recognized for 20 years of service to the 9-1-1 District, and Communications Specialists Deb Franklin and Nathan McCallum were presented 5-year service certificates.

Outstanding communications support during a multi-agency response to a knife fight at a bar, a K9 track that resulted in a suspect being taken into custody, a residential structure fire in which all residents and the family dog were safely rescued and relocated to shelter provided by the Red Cross, a multi-agency response to a shooting, and a successful multi-agency search and rescue of two children garnered 2006-7 Critical Incident Awards for Communications Specialists Trish Hilsinger, Deb Franklin, Nathan McCallum and Supervisors Terri Levie and Tracy

Edinger. Two incidents in which the 9-1-1 call taker provided CPR instruction to revive a baby who had stopped breathing due to an obstructed airway earned two Lifesaver Awards for Communications Specialist Trish Hilsinger.

Public Safety Partner awards were given in appreciation for assistance provided in the selection of a new community outcall notification system to Mike Cave from Dyno-Nobel in Columbia City, Diane Dillard from Boise in St. Helens, Vernonia Police Chief Mathew Workman and Columbia River Fire and Rescue Chief Jay Tappan. Special recognition was given to Alicia Little of Dyno-Nobel who also maintains the contract for the system in partnership with Columbia 9-1-1 and the Columbia Emergency Planning Association.

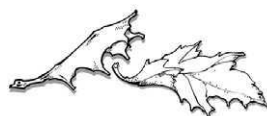
Herb Schroeder and Scott Miller, service technicians with Qwest, were presented Public Safety Partner awards in appreciation for their expertise and good humor under pressure during technical conversions, upgrades and repairs to the emergency call reporting system.

Columbia County Deputy

Sheriff Scotty Davidson earned the Public Safety Partner award in appreciation for his supportive good nature and professional approach in spite of extreme pressure of many calls and callouts from home.

Employees of the Year, selected by Columbia 9-1-1 staff and presented as a surprise at the end of the ceremony, were Communications Specialist Trish Hilsinger, Operations Manager Lee Knowlton and Administrator Sally Jones. Hilsinger was recognized for her ability as a new employee trainer, is quick to help others, is highly competent, shows a great deal of compassion with callers and makes a complex job look much easier than it is. Knowlton was recognized for setting a standard of integrity for all employees, for his sound advice, patient coaching, meticulous record keeping and fairness.

The event was followed by a chicken, ribs and salmon barbecue prepared by Board Members Henry Heimuller, Dee Wooley and Wes McMahan.



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