# Elsie Vinemaple Fire District

## ELSIE FIRE AWARDED WILDFIRE GRANT

### *Total Donations and Grants Received This Year Now Exceed $100,000*



***The Oregon State Fire Marshal*** has announced the recipients of its 2025 Wildfire Season Staffing Grant, and Elsie Fire has again been included in the list of winners. "We are absolutely thrilled to accept this award," said Elsie Fire Chief Rob Davis. "Successfully receiving another year of the grant will enable us to once again add staff from July through September to better serve our community during the Oregon fire season. It positions us to respond faster to the threat of fire on the landscape, as well as any other call for service within our district or with our mutual aid partners."

The $35,000 grant brings the sum total of monies we've received this year from grants and donations to $105,000. With an annual operating budget of about $95,000 from local property taxes, these additional funds more than double our budget with no extra cost to our taxpayers.

"Having professional relationships and connections with donors and local businesses, like Chief Davis does, has significantly boosted our budget," said Board Chair TJ Hecox. "As a result, we now have new apparatus and gear to replace some of the outdated trucks and equipment we'd been dealing with before. In addition to helping us more effectively serve our community, it's been a tremendous morale booster for our responders."

The new apparatus will be on display on Monday, April 28, at the District Community Meet-Up and State of the District address at Jewell School. Starting with a BBQ at 4:30, come enjoy some good food, meet your first responders, and get an up-close look at the fire trucks and other gear before hearing the Chief's address at 6 p.m. We hope to see you there!

## What's Inside

Elsie Fire Wins Grant.. Pg. 1
Letter from the Chief..Pg. 2
Community BBQ .....Pg. 4
Volunteer Spotlight.....Pg. 5
Responders in Action...Pg. 8
Spring Safety Tips.....Pg. 10
Join Our Team!.....Pg. 11

# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF




The last 14 months of being your fire chief has been an incredible time of growth and progress for our Elsie Fire District! Our team has accomplished so much, and we have so much more work to do! To start off, here are some of the things we have accomplished by being proactive and fiscally responsible with your tax dollars:

•Received a donation for a Type III Wildland Urban Interface Engine

•Received a donation for a 2015 Ram 1500 Pickup

•Added volunteers to our roster

•Acquired auto extrication tools that are actually capable of cutting the vehicles of today

•Applied for regional grants to replace outdated PPE

- Applied for a regional grant to purchase Thermal Imaging Cameras
- Applied for a major seismic rehabilitation grant for Station 1
- Received wildland fire hose from ODF through our partnership to equip wildland fire apparatus appropriately, and donations of additional hose to outfit apparatus.
- Purchased a 2024 Ram 1500 Pickup
- Outfitted, and placed in service the grant-funded Pumper Tender
- Cleaned out Fire Station 2
- Cleaned out Station 3, and returned it to an in-service fire station

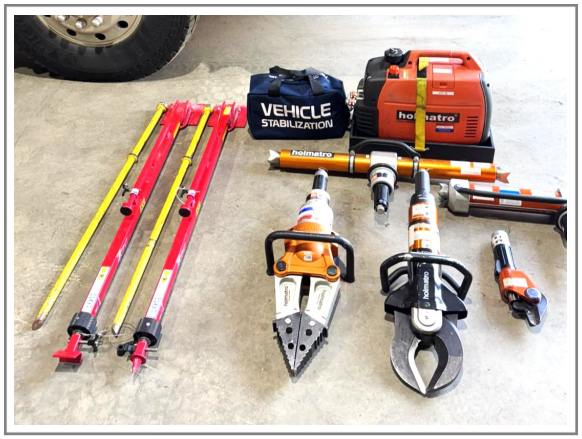
When I talk about cleaning fire stations, I mean we did some real cleaning. We have dumped over 100 YARDS of garbage with probably another 30 yards to come out of Station 1. Our volunteers and board of directors have put in countless hours filling dumpsters, donating unnecessary items, and assisting in selling things the district no longer needs – recouping your hard-earned tax dollars to reappropriate and better meet the demands of the district.

We have remained transparent in our management of the district through open discussion in board meetings, sharing information through our website and social media and the use of our newsletter. Now in our second year of solid budgeting, we have

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## *Letter From The Chief (continued from page 2)*

counted every penny, and only made purchases that had long term, positive effects on the way we operate and how we serve the community. If you follow our Facebook page, you may have seen before-and-after shots of some of our upgrades!




For example, we recently made the decision to upgrade our auto extrication tools. The best set of tools the district previously had were from the late 90's/early 2000's, donated by another district when they upgraded their own tools. Their lack of annual maintenance and inspection, general wear, age, and inability to cut almost every newer vehicle on the road was of major concern to me. A large portion of our calls are in response to motor vehicle accidents along Highway 26, and knowing there was going to be a day we were unable to free someone trapped in a car was unacceptable. The replacement of the outdated tools with newer, more effective demo extrication tools cost the district $9,999 – a cost savings of nearly $40,000 over the cost of a brand new set, while still giving us the ability to cut even the newest cars on the market during an emergency.

I want to thank your volunteers; they are the heart of this fire district and without them there would be nobody to answer the call. These men and women stepped up when things were bad, braving criticism from some, yet continuing to answer the call daily. They have trained more than any volunteer department I know to teach each other new skills, and hone in on others. They have donated hundreds of hours cleaning fire stations, appropriately equipping apparatus, and helping with every single task I have ever asked them for. These are some of the finest folks you will ever meet and I consider them family. When you see them out in the community, shake a hand, give them a thank you, and let them know that you care!

I'll close with this: we have an event coming up that I feel is beneficial to everyone in the fire district. We will be presenting the 2025 State of The District address at the Jewell School on April 28th. If you want to know what's going on, get some facts, and know what we did last year, you should join us! We will have apparatus on display, BBQ starting at 4:30 and presentation at 6:00pm. Thank you to Camp 18, Elderberry Inn, Jewell School, the Elsie Vinemaple Volunteer Firefighters and everyone else that is helping to make this an absolute success! We look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

Rob Davis, Fire Chief
Elsie-Vinemaple RFPD


ELSIE FIRE
COMMUNITY MEET-UP
Chief's State of the District Address
New Apparatus on Display
Meet your Firefighters and EMS Responders
Enjoy a Meal with Friends Old and New
JOIN US!
MONDAY, APRIL 28 JEWELL SCHOOL
Food served 4:30 – 5:45 pm
State of the District Address 6 pm



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## *Meet Your Fire Board!*

When you think of the volunteers for our Fire District, you probably think of the first responders, racing out of their homes at all hours of the day and night to respond to a 911 call from our community. But the responders aren't the only important people helping to serve and protect our community. On the contrary, there are a lot of good folks working hard behind the scenes to keep the District functioning. Your Board of Directors are a few of them.

What exactly does the Board of Directors do, you might ask? Working under the guidance of the Special Districts of Oregon, Fire Board directors are charged primarily with setting broad policy for the District, and ensuring that the District operates in a legal and fiscally responsible manner. Solid project management skills and a background that involves overseeing budgets with clear accountability and transparency are key features of an effective Board member. They don't oversee the daily operations, though -- that's the Fire Chief's job, including management of personnel, safety, equipment, and response. In addition, our Fire Board members are a "working board," meaning they do far more than just attend meetings once a month. They participate actively in hands-on District projects, such as cleaning up the stations and pitching in wherever extra hands are needed. Here is a little about each of them:



**TJ Hecox,** current Board Chair, is a lifetime resident of Clatsop County. As the Public Works Supervisor for the Jewell district, and former owner of the Elderberry, he's a familiar face for many. "I'm out and about daily in the area," says TJ, "and it's been rewarding lately to hear people tell me they see how the momentum of the Fire Department has shifted over this last year. They like that information is getting out to them through the newsletter and social media, they like knowing what's going on, and they see us responding to calls. They know that if they need help, we'll be there. We've been trying to build back trust, and I think we're getting there."

TJ added to his department responsibilities last year by becoming a first responder. So, he doesn't have much spare time anymore, but when he does he spends it with his family. He married Emily, his high school sweetheart, and together they are raising their two children, Kendal and Axel. "People might tease you about only having 6 classmates in your grade at Jewell School, and I tell them 'that may be true, but they're the best 6 friends you ever had.' Elsie is filled with great people who want to do the right thing, and that's worth a lot."

*(continued on page 6)*

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT *(CONT FROM PAGE 5)*



**Deidra Pitkin** joined the Board in 2024, and her dynamic energy, leadership, and architectural skills have been critical assets to the District. Initially approached by the Board in late 2023, after the County had recommended engaging an architect to help remedy building violations at Station 2, Deidra offered 40 hours pro bono work to help move that project forward. When she became a Board member in mid-2024, that work continued to the point that she has now donated more than 200 billable hours to the project.

Deidra has also been a driving force in building a strong foundation for the District's future as an organization. "As a Board, we have really been working on the foundation of the department. We've been creating policies for the Board and for the District. We're setting up procedures so we can govern more effectively, and have our communications and files better organized and more easily accessible with upgraded technology. We are creating a future that will benefit the community, and that's exciting!" she says earnestly.

Deidra loves being outdoors, walking through the forest, at the beach, fishing, and just exploring nature with her husband Steve and their two dogs. "Even though I wasn't born here," she says reflectively, "Elsie feels like home to me. I know that, as neighbors, we will all be there for each other, and I love being part of that kind of community."



**Kerry Walsh** brings a long career in emergency management to the Board. While serving in the Coast Guard, Kerry volunteered with the local fire department as a firefighter and EMT. Later, he served on a ship rescue vessel out of Astoria, ultimately becoming a ship wreck Salvage Master and Project Manager for large scale maritime casualty operations. His most recent deployments include response to Hurricane Milton in Florida, and to Maui to oversee the recovery of the Lahaina Harbor in the aftermath of the devastating wildfire.

"One thing I've learned since I joined the department is how quickly best practices change in fire services -- just like they do in the commercial diving industry. It's not our job on the Board to know everything about fire management -- we rely on the Chief to stay current and up-to-date with new practices and technologies in firefighting. Our role as Board members deals more with the business side of the District: overseeing financials, project management, maintaining transparency and ensuring that we are operating within District policy and state and federal law," Kerry explains. His fellow Board members agree that his strong head for business and management is real asset to the District.

Kerry and his wife Janet love the thrill and the challenge of self-guided whitewater rafting, and with their family and friends have rafted rivers all over the West.



**Joan Layman** was born and raised here in Jewell, living and working here her entire life. She serves as Transportation Manager for Jewell School, and has 3 children and 4 grandchildren. She joined the Board when she saw an opportunity to be part of a Fire Department that was moving forward in a positive direction.

"For a long time," she says, "it felt like there was a closed door at the Fire Department. A lot of people tried to volunteer, but ended up leaving. I was also concerned about the condition of things. Trucks weren't maintained well, and it seemed like we just took leftovers from other departments. I always thought our community deserved better than that. Today, I can say I'm proud to be part of a Fire Department that welcomes new volunteers, and a Board that prioritizes being good stewards of our taxpayers' dollars, is transparent with the financials, and makes sound decisions."

Joan loves gardening, attending her grandkids' sporting events and choir concerts, traveling to warm and sunny locations, and regularly attending the Broadway Across America musicals. She admits to having heard all kinds of stories, having been a school bus driver for many years. "It's true that kids say the darndest things! After a while driving, you kind of become invisible. The kids forget you're there and then you really hear a lot!" she laughs. "I'm on my second generation of kids now, so when one misbehaves and I have to call their parents, oftentimes I realize I'm talking to a person who, as a kid, was acting up on my bus in the very same way!"



**Ed VanDyke** has been doing community and public service his entire life. After retiring from the Army as a sergeant major, he built a second career helping veterans as a counselor and claim officer, eventually becoming Deputy Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. Even now, after retirement, he stays connected with the veterans community as a Veterans Service Officer for the American Legion. Those skills he built in communication and successfully navigating challenges are a key asset to the Board.

"You have to be able to ask the hard questions, and give and expect honest answers," Ed says firmly. "Without that kind of respectful and honest communication, it's difficult to be transparent, and to see if things really are the way they appear. With the new leadership, we are much more successful at sharing our diverse viewpoints, facing challenges head on, and working our way to a solution. It's very rewarding. And it helps us meet our goal of ensuring that our community members have solid and professional emergency services at their fingertips."

Ed and his wife, Sharon, have been married for 42 years, and have 10 children and 11 grandchildren. He enjoys working his farm, fishing, woodworking, and flying remote-control aircraft.

# YOUR RESPONDERS IN ACTION



*Your Elsie firefighters, responding quickly to a logging truck that caught fire on Quartz Creek Mainline (seen in left and right photos), were able to rapidly extinguish the blaze before it could spread to its load of logs. Thankfully, the driver was uninjured.*





*An illegal burn near Highway 26 was quickly doused before it could spread to nearby vegetation and residences. Pictured are firefighters TJ Hecox, Ben Mockley, and Joe Mockley, on scene with Assistant Chief David Senz.*



*Heavy storms knocked down trees and power lines all across our region this past winter, and Elsie first responders were faithfully on scene day and night clearing the roads and providing traffic control to ensure safe travel through our district.*




*Your Elsie firefighters are always happy to be on standby at community events, like they were last week at the Jewell School Easter Egg Hunt at the Jewell Meadows.*





*When a deer became stranded this winter on a frozen Fishhawk Lake, Elsie Fire joined our neighbors at Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD in a dramatic rescue! Firefighters carefully maneuvered equipment out onto the ice, securing the deer and transporting it back to shore, where rescue personnel gently assisted its recovery. Above right, Elsie's Lt. Shawn Hensinger is pictured removing rescue knots prior to releasing the animal back into the wild.*

## CALL LOG SUMMARY
## NOVEMBER 1, 2024 - MARCH 31, 2025

**Elsie-Vinemaple RFPD was toned out and responded to 95 calls!**

**34 Medical Calls (EMS) 28 MVA (Motor Vehicle Accident) 18 Public Assist Requests**
**8 Fires 7 Other**

# SPRING INTO SAFETY!




## CREATE DEFENSIBLE SPACE AROUND YOUR HOME



# JOIN OUR TEAM

## Volunteer with the Elsie-Vinemaple Rural Fire Protection District

### Looking for a meaningful way to serve your community?

Become a volunteer firefighter or support member!

No experience necessary - just a willingness to learn and help!

#### WHAT WE OFFER

- Professional Training (all provided at no cost)
- Leadership and skill building opportunities
- Emergency Medical Training
- Life-Flight Network Benefits
- A supportive family-like environment
- A chance to make a real difference

#### POSITIONS AVAILABLE

- Volunteer Firefighters
- EMS / Medical Responders
- Support and Auxiliary Members
- Administrative & Community Outreach Volunteers

#### JOIN US AT OUR OPEN HOUSE

- First Monday of each month
- 6:00 PM -7:00 PM
- Station #1 (42644 Lloyd Lane)

#### QUESTIONS

- elsiefirechief@gmail.com
- 503.755.2233
- Or scan below and send us a message!

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Elsie Fire Wins Grant.. Pg. 1

Letter from the Chief..Pg. 2

Community BBQ .....Pg. 4

Volunteer Spotlight.....Pg. 5

Responders in Action...Pg. 8

Spring Safety Tips.....Pg. 10

Join Our Team!.....Pg. 11



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