



Jordan Harpole, left, Jack Bryant and Norm White raise a pavilion at the green space next to the Lyle Activity Center, former site of Lyle Elementary School.

Old is New Again

Conversion of Lyle Elementary School establishes a community activity center

By Jeanie Senior

The former Lyle Elementary School building, now renamed the Lyle Activity Center, is living up to its name.

“It’s a happening place,” says Barbara Sexton, a board member of both the Twin Bridges Museum, which is located in the old school, and the Old Lyle Elementary School Supporters (OLESS), which holds the lease for the building.

The number and variety of groups and individuals using its space continues to swell, ranging from family gatherings and Scout groups to bicycle maintenance classes.

In December, a Come See Santa event there featured the Lyle High School jazz band and a lighted parade by area volunteer fire departments.

“The ladies of the community held a big bazaar in December—with no

Lyle Online

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heat—but both rooms and the hallway were filled with tables,” Barbara says. Two Fridays a month, one large room

serves as a youth drop-in center.

"It's a place for teenagers to go," says Joy Collins, who is in charge of renting rooms at the activity center. "I think that's our biggest accomplishment."

The building represents, in effect, a rescue. Its owner, the Lyle School District, told the community last year the old school was going to be torn down.

Barbara and Vern Harpole spoke at the Washington State Heritage Caucus in Olympia earlier this year, relating the activity center's recent history.

The pair noted that nothing had been done to keep the building in repair for the past 20 years. The structure is attached to the only green space in Lyle.

One of the fears was that if the old school was demolished, the community could lose the green space along with the building.

The heavily used green space, formerly the school grounds, now features a children's playground and a skate park, both built by volunteers with economic development grant money from Klickitat County. Another county economic development grant paid for the picnic pavilion, raised by volunteers this spring.

An activity center was identified as one of the community's highest needs in the Lyle Horizons project, a joint Washington State University Extension/Northwest Area Foundation program aimed at alleviating poverty in rural communities.

Lyle residents rallied to save the school building. In late April, the school district and OLESS signed a 10-year lease agreement for \$1. The lease is renewable for two more 10-year periods.

The building, however, needs costly repairs and improvements.

"Heating and windows and plumbing, those things are priorities," Barbara says. "We've done patch work on the roof, so we'll live with that for now."

An economic development grant

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Joy Collins, left, and Barbara Sexton carry out a sign that will alert motorists to yard sales.

Drive Up and Save

Bargain shoppers are willing to go the extra mile or two

By Jeanie Senior

It's advertised as 13+ Miles of Yard Sales, but that is an understatement for this Klickitat County event, held this year June 12-13.

The 13 mile reference dates to the first-ever yard sales, which involved the communities of Lyle and Klickitat. This year, the event stretches from Husum to White Salmon and Bingen, then east to Lyle, High Prairie, Murdock, Dallesport and Wishram.

Organizers expect lots of sales, lots of bargains and hope to attract lots of visitors.

"Oh, my goodness, last year between Bingen, White Salmon and Husum we had about 30 sales, and we hope to have more than that this year," says Marsha Holliston, manager of the Mt. Adams

"We make people return customers if we show them they are going to see interesting, clean, good products."

— Joy Collins

Chamber of Commerce. "We've already been contacted by some people in Pennsylvania who were coming out this way and happened to notice there was going to be a yard sale. I guess there's also people that come from Nevada every year."

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Activity Center

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from the county will pay for new windows throughout the building. Set to be installed later this year, they will greatly improve the building's energy efficiency.

The heating system, however, has to be repaired or replaced. OLESS continues to search for grants and donations to help with the needed improvements.

"It's just a fabulous project," Barbara says.

Teamed with Lyle Horizons, the activity center and park green space have been a focus for other community activities, including the River Peoples Cultural Exchange, which brings people together for a salmon feast, drumming and singing. First staged in May 2009 and repeated in 2010, it has been a resounding success.

In May 2010, the community staged its first-ever Tour de Fleur, celebrating local wildflowers, wineries and recreation opportunities.

The day featured the monthly Lyle Lions Club breakfast and wildflower hikes on the Klickitat Trail and Catherine Creek, live music, and food and wine from local vendors. ■



Volunteer Colleen Hatfield paints the outside of the old Lyle Elementary School, which has been converted into a community activity center.



Stuffed animals, a rechargeable power drill and vintage magazines will be some of the items for sale during the 13+ Miles of Yard Sales on June 12-13.

Yard Sales

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Klickitat County's yard sale is widely publicized. Marsha sends news releases to RV magazines, festival and events guides, and newspapers.

Joy Collins of Lyle, who has been involved since she helped found the first sale eight years ago, says there are RVers who travel across the country visiting miles of yard sales, now a national phenomenon.

"We encourage people to sell good stuff," she says. "I know a yard sale is a yard sale, but we make people return customers if we show them they are going to see interesting, clean, good products."

In Lyle, the park next to the Lyle Activity Center will be filled with yard sales, including a sale sponsored by the Twin Bridges Museum, with proceeds going to support the museum. A storeroom at the activity center already is packed with donations for the sale.

Throughout the year, Joy and friends Mildred Lykens and Barbara Sexton

pick up things to sell at the yard sale. They spend the day, for example, at the annual Pine Grove Fire Department auction in Hood River and make excursions to the Goodwill outlet store in Vancouver.

"Fortunately, I have a van," Joy says. "We always take my van and once we had to unload one side of the car so we could get Mildred out."

One of the White Salmon area sales will be held at Vanguard Nursery, with proceeds going to support the White Salmon swimming pool.

The pool committee "has been collecting stuff from people all year," Joy says. "Everything is in storage. It's going to be a big yard sale in one of the big greenhouses."

Joy views the yard sales as a means of economic development.

"If you can tie the towns together, more people will come," she says. ■

Yard sale participants pay \$5 to be listed on a map of all the sales throughout the county. Maps are available for \$2 at the Mt. Adams Chamber office and the Lyle Activity Center, with proceeds going to sponsors.