

Annual Fourth of July in Mossyrock includes parade
PAGE 12



Journal editor passing the torch, retiring after 35-year journalism career
PAGE 10

Musical Extravaganza brings live music performances as part of a fundraiser in Morton
PAGE 4



The East County

JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving East Lewis County since 1945

July 8, 2026

\$1

Vol. 82 No. 27 • USPS 363-940

Glenoma fire makes for post-fourth smoky skies

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

At 8:37 p.m. on Saturday, July 4, a fire was reported near Haul Road and Glenoma Road in Glenoma. It is now named the Haul Fire on the Watch Duty app. The Watch Duty app is a public accessible app that gathers information from the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) which is what firefighters officially report to.

The first person on the scene was Lewis County Fire District 18's Fire Chief Phil Congdon. "Fire season is approaching and I have taken to keeping a fire tinder at my house so that I can respond more quickly to calls about fire," he said.

According to Watch Duty, when crews

arrived on scene the fire was between 13 and 15 acres in size. The fire was growing at a slow to moderate speed, no structures were threatened and the crews built an anchor point.

No official cause of the fire has been determined, although likely due to fireworks combined with dry conditions.

"I was able to get to the gate at Glenoma Road but I didn't have a key to the gate. A Lewis County Sheriff's deputy was able to call and get the key," Congdon said. "Because we kept getting hit by the wind, I was afraid that the fire would jump Glenoma Road. If it had jumped the road then it would have headed straight for homes with

See **Fire** Page 5

Morton Council member resigns, citing ongoing issues

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

Following the regular Morton City Council meeting, on June 22, the City of Morton Facebook page posted an announcement that, "The City of Morton seeks applicants for vacant city council position 5." The new councilor will be announced at the July 27 meeting.

Tim Pendergrass shared the post on Morton Talks stating, "It seems Mr. Knutson has resigned from his position on the city council." In the following comments of that post, Karly

Knutson said, "Our family/kids getting threatened and harassed in their own home isn't worth it." In another comment, she said, "People planning an event and showing up at your house where your children are to threaten you, is NOT an opinion." She had shared a screenshot of someone asking for their home address.

Public comment focused on complaints within the community. A city resident, who identified himself as Tim, asked the council if they could have volunteers who could act as enforcement officers in order to assist the city. "People come

to me with complaints all the time," he said.

City Clerk LuAnn Ward said, "The people need to come into city hall and file a formal complaint. I am the one who receives the complaints. It must come past me and I can tell you that there have only been two complaints filed this year." Both complaints were handled as quickly as they could following the proper procedures.

Kathy Wolf, secretary of the police station, spoke. "I am here to tell you about the dog situation. Next

See **Morton** Page 3



Ric Hallock | East County Journal

Bombs bursting in air

Mineral fireworks organizer Roy Petersen of Kalama, Washington, can just be seen at the bottom right using his phone to launch the fireworks from a barge on Mineral Lake on Saturday, July 4. For a look behind the scenes of putting together a 40-minute show, see page 7 of today's East County Journal.

WP school board gets first reading of health care policy updates

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

At a prior meeting of the White Pass School Board on Monday, May 18, parent Tim Colson brought to light that his 6-year-old daughter needed extra care when it came to handling her Type 1 diabetes. At the meeting, Superintendent Mark Westley promised to look into the situation.

At the regular meeting of the White Pass School Board on Monday, June 15, the answer was still not confirmed but progress has been made. During a

first reading of the school board members, new or updated policies were introduced on accommodating students with seizure disorders or epilepsy; student immunization and life-threatening health conditions; catheterization and the procedures for that; self-administration of asthma and anaphylaxis medication; anaphylaxis prevention and response and what that procedure is; student sports concussion, head injury and sudden cardiac arrest; opioid related overdose reversal and the procedure for that and accommodating students with adrenal insufficiency.

These policies are still a first reading, but the Superintendent and school board are looking into the policies and procedures to handle health concerns within the district.

In the superintendent report, Westley reported that at the beginning of June there were "graduations galore." There were graduation ceremonies for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, sixth, eighth, alternative learning education (ALE) and high school graduations. "It was exciting and great to see all of the young students with their sashes," he said.

Westley has applied for an

ECEAP grant. If awarded, this grant would be used to start the process of converting the building near the bus garage into a learning building for the pre-kindergarten students. "If we can get the bids, then the earliest we're looking at would be December or January to move into the building," he said.

He is also looking into a grant from TransAlta. There are three categories to qualify and White Pass qualifies for two of the categories in energy efficiency and facilities. TransAlta has provided grants to redo the track. Westley finished his report

saying that now that students have gone home for the summer, he is focusing on prioritizing his to-do list and working with board members to make sure all the items are getting completed. After the meeting, Westley shared that the search for a new high school principal continues.

In the high school report, shared by Westley, he said that the seniors took a field trip to Seaside, Oregon.

"Mr. (Curtis) Patching took the night duty," Westley said. Special thanks was given to Ms.

See **White Pass** Page 5

Packwood UPS driver made his final delivery Two Quilts of Valor given at Mossy meet

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

Richard Rushton has recently retired after 36 years and 19 days working for the United Parcel Service (UPS). "Last year, I was off for six weeks and by the time it was done, I was ready to come back. It hasn't really sunk in that I'm not coming back," he said.

At the time of the interview, Rushton had traveled to Packwood six times since his retirement four weeks prior. "I felt like I could have done this job forever because I like it," he said. UPS had offered him a pension and cash buyout incentive that he couldn't refuse.

Rushton started working for UPS in 1987 as Christmas help. He did that for three seasons before a full-time position opened up. "It was April of 1990 that I was hired full-time," he said. "It wasn't until 2004 when Dan Erhart retired from the Packwood route that I bid on the job and got it. I've been coming to Packwood ever since."

The job with UPS came



Richard Rushton courtesy photo | East County Journal

Richard Rushton stops to get a selfie while working in White Pass delivering packages as a United Parcel Service driver in an undated photo.

about because he was eavesdropping on a conversation. "I was working at a fertilizer plant and down the stairs I could hear the UPS lady talking to another worker. He couldn't do it and I practically fell down the stairs to ask where I could sign up," he said.

"I met with the HR lady who called in the supervisor and we went for a test drive. He handed me the keys and I got the job. My first day out, they handed me the key to the truck and a paper map," Rushton said. "My first shift was a disaster. I had to call my supervisor, Jody, from a pay-pervisor and tell her what I did wrong. Her advice was to 'do better tomorrow,' and I've lived by that. Every day, I have always tried to do better," Rushton said.

See **Rushton** Page 3

BY BUDDY ROSE
East County Journal

Two Quilts of Valor presentations highlighted the July meeting of the Mossyrock Area Historical Society on Wednesday, July 1. Receiving quilts were military service veterans Doug Jarboe and Amanda Houghtelling, both residents of Mossyrock. Presenting the quilts were society trustee Kristi Riffe Gerard along

with Sara Benson and Janet Meade, all representing the Mossyrock Quilts of Valor group.

Doug Jarboe's service in the U.S. Army began in 1973 following four years at the University of Tennessee that included time in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps preparing him for duty as a commissioned officer. He com-

See **Valor** Page 2

Tunes and trivia fill the air for Packwood center

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

Timber Tunes and Trivia took place at the Packwood Schoolhouse Events Center and Museum on Friday, July 3. The theme of the event was celebrating the 250th anniversary of American Independence with the lawn decorated with American flags.

Museum Manager Michele Livernash obtained

a grant to provide the food for the event. The food was hot dogs, potato salad, watermelon, corn bread, baked beans, cookies and soda, lemonade or water. The canopies had dedicated volunteers hanging onto the poles so that they didn't blow away in the strong gusts of wind.

There were two 50/50 raffle drawings, which

See **Tunes** Page 2