



2010 RURAL HEALTH HERO OF THE YEAR AWARD

*"You can do anything at any age. Age is not an inhibitor.
As long as you can, do it." – Jane McLaughlin*

The Oregon Office of Rural Health is proud to present this year's Rural Health Hero of the Year Award to Jane McLaughlin. Following are excerpts from those who supported her nomination

EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION

Jane McLaughlin moved to Chiloquin nearly 30 years ago to escape the hustle and bustle of the Bay area. While raising her four sons, she worked several different jobs. She became involved in EMS after her youngest son was accidentally shot and Chiloquin Volunteer Ambulance Services responded to the call and transported him to Klamath Falls for treatment.

Jane is 74 years old and has been involved with Emergency Medical Services in Chiloquin for almost 30 years. She is currently the oldest certified Paramedic in Oregon. In recent years, Jane has been frequently asked why she is still active with the ambulance services. Her response is always, "Because I can, I want to and I am able to do the job".

Jane has provided thousands of volunteer hours to Chiloquin Volunteer Ambulance Service (CVAS). She has also been employed as an EMT in nearby Klamath Falls by West Medic One, then as an EMT-Firefighter with Klamath County Fire District One as a responder as well. She was 61 years old when she completed the fire fighter academy training. Jane retired from the fire district in 2001 to become the EMS Chief with Chiloquin Volunteer Ambulance Service.

There are many things that make Jane's contributions exceptional, but consistency is the first that comes to mind. When people in our community think of Chiloquin Volunteer Ambulance Service, typically, the first thing they relate it to is "Jane McLaughlin". She has been a comfort to families in their times of vulnerability and need. She knows generations of local families. This type of caring and continuity is a blessing in a time of need.

VOLUNTEERISM

Over the years, Jane has made herself available as a volunteer day and night, 365 days a year. Even when she is not scheduled, she always makes herself available to the ambulance crews via cell phone. She's involved in community affairs as well. She participated in the Chiloquin Area Community Improvement Plan which outlines various areas of focus for committees to be formed, plans made, and actions taken, all to improve the livability of Chiloquin. Jane is also a member of the Chiloquin Area Sheriff's Citizen Advisory Committee, the Klamath County 9-1-1 Users Committee and the Klamath County Ambulance Advisory Committee which she helped form in the 1980s. This committee is made up of all of the ambulance providers in Klamath County and is charged with advising the Board of County Commissioners on all issues relating to EMS in the county.

Jane received the United Way Klamath County Volunteer of the Year Accommodation for Excellence award in 2002 and the United Way Klamath County Volunteer of the Year, Senior Division award in 2004. Also in 2004, the State of Oregon Department of EMS and Trauma Systems awarded her the Meritorious Service Medal as Paramedic of the Year. She was nominated for this prestigious award for the care she provided during a motor vehicle accident on Christmas Eve 2003. Miraculously, no one was killed in the incident. The driver of the small vehicle that collided with a semi-truck had a spinal cord injury that Jane stabilized in the field, enroute to the hospital, and she stayed with the patient during her initial assessment at the hospital. To quote the award documentation, doctors treating this patient "observed she shouldn't be alive and noted what an incredible job on-scene paramedics had done".

Because of her dedication, contributions and outstanding service to the community, Jane was chosen by Mayor Mark Cobb as Grand Marshall of the City of Chiloquin 4th of July parade in 2009.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Chiloquin Volunteer Ambulance Service is known throughout Oregon for its excellence in service and willingness to share information with other rural EMS providers. This all stems from the leadership that Jane has provided to the agency. In her position as EMS Chief, Jane has set the tone and led the way for its volunteers to follow in providing excellent emergency medical care within the community and the surrounding area. She has set standards of excellence that inspire volunteers to perform at their highest level and reach for goals that they might otherwise believe are unobtainable. These volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds: a 74 year old farmer who is a driver; a retired store clerk and a local pastor, both of whom are First Responders, a rural postal delivery person and an insurance salesperson who are EMT-Intermediates; and a reserve Deputy Sheriff and a national park biologist who are EMT-Basics. The youngest volunteer is a 16 year old First Responder who was inspired by his mother who is an EMT-Basic.

It's the summer of 2010 and the eve of Jane's retirement as Chief. A new era is about to begin. Many groups would have difficulty with such a transition. Without a doubt, Chiloquin Volunteer Ambulance Service will have a few stumbles as it moves on, but the example has been set and the expectations and goals of the agency have been well defined. No one person makes the total of the ambulance service. Instead, everyone in the community has an opportunity to step up, help neighbors in times of need and pass it forward to the next generation of EMS providers, and Jane has shown us how. No one can fill Jane's shoes, but she has seen to it that there are many people trained to follow in her footsteps.

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Jane's commitment to her community and the community of EMS never ceases to amaze me. Her energy level will put many 20 year olds to shame. She has dedicated her EMS career to making sure all patients receive the highest level of care available, whether in the small community of Chiloquin or the bigger metropolis of Klamath Falls, and often sacrifices family time to do so. Jane approaches EMS challenges with thoughtful insight and does her homework before making comment on proposed changes. She looks for facts and at all sides of a situation before rendering a comment or decision and is tactful but persuasive in her argument. Many rural agencies looking for "how to.." contact Jane and she has helped numerous small agencies with operations and mentoring. Jane is a symbol of all that is good in Oregon EMS.

Jane is one of the most caring, compassionate, hard working, levelheaded individuals I have ever had the pleasure of working with. She always puts her family, friends and patients before herself. She treats everyone with respect, dignity, purpose and compassion. She might tell you a little life lesson and always does so with poise and class. In regard to co-workers, she demonstrates respect for everyone regardless of rank. I have witnessed Jane challenge doctors as well as fellow EMTs if she felt they were being disrespectful to a patient. Jane has enriched my life and it is an honor to call her my friend and colleague.

Jane's impact on the rural community of Chiloquin has been significant in the degree of service that CVAS provides, the respect it's earned and the professionalism it portrays. She is loved by all those around her. Her example has been passed on to the people who work with her. Her love of the career has been passed on to more than a few people who have decided to follow the same path, myself included.

Jane has been such an asset to our community as a dedicated and skilled EMT and in administering the CVAS. My guess is there are very few towns the size of Chiloquin that are blessed with the quality of emergency service that CVAS provides to us.

Throughout the course of my EMS service, I have encountered scores of EMS providers who do a good job. Only a rare few rise to a standard of excellence that is exhibited by Jane. I have met, trained and performed with hundreds of fellow EMS providers - Jane has consistently been the stellar example of EMS values. Her work ethic, knowledge base and community spirit is unequalled in Klamath County.

CONGRATULATIONS, JANE, AND THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE AND CONTINUE TO DO!