Plumas, Lassen and Sierra Counties

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A heartwarming story of two valentines who found love through all of today's challenges.

By Roni Java
Special to High Country Life

Palmer T. Lee, of Olympia, Washington, performs in a banjo and acoustic guitar duo, The Lowest Pair, with fellow musician Kendl Winter (not shown). He fell in love with his valentine, Emily Bryant, of Quincy, after a show at the Feather River Hot Springs.

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instrumentalist Palmer T. Lee was growing as a Banjos, gigs and songwriting right time, you can watch the eagle soar by. “If you’re sitting in the water at the early every morning, like it’s a routine or something. If you’re sitting in the water at the right time, you can watch the eagle soar by.”

“Who is this guy, who knows all about Saraswati?” Emily thought to herself with a smile. “Saraswati?” Emily thought to herself with a smile. “Hindu goddess of wisdom, learning and art, there’s a bald eagle that flies across the area immediately spotted a small statuette in her cab, a figurine of Saraswati, the venerated Hindu goddess of wisdom, learning and art, especially music. He thought that was pretty cool. “Who is this guy, who knows all about Saraswati?” Emily thought to herself with a smile. “Indeed, the couple was off to an auspicious start, but people have their lives to return to, so it wasn’t meant to be just then. All of the bands left, Emily went home to Quincy and Palmer headed off to his next booking. Unbelievably, they made no plans to continue their new

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Photo submitted

## Hot springs and great music on the Feather River

On an early August evening in 2017, Emily decided to check out some music at the Feather River Hot Springs and stay over the weekend for a nice, relaxing soak in the 100-degree waters. “There was a problem for me back then, working myself to death over about six years,” she explains, remembering that night. “I couldn’t sit down. And I liked to help Rocki (a co-proprietor) sometimes because there’s a lot to do during those events.”

“The music was great and the “vibe” was cool, just good folks hanging out and having fun on the river. The Lowest Pair was one of a few groups playing that evening. “I met this gentleman there,” Bryant says, shyly describing her experience listening to the various bands and meeting Palmer T. Lee for a casual chat between sets. “We had an awesome time listening to all the artists, and I thought he was really handsome, very sweet. A quiet person, very observant. I mean, for me, I tend to steer to those who are really quiet. I feel like they’ve got a lot to say, but they don’t really gravitate toward that.”

After the relaxed, fun evening everyone headed off to their own spaces at closing time. Emily was ready for some rest. She also had a plan to wake up really early and see the bald eagle the next morning.

She arose about 5:30 a.m. for a solitary soak and headed down to the springs. But someone else was already there: Palmer. You read that right; a musician was awake that early. So Emily shared the spot, the sun rose, the bald eagle made his sojourn and the two guests had another chance to get better acquainted.

As the morning drew on, some of the other musicians staying at the springs decided to take impromptu gold-panning lessons from a willing tutor who shared interesting details about the history of mining in the Feather River region. Palmer, Emily and the group went to the river’s edge. “And we found some gold, which was really cool!” Emily recalls. “I’d never found gold before.”

On the way back to the resort, everyone divided up into riders and drivers. Palmer accepted a ride in Emily’s truck and immediately spotted a small statuette in her cab, a figurine of Saraswati, the venerated Hindu goddess of wisdom, learning and art, especially music. He thought that was pretty cool.

Emily Bryant found true love with her sweetheart, musician Palmer T. Lee, and returned to her artistic endeavors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emily was everywhere.

“I was so busy, doing a lot of things for our community,” she says during a phone interview with High Country Life. “I enjoyed it all, but I was kind of distracted.”

The activities and commitments brought her many friends but kept her feeling alone a lot of the time. So she enjoyed art and music in the area, two things she loves. Events like the Feather River Hot Springs on Highway 70 for the music and food promotions to organizing small outlets where she could dance and express her creativity.

“I also really loved going out to the Feather River Hot Springs on Highway 70 for the music and warm waters on the river,” Emily says. “They have good shows at the springs. And there’s a bald eagle that flies across the area early every morning, like it’s a routine or something. If you’re sitting in the water at the right time, you can watch the eagle soar by.”

### Banjos, gigs and songwriting

Meanwhile, half a nation away, multi-instrumentalist Palmer T. Lee was growing as a musician in the Midwest, having begun his journey by building his first banjo when he was 19 from pieces he inherited.

He currently writes songs, plays guitar, too, and is adding fiddle to his repertoire.

In Minneapolis several years ago, his music drew praise and he played a lot of shows featuring for string bands. Then, in the mid-2000s, Palmer met acoustic musician Kendl Winter at a festival on the Mississippi River. A fellow guitarist and singer-songwriter, Kendl hailed from Arkansas and played banjo, too. Together, they formed a successful duo composing and playing a blend of folk, Americana and more.

Palmer and Kendl play and tour extensively as The Lowest Pair and have recorded and released five albums together. Their website outlines a strenuous touring schedule of more than 500 live shows over the past five years in North America and two ventures to the United Kingdom.

The performers are now based in Washington State and recently released a 10-song album titled The Perfect Plan. Their bio describes a collaborative process of seeing “artistic sparks all around them — in poems, people, ideas, experiences.”

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friendship. Too shy, it seems. “We didn’t exchange numbers or anything,” Emily says. “It was just nice to meet and have a great conversation about our interests, about music and art and life. I get nervous and I don’t know why, because I can take on public speaking, I can take on a lot of things. But when it comes to (the possibility of) love, I get so freakin’ awkward!”

Solar eclipse comes to the rescue
As fate would have it, Palmer already had plans to attend an Aug. 21, 2017 event on the Oregon coast celebrating the solar eclipse. The gathering promised to be a “vortex” of creativity. Emily, having absolutely no idea that Palmer would be there, made a spontaneous decision to go and was amazed when she ran into him there.

“Lo and behold, he’s also there!” she says, talking about how serendipitous it was and with so much going on, they didn’t have long to talk. She did, however, accept an invitation to follow his music on social media.

She says she felt “like we were at a point where these ends (of our lives) were meeting, but you put off your intentions of what it is that you want in the world.”

Two more years went by. The novel coronavirus COVID-19 began sweeping the world. Lives were changing dramatically everywhere, even in Plumas County.

Life in the time of COVID
By early 2020, when things began closing down and so much uncertainty was upon the world, Emily was experiencing much of the same inner questioning and soul-searching that millions of others have undergone since the arrival of the pandemic. She was ready to make some big changes in her life, get back to doing more art and align with her center again.

An accomplished watercolorist, she has a fine hand for portraits and whimsical landscapes. Her uplifting paintings and pencil sketches bring her sea-based landscapes to life and reveal a sense of joy in portrayals of artists such as Jerry Garcia and Robert Plant.

“I dug deep,” Emily says. “I asked myself what it was that I wanted in this world and what would I be able to do while I had this time. How could I reconnect with my artistic self?”

Creating art, working on music and seeing more of the country topped her list. She started downsizing, releasing things and staying at a friend’s place while she made her truck ready for an extended trip.

“I wanted to be able to just go and have my own adventure, to do whatever I wanted,” she said, explaining her intentions weren’t much formed beyond that.

Emily did, however, feel like she’d “kind of been living in a bubble in Quincy,” and wanted to make her way to Portland, Oregon. As a teacher and an artist, Emily wanted to see for herself what was unfolding with the peace demonstrations and rallies for equal justice there.

Her friendship with the banjo player “wasn’t even on my radar,” she recalls. So she made ready to head out when school ended for the Plumas Unified School District students in May 2020.

Right before Emily was leaving Quincy, The Lowest Pair announced on Facebook that they were hosting a virtual concert. The duo was following suit with musicians everywhere who...
had been impacted by the stay-at-home directives that closed venues and gatherings to reduce the coronavirus spread.

Emily joined other fans on YouTube and tuned in for the show, following up with a small post of thanks.

“It’s been really hard for musicians and performers this year. So the online concert was a great thing to do,” she says. “I didn’t have any idea they would be reading comments, because, you know, while they’re doing a virtual show the thing is just going,” and lots of people will comment live. A short time afterward, she received a simple social media reply, “Hey, is this Emily from the hot springs?”

The shy Georgia girl was amazed. “I’m like, oh God!” Emily laughs.

Two artists become soulmates

One post led to another and when Palmer learned Emily’s only immediate plan was to visit Portland, he said “if” she ever made it as far north as Olympia, she was welcome to visit. He casually dropped in a nonchalant “I’d love to see you,” and she thought to herself, “Here’s a guy I admire, but in my mind, I’m thinking yeah, right Emily.”

Before setting out, she was well prepared with her own strict COVID precautions in place. She practiced social distancing, minimal or no mixing, a whole lot of hand washing and carried her own masks. She says she took the virus very seriously.

By mid-July, Emily had been to Portland and seen a lot of the Pacific Northwest coastal communities. It wasn’t much further to head to Olympia. She agreed to continue her trip and met up with Palmer.

They kept their distance, wearing masks and sitting far apart on his front porch while they talked or went for walks. She saw Puget Sound with him and learned a lot of the history of the area.

“We didn’t hug or anything, you know, because seeing people through this time of COVID is about keeping your distance,” Emily explains. “Plus, this was an awkward situation for us both. He’s handsome, but we weren’t dating, and there was this veil of uncertainty with us and with the world.”

At his invitation, she camped there with her truck for three days. They talked about writing, creating art, making music and time for the things you really care about. He played, she drew. Their friendship grew.

And then it was time for her to head out, make a trip back to Portland and continue on her journey. There was still plenty of summer left. On the road, her phone buzzed with a text.

Palmer wrote, “I don’t know how to say this, but I don’t want you to leave.”

As Tracy Chapman so wisely sings, “Give me one reason to stay here, and I’ll turn right back around.” So Emily returned to Palmer and they are currently living happily ever after, encouraging each other in their pursuits and creativity and making the world a better place one day at a time.

“I wanted to be myself again, and then I found someone like that,” she says delightedly. “That’s a miracle, right? We’re helping each other build on our dreams because they’re already really perfect.”

For more information about the art and music of Emily Bryant, Palmer T. Lee and The Lowest Pair, or the Feather River Hot Springs (currently closed due to COVID), visit: galleryboomshop.com/search?q=emily+bryant; thelowestpair.com; featherriverhotsprings.com/the-hot-springs.

Taking a trip to get outdoors in a pandemic-safe and no-mixing fashion, Palmer T. Lee and Emily Bryant visited Yellowstone earlier in 2020.

Photo submitted

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High Country Life • February 2021 7
Lost Sierra quest for gold and 1800s westward push to California come alive in two new novels

By Roni Java
Special to High Country Life
In a crisp winter day here in the Sierra Nevada, there’s nothing like bundling up with a steaming mug and a cracking good adventure tale.

In two new novels of historical fiction set in the Old West that take place from the Midwest to the gold fields of the Feather and Yuba Rivers, author Ronald M. Cerruti gives us just that opportunity.

Cerruti has a deep attachment to Northern California’s pristine wilderness and remarkable history. He lived and worked in Plumas County for a number of years and his love for the mountains has never diminished.

Best known for his entertaining memoir of timberland heydays with the Greenville Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest, Back to Greenville: Big Trees, Blue Lakes and Big Dreams, Cerruti now brings to life the wild beauty and romance of the American frontier.

The Henry Moreland Chronicles

In The Walker Colt and Sunrise Over Rich Bar, volumes one and two of his Henry Moreland Chronicles, readers follow Cerruti’s band of characters through a series of lively adventures and mostly honest ambitions. Both works are steeped in rich detail and authentic historical insights.

The author also illustrates in plain language the hard realities endured by pioneers of our nation’s westward expansion who followed their dreams of prosperity and freedom from 1848 into the 1850s.

Published in 2019 and 2020, the two novels are over 300 pages each. The chronicles are based on true-life heroes of the West deftly interwoven with well-imagined fictional actors that move the stories forward with humor, grit and good intentions.

Texas had recently become a state and the war with Mexico had ended, Cerruti writes, leading to U.S. expansion. We come into the leading tale just after gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill. Together, the stories combine and build upon significant, exciting events and locations that contributed to settlement campaigns, statehood drives, California’s growth, the Gold Rush and the tumultuous history of the Old West.

Westward to Santa Fe, Texas and beyond

Book one, The Walker Colt, highlights the adventures of Henry “Chance” Moreland, 19, who journeys from Missouri to San Francisco and onward to the gold fields of Northern California.

The story opens in present-day Sierraville where fictional descendents unearth two lost manuscripts, memoirs of their Midwestern great-great-grandfather.

California’s epic Gold Rush (1848-1855) drew fortune seekers from all over the world to stake their claims throughout the state. These gold nuggets, discovered in the 1970s in the Middle Fork Feather River by a local miner, help illustrate why Americans and immigrants risked everything to head west and build their dreams pursuing the elusive treasure. Photo by Roni Java
Henry Moreland that vividly recall his encounters with settlers, rustlers, outlaws, Texas Rangers, Native Americans and soldiers of both the U.S. Army and Mexican Army.

As the tale expands and unfolds with fresh enthusiasm, young Henry meets people on the Santa Fe Trail, in El Paso, on the Southern Emigrant Trail and in California. Cerruti’s regional characters are woven into stories featuring such famed personalities as Capt. John Coffee “Jack” Hays of the Texas Rangers, San Francisco’s first sheriff, who saves Henry in a bar fight in the Southwest and becomes a lifetime friend.

Throughout both volumes of the Moreland Chronicles, readers are in for wide-ranging fun and colorful adventures as Henry comes of age on the way west.

The Walker Colt also follows our hardy traveler as he makes friends with like-minded “Argonauts” and adventurers from all walks of life, on the trail, in cantinas and out in remote deserts. An expert horseman and mule trainer, Henry learns to scout for and support wagon trains of settlers and to respect the cultures of Native American tribes of the Plains and Southwest. Henry meets Geronimo, Cochise, the bandit Joaquin Murietta and others on his way.

The real exploits of Capt. Jack Hays are well served in Cerruti’s tale of heroes and fictional enhancements. For example at one point, he, Henry and their compadres overtake horse thieves who are surprised that anyone would pursue them over the border into Mexico.

Road to the California goldfields
Sunrise Over Rich Bar takes Henry through what will become Southern California, past the missions where he sees Native Americans suffering in servitude, up to a burgeoning San Francisco that is literally bursting with unchecked growth and fortune-hunting fever.

His quest takes him to Sacramento where John Bidwell out of Sutter’s Fort offers Henry prospecting advice. Then it’s off to Nevada City and Marysville, up into Butte and Plumas counties and along the Yuba and Feather rivers.

Reaching the north at last, Henry prospects in sites that will be familiar to California readers, from Grass Valley and Deer Creek to Downieville, Nelson Point, American Valley, Rich Bar and points well beyond.

History fans will also enjoy the familiar place names in Henry’s travels, especially the original designations of regional gold diggings like Rabbit Creek that became LaPorte, Ophir City as Oroville’s early identifier and others.

In the gold fields of Plumas County, trailblazing scout Jim Beckwourth and Rich...
Bar’s acclaimed *Dame Shirley* author, Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe, befriended Henry.

**Characters and events emerge with authenticity and rich detail**

Cerruti’s work is founded on extensive research into pioneer life, wagon and mule train passages, mining experiences, gold camps, and the role of the Texas Rangers in the growth of the American West, among many other fascinating points in western history.

The author relies on authentic journals from settlers, trappers, traders, prospectors and explorers who wrote about their encounters in the wilderness and with Native Americans, from the Plains to the peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Citations are included in every chapter and generous bibliographies are included to serve the heartiest history buff’s appetite.

The ever-moving backdrop of his work impresses readers with the magnitude of change happening in 1800s America. An estimated 300,000 prospectors and other fortune hunters dramatically transformed California’s landscape and national resources from 1848 to 1855 — economically, politically, environmentally and socially.

It is this scene in which author Cerruti paints a colorful, revolving mural of the world where would-be prospector Henry Moreland stakes his future.

Throughout his work, the writer portrays each character with balance, reason and reliance upon a variety of historical records from respected collections, such as the Bancroft Library at U.C. Berkeley. Their flaws and virtues are fully realized and easy to relate to.

But this is no dry, scholarly work. Henry Moreland and his friends, to say nothing of his enemies, have lively adventures and get into and out of scrapes of all sorts.

Through dialogue and solid, imaginative storytelling, Ron Cerruti creates sympathetic (or detestable) characters that reflect the values of their era as well as the best and the worst of the pioneer spirit that formed America’s westward expansion. These men and women — both fictional and real, distinguished or plain folks — are seen and understood within the place in time and history that they occupied.

Cerruti said *Sunrise Over Rich Bar* was “the most fun to write so far because it deals with the early history of Plumas and Butte counties,” from a prospecting and early statehood perspective.

That sense of adventure and wide-open destiny is fresh and alive in his books.

Historical western fiction fans — and Sierra Nevada readers in particular — will delight in this entertaining expedition.

*By Ronald M. Cerruti*


Each work contains a detailed introduction, rich bibliography and author notes.

Ronald Cerruti’s books are available locally at Crescent Country in Crescent Mills, B&B Booksellers in Chester and online at Amazon.com in both paperback and Kindle Book formats.
By Makenzie Davis
mdavis@lassennews.com

alling asleep to the sounds of pigs squealing and the distant moo of the cows was normal for Kaitlyn Downing and her siblings as they camped at the Lassen County Fairgrounds the night before showing their animals. It’s part of the trade. Youth in 4-H and FFA know the gig: During the fair, animals come first.

But even when Kaitlyn won 4-H Reserve Champion with her market pig one year — her most rewarding fair memory — she didn’t know she would one day accept the job as Lassen County Fair Manager.

“I always grew up showing livestock at the Lassen County Fair — this included sheep and swine for both 4-H and FFA. I was always looking for different ways to support and bring our community closer while growing up in Lassen County. I have such a big heart for our fair and I want to bring some new ideas and energy back to the Lassen County Fairgrounds,” Kaitlyn wrote to High Country Life shortly after officially starting her role as the new fair manager.

Kaitlyn grew up in Lassen County and graduated from Lassen High School before
heading off to San Diego. There, she spent six
years working for the San Diego Zoo Safari Park
where she was involved in public relations
events, in addition to training exotic animals.

Her recent engagement was a driving factor in
her return to Lassen County.

“I feel that with the experience I have gained
over the last six years down in San Diego and
the combination of growing up here we can
achieve a lot of great things within our
community,” Kaitlyn added.

The Lassen County Board of Supervisors
appointed Kaitlyn to the position during the
Dec. 8 board meeting. Her appointment follows
the retirement of Lassen County Fair Manager
Jim Wolcott, who held the position for nearly 11
years.

Growing up, a good portion of her time was
spent with fair related events and now she
treasures the memories she has — from the
overnight camping at the fairgrounds, to
spending time with her friends during barn
duty in the livestock barns and competing in

the Miss Lassen County
Competition.

As the new fair manager,
Kaitlyn has hit the ground
running. She’s revamping
social media efforts and how
the fair presents itself.

“I really hope to bring new
and exciting events to the
Lassen County Fairgrounds. I
plan to keep the community in
mind with these events and
hope to have something for
everyone to enjoy. We have
such a wonderful and
connected community here in
Lassen County. I only hope to
promote and improve on that
through spectacular events
year-round at the fairgrounds,”
Kaitlyn wrote to the magazine.

Like many events in 2020,
the Lassen County Fair did not
go unscathed. But plans are
moving forward with the 2021
event, which is aptly themed “Lassen County
Fair is Back in the Saddle.”

“We are very optimistic for some sort of fair to
happen this year as we move forward in our
planning details. I know that the COVID-19
pandemic has been difficult on everyone and I
would like to get back to a place where the
community has something to look forward to,”
she added.

For Kaitlyn, it’s important to remain
optimistic, even through challenges.

“I was working at the San Diego Zoo Safari
Park when COVID-19 initially struck and closed
communities down worldwide. I was still
considered an essential employee then because
of our animal care side of the job which means I
am very used to working and still trying to
promote an organization’s message even during
times of global crisis. I think the most
important thing is to remain optimistic and
remember what a great community we live in,”
Kaitlyn added.

When not promoting the fair, balancing

budgets or scheduling events, Kaitlyn can be
found at home in Susanville, out fishing with
her dog who goes just about everywhere she
does and helping her fiancé work his cattle.

“I would just like to thank Lassen County for
having me as their new fair manager, and I really
look forward to bringing new events as well as
improving on current events to make Lassen
County a better place to live and give our
residents something to look forward to. Feel
free to come on by the fairgrounds and check
out our website to say hi or see what we are up to
as well.”

Follow them on Facebook and Instagram at
@lassencountyfair.

“I really hope to bring new and exciting
events to the Lassen County Fairgrounds. I plan to keep the community in mind with these events and hope to have something for everyone to enjoy. We have such a wonderful and connected community here in Lassen County; I only hope to promote and improve on that through spectacular events year-round at the fairgrounds.”

—Kaitlyn Downing, Lassen County Fair Manager
“I just want people to feel better, and quilts can help that sometimes.”
—Laura Roberts, Country Pines Quilt Shop

Laura Roberts, Country Pines Quilt Shop owner, poses with the store’s mascot, Maude, who is wearing Laura’s grandmother’s hat. Laura and her sister are still working on finishing some of their grandmother’s quilts.

Photo by Makenzie Davis

COUNTRY PINES QUILT SHOP

Groving up, Laura Roberts wasn’t even aware of the quilts displayed around her Milford home.

“I knew there was a rack that was up in the living room all the time when I was growing up, but I didn’t really realize the significance of it,” Laura shared.

“It was a quilt frame and it had a quilt on it, and then I grew up and got married and had kids and they’d play tent under it and camp under it, sleep under it. My mom was working on a quilt on there and I never even asked her about it.”

Laura was a garment sewer back then, and had never made a quilt although her sister had, but when her mother passed about 15 years ago, she started looking more into the process.

“The day that my mom passed away, she asked my sister, ‘you’ll finish my quilts for me, won’t you, Nan?’ And I looked at my sister and said ‘what quilts?’ So the light was coming on the day my mom passed away,” Laura remembered.

From there, she and her sister would embark on “fabric runs” about once a year, loading up her Volkswagen and heading north, stopping in every town with a fabric store.

“I remember the first one was in McCloud, that’s when they had a quilt shop, and I just kind of stood there and Nancy went around and picked out what she liked and bought it, and I just looked at things because I didn’t know what to buy.”

But the road trip continued.

At the next location, Laura asked her sister how she knew what to get.

“You’ll figure it out.”

So Laura bought her first item — a kit of a frog fishing in a pond — and by the end of the fabric run, Laura shared, “you could not see out the back of the car. I was in full swing.”

Just like a rainbow

In July 2008 Laura decided to open up her own online fabric shop out of her garage. A small venture at the time, she wanted something to do as she prepared to retire.
With little room to move around and fabric stacked to fill her online orders, Laura had someone local reach out to her in search of some fabric — that customer still supports Country Pines Quilt Shop to this day.

And as time passed, the need for a bigger shop became apparent. Initially the garage was expanded, but in 2015 her family came to her with an idea.

“I think you need a bigger shop,” they told her. More than that, they built it.

Laura’s son and son-in-law, with help from a contractor friend, drew up the plans and in May 2015 the first shovel touched ground. By March 2016, the doors opened to the 704-395 Richmond Road E, Susanville location.

“I love it, it’s my happy place,” Laura beamed.

Decked from floor to ceiling, the shop is a Mecca of fabric, ranging from hand-dyed boutique fabric to regular cotton and fun patterns, the shop has it all — they even have kits ready to buy for crafters to try their hand, or to get all the necessary pieces together in one packet.

As one customer exclaimed as they walked in and viewed the rows of colorful fabric: “This is like touching a rainbow in here.”

Country Pines Quilt Shop not only offers fabrics and kits, during non-COVID times they even have classes available in the adjoining room, and those looking for a relaxing sewing retreat can rent out the nearby cottage that sleeps six.

Moreover, just adjacent to the shop Barbara and Susan are in the next room, finishing off quilts for donations or putting together the perfect kits to sell in the store or online.

**Time for a new hobby?**

For those looking for a new hobby, or even the experienced pros, Country Pines Quilt Shop makes it easy to find what you’re looking for, or even to just browse until something grabs your attention.

With little experience in the world of fabric and quilting, it can be a little daunting entering a fabric store — take it from the author of this piece — but soon, the knowledgeable Laura and staff will help you find exactly what you’re looking for, even if you’re unsure of what you seek.

Getting a new hobby is common practice lately, thanks to the pandemic, and Laura notes she’s been having some first-time quilters and sewers making their way into her store.

“We just talk with them about what they...
In addition to supplying the area with yards and yards of fabric and unique kits, Country Pines Quilt Shop also donates its efforts to finishing donated quilt tops intended for natural disaster victims. Here, Barbara Goodnight uses the donated long arm machine to finish a quilt top. The shop doesn’t take business away from those who machine quilt professionally. Photo by Makenzie Davis

A big part of it is giving back

Laura and her team are big believers in giving back and sharing love.

“I absolutely have to do that. I want to do that — give back. It’s important to give back and to donate to other groups that give back and care about people. Quilts are very healing and comforting for people who are sick. Pillowcases brighten the rooms of children in hospitals, and it kind of smooths out the rough time they’re going through a little bit,” Laura shared. “I just want people to feel better, and quilts can help that sometimes.”

Whether it is completing quilt tops with a donated long arm machine to give out to fire survivors or sewing and collecting hundreds and hundreds of pillowcases for Ryan’s Case for Smiles, Laura, Barbara and Susan keep busy.

Following the Camp Fire in 2018, which devastated the forest town of Paradise, Country Pines Quilt Shop put out a call for pillowcases and quilts. They received about 250 finished quilts and about 250 unfinished tops all from quilters showing their love and warmth no matter how far the distance.

So the long arm quilters in the area donated their efforts to finish the quilts. The borders were sewn on and they fixed what needed to be fixed, and the finished quilts were given to the Paradise Ridge Quilt Guild for distribution. Moreover, people around the nation donated around 3,000 to 4,000 pillowcases to go directly to victims of the Camp Fire. Laura said the Lassen Community College nurses helped deliver the pillowcases to the shelters.

Now, there is a new project. Following the Laura 2 Fire, which destroyed homes in the Lassen County community of Doyle, Country Pines Quilt Shop staff and local quilters were working to finish quilts for each of the people who lost their homes.

Quilts were also delivered to those who lost their homes during the summer Sheep Fire. If there are silent auctions, they donate quilts; if they know of someone who is sick; they give quilts; if they know of anyone who needs love and comfort, Laura and Country Pines Quilt Shop gives a quilt.

Laura even shows her love to her own family by gifting them quilts, each themed to the interest of the recipient. One grandchild has a softball quilt, another’s features computer circuitry, and there is even one with kittens.

“To me it’s all about nurturing people and showing them you care about them, whether they’re your people or somebody else’s,” Laura added.

Country Pines Quilt Shop

Country Pines Quilt Shop has had a journey full of family love, support and giving back to anyone in need.

In fact, Laura’s generosity is evident in almost every interaction. Whether it’s helping a clueless writer find the perfect fabric and apron kit so she could surprise her mom with a handmade Christmas apron, or the instance when Laura took some knitting supplies from her own sister’s private stash in order to help a visiting man get the needed tool for his wife — she can’t help but give.

Country Pines Quilt Shop may have started as an online venture out of her garage, but it’s blossomed into a destination for quilters near and far.

Find Country Pines Quilt Shop online at countrypinesquiltshop.com, stop by their Susanville store, and experience the rainbow for yourself.

“I’m very grateful to have this store. I’m grateful for all the business that people bring to my store, and I just like for everybody to have a successful project,” Laura said.
It’s still cold outside. But in my house it’s warm and cozy. COVID has me working from home, but that home has candles lit in my office space, a throw blanket on my overstuffed chair, a warm, purring cat sitting next to me, and a warm cup of herbal tea. My daughter is busy in the kitchen making her first pavlova dessert. The world outside our doors might be chaotic and anxiety-ridden but in here it’s all about cozy comfort. When I finish this article, I’ve got a meeting with a new novel I just purchased. My husband just installed a
new light above the front room that makes the whole living room look warmer.

This time of year it might do us all well to take a page — or more appropriately perhaps a blanket — from the Danish and embrace the concept of Hygge (pronounced Hoo-Ga). Winter is still with us and while we might be getting antsy for spring, there’s nothing we can do about making spring get here faster, so we might as well embrace the cold blustery days of a mountain winter.

Living in the northeastern corner of California in the waning months of winter can be agonizing. How can you get to those New Year’s resolutions about taking up jogging when there’s a sheet of ice outside your front door and you’ve already slipped twice just bringing in more wood? In a world where we are constantly bombarded by technology, deadlines, and expectations of other people, Hygge is a great way to take a step back and embrace the remains of winter.

The concept basically refers to keeping a cozy home and lifestyle and while there is no set way to do this, the Danes, and a good deal of lifestyle vloggers on YouTube have many suggestions on what we can all do to live a better, cozier life.

So what makes for a cozy home you can relax in? Lifestyle experts and the Danes say number one is to have less clutter — it’s easier to be cozier and more comfortable when your eye isn’t roaming onto things that need to be done. Spend a weekend cleaning things up and getting rid of stuff that doesn’t need to be there.

Hygge coziness should appeal to the senses. It is also about being warm and feeling warm and having the space to do it in. The Danish have hygge nooks in their houses — essentially a small spot with a comfortable place to sit and read a book with a throw blanket and drink cocoa out of a favorite mug. It’s about giving yourself the time and space to enjoy simple pleasures while you’re inside during cold months.

Some of the essentials of hygge are warm, comfy oversized sweaters, soft blankets, wood and material textures you can run your hands through or on (maybe this explains why I loved ribbed cotton shirts and feel happy wearing them).

In Demark they go through a ton of candles like cooking by candlelight. What if we did that instead of by iPad glow? Other not flammable suggestions for lighting are salt lamps or any warm light.

A hygge household is sensitive to what smells are around. Smells should be warm and comforting. A winter stew on the stove, essential oils in a defuser, cookies baking. Or a bubble bath with lavender. Hygge is probably where the contemporary term ‘self-care’ comes from — isn’t ‘self-care’ about stopping what you’re doing in your hectic life and doing simple fun things for yourself? Like a bubble bath and a cup of hot chocolate or a glass of wine?

Hygge seems to be this blend of zen-moment calm, full-belly happiness, living in the moment. Finding joy in simple things. Reading. Cooking. Baking. Napping. Bathing. Making things without the intention of anything besides creation. When is the last time we made anything without wondering about selling it or if we made it well enough? What if we cooked a hearty meal or tried making a complicated dessert just for fun and for the wonderful smells that take over the kitchen?

So here we are, in the mountains, with at least a month more to go of winter cold. Why not embrace it and indulge in simple pleasures to make yourself happy? We are trying to embrace that here in my home — trying to wrap ourselves in blankets, picking out a book to read for fun, putting down the phone, and making desserts and hot drinks in cute mugs. And definitely not stressing out about all the zooms in the morning.

Embracing hygge means treating yourself to cozy evenings with desserts! Here’s a lychee pavlova made by Paloma Couoh. Photo by Paloma Couoh

Embracing hygge dessert number two: a bee sting cake. Photo by Margaret Elysia Garcia
SECONDHAND SMOKE
DOESN’T BELONG HERE

There is no safe level of secondhand smoke.

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n the days of online shopping and readers preferring to download books from virtual bookstores and libraries, how is it that the independent bookstore B & B Booksellers remains?

In 2003, Susan Bryner, a long-time visitor and new arrival from Fresno, opened B & B Booksellers at 140 Main Street in Chester. She loved the rural community but noticed immediately that there was something missing. "I could not imagine living in an area where there wasn’t a bookstore, since I had so many childhood memories of spending time in a bookstore strolling the aisles and picking out a favorite book," Sue said. She wanted other children to enjoy the same experience she had as a child and that she had shared with her own four children, so she opened one herself.

At the time she moved to Lake Almanor, Sue had suffered the loss of her parents and husband, (the Brannans and Bryner) thus the name B & B Booksellers, a fitting tribute, particularly since her mom was an avid reader.

She threw herself into the business, and whether it made money or not, was not the goal. Surviving her grief and becoming part of the community was.

With this in mind, in 2006 Sue opened the Backroom Art Gallery that showcased local artists launching what became the popular, Second Fridays. "Food was served. Live music was played and wine poured. Even during snowstorms, we packed the bookstore," she said, adding she wasn’t sure if it was love of art or the wine, but it really didn’t matter. These events made the store the “hub” she wanted for the town and made her feel part of the community as well as contributing to her new hometown.

Later that year the bookstore hosted its first Santa Book Signing Party. This has become a much-anticipated annual event, with this year being the first time since 2006 that Santa wasn’t able to appear, disappointing many children. But Sue is confident he will be back next year!

Sue admits that the only reason she is “one of the last standing” is that she still cannot imagine a town without a bookstore. Closing the store during the recession would have been the fiscally responsible thing to do, but she just could not bring herself to close shop. What she did instead was to invite her employee Dawn Gray to be a 50-50 partner in the store. "Dawn was as thrilled to come on board as I was to have her join me in my efforts to keep the store afloat. She finds great satisfaction in ownership and in creating a great experience for our customers, and like me, loves books," Sue said, adding that she and Dawn complement one another. "Dawn used to say she is the McCartney to my Lennon. I have the vision and ideas and she likes to execute — doing it brilliantly, as she is well-organized and meticulous. Me? Not so much. She calls me ‘Hurricane Sue’ and she is so right!”

In 2017, it was the idea of like-minded owners, Sue and Dawn and Christy and Heath Chase, owners of Cravings Café and Espresso Bar & Bakery, to create a place where the local community, as well as visitors to the Lake Almanor Basin, could come together with friends and family for good food, art, literature and music. They ended up at Stover Landing Commons in the heart of downtown Chester, the site of a historical building built in the early 1930s, that was moved from its original property on Gay Street to this location to be on Stover Creek.

Part of the café space displays B & B Bookseller’s gift items as well a full display of bestsellers and fiction. "If people come for breakfast or lunch or are meeting a friend for coffee, chances of them wandering into the bookstore are pretty good. And vice versa!"

Though this has been beneficial and has become a place for gatherings as Sue had envisioned — with COVID and the fires this past summer — the store continues to take a loss; and she has put more into the bookstore than she will be able to take out if she ever sells. But is selling an option? She answers, "I opened B&B Booksellers because I didn’t want to live someplace that didn’t have a bookstore."

That still remains true today for Sue, but in reality, she adds, the store gave and continues to give her so much more. “It gave me friendships, great conversations with fellow book lovers and a feeling of pride when someone from out of the area walked in the store and was overjoyed and surprised to find a full-category bookstore in such a small rural town.” That pride and need still remains.

We hope you take the time to stop by the store, browse, say hello to Dawn and her companion, Fergus, usually perched on the desk, and take in all that a bookstore offers.

B&B Booksellers wants to hear from you! If you have recently read a book and write a review that we post, you will receive 5 percent off your next book purchased at B&B Booksellers. You can mail your review to the store at 278 Main Street, Chester, CA 96202; stop in and see us or email to Books@bbbsellers.com.

For more information on B&B Booksellers, visit bbbsellers.com or call (530) 258-2150. HCL
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Sophie Schler, of Reno, will always enjoy the honor of being the first female Eagle Scout in the Nevada Area Council that includes two districts in Nevada and one in Northeastern California, including Susanville. Photo submitted

Sophie Schler, of Reno, made history last November when she became one of the nation’s first female Eagle Scouts – a prestigious achievement attained by some of the country’s most noteworthy figures. Sophie is among hundreds of young women who will make up the inaugural class of female Eagle Scouts.

And Suzanna Stankute, 14, a senior patrol leader with the all-female Troop 55 also recently became an Eagle Scout Dec. 3.

By Sam Williams
swilliams@lassennews.com
“I did a big cleanup project at Dayton State Park close to my house,” Suzanna said. “We did two trails and a fence, and it had a huge, huge impact. It was a really big deal we got that done.”

“Earning the rank of Eagle Scout takes hard work and perseverance, and we are honored to recognize Sophie for this significant accomplishment,” said Paul Penttila, Scout Executive and CEO for the Nevada Area Council that includes two districts in Nevada and one in Northeastern California, including Susanville.

“Along the journey to Eagle Scout, young people gain new skills, learn to overcome obstacles and demonstrate leadership among their peers and in their communities. These benefits are invaluable for everyone, and we are thrilled that they are now available to even more youth.”

Young women have been part of scouting for decades in co-ed programs offered by the Boy Scouts of America, including Sea Scouts, Venturing, Exploring and STEM Scouts. The BSA expanded that legacy further in recent years by welcoming girls into Cub Scouts and then into Scouts BSA last February.

Scouts BSA is the program for youth ages 11 to 17 previously known as Boy Scouts. Since then, tens of thousands of young women throughout the Nevada Area Council and across the country have joined the organization’s most iconic program with many, including Sophie and Suzanna, working their way toward the rank of Eagle Scout.

“It feels rewarding to know that I had completed this rank in such a limited timeframe, especially with the challenges of moving to college, joining a whole new troop while at college, and COVID,” Sophie said. “I don’t really remember there being any challenges. Again, the only challenge I really faced was trying to earn Eagle Scout rank in two years while also moving to college about halfway through the time frame. The biggest obstacle/challenge for me was trying to plan out my rank advancements to earn Eagle in two years (it’s all the time I had since I turned 18 in late February of 2019). There was a lot of planning and adjustments to planning especially in the beginning. The first few months were lots of campouts and weekly meetings to go over rank advancement.”

While the Boy Scouts of America traditionally has been a group exclusively for males, Sophie said her gender made no difference once she joined the group.

“I’m not sure as I cannot speak for them, but a lot of my friends and family friends did accept that females are now being allowed in scouting,” Sophie said.

In fact, she joined BSA to share the experiences scouting offered to her brother.

“I decided to join Scouts BSA because of all of the great opportunities that I saw my brother experience in both Cub Scouts as well as Scouts BSA,” Sophie said. “Not only has scouting given rise to my love for the outdoors, but I have also learned countless leadership and life skills.”

Suzanna also said she was easily accepted into the group.

“You’re always going to run into people who think girls shouldn’t be in Boy Scouts, but honestly, we never had that problem” Suzanna, a member of an all-female troop said. “We had a really good troop and a really good scoutmaster. He made it clear whenever someone had the slightest idea like that that we’re not going to tolerate it ... It’s a really great troop, it’s a really great program ... In my troop we have about 20 ladies. We run completely on our own.”

The Eagle Scout is the program’s highest rank, which only about 6 percent of scouts achieve on average. To earn it, an individual has to take on leadership roles within their troop and their community; earn a minimum of 21 merit badges that cover a broad range of topics including first aid and safety, civics, business and the environment; and they must research, organize, lead, and complete a large community service project.

“My Eagle Scout project was a floating fishing dock for the Maison T. Ortiz Camp, a youth camp located near Pyramid Lake,” Sophie said. “I attended this camp in the summer of 2014, and fell in love with the outdoors. This dock will allow more youth to experience the fishing station and have the chance to catch their first fish. From this project, I was able to bring both youth and adults together to accomplish a goal.”

The final step of achieving the rank of Eagle Scout is to go before a Board of Review. The panel approving the rank was made up of experienced and prominent women in the community such as Nevada Assembly Majority Leader Teresa Benitez-Thompson and Former Nevada State Treasurer Patty Cafferata.

Teresa had this to say about Sophie: “She is kind, determined, and a testament to the fact that all people can embody scout values.”

The next Eagle Board of Review for a young woman in Northern Nevada will occur in a few weeks and includes Nevada Supreme Court Justice Pickering, and Eileen Way, the first female Scoutmaster in Reno from 1988.

In addition to gaining skills that last a lifetime, individuals who earn the esteemed Eagle Scout rank can reference it for academic,
HEART HEALTH FACTS

According to the CDC, the major signs of a heart attack are:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Upper body pain or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw, or upper stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea, lightheadedness, or cold sweats
- The #1 killer of women in America is heart disease, more deadly than all forms of cancer combined. (American Heart Association)
- An adult heart pumps more than a gallon of blood per minute — enough to fill 38,000 drinking glasses each day! (Cleveland Clinic)
- Studies have shown yoga is effective in slowing down your heart rate, which can help lower your blood pressure. (American Heart Association)
- Laughing may increase overall health. Research suggests a good laugh can increase your blood flow by 20%. The positive effects of this can last for 24 hours. (American Heart Association)

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vocational, and military recognition, including scholarships and advanced enlistment grade.

So, would Sophie and Suzanna recommend other girls get involved with BSA?

“Of course!” Sophie said. “It’s a great way to be involved in the outdoors and meet new people and experience new opportunities that you might not get otherwise.”

And she said the best way to find out if scouting is right for you is simply to attend a meeting.

“If you’re on the fence about joining scouts, just go on an event or a campout with an open mind,” Sophie said. “And if you enjoyed it, then find a troop near you that is willing to help you achieve your goals. Earn ranks at your own pace, and try to be as involved with the troop as you can. It helps you build connections with others and create closer friendships, and have fun along the way!”

“You’re going to learn something great, even if you already know everything,” Suzanna quipped. “You’re going to make great friendships. I’ve met so many great ladies ... And after you earn your eagle, scouting offers so much more.”

But don’t expect scouting to give you any special treatment just because you’re a female.

“Girls trying to earn Eagle Scout had the same requirements and we had to wait the same time frame as all other scouts (ie. time between ranks),” Sophie said.

The region’s first female Eagle Scout has big plans for her future.

“I am currently a sophomore at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff,” Sophie said. “I’m majoring in exercise science with a minor in biology and nutrition. My plan is to go to physical therapy or physician’s assistant school and work with athletes on the sports medicine side of the field.”

Suzanna also plans to continue her education at a college that accepts high school students. Eventually she hopes to earn a college degree in public relations.

About the Nevada Area Council

The Nevada Area Council, BSA was granted a charter by the National Council, Boy Scouts of America in 1924 and charged with the responsibility of organizing and supporting successful Cub Scout Packs, Scouts BSA Troops, Varsity Teams, Venturing Crews, Explorer Posts and Learning for Life Groups within its 101,355 square mile geographical boundary. Our boundary includes Northern Nevada and Northeastern California.

About the Boy Scouts of America

The Boy Scouts of America provides the nation’s foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training, which helps young people be “Prepared. For Life.” The Scouting organization is composed of more than 2.1 million youth members between the ages of 5 and 21 and approximately 800,000 volunteers in local councils throughout the United States and its territories. For more information on the Boy Scouts of America, visit Scouting.org.
The tantalizing loaves would pop up on my Facebook page — golden baguettes, crusty rounds, thick sandwich breads — each more tempting than the last. Quincy resident and jewelry maker Judy Dailey had discovered a new passion during the COVID stay-at-home orders and she was sharing the results online.

With less foot traffic in stores and the summer craft fairs a distant memory, she needed another outlet for her creative talents. “All of my art shows were canceled,” Judy said during a recent wintry afternoon. “And other places would open and close, open and close. Nobody was buying jewelry and I had to do something to keep busy.”

Judy had always been a baker, but now she had the time to really devote to it. Others had the same idea, which made yeast (along with toilet paper and hand sanitizer) a hot commodity.

“I started making my first starter the first or second week in March,” Judy said of what would become the foundation of her new passion. She joined a Facebook group devoted to sourdough and signed up for an online class.

Making a sourdough starter is not always foolproof, but Judy succeeded on her first attempt. While many people receive their initial starter from other bakers, Judy made her own using a mixture of flour and water and then carefully tending to it. She figured that if she killed it, she would toss it and try again. “It took about a week before it started doing something,” she said. “You’re looking for it to come alive; you can watch it boil. Once it comes alive it looks like active yeast.”

By day 10, Judy was ready to try her first recipe. When using sourdough starter, whatever amount is used must be replenished. Judy explained that making bread using a sourdough starter takes more forethought than a yeast bread. “Sourdough is entirely different,” she said. “You have to plan two to three days ahead.” That’s because the recipe must be slowly added to and then sit in a refrigerator overnight.

She used sandwich bread as an example. “I needed 250 grams of starter (the equivalent of about a cup). To that she adds flour, butter, milk, salt — but all in stages. For example, salt can’t be added immediately because it inhibits growth.

Another difference with sourdough is that it...
Judy makes bread roughly twice a week, which is greatly appreciated by husband Skip.

Bread is stored in the open air on day one and then put into Ziploc bags after that. “It also freezes great,” she said.

Even if the family can’t consume it all, the bread doesn’t go to waste. “With the leftover bread I make bread crumbs and croutons,” she said. “I love rye bread and those croutons are so delicious.” She turned some of those croutons into Thanksgiving stuffing with sausage and apples.

Judy also uses the sourdough to make pizza crust, a recipe that takes three to five days to process. She is working her way through the recipes provided via Teresa Greenway’s online courses, which can be found at northwestsourdough.com

While Judy has focused on breads, there are other recipes such as cakes, pizza crusts, and batter for fish and chips. Despite what she tries, her husband’s favorite remains French baguettes.

When asked if she has had any flops, Judy admits to one loaf of wheat bread that didn’t rise above three inches, and though it wasn’t tall enough to make sandwiches, it still tasted delicious.

One benefit of writing about a bread maker is sampling the product — in this case a fresh cheesy, jalapeno baguette! Her family and friends are lucky that she has developed a love for sourdough.
MOTHERDOUGH:

85 G vigorous sourdough starter
85 G water
170 G bread flour

Mix thoroughly, this will be quite stiff. Refrigerate, covered at least 5 days.

DOUGH:

300 G Motherdough that has aged at least 5 days
460 G water
17 G kosher salt
120 G rye flour
537 G white bread flour
1 T coriander seeds
1-1/2 T caraway seeds
23 G cocoa powder (not sweetened)
30 G dark molasses

In a large dough trough or bowl, tear the Motherdough into pieces, add the water, mix well then add remaining ingredients, incorporating evenly. This is best accomplished by mixing with your hands. Sandwich-makers gloves are ideal.

Cover and let rest 1-1/2 hours, then stretch and fold with wet hands. Repeat the stretch and fold every 1-1/2 hours for 6 hours. After the last series of folds, cover the dough and refrigerate overnight.

Next day shape your dough into either 2 boules or 3 baguettes. Cover and let proof.

Heat oven to 500 degrees with pizza stone inside. About 10 minutes before dough is ready, put a large baking pan lid (large enough to cover a boule or baguette) in the oven to heat.

When dough has proofed, score the top, place in the oven, spritz with water, cover with pan lid and lower the oven to 450 degrees. Bake 15 minutes then remove the lid and cook another 10-15 minutes or until it reaches 200 degrees on an instant-read thermometer.

Let cool on a rack for 45-60 minutes before cutting.

NOTES: YouTube has amazing videos showing stretch and fold methods. It’s also a great resource for instructions on shaping a boule or baguette.
When it comes to being a cowboy, it's doubtful anyone has ever said they learned to be one while obtaining their bachelor of science degree at a community college.

This would be tough to believe for a variety of reasons. For starters, who would think that you could attend college and learn to be a cowboy? Besides that, why would a community college offer a bachelor’s degree?

The answer to both of these questions is simple: Feather River College (FRC) is a unique institution with its distinct degrees and programs.

The agriculture department at FRC

When you think of your typical collegiate classroom, do you picture a state-of-the-art rodeo arena surrounded by cascading pine trees nestled in the heart of the Sierra Nevada? FRC is changing the way students visualize typical classroom settings. It all begins with a vision and someone to steer that vision forward. At FRC, you need to look no further than Russell Reid, program director and department chair for Agriculture and Equine Studies.

Reid knows that teaching students a hands-on curriculum, such as Ranch Management and Equine Studies, comes with its challenges. But, Reid also knows exactly where to start when teaching students about their future in agriculture, and it all begins with one word: THINK! This is what Russell Reid writes on the blackboard when students arrive for their first day of class. He wants students to do more than just anticipate learning about tying hitches, he wants them to learn to think like the animals they will be educated about, and think through any situation they may encounter while in his program.

It is this attentive mindset that allows students to excel in the agriculture program at FRC, and learn “horsemanship for the real world,” as Reid puts it. He is just one of many instructors at Feather River College who develop a unique relationship with their students. The entire Agriculture and Equine Studies program offers students the opportunity to learn so much about their future careers outside of typical classroom walls.

It is because of these programs and the college’s approach to offering degrees aligned with local interests that keep the courses full and the curriculum evolving. One major stage of evolution came in Fall 2016 when FRC launched a pilot program in cooperation with the California Community College Chancellor’s
Office. The program developed into something that was the first of its kind. FRC was able to combine scientific agriculture ranch management courses with hands-on horse related disciplines that incorporated both traditional and progressive performance-horse methods. This evolutionary process led to the first degree of its kind — a bachelor of science degree in Equine and Ranch Management.

Kai Brown is grooming a horse and getting it ready to saddle for one of FRC’s riding classes.

Bachelor of Science in Equine and Ranch Management

Equine and Ranch Management students are treated to daily interactions with horses and livestock at the on-site facility, while integrating management and business principles into creating successful ranch operations. This is the students’ livelihood and, a majority of the time, everything they have ever known when it comes to making an earnest living. This can represent generations of blood, sweat, and hard-work equity that go into the daily processes of their ranching operations. And for these same students to now have an opportunity to earn their degree in a desired occupation is a total win-win for both students and their industries.

Not only does this cutting-edge program equip future ranch managers with the knowledge of livestock and animals, it teaches them the ability to analyze data and solve real-world problems. It teaches the ability to critically think beyond just the ranch terminology and methods they have been accustomed to, and really develop leadership skills that are transferable at any level of business, not only at the ranch.

Billy Fournoy, President of the California Cattlemen’s Association, says this about the program: “This innovative, hands-on degree will benefit the livestock and agriculture industries throughout the region and state.”

Fournoy goes on to mention that he believes this specialized degree will be the “standard-bearer to fill numerous ranch and equine management positions.” These are meaningful words, as California is often forgotten about when it comes to ag production; though it currently accounts for over 13 percent of the nation’s total agricultural value. This means Plumas County is now helping to shape the future not only of the state, but the nation as well when it comes to agricultural leadership.

Finding success through FRC programs

Unique collegiate programs, as with Equine and Ranch Management, are often the catalyst for many college students to find their true calling, or at least, have a little fun while earning a degree. What more fun can be had

Tyler Tatum, Addie Engelhardt and Courtney Wood bring up cattle to use in a Feather River College ag class.

Morgan Kingman (bachelor’s degree grad), Kai Brown, Branna Sherrill and Jacquie Wheaton pose for an FRC Horse Sale day group photo.

Ally Brayer practices on her sale horse before the preview.
for a couple of collegiate cowboys than traveling to the College National Rodeo Finals as a means to unwind from another academic semester? Clayton Biglow is a former FRC student-athlete who went on to help solidify the rodeo program in 2016 when the rodeo team from Quincy made a big splash at the long-standing College National Rodeo Finals event. Clayton is still competing on the circuit and has plenty of earnings and belt buckles to show for his hard work ethic — buckles that just happen to be the same color as his college mascot.

Career options in Plumas County
When it comes to making that decision to earn a college degree, career opportunities are often weighed against the cost of attendance. Feather River College understands the importance of offering programs and degrees that place graduates into careers immediately after graduation. When it comes to the Bachelor of Science Degree in Equine and Ranch Management, it is no different. The opportunities in Plumas County are abundant, which is why this program is not only popular, but powerful when used as a tool for beginning a professional career. Career options locally include: agricultural inspectors, graders and sorters, farm and ranch managers, animal caretakers, veterinary assistants, horse trainers, rodeo producers, and riding instructors.

Curious about any financial assistance? With various scholarships for those looking to finish or start a degree, Feather River College offers funding to those who need assistance. This includes local “pipeline” scholarships dedicated to helping Plumas County residents attend FRC at zero to minimal costs.

So if you have ever thought about getting a degree, or perhaps you know a friend or family member pondering that same question, explore the options at Feather River College. It is an institution that serves its local population and values the same principles that the surrounding communities do. It is an institution that is developing future leaders in agriculture through the programs you have read about here.

For more information regarding the programs and degrees written about in this article, visit frc.edu/agriculture.
Are your garden plans moving ahead for spring and summer 2021? I started ordering seeds in late October and November 2020 and I was already getting “out of stock” notices — both in the online catalogs and through urgent emails. I’m an avid gardener. I used to plan what seeds I wanted to order and eventually eat on New Years day. I would actually do the ordering sometime later. But online seed catalogs and COVID-19 have changed the shape of things.

How does coronavirus affect gardening, one might ask? I have more time for gardening because my job became nonexistent for months and is now intermittent. And with so many people out of work or laid off it stands to reason many of them have more time to explore new hobbies, get back to old ones, or explore ways to grow exactly what they want.

So, I was shocked when I started hitting the earliest of the online seed companies. I was even more interested when my first catalog arrived — not in December, January or March — but in November. That spurred me to check out my favorite seed sources. Some of these have been with me since their infancies; others are relatively new discoveries.

So far I have packages and boxes of seeds now in my possession, though I haven’t drawn out what will go where. These contain dozens of future crops for my household. Despite having ordered early — tools and garden amendments can wait — I still didn’t get everything I wanted. Some of the companies added a link so they can respond when that seed comes available again.

I used to think that all seed companies raised their own seed, that way they had absolute control of the product and the pricing. In my early years of gardening I thought the seeds came from one farm. Now I understand that seed companies often contract with other farmers who agree to grow particular crops in a set manner.

Can you imagine a company that prides itself on heirloom, open-pollinated, non-GMO (not genetically modified), organic seeds, and the farmer the seed company contracts with doesn’t follow those practices? Really, I can’t bear to think about it.

All of those specifications are important to me. Although I can’t legally call my odd assortment of raised beds organic — that’s a lengthy and confining process — but I follow those practices. I only purchase seeds from non-GMO companies. I buy organic seeds when the prices are right and I’ll explain in a minute about that, and I adore heirloom seeds.

I reason that if I’m buying seeds that are not genetically modified from a company that doesn’t promote the use of chemical pesticides or fertilizers, I’m already getting a good seed. It’s one that will not only grow this year, but if I choose to save the seeds, that same heirloom plant will come back year after year.

Hybrid seeds, as I understand it, are contrived from joining several varieties to make a new plant. And those seeds aren’t necessarily stable. The plant can easily slip back to become one of the parent plants.

I haven’t been a seed saver. That changed last fall when my grandson told me he wanted the exact same watermelons again next year. I didn’t think last year’s crop of Moon and Stars were anything to brag about. I got them in a little late and then I had to plant them in a flowerbed.

While I believe wholeheartedly in companion planting (which crops benefit each other), this was not a choice spot for these melons. My grandson didn’t care. He watched them day in and day out. I received regular reports and knew every time a new blossom developed and actually produced a melon. I learned about each melon as it grew and how it compared in size to the others.

And then late in the season I let Caden begin picking them. They weren’t good. He loved every bite. He started saving the seeds.
which I showed him how to dry and then label as well as store them in Ziploc baggies.

Then considering the plastic pails with firmly closing lids that survival-minded seed companies offer, I started hunting around for something we could use. When my husband dug out two popcorn cans along with the Christmas things, the light went on. Feeding the old, awful cheese, plain and caramel popcorn to the chickens, I thoroughly cleaned them, got rid of that stale pop corny smell and started filling them.

By this time seed saving had gone from one variety of melons to at least three types of pumpkins — including the largest Big Max pumpkin that must have come in at 15 to 20 pounds. (Caden was so proud the day he and his papa cut the stem from the vine.)

Also into marked and dated baggies went marigold and zinnia seeds. I believe I even saved a few sunflower seeds, but quite honestly, the hens deserved them more.

So this year I intend to save a lot more seeds, especially heirloom tomatoes.

Anyone who knows much about me is aware that I’m a tomato junkie. Yes, I like eating them, but it’s the thrill of the chase so to speak. I make lists of tomatoes, especially the ones I’ve grown. I catalog the color, the taste, did the growing time match that of the producer, does it grow well in this area, especially in my own yard.

I love history and it seems to gravitate toward heirloom seeds, especially tomatoes. I love the idea that I get to grow a tomato that was available in 1862, came from Granny Cantrell’s garden, or was discovered in the 1920s following a flood.

I enjoy reading about what countries seeds come from. I know that tomatoes are original to the Americas and that it was Spanish explorers who took the first seeds or fruits back to Europe.

While many Europeans thought tomatoes were poisonous, they eventually learned how good they are and versatile. And they developed their own varieties. Stands to reason. So I find it part of my duty along with thousands of other tomato enthusiasts, to bring the tomato variety back home, so to speak.

I’ve also enjoyed purchasing and growing at least one of the tomato varieties that Thomas Jefferson grew in his massive gardens at Monticello. The climate and conditions vary greatly from those in Virginia in the late 1700s and early 1800s, but I still enjoyed the process.

So this year tomato seeds will go through one of the processes known to do well when it comes to saving tomato seeds. And they too will be dried, packed in a baggie, labeled and stored in a Santa or old-fashioned Christmas themed popcorn tin.

But back to my original thoughts when beginning this feature: Don’t delay a moment longer in ordering your seeds; keep checking back for seeds that are listed “out of stock.” Many companies are getting in new stock.

And if you don’t garden, consider it. Local garden centers did a lot of business last year. The owners and staff usually have a wealth of information to share. Purchase at least one good book that includes information specific to shorter growing seasons.

And don’t always believe the zones — those climate areas that march across the U.S. indicating how well particular plants will do in particular climates. Mine often comes up as 8 and 9. I don’t go by those. I figure I’m far better off planning for a growing season at zones 4 through 6. The lower the zone, the fewer growing weeks are available and the colder the temperatures. Personally, I would far rather err on the side of colder than warmer. I know oleanders; pineapples and bananas just won’t do well in Plumas County despite my desire.

What to take away from all of this is promoting the desire to grow at least a little of your own food — even if it’s plopping a few lettuce plants amongst your flowerbeds. And, if you haven’t ordered your seeds, I suggest doing so immediately.
My favorite Valentine story

By Angelina Wilson
Special to High Country Life

W e’re all sitting in the living room around the toasty fire when my dad looks up and asks, “Do you remember the story of how I courted your mother?”

Then, he looks mom in the eyes; they sparkle and a pinky-red tint flushes over her cheeks. She grins sheepishly.

“A wolf in sheep’s clothing!” dad jokes and launches into the tale we’ve all heard before but pretend not to remember.

He starts off explaining how he was determined not to date her, though he couldn’t have been too serious or we wouldn’t be here.

“She really had to chase me,” he teases before mom intervenes.

“It started when I was on a retreat at Esalen,” she says. “I had a funny feeling I had to get home and left early with a friend heading back to San Francisco.”

Dad picks up the thread.

“It just so happened that I was having dinner with this girl from the program and she was beautiful, did I mention she was beautiful? Curly red hair and great fashion,” our dad adds jokingly. “But your mom wasn’t having that!”

My little sister looks at him scornfully for admiring any woman who isn’t our mom.

“I knew I needed to get back to the city that night,” mom continues with a mischievous look. “I dreamed somebody was stealing me something.”

My sisters and I look at each other knowingly. She was talking about our dad, her neighbor on Haight Street. She felt she was losing her chance.

Then dad reclaims his tale.

“So, my date and I are sitting outdoors on my pretty patio outside my apartment, all romantic in the warm San Francisco evening, when your mom arrives ... all, you know, ... all Mommy!”

We laugh together and he continues.

“Now, I’d known your mom for a while. We had classes together, lived in the same duplex and we had the same friends group. But I did not want to date her. She was from the old country, like my mom. Still, there she was, so I introduced her to my date. We had a fun time chatting and sharing stories. And your mom would not leave!”

Dad is really warming up to his story now.

“Finally, it was time for me to drive my date home and I asked your mom if she wanted to tag along, thinking she’d politely decline! But she would not be edged out and answered demurely, ”Yes!”

Looking at us, dad thinks he is finishing up.

“Well, that was the end of my new friend,” he tells us.

“Besides, I would have had to steal her from her Persian boyfriend! It wasn’t long after that when mommy and I started dating. I couldn’t escape it!”

Mom, with perfect timing, has the last word.

“Well honey,” she says, “you invited me!”

And we all laugh together.

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Mt. Huff Golf Course is the only golf course in Plumas County open all year long.

Driving through Indian Valley, one might not immediately think of golf and homemade pie — and indeed at first glance from a car window you might not see either right away heading out from...
Crescent Mills to the Taylorsville T — but both are here — and boy are they popular.

Mt. Huff Golf Course is the only year-round golf course in Plumas County and there always seems to be a few people on the course — both locals and visitors alike. Equally popular is the Mt. Huff Café which sees local cowboys, out-of-towners visiting relatives in the valley and golfers.

The place has its charm at all times of year. Whether a game bundled up in jackets or a summer round, it’s hard to beat the atmosphere nestled between Highway 70 and the creek. There are spectacular views of the mountains you can’t get from anywhere else in the valley.

“As long as you can drive up the road, we’re open,” said Elisa Rutledge, owner of the golf course along with husband Jim Rutledge. That spirit of perseverance is what keeps Mt. Huff Golf Course now running under the Rutledges’ care for six years, open and welcoming.

Originally from Roseville, Elisa Rutledge saw an ad to buy the course and its cafe. She’d never owned a golf course before. She came up to see it and fell in love with it and Indian Valley. She and her youngest son began running the business with the idea that when husband Jim retired, he’d take an active role in it and her son would phase out his involvement. The plan is still on schedule.

Elisa Rutledge gets teary eyed when she talks about the great storm in February of 2017 that left so many roads and spots in Indian Valley flooded and with downed trees — including her golf course. It rained heavily for days and the valley was without power for nearly a week. Mt. Huff Café was flooded and the course was a mess.

It was then that she truly came to appreciate the Indian Valley community — she doesn’t want to live anywhere else.

“I didn’t ask anyone to come help. Golfers just started showing up to clean up the mess and take care of the course. A dozen golfers were out there fixing it up,” said Rutledge. It made Rutledge believe in the goodness of people and made her feel like Indian Valley is the best place to live. There’s a brand new kitchen since the flooding, too.

In the summer of 2020, she hired Lorraine Hanson to help out in the kitchen. As word got out to locals that Hanson, of the beloved and now defunct Hanson’s Homemade Pie shop in Taylorsville, was at the golf course the inevitable question arose: Is there going to be pie?

The answer is yes. Each week Hanson makes six different pies she once made at her pie shop. In December she made banana cream, apple, pumpkin, coconut cream and a few other favorites. But both Hanson and Rutledge would like to stress that they are selling pie by the slice. They’ve been getting tons of calls with locals wanting to order whole pies, but the kitchen isn’t set up for that level of production.

Mt. Huff Café is open for lunch every day from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information about the course, call the course at (530) 284-6300 or visit them online at mthuffgolfcourse.com.

It’s back. Lorraine Hanson is making her homemade pies at the golf course. Featured here is her banana cream pie — a favorite of Indian Valley locals.

Photo by Meg Upton
When most of us think about romance, we often visualize the grand gesture—the stretch limo, the 100 long-stemmed roses, those elaborate marriage proposal production numbers featuring a cast of complicit friends who’ve helped you stage “a moment to remember.” At the very least, maybe a candlelit dinner? In my dreams.

As with everything else in life, romance means different things to different people. Take my hubby, Bill, for instance. Good man, solid values, smart, dependable. Romantic? Picture me laughing.

Case in point. Six months after we started dating, my birthday rolled around. What did I get from my own true love? A Franklin Planner. Carefully wrapped in a paper bag. Because nothing screams true romance like an appointment book. And, Bill added, with the excitement of the utterly practical person he is, “You can track your expenses!”

Hearts and candy aren’t the only way of saying, “I love you.”

Photo by Roni Java
Be still, my heart.

Clearly I knew what I was headed for romance-wise when we married 10 months later. And in the subsequent 30-plus years of our marriage, Bill hasn’t veered from his commitment to practicality, in his view the highest standard of a life well lived.

To Bill, a romantic gesture on my part is turning off the lights when I leave a room because he tracks our energy consumption like some folks track calories. A romantic gesture on his part is taking out the compost bucket without being asked. You get the idea.

But every now and then, the boy does surprise me. I know Valentine’s Day is just around the corner, so who knows what delights await me, but to illustrate the classic Bill style of romance, let me tell you about this past Christmas.

It is well known among our friends and family that I “do” Christmas. I’ve got the garlands, the wreaths, the yuletide hangers, the poinsettias, the linens, the dinnerware, you name it — all carefully packed away in red and green boxes and stowed in the garage at the end of the season.

Bill, on the other hand, does not “do” Christmas. Christmas isn’t practical, “practical” being his yardstick for rating the value of virtually anything. To him it simply isn’t practical to haul out boxes and boxes of festive décor once a year for three weeks, only to yank it down, re-box it, and re-stow it in the garage for the next 11 months. (His term for festive décor is “schlock,” by the way.)

Last December was no exception. You know that scene in the movie, “A Christmas Story” when the furnace starts smoking and Ralphie’s old man goes down to the basement hurling swear words right and left, none of them actually discernible, of course, but you totally know the man’s mood. It’s like that every year when I tell Bill it’s time to bring down my boxes of Christmas décor. If grumbling were exercise, the man would be svelte. But up the ladder he went to get my boatload of “precious holiday things.”

That, however, is the extent of his help in turning the house into a veritable homage to all-things-Christmas. He leaves the tree decorating, the picture hanging, the careful placement of holiday décor to yours truly, and that’s OK because yours truly loves the romance of Christmas.

Picture Bill at his computer, analyzing our year-end kilowatt usage to see if we hit “zero net energy” status, an annual ritual that he considers nothing less than his reason for existing. As I was gingerly placing ornaments on the tree (hoping it wouldn’t tip over from the weight of them), to what did my wondering ears did I hear? The sound of Christmas music wafting into the living room via the Sony speaker that Bill turned on from his computer just for me.

Why? Because he knows that, like everything else Christmas, I love Christmas music. Grand romantic gesture? Not by the standards of some, but what is romance anyway? It’s caring about the person you love and showing it in ways you know they’ll appreciate, however small.

So come Valentine’s Day, I’m not expecting a grand romantic gesture, not by a long shot. But here’s hoping I’m also not getting a Franklin Planner!
By Sam Williams
swilliams@lassennews.com

Can we be completely honest for a moment, just for a little perspective?

The Lassen Municipal Utility District — a small, publicly owned 10,000-meter utility in Northeastern California finds itself at the end of a long, long Pacific Gas and Electric transmission line that snakes across the Sierra Nevada. While LMUD doesn’t purchase power directly from PG&E — the California Independent System Operator assumes that responsibility — the electricity LMUD purchases travels on the PG&E lines that frequently fail during winter weather or during a wildfire, to which we at line’s end have become accustomed.

Here’s the good news — all that is about to change this year as LMUD begins construction of the new Skedaddle Substation, forging a new relationship with NV Energy that will result in improved reliability for LMUD customers for years to come — all without a rate increase.

As part of its long-term planning, LMUD’s board and management continually look for ways to stabilize the power supply and the cost of power it delivers to customers.

“Over the past few years, it has become more and more evident that our current connection to the grid is not reliable,” said Theresa Phillips, LMUD’s public safety manager. Public Safety Power Shutoff events, wildfires and energy shortages contribute to the need for an alternate connection and new power resources. One of the ways we are looking toward the future needs of our community is the construction of the new Skedaddle Substation.”

Veteran LMUD board member Fred Nagel has seen the industry change during the past 20 years, and he realizes the need to diversify LMUD’s power supply and grid connection.

“Given the increased unreliability of the California grid, LMUD has no choice but to construct an inter-tie (Skedaddle Substation) with NV Energy, regardless of the extreme cost,” Fred said. “Today’s LMUD customers are dependent upon reliable power and cannot accept prolonged outages.”

In fact, the Skedaddle Substation is the result of years of planning and research. It
will be located in Wendel and will connect LMUD’s system with Reno/Alturas transmission line. The substation will lessen LMUD’s reliance on Honey Lake Power and all but eliminate the need for the connection to the PG&E transmission line.

But the LMUD board and the utility staff acknowledge the project is costly and will require LMUD to acquire bonds to fund its construction.

“The question now is how long will it take?” said LMUD Assistant General Manager Pat Holley, who serves as the project manager for the Skedaddle substation.

“We expect construction on the substation to begin in early 2021,” Pat said. “Detailed specifications for equipment have been put together and those will go out to bid soon. If all goes well, the substation will be online sometime in 2023.”

Keeping the board and the public informed during this lengthy planning process has been and remains a high priority for the LMUD staff.

At its monthly board meetings, both the general manager and assistant general manager provide updates on the Skedaddle project to the board and the public. As always, the public is encouraged to attend the board meetings, which are held at 5:30 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of each month. Agendas and meeting minutes can be viewed or downloaded from the lmud.org website.

The general manager comments on the project
High Country Life asked LMUD General Manager Doug Smith to provide our readers with details about the project. Here are his responses.

What do LMUD customers need to know about this substation? The Skedaddle Substation is the result of years of planning and research and it represents a solid, long-term investment for the people of Lassen County. It will greatly improve the reliability of electric service for our customers while providing significant transmission cost savings over the long term. We have worked with local agencies, including Lassen County, the Bureau of Land Management, the Susanville Indian Rancheria, and the U.S. Forest Service, to mitigate environmental impacts and ensure that the substation meets all local, state and federal requirements.

How big is this project? The project consists of two main electrical facilities: a 345,000 volt (345 kV) switching station that will be owned by NV Energy, and a 345 kV to 60,000 volt (60 kV) substation that will be owned by LMUD. It also includes about 4 ½ miles of 60 kV transmission line to go from our substation to our existing 60 kV line.

The estimated cost for design and construction of the NV Energy switching station is $25 million. The estimated cost of the LMUD substation and transmission line is $18 million. We’ve already spent about $1 million on acquiring property, permitting and miscellaneous other expenses, so the total estimated cost of the project is approximately $44 million.

NV Energy will fund their portion of the project, and we will repay their cost, plus a rate of return, over a 20-year contract period. We’ll

“Wildfires, power shortages, increased state mandates and the goal of providing safe, reliable and affordable power to our community all drive the need to increase reliability and stabilize power costs.”
— Theresa Phillips, LMUD
How are we going to pay for it? Our portion of the project will be paid for using a combination of cash reserves and borrowed funds. We plan to issue Certificates of Participation, a type of bond issuance that is available to special districts in California. A decision has not yet been made on the exact amount of money to borrow, but we have been assuming that we will borrow $16 million in our long-term financial projections. Those funds would likely be repaid over a 30-year term.

Who are our partners? NV Energy is the most obvious. We spent a good deal of time negotiating an agreement that works for both of us, and I believe they will be a good partner in completing this project and providing transmission service over the long term. We are also working with two engineering firms: Power Engineers and Engineering Consultants, Inc. Power Engineers will do the design specifications for our portion of the project and ECI will act as construction manager. NST Consulting has provided some design work for site improvements. We also worked with Navigant Consulting out of Folsom and a handful of subcontractors on the permitting and environmental studies.

How will this project affect our rates? We do not believe that this project will impact rates, assuming the work can be completed within the amounts currently estimated for design and construction. Our 10-year financial plan assumes a modest rate increase every three years, but that is driven by increases in the cost of goods and services over time and anticipated increased regulatory requirements from the state, rather than by this project. This is true because we currently pay very high rates for transmission service from the CAISO, and we will see significant savings once this project is completed. Factoring in debt service on the borrowed funds and payments to NV Energy's system to the Skedaddle Substation won't cost us anything other than the annual payments for capital and O&M described previously. After the 20-year term of the agreement expires, we will move to NV Energy's standard network transmission tariff, which is currently about one-third of what we pay for transmission service from the California ISO.

For many years, the Lassen Municipal Utility District has relied on power from Honey Lake Power biomass plant in Wendel when the Pacific Gas and Electric lines across the Sierra failed due to weather or wildfire. Many times this arrangement between HLP and LMUD has kept the power flowing to customers in Lassen County who would otherwise be left in the dark. Photo submitted
Energy, we think the project is essentially a break-even proposition.

How will this project affect our reliability? Our reliability will be dramatically improved over our current situation. I think we’re all aware of the challenges we currently face. We’re fed by a single transmission line that experiences frequent unplanned outages. We are also experiencing Public Safety Power Shutoffs with increasing frequency due to wildfire risk. This project is designed in such a way that we can be fed from either direction on the Reno-Alturas transmission line, so if there is an outage to the north or to the south of our point of interconnection, we should be able to remain energized. This line is very robust and has not experienced an unplanned outage over its entire lifetime.

In the meantime, LMUD can continue to rely on Honey Lake Power during PSPS events

“Fortunately for us, we can rely on Honey Lake Power to provide enough backup power to keep our entire system going,” Theresa said. She explained the LMUD operations department works closely with PG&E and HLP to ensure that when a PSPS occurs, the district has enough time to disconnect from the PG&E line and island with HLP.

This coordinated effort between PG&E, HLP and LMUD is no easy feat. It takes all three agencies working together to make a smooth transition from PG&E’s Caribou transmission line to Honey Lake Power.

This fall alone — between Sept. 28 and Oct. 28 — PG&E scheduled four separate PSPS events.

Here’s how it works. PG&E’s Grid Control Center notifies LMUD’s operations department that they are anticipating a PSPS event. High winds, extreme temperatures and low humidity usually trigger the event. Once the decision has been made by PG&E officials to shut off power, the GCC operators are responsible for turning off and turning on the power to PG&E’s high voltage lines – including the Caribou transmission line that delivers power to the LMUD system.

The change over from PG&E to HLP requires both time and planning.

“There are several hours of prep to make sure our customers are unaffected by the PSPS,” said LMUD’s Operations Manager, Cort Cortez. “We work with PG&E and HLP to prepare for islanding. We try to get off the electric grid a few hours before the scheduled PSPS. If we are given enough notice, the transition onto the island with HLP is smooth and unnoticed by our customers.”

For technical reasons, if the PG&E transmission line fails unexpectedly such as during a wildfire, LMUD cannot just switch to HLP. The change requires both time and planning.

“During PSPS events, our goal is to keep the power flowing to our community,” Theresa said. “Having HLP in our backyard means we can do just that; however, it does come at an increased price. The power we purchase from HLP is roughly twice the price of the power we normally purchase. Thankfully, our board and management have set aside adequate financial reserves that help us to absorb the temporary increase in purchased power without passing the cost on to our customers.”

LMUD is not the only one that takes a financial hit during islanding events. When our connection to the California grid is interrupted, it means that HLP cannot sell their power for their current contract. Because the LMUD system can only take a certain amount of energy, HLP must reduce its normal output by as much as two-thirds, resulting in reduced revenue. The ripple effect of PSPS events is felt throughout the state. It affects more than our system; it affects the entire grid.

There is also concern about the future of biomass in California. Currently, HLP has a power-purchase agreement in place with San Diego Gas & Electric — this helps stabilize their operation and ensures LMUD’s partnership with them will continue to benefit our customers as well as HLP.

“However, as is the case with much of the California energy landscape, we must plan for known and unknown,” Theresa said.

What about wildfires?

During the last decade, California has experienced increased, intense and record-breaking wildfires. These fires have resulted in devastating loss of life and billions of dollars in damage to property and infrastructure, Theresa explained.

According to the California Energy Commission’s web page, “Electric utility infrastructure has historically been responsible for less than 10 percent of reported wildfires; however, fires attributed to power lines comprise roughly half of the most destructive fires in California history.”

“Rest assured the LMUD board and management are working hard to ensure that we have the power we need when we need it, now and well into the future.”

— Theresa Phillips, LMUD
Johnstonville Foods — a landmark in the small community just outside the Susanville city limits — lost its lease and closed its doors for good last month. Photo by Cindie Williams

By Sam Williams
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Nothing lasts forever, they say, and by the time you read this story, the landmark family owned Johnstonville Quality Foods on Highway 395 near Johnstonville School that has served its tiny rural community so well for nearly 80 years, sadly will have passed into memory.

Eve Maslin, the latest member of her family to operate the store, said it had to close Jan. 17 because while she owns the business, the family recently lost its lease on the building.

“I tried to renew the lease, and we couldn’t work it out, Eve said, “so it’s time for me to go.”

Rather than dwelling on the closure of the store, Maslin instead wanted to thank all the loyal customers who have supported the family business over the years.

“We love our customers,” Eve said. “They’ve helped make the store. This was our biggest year ever, and they’ve helped make the store ... I'd just like to say thank you for your support and letting me serve you all these years. We really do appreciate you.”

She’s not just talking about the new folks in the area.

“I’ve got customers from all the way back in the 1960s,” Eve said, “although there are not as many as there used to be. We’ve got customers who are grandkids or great-grandkids of those customers still shopping at the store today — third or fourth generation.”

All in all, Eve said running the grocery has been a lot of work, but she loves it. And with the closure of other little stores in the area such as the Leavitt Lake store, the Wayside and the store in Milford, the little market’s business has actually increased over the years.

“It’s been a good experience running this business,” Eve said.

“It’s changed over the years, but it makes you appreciate your neighbors. We’ve been
Johnstonville Quality Foods — sometimes dubbed the Johnstonville Chamber of Commerce because it gave locals a place to gather to discuss the issues of the day — always provided a clean and tidy spot for patrons to shop.

Photo by Cindie Williams

like the Johnstonville Chamber of Commerce... We do a little bit more than some of the chain stores. We add a personal touch.

Sometimes someone comes in looking for Aunt Amy, and if we know them we can say, oh yeah, she just lives right down the street.”

Eve acknowledges most shoppers buy most of their groceries at a larger store, but her store has been a pleasant alternative if a customer just needs two or three items.

“We can’t really compete with the prices you get at a supermarket,” Eve said, “but if you’re in a hurry or just need an item or two, we’ve been there for you.”

Of course, she also stressed the importance of good customer service as a means to generate customer loyalty.

“If you treat your customers right, they will stop and see you even if they move to another
Real old-timers might remember a previous incarnation of Johnstonville Quality Foods when it was located in the other building on the property that also has served as a restaurant. "Who would think someone would come to our little store and buy a $21 grass-fed steak? We also carried less expensive meat. We tried to have something for everybody." — Eve Maslin

part of the county," Eve said. She said the store always tried to carry the items customers wanted. "If a customer came in and wanted something, we'd always try to get that for them," Eve said. She also remembers the nightmares of running the store during a power outage when everything had to be done by hand. She said even though she couldn't use the credit card machine, she kept track of the customers' purchases and nearly all of them
came back the next day or later that week and settled their account.

While most little neighborhood markets don’t carry meat, Johnstonville Quality Foods did, despite the problems of keeping the meat products in stock.

“A lot of these grocery companies don’t really cater to the small guys anymore,” Eve said, “but we were fortunate to find Hannah Tangeman, and my brother approached her to start carrying some of her meat. We started with the ground beef and then we started carrying some of the steaks the next year. And things have really taken off with that … When we lost the health food store we got some of that businesses. Who would think someone would come to our little store and buy a $21 grass-fed steak? We also carried less expensive meat. We tried to have something for everybody.”

Eve said she and her brother and four employees ran the store. With the closure and the high cost of grocery store equipment, she’s trying to sell some of her equipment and shelves to other small markets in the region.

“Some of the freezers are $5,000 or $6,000 brand new,” Eve said. “It’s really hard (to pay that much) in these small towns unless you inherit some money or something. There’s no way in this day and age that I could start this business over,” with the restrictions on things such as beer licenses (today you have to buy an existing license).

She also said the restrooms in the store are not handicapped accessible, but because the business has been in operation so long, it was grandfathered in.

Eve said she plans to remain in the community and may seek employment at another small market or convenience store in the area, although she plans to take some time off since she hasn't had a vacation since 1989.

Johnstonville Quality Foods history over the years

Actually the store originally opened in another building around the corner on the property (the red building that used to be a restaurant) way back in the 1940s before her family got involved.

Eve said several Johnstonville families first operated the store — the Rooks and the Alexanders ran the place before the Reynolds family took it over around 1950, and several families ran the local grocery until her parents — Harry and Barbara Maslin — moved to town from Pomona to open the store in 1968.

“It was in the little building next door that was a restaurant for many years,” Eve said. “That was the original store.”

The landlord added on to the original building, but then in the mid-1970s the landlord built the steel building current customers know and love and the family business moved into new digs.

Eve said her parents sold the business to some neighbors up the street in 1975, but in 1989, the Maslin family (her mother, her brother Art Sowall and Eve, again purchased the grocery business.

“We own the business not the building or the property,” Eve said. “I've been an owner since 1989.”

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46 High Country Life • February 2021
With each cake, Frosting Families is making life a little sweeter. “There are things we take for granted — like birthday parties. Not everyone gets those,” said Frosting Families Executive Director Nycki Lofton.

To help support those in the community who could use the dash of sweetness, the developing nonprofit helps low-income families, foster children, families recovering from disasters, seniors, veterans and families reuniting. They’ve even made a cake for a baby shower for a Camp Fire victim and can cater to dietary needs, making sugar-free and gluten-free treats.

“It makes me appreciate the things that we do have, what my family does have. I get to see the joy, the little things, like just a simple cake or cupcake that these families wouldn’t have had if it had not been for this,” Nycki added.

Frosting Families founder and CEO Heather Arter, who owns Merry Morsels on Main Street in Susanville, understands what it’s like not being able to afford things for her kids.

A mother of five herself, Heather started making cake-pops in her home so her children could have treats to bring to class for Valentine’s Day. Now, in a position to help others, she wanted to give back and help families bring the joy of a perfectly decorated cake. Although the acts of giving started before, Frosting Families formed its board of directors in 2018.

“Just because you are low income, or in various situations, you should still be able to enjoy yourself,” Nycki shared. Initially, Heather wanted to work with national organization Icing Smiles, which gives cakes to ill children, but the county’s rural location made it difficult. So, the idea to start a local cake donation organization became a reality.

“Since we are a smaller community, we are really focused on taking care of each other,” Nycki said.

And Frosting Families certainly does its part to bring joy to community members. Nycki said the organization does about 50 cakes a year.

“The requests keep coming in,” she said. Heather added the number of cakes donated each year is growing.

Recently, the team described a cake given to a 16-year-old foster child — one who told them she had never had a birthday party before.

“It’s hard to describe,” Heather said of the feeling when they are able to give a child something they’ve never had before, to make a child feel special.

Most of the baking is done by Heather and Nycki, but there is a whole team of bakers who will lend their talents when it comes to donating a cake. The organization is even adding more cake decorators to their team throughout the county, including a recent addition in Westwood.

Moreover, the developing nonprofit aims to help the community in other ways. Throughout the year, Frosting Families helps provide party decorations, Halloween goodie bags and free costume rentals.

Frosting Families is also working to help those in need during quarantines.

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The Frosting Families Board of Directors is helping bring smiles to local children one cake at a time. Assistant Executive Director Brandy Huett, left, CEO Heather Arter, Public Relations Director Leah Holloway, Financial Director Susan Baxter, and Executive Director Nycki Lofton (Administrative Director Roxanne Kranz is not pictured) are focused on bringing a smile to everyone’s face on their special day.

Photo by Makenzie Davis

By Makenzie Davis
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High Country Life • February 2021
Frosting Families provides cakes, along with other coordinating treats and decorations, to local low income families on the child’s birthday, for foster children, for family reunifications or a variety of other instances.

Photo submitted

The organization has partnered with Lassen County’s COVID-19 hub, Lassen Cares, to ensure residents stuck in quarantine could have access to items like food if they don’t have the resources or connections to help them acquire necessities. The organization is collecting items like food, cleaning supplies, paper products and then dropping them off at the county department for delivery.

“We’re always finding more ways we can help out. We go with the flow,” Nycki shared.

But overall, Frosting Families is a community effort.

The Frosting Families Board of Directors consists of CEO Heather, Executive Director Nycki, Assistant Executive Director Brandy Huett, Financial Director Susan Baxter, Administrative Director Roxanne Kranz and Public Relations Director Leah Holloway.

Frosting Families provides cakes, along with other coordinating treats and decorations, to local low income families on the child’s birthday, for foster children, for family reunifications or a variety of other instances.

Photo submitted
And there are a whole host of local businesses that make sure Frosting Families gives the best experience.

When the local organization learns of a family who could use a cake, they get to baking. The family can either make a cake request, or they are referred to Frosting Families though a local agency like CASA or social services. Then the team finds out the interests of the cake recipient.

If they like Ninja Turtles, their cakes will make you say “cowabunga,” if princesses are more their thing, the sweet treats will be fit for royalty — and the cakes, coordinating treats and decorations are made possible by businesses like Supreme Graphics, Amaiya’s Magical Treats, Those Buns Dough, Merry Morsels, Nycki’s Knits and Creations, Majestic Rose, Be Creative, Highway to the Gaming Zone and High Sierra Party Rentals.

And there are plans to do even more. Heather shared the board’s desire to give additional treats and even gifts with future cakes. She hopes any organization interested in providing gift certificates or gifts to local youth reach out to Frosting Families.

Back in 2019, Heather explained if anyone needed a cake, all they had to do was ask — there’s no need to put more pressure on a family through an application process. “If they are asking for a cake, they can’t afford a cake nine times out of 10,” she said. This program is intended to “fill the gap between necessities and luxuries.”

The local board is still working on finishing the paperwork to make Frosting Families an official nonprofit organization — a task COVID-19 has certainly hindered — but the plan is still in the works, and the organization welcomes any donations to ensure cakes can still be provided for free.

Additionally, Frosting Families is always looking for volunteers in addition to donations, and although cash is accepted, even supplies, like flour and sugar, are welcome. People could even donate gifts and gift certificates.

Or, if you’d like to support them and also receive a sweet treat yourself, be sure to check out their pie booth at the Farmers Market, which, according to Heather, helped fund many cakes.

For more information on Frosting Families, how you can help or how to receive some assistance, call Heather at (757) 576-2815, stop by Merry Morsels or check out the Frosting Families Facebook page.

“It’s just really a blessing to be able to be a part of this and give back to our community, because I love this town,” said Nycki. “It’s a beautiful way to give back to this community.”
any members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have served our community since they arrived in Susanville more than a century ago — leading our community as members of our elected government or as citizens appointed to positions of authority.

In the early days of the church, its members suffered religious persecution when its founder Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were both shot to death in Carthage, Illinois on June 27, 1844. Nearby Latter-day Saint settlements came under attack in which their homes were destroyed and their crops were burned.

Brigham Young, the senior of the Twelve Apostles, succeeded Joseph Smith, and in February 1846 he led church members west through Iowa and then to Nebraska before he and an estimated 17,000 followers finally arrived at the Great Salt Lake in Utah on July 24, 1847 — Mexican territory before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and nearly 13 years before the American Civil War.

Through the Compromise of 1850, Utah became the Utah Territory, but then disputes...
erupted between the church and the federal government, largely because of the practice of polygamy. Eventually the church abandoned the practice, and Utah became the 45th state Jan. 4, 1896.

Members of the so-called Mormon Battalion — the only religious military unit in U.S. history — are believed to be the first Latter-day Saints to pass through Susanville during the Mexican-American War.


On Nov. 11, 1922 the Primary Association — essentially a Sunday School for children — was organized. A Sunday School meeting was held at the home of Brother Davis July 1, 1923. A Priesthood meeting was held Jan. 4, 1924, and two weeks later the group made arrangements to rent Knoch Hall for $2.50 per week. That year 21 Sunday School sessions were held with as many as 23 children in attendance.

On May 11, 1924, the Susanville Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The number of participants swelled, and meetings were moved to the Orpheum building.

The first Branch Conference was held Oct. 19, and the first Christmas party was held Dec. 22.

A Mother’s Day program with 45 members in attendance, was presented May 9, 1925. The Primary was reorganized in September 1925, and the Relief Society was organized Sept. 20.

By November 1926, the group needed a larger meeting place and moved to the IOOF Hall at Main and Lassen Streets.

Mark Butler became the first baby blessed in the Branch on April 3, 1927, and Gallatin Beach at Eagle Lake hosted a Pioneer Day Celebration on July 24.

Finally, on Nov. 13, 1927, Latter-day Saints first discussed the need of a new building. With about 15 members in attendance Feb. 8, 1928, leaders expressed their confidence the group had “such faith and determination to make the dream of a new building become a reality. After visiting several sites, a chapel was proposed for the corner of Main and McDow streets.

Today, the stake includes a building in Standish, a building in Susanville that houses two wards, a building in Clear Creek, a building in Greenville, a building in Portola, a building in Quincy and a building in Loyalton. Currently the stake has about 1,800 church members.

“According to “My Story,” by Brother Olsen, “Our main problem was to obtain money to purchase the ground we needed. We had a membership of about 300, of which 175 were in Susanville, the remaining were scattered from Westwood to Alturas, a distance of about 130 miles.”

According to accounts, the group struggled and almost gave up hope, but then they sought “on our knees the help of the Lord. Each time
we humbly and prayerfully asked His help, a
ew ray of hope was born.”

This new building would cost $30,000, and
the money was harder to come by than the
$300,000 spent on a new chapel on Richmond
Road nearly 40 years later. Despite the
struggle, within 14 months, the building was
finished and paid for, making possible its Nov.
10, 1929 dedication by the President of the
Church of Latter-day Saints, Heber J. Grant.

The ladies of the church sponsored a large
and popular Christmas Bazaar to help pay for
the Richmond Road building. The bazaar was a
big deal to everyone who attended. Once the
bazaar took in $5,000 in a single day.

That really helped because the local people
had to fund their buildings back in those days — a building could not be dedicated until it
was paid for by the local church members.

What was the big draw? Homemade candy!

The ladies also held monthly dinners and
luncheons that as many as 300 diners attended.

In addition, many church members donated
their labor to help build the building on
Richmond Road.

For several years members also cut as many
as 4,000 Christmas trees per year to sell to the
public to raise funds for the building — some
trees going all the way to Los Angeles.

The local church had to end the Christmas
Bazaar due to tax concerns as the government
began collecting taxes on church-run
businesses, and local leaders decided the
bazaar’s profits should not threaten the
church’s tax-exempt status, and the church
now separates its church and business
activities.

Another distinction for the Richmond Road
building is its use of a private geothermal
system. In fact, it is the first geothermal
building in Susanville.

Today, the church owns ranches that operate
as part of its welfare program. In Reno,
Nevada, The Bishop’s Storehouse distributes
many food items prepared by local churches
around the nation, including many canned
and fresh fruits and vegetables grown on local
Welfare Farms. The church also operates the
largest cattle ranch in the nation located in
Florida. In other locations the church operates
wheat farms and vineyards.

The idea is not to make money, but to help
provide for those who can’t provide for
themselves. Some of the foodstuffs wind up in
local foodbanks, and the church works with
many other charities. During World War II, the
church’s relief agency sold wheat to the federal
government. After World War II, through
cooperation with the federal government, the
church provided foodstuffs for the war-torn
citizens of Europe.

Today, if these operations show a profit, the
church pays the taxes, but these commercial
efforts are kept separate from the other church
activities.

Members are encouraged to have a three-
month supply of food because church members are taught to be self-sustaining in all things — spiritually, physically and financially. During an emergency, the members would not need assistance from either the government or the church.

Fifteen apostles lead The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and local congregations, known as parishes or wards, are led by a bishop. Groups of wards form a stake, led by a president.

Today there are three wards or congregations in Susanville, and these local wards are joined in a stake that includes wards in Lassen, Plumas and Sierra counties, although in the early days the stake included areas that extended east to Reno, Nevada and north to the Oregon border.

Many of the original church members came from Utah to work at the Red River Lumber mill in Westwood after the turn of the 20th century, and in the late 1930s there was a large ward in Westwood — probably even larger than the ward in Susanville at that time. Many others came to work on the ranches.

When Young served as president of the church, he encouraged members to leave Salt Lake and form “colonies” across the west. Believe it or not, Genoa, Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada and St. George, Idaho were first settled by church members.
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