

# ROW RIVER REVIEW

Our Voice, Our Valley, Our Future



Al Kennedy Youth Crew chipping vine maple as they finish up a big wildfire mitigation project.

## ***Working Together is Community at its Best***

The season is shifting again in the Row River Valley, berries are ripening, and the golden light of late summer is settling in. This month's Row River Review brings together stories and knowledge from across our beautiful watershed, from tips on safe swimming and local wildlife to a special look back at the history of our valley's schools. We're also sharing a favorite late-summer harvest: elderberries, along with a recipe to turn them into something nourishing.

This issue highlights one of the most important initiatives in our valley right now: Neighborhood Teams. Born out of the challenges of wildfire preparedness and community resilience, these small, hyperlocal teams are made up of neighbors helping neighbors. Wildfire fuel mitigation is hard for everyone, so why not make it fun! Soon we are securing a tool library, dump trailer and chipper. Now neighbors can work together to achieve even more! That's why growing our local action network is so essential. The more we can coordinate as residents, sharing tools, knowledge, and effort, the stronger and safer we become.

We've already seen what's possible. Maybe you have caught a glimpse of the Al Kennedy Summer Youth Crew who, on behalf of the RRVCP, recently completed wildfire mitigation projects at several homes across the valley. These important wildfire mitigation projects can also be done together! With Neighborhood Teams, we can keep that momentum going, year-round and into every corner of the valley. In the spirit of a barn-raising, we can work quickly and successfully when neighbors are working together.

As always, thank you for reading, for showing up, and for all the ways you care for this land and community.



# Meet Your Neighbor



Hello new friends in the Row River Valley,

I'm Laura Bee, a new Cottage Grove resident, here with my son, my brother and his partner; we're homesteading just outside of town. I'm a third-generation Oregonian, an organic gardener, an artist, beekeeper, and mom. I've been lucky to find the Row River Valley Community Partnership and have so enjoyed working with the team and meeting many of you.

As Communications Specialist with RRVCP, I support several of our programs, including the Income Survey, editing the Row River Review, and performing Mitigation Assessments throughout the Valley. I look forward to meeting more of you along the way!

## My Fire Story

My great-grandfather fought the Tillamook Burn, a massive fire that scorched 350,000 acres from 1933–1951. A logger by trade, he shared unforgettable stories of that disaster, one that made global headlines. Little did I know that I would eventually fight fires in my own way.

My encounter with wildfire came as a resident of Talent during the 2020 Alameda Fire, which raced 20 miles in just four hours. From my rooftop, I watched flames sweep through the valley, like wind-driven rapids, while aircraft roared overhead and propane tanks exploded into the night. My neighborhood became a shelter zone; I helped guide trapped people to safety on back-roads, and cared for injured animals after the burn. I lost my bees.

That fire taught me hard lessons: how quickly chaos comes, how vital community becomes, and how communication can falter just when it's most needed. Since then, I've made it my mission to learn all I can about wildfire, preparedness, and resilience. I now live with go-bags, solar batteries, water storage, and a rule to never let my gas tank fall below half. I'm slowly hand-mitigating our overgrown land and shaping our lives around fire season.

I feel so fortunate to have found RRVCP and to be part of its mission to protect this beautiful valley. The Row River and its wild, living landscape have captured my heart. And the people here, ~sturdy, friendly, and full of 'can-do' spirit~ have inspired me. I'm here to serve, to organize, and to help us grow stronger together.

**If you'd like to join Neighborhood Teams, volunteer, write your own Fire Story, or get a mitigation plan started, please reach out: [Communications@RowRiverValley.org](mailto:Communications@RowRiverValley.org)**

*Let's do this! ~Laura Bee*







## Row River Valley History Corner

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROW RIVER VALLEY

BY KATY VAUGHN

**Dorena School** is the only original school upriver that is still open. It started out as **Chrisman School** in 1891. The grounds for the school building that stood from 1896 until 1946 were purchased from James and Sarah Kirk. The name Dorena did not come into being until 1899 when Postmaster Alfred Bigelow named the town. As the town obtained a Post Office and an official name, the name of the school followed suit.

Dorena School added a High School class around 1912. 1912 was also the first year that Mrs. A.E. Dean taught at the school. She was known and loved as Aunt Jakey Dean by the people of Dorena for many years after.

In 1936 the last graduating class left Dorena High School. The advent of the school bus made it possible for Row River Valley teens to attend Cottage Grove High School. The town of Dorena had to disperse when Dorena Dam was constructed. The school moved to a new building a few miles upriver from its original site and reopened there in 1946. That school building still stands and, with the addition of portable classrooms, is still in use.

**Disston School** was in operation from 1912 until 1961. The old gym is still standing on private property. The oldest first-grader at Disston School was a 17 year old named Signe. She had just immigrated from Sweden and decided to spend a year in the first grade to learn English.



**Wildwood School** was the oldest school in the Row River Valley, opening in 1884. It closed in 1940. The old building remains on private property on Lower Brice Creek Road.

**Star School** was open from 1890 until 1936. Noted local author Opal Whiteley and her sisters attended Star School for part of their childhoods.

**Culp Creek School** closed in 1989. The large gymnasium at the school was the pride of the area and many events and activities were held there. The Culp Creek School building enjoys new life today as Child's Way Charter School.

There were some other small schools in the area that came and went quickly. The **Doolittle School** near Cerro Gordo was open from 1906 until 1916 and served children of the Doolittle and Crites families.

In the old days each school was often its own School District. At one point there were 200 School Districts in Lane County. Some years ago, a law was passed that required every School District to have a High School. At that point the many small Districts surrounding Cottage Grove merged to become the South Lane School District, including the little schools of the Row River Valley.



Top Photo: Dorena School, 1914, Above left: Wildwood School, 1936, Above Right: Disston School, 1910



# ELDERBERRY: THE PEOPLE'S MEDICINE



If there's one plant you'll find in nearly every old country remedy book, it's elder. Known as "the medicine chest of the country folk," elderflower and its berries have been used for centuries—and for good reason. They are rich in antioxidants and Vitamin C, boost immunity, reduce inflammation, and help with cholesterol.

The elderberry bush comes in many varieties, but the ones you're most likely to find around here are *Sambucus caerulea*, or blue elderberry. These wild beauties grow tall, up to 30 feet, and often live near streams, marshy spots, or sunny, quiet roadsides. The berries are deep purple on the inside with a dusty bloom on the outside, and they grow in big, flat clusters that droop when they're ripe and ready.

## Harvesting Tips & Traditions

Before you go gathering, be sure you know what you're looking for, there are look-a-likes out there, and not all of them are safe. Once you learn to spot elder, you'll start seeing them everywhere.

### A few tips from the old ways:

- Respect the Elder: There's an old saying: don't cut elder wood. These bushes don't take well to pruning unless you know how, and careless cuts can really harm them.
- Gather gently: Don't yank or pull down high branches, they're fragile and can snap. Use an extension pruner, bring a ladder, or just leave the top berries for the birds.
- Be mindful: Only take about 10–20% from any wild tree. There's plenty to share with wildlife, and your neighbors.
- Pick ripe berries only: Skip the green ones and go for the soft, plump, dark purple ones. Clip whole clusters at the branch joint and place them gently in a lined basket or shallow box to keep them from getting squished.

## At Home with Elder

Once home, soak the clusters in clean water. This helps remove twigs, bugs, and any dried bits, everything you don't want in your medicine. Floaters can go to the compost pile, and your chickens might be delighted by the scraps!

Next, lay the clusters out to dry on towels. Once mostly dry, spread them in shallow pans and freeze. This is the real time-saver: frozen berries pop right off the stems when rubbed gently between your palms. From there, you can freeze them in smaller batches or simmer them into syrup and store in jars.

Elderberries are a gift from the land, to the people. Harvest with care, share with gratitude, and enjoy the deep tradition of this beautiful, healing plant.



## Important Notes:

Elderberries have cyanic compounds in the stems, roots, leaves, seeds, and green berries. You can eat a half cup or less of ripe berries without stems etc, without getting sick but cooking them changes the chemistry.

If you cook and clean them, the compounds are no longer present and you can safely enjoy the benefits. *You can even eat a slice of Elderberry Pie!*





## COOKING UP ELDERBERRY GOODNESS

***Once you've got a basket of elderberries, it's time to turn them into medicine.***

### **Here's how to do it:**

In a stainless steel pot or crockpot, mix about 2 parts water to 1 part berries (some folks like 3:1). Bring it to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for an hour or so, until it thickens a bit.

Let it cool, then ladle the juice into clean, sterilized jars using a funnel. When you hit the layer of berries at the bottom, pour that into a jelly cone or fine strainer and press it with a wooden pestle to get the thick, rich liquid out. If you want it extra clear, strain it again through cheesecloth or a clean dish towel.

The thick stuff is best for medicine. The lighter juice is perfect for syrup or jelly, but really, you can use either for both.

Once you've got your elderberry juice, you'll want to use or preserve it right away. It'll last about two weeks in the fridge, or a few months if you can it. You can also freeze it. Ice cube trays work great for small doses.

### **Simple Syrup Recipe + Extras**

To make a syrup, bring your elderberry juice to a simmer again, adding any extra ingredients you'd like: herbs, roots, spices, citrus. For every ½ cup of extras, add 1 cup of water. Boil 30 minutes, smash, strain, and cool to warm.

Stir in honey, lemon juice, or apple cider vinegar. Pour into jars and refrigerate, freeze in ice cube trays, or preserve by canning.

**TIP: With enough honey, your syrup can last 2–3 months in the fridge. Aim for 50% of the volume!**

*Elderberry syrup is one of those old-time traditions that keeps on giving! It's good for your immune system, and full of flavor, too.*



## **Elderberry Syrup – Simple Recipe**

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 cups fresh or frozen elderberries
- 4 cups water
- 1–2 cups raw honey (to taste, 50% sugar content for longer shelf life)

### **Optional Add-Ins (Pick 2–4):**

- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 thumb fresh ginger (sliced)
- 3–5 whole cloves
- 1 star anise
- 1 tbsp dried rose hips or hibiscus
- 1 slice lemon or orange
- 1 tbsp dried echinacea, turkey tail, reishi, nettle, or mullein

### **Instructions:**

- Simmer berries, water & herbs for 30–60 minutes.
- Smash berries to release juice.
- Strain through cheesecloth.
- Cool until just warm.
- Whisk in honey and optional splash of lemon juice or apple cider vinegar.
- Bottle in clean jars. Store in fridge up to 3 months.

*There's no standard dosage, but if you're feeling unwell, taking one tablespoon four times a day is a gentle way to try elderberry medicine.*



# Introducing Neighborhood Teams:

## Knowledge, Competency, Unity, Shared Labor & Resources

### You're Invited!

#### Neighborhood Teams Interest Meeting

September 14th, 3-6 PM,  
Row River Grange

In the spirit of barn raising and neighborly care, the Row River Valley is launching Neighborhood Teams, small groups of neighbors coming together to support one another through wildfire safety, emergency preparedness, and everyday connection.

Whether it's brush clearing, tool sharing, or simply checking in, this is about helping each other out, no pressure, no politics, just people who care.

Join us for an afternoon of food, fun, kid-friendly activities, and meaningful conversation as we kick off this valley-wide effort. We'll discuss how teams will form, how neighbors can choose names and boundaries that reflect their area, and how the Row River Valley Community Partnership (RRVCP) will support the work with tools, training, and coordination.

Together We Can is more than a motto; it's how we build a stronger, safer, more connected community. Whether you want to lend a hand, learn something new, or just feel a little more peace of mind, there's a place for you here.

**Come as you are. Leave inspired.**

**We can't wait to see you there!**

**The purpose of this self-organization is twofold:**

To build meaningful trust among neighbors who are most likely to help one another during emergencies, collectively work on wildfire mitigation properties, evacuation preparedness, and so on.

*Together  
We Can!*

#### Community Event! Meet Your Neighbors

*Join us for our Neighborhood Team Launch. It's going to be all fun and games!*

**GREAT FOOD : RAFFLE : SIGN UPS & OPPORTUNITIES : GRANT UPDATES**

**Special Back-to-School Gifts for the kiddos!**

**SEPTEMBER 14<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-6:00 pm** Row River Grange 34360 Row River Rd., CG

**Do you live in the Row River Valley? Neighborhood Teams are here to support your neighborhood.** Whether you want to stay informed, lend a hand, or simply be part of a caring network, there's a place for you. Built on connection, compassion, and a 'can-do attitude', we are simply neighbors helping neighbors; no uniforms, no pressure, no politics. **Just real people, looking out for each other in big and small ways.**

**By grounding team formation in local knowledge and mutual trust, the Neighborhood Teams become more than just a preparedness program—they become a framework for reconnecting and strengthening a rural community that, despite its distance and challenges, is deeply interdependent.**

**You Belong—Just as You Are**  
Use the Skills you already have!

**Celebrate Connection**  
**Learn Simple Skills That Save Lives**

**Be a Voice for your area**  
**Help build a Stronger, Kinder Community**

**Make a Difference, Close to Home**

**Get help on projects**  
**Stay Involved Without Feeling Overwhelmed**

The RRVCP and Row River Review are committed to clear communications about on-going funding, and support for mitigation support projects. You will be invited to participate at your interest level. RRVCP will help the Teams with tools, organization, Mitigation Assessments, and incentives!

**Ready to Learn More?**  
**You're invited. No pressure.**  
**Just people like you, caring about the place we all call home.**

[Programs@RowRiverValley.org](mailto:Programs@RowRiverValley.org)



# Fire Station Progress Update

The Row River Valley Community Partnership is excited to share an update on our progress toward building two fire stations in our valley: one in Disston and one in Dorena. Over the past year, our team has been working hard behind the scenes to move these projects forward.

While the newly formed fire district focuses on training, emergency response, and day-to-day operations, our nonprofit continues to handle the planning, permitting, and fundraising efforts needed to make these community stations a reality.

Here's a look at what we've accomplished so far.

## **Disston Station** *Milestones Achieved*

**Land Secured!** Thanks to Weyerhaeuser for their land donation on the corner of Layng Creek and Brice Creek Road.

**Environmental Phase I** Completed the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, which confirms that the land is environmentally safe for construction.

**Land Use Preparation** Special Use Permit is in progress.

**Funding Advocacy** RRVCP is actively working to secure private funds to support this station, with grant readiness documentation in place.

## **Dorena Station (Main Station)** *Milestones Achieved*

**Land Secured!** A centrally located parcel in Dorena was donated by community members to serve as the site for the main fire station.

**Environmental Review (in progress)** RRVCP has completed its portion of the required environmental documents, including a Preliminary Environmental Report.

**Special Use Permit (SUP)** The SUP application is in its final review stage with Lane County.

**Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA)** This required study has been completed.

**Site Planning and Layout** Site design is under development in collaboration with professionals. Plans take into account access, equipment needs, and phased construction.

**Income Survey Completed** RRVCP conducted a federally compliant Income Survey, confirming that 57.99 percent of households in the service area fall within the Low-to-Moderate Income (LMI) threshold. This qualifies the area for multiple grant opportunities, including CDBG and other state-level programs.

**Federal and State Advocacy** Since 2023, RRVCP has worked closely with the offices of Governor Tina Kotek, Senator Ron Wyden, Senator Jeff Merkley, and Congresswoman Val Hoyle to help secure long-term funding and matching support for fire station construction.

**Land Use Update (coming soon)** An updated land use notification will soon be shared with neighbors near the Dorena site. The main station is returning to its originally proposed location on the parcel, based on feedback, operational needs, and permitting requirements.

## **What's Next?**

Raising funds and preparing raw land for a government-regulated facility takes time, coordination, and a lot of hard work. Thanks to the efforts of our team, agency partners, and local professionals, both fire station sites remain on track. We are continuing to secure the final layers of funding and permits. RRVCP is committed to keeping the public informed and involved every step of the way as we move closer to groundbreaking.

If you would like more information or want to get involved, please reach out:

**Info@RowRiverValley.org. RowRiverValley.org**

**Find us on Facebook: Row River Valley Community Partnership**



## Facts & Observations

by Lena Harding



### Cedar Waxwings

These beautiful birds can be found year round in Oregon, although they are very nomadic. One day you will see them in your yard, and then you might not see them again for months (usually they come in flocks).

Cedar Waxwings can be recognized by their sleek appearance, tan brown plumage, light yellow bellies, black masks, and crests on the top of their heads. They also have yellow tipped tail feathers and red tipped wings. You usually hear them before you see them with many chatty high pitched calls cracking the silence.

These birds are considered one of the most efficient fruit eaters of the northwest. Cedar Waxwings eat a wide variety of fruit including Cherry, Crabapple, Dogwood berries, Hawthorn berries, Mountain Ash berries, Oregon Grape berries and so many more. When the fruit is not readily available they will eat insects, by perching in trees swooping down and grabbing them out of the air.

They nest in late spring to early summer allowing the fruits to ripen for easy feeding of their young. Their nests are made from grasses and twigs, although sometimes they will reuse other bird species' old nests. A clutch of eggs for them is usually 4 eggs two times a year.

Cedar Waxwings love bird baths, but tend to not eat out of bird feeders. If you want to spot these beautiful birds in your yard, plant fruit trees with smaller fruits, and put out a bird bath, they are sure to come at least once in a while. I am happy to say that I see them in my yard 3-4 times a year enjoying small fruits. I typically see 12-20 of them at a time. They don't stay long eating and chattering before moving on.

Keep an eye out and happy birding.

## CREATURES OF THE ROW RIVER VALLEY

### Hummingbird moths

This is one of the coolest insects in our area. The Hummingbird Moth resembles a Hummingbird, even flying and sounding like one. Their bodies are quite large with brown and black stripes, and they have two sets of wings with red, brown and tan stripped patterns on them.

They eat nectar from all sorts of flowers similar to the Hummingbirds. They do not eat out of Hummingbird feeders though. I have found them eating native flowers along the river, but they will also enjoy cultivated plants such as Petunias, Figellius, Fuchsia, Lavender and more.

Hummingbird moths only live one generation a year, so summer is the time to spot them. They come out primarily in the evening and buzz around. These insects are very fast, making them hard to see sometimes. It helps to get a closer look by following them carefully and standing still when they fly down and hover over a flower to eat.

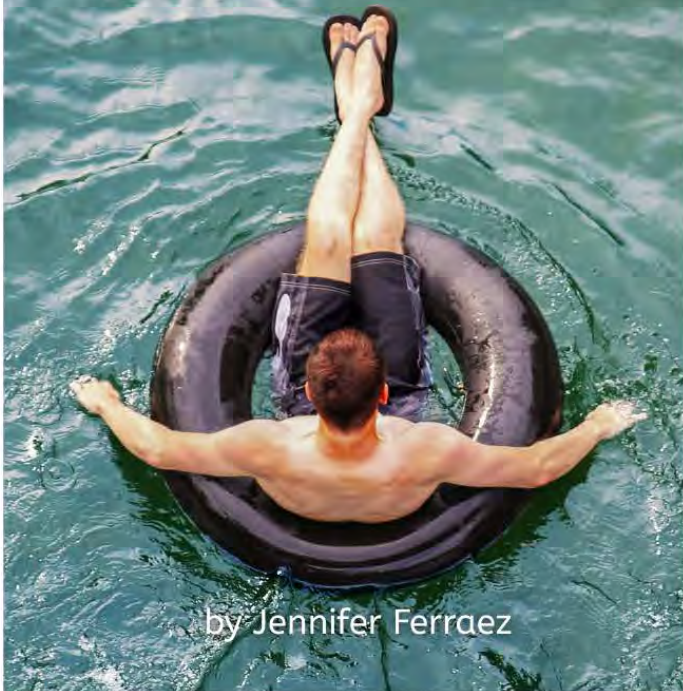
I hope you get a chance this summer to see these fascinating and amazing fast moths.



Learn  
about  
Beavers  
on next  
page



## Health Matters



by Jennifer Ferraez

**Cottage Grove Aquatic Center  
offers swim lessons  
to anyone of any age.  
541-942-5533**

## Keeping Safe While Keeping Cool

We are fortunate to live in a landscape filled with beautiful rivers, lakes, and creeks. Summer is a wonderful time to enjoy these places while keeping cool and taking in the natural beauty that surrounds us. Here are a few gentle reminders to help keep your time by the water safe and enjoyable:

### **Watch your step.**

Algae can build up on rocks, creating slippery surfaces. Take care with your footing when entering or exiting any body of water. Water shoes with good grip can make a big difference.

### **Climbing waterfalls? Plan ahead.**

Waterfalls are stunning to look at. Some folks enjoy sitting quietly and admiring them, while others feel inspired to climb. Keep in mind that they can be slippery, and while the way up might feel manageable, the way back down can be more difficult than expected. Each year, Search and Rescue teams lend a hand to people who find themselves in tricky situations.

### **Go with the flow.**

If you find yourself caught in a current, try swimming at a diagonal angle toward the shore instead of straight against the current. This approach can help you reach safety with less effort.

### **Keep a close eye on kids near water.**

It only takes a moment for things to change. Flotation devices are helpful, but supervision is always the best safety measure.

### **Look before you leap.**

Avoid diving headfirst into water. Rocks, logs, and shallow areas may be hidden just below the surface.

## Beavers

(Continued from previous page)

Beavers are mammals and are the largest North American rodent. They grow up to 4' feet long and weigh 65 pounds or more. They continue growing throughout their lifespan of 10-12 years.

The beavers are a very important part of Oregon's history. During the time of settlers they used Beavers for the fur trade, coining Oregon as "the Beaver State". They are now recognized for their important work along our water ways creating habitat for fish and other wild life. They are needed for riparian areas. Unlike popular belief, these mammals don't destroy the forest. Instead, they selectively trim, allowing for new growth of trees and shrubs.

Beavers are strictly vegetarians, their diet consists of a wide variety of plants including trees, roots, leaves, bark, sedges, blackberry canes, and more!

They store their food for winter in the dam allowing the water to act like a refrigerator. This is called a cache.

The young are called 'kits' and nurse for the first six months of their lives. When they have kits they are more territorial, giving out a warning sign by slapping the water with their wide tails.

Beavers are primarily nocturnal although they can be spotted during the day if the conditions are favorable. If you happen to see one of these historical, riparian, rodents please keep a safe distance and respect the work they do for all of us.





# AUGUST & SEPTEMBER



## *The Tempest*

Shakespeare's classic shipwreck saga, filled with stormy seas, magic, and malice -- and a bit of romance.

**August 8-24<sup>th</sup>**

Show Times: Th, Fri & Sat at 7:30 pm, Sun at 2:30 pm

**Cottage Grove Theater, 700 Village Drive, CG**  
(541) 942-8001 | info@cottagetheatre.org

## Poetry Night

**Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:30-9:30pm**

Kalapuya Books' long running and much beloved Poetry Night moves to **The Cottage Events Venue (formerly at The Axe & Fiddle)**.

**FREE! Come one, come all!**

## Concerts in the Park

**Wednesdays, 5:30-8:00 pm.**

**Bohemia Park, CG**



**Aug 6** Skip Jones & Spirit of New Orleans

**Aug 13** Luke Cole

**Aug 20** Fox Hollow Boys

**Aug 27** The Men From S.U.R.F.

## Neighborhood Teams

**Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

**3:00-6:00pm**

**Row River Grange, 34360 Row River Rd, CG**

*Together  
We Can!*

RRVCP WELCOMES YOU to a Community Event  
Food ~ Raffle Prizes ~ Opportunities ~ Sign-Up  
See more on pages 6 & 7

## Sunshine Club

**Wednesday, September 3rd, 9:30-12:00**

**At the little white church: 37553 Row River Rd**

**Potluck lunch included**





# Row River Grange News & Events

## August–September 2025

To rent the Grange Hall, or other inquiries:  
RowRiverGrange@gmail.com or (541) 942-2295.

### Gentle Yoga with Courtney Finstad

Join us for gentle **yoga every Tuesday and Thursday at 10 AM.** (Note: No yoga the last week of August.)

### Refuge Recovery

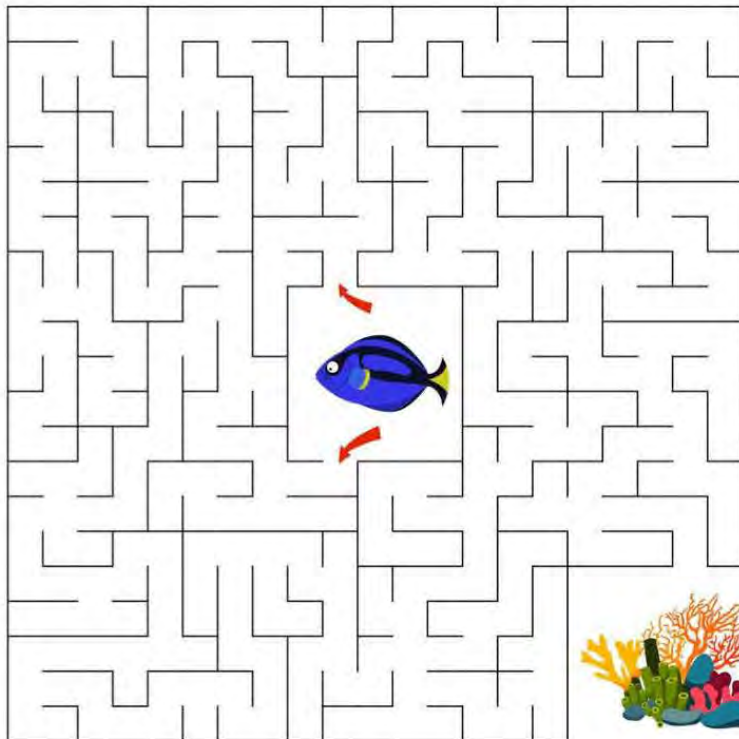
Refuge Recovery will be on pause for August and resumes in September. This group offers support for all forms of addiction: substances, gaming, nicotine, and more. **Tuesdays 5:30–7:30pm.**

### Community Potluck

Bring a dish and a smile to our monthly potluck, **every third Monday from 6:30–7:30 PM.** All are welcome ~ Grange membership not required! It's a great way to share a meal and meet your neighbors.

### Communal Birthday Parties

We're pressing pause on group birthday celebrations for now. Thanks to all who joined in!



### The Grange at Work for the Community

The Row River Grange supports the valley by:

- Lending our field to local T-Ball teams
- Offering free compost and biochar
- Hosting Refuge Recovery
- Supporting communal meals
- Providing affordable hall rentals

### Grange Hall Heater Fundraiser

#### Save the Date

#### Join Us for Our First Annual Row River Grange Harvest Festival!

Last December, our meeting hall heater quit, and with colder weather coming, we need your help to raise funds for a new one!

**Saturday, October 18, 2025**

- Raffle tickets available starting September 1
- Vendors: RowRiverGrange@gmail.com (ATTN: Harvest Fest)





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Special Thanks to the  
**Oregon State Fire  
Marshall** for providing  
funding for the  
**Row River Review**, the  
best little newspaper in  
the Row River Valley!

Contribute, Participate, Celebrate with us. We need **you!**

RowRiverValley.org

Communications@RowRiverValley.org



**ROW RIVER REVIEW**  
Your Community News

Row River Valley Community Partnership  
P.O. Box 4, Dorena, OR 97434

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*Together  
We Can!*

**SAVE THE DATE: SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 14th 3:00-6:00pm.**

Neighborhood Teams Interest Meeting (see pg 5 & 6) at the Row River Grange  
FOOD : RAFFLE : SIGN-Ups & OPPORTUNITIES! **CUT THIS OUT AND BRING TO WIN BIG!!!**

NAME:

CONTACT INFO: