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## Local Family Receives Adapted Home

**Chloe Harrington**  
Contributing Writer

Homes For Our Troops (HFOT) announced plans to host a Community Kickoff Rally to celebrate the new construction of a specially-adapted home for Marine Sgt. Joshua Elliot and his wife, Samantha Elliot. HFOT Executive Director Bill Ivey said that framing for the custom home is already underway, and the house is projected to be completed and donated to the Elliots in early summer.

The Community Kick-off Rally is scheduled to run from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Loon Lake Elementary on Saturday, Jan. 31, with Joshua Elliot as the last speaker. Lunch is provided afterwards. Ivey said, "The kickoff is an opportunity for folks to come out to learn a little bit about HFOT, but more importantly, meet [the Elliots] and other veterans that we may have in the area – to get to know them and start that lifetime relationship with them."

Elliot told HFOT he was injured in 2011 during his second deployment, serving as a combat engineer in Afghanistan. During a routine patrol, he stepped on a 20-pound improvised explosive device (IED).

"The day I was injured in Afghanistan started as a routine patrol," he said. "I had four guys following me. I was walking

back across the roof and I must have been inches off of where all five of us had just stepped. I set off a pressure plate that had an IED cleverly hidden in the roof."

A navy corpsman applied five tourniquets – two on each leg and one on his arm – before he was transported to Germany for intensive care. At Walter Reed Bethesda, he received surgeries every other day. He said, "I survived with a double leg-above-knee amputation, injury to my left hand and arm, and multiple other internal injuries."

"My first goal was to be up, standing for my Marines when they returned home from Afghanistan," Elliot continued. "That gave me three months. I was back in Camp Lejeune in North Carolina in the armoury welcoming my Marines home, standing on my prosthetics. So we started as a team and we ended as a team."

The Elliots have since returned to their home state of Washington and purchased property in Loon Lake. However, their current house's small bathroom and kitchen, along with uneven surfaces, create "an extra challenge," Elliot said. "I kind of have to psych myself up to walk from my door to the car and pray that I don't fall over or hurt myself. That's every day."

Ivey said Elliot applied to HFOT soon after

his injury. "But," Ivey said, "he was pretty busy with skiing for the U.S. paralympic team and figuring out where they wanted to live. But once a veteran applies, we never lose track of them, and if we haven't heard from them for a while, we'll reach back."

According to Ivey, HFOT keeps applications active until veterans are ready and checks back in periodically. "That works a lot better because you're not rushed into a location. We don't ever expect our veterans to move again, so we want to make sure it's where they want to spend the rest of their lives. So, when they were ready, we were ready, and we got things going for them." He added that HFOT builds homes where veterans want to live, unlike some organizations that place veterans into preselected locations.

"Our tagline is 'Building homes, rebuilding lives.' Community is absolutely vital to our veterans rebuilding their lives," Ivey said. "[The Elliots] picked Loon Lake. They could have lived anywhere in the United States they wanted to live, and they chose to come back to Washington and to live in the community of Loon Lake."

Samantha Elliot said, "An adapted house will make us not want to move anymore, because then we won't need to be



The Deer Park Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting at 19 N. Main St. to celebrate the re-opening of a Deer Park office location for the long-time weekly newspaper, the *Deer Park Tribune*, on Jan. 21. "We're excited to have a physical office location again," Managing Editor Cami Krema said. Publisher/Owner Gabriel Cruden added, "A community newspaper is such a vital part of a vibrant community, sharing unbiased news and information that is timely, relevant, and local." Cruden noted that the initial open office hours are Mon., Wed., and Thurs., 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pictured (left to right) are Deer Park Mayor Tim Verzal, Deer Park Chamber of Commerce Member Adam Smith of SMASH Jiu Jitsu, Deer Park Tribune Managing Editor Cami Krema, Deer Park Tribune Publisher/Owner Gabriel Cruden, Deer Park Chamber of Commerce President Kris Stoop of WaFd Bank, Deer Park Chamber of Commerce Member Kayla Sloon of WaFd Bank, and Deer Park Chamber of Commerce Treasurer Jose Santa-Cruz of T-Mobile. Photo courtesy Caleb Blatz.

looking for something that's a little bit easier for [Joshua Elliot] to live in."

Ivey explained that true accessibility requires more than small modifications. "You can always put a ramp in or some grab bars," he said, "but that doesn't make it adapted."

According to Ivey, HFOT uses a single-story floor plan that can be customized to each veteran's needs and preferences, from room layout to flooring and cabinetry. He said, "We tailor to their tastes as much as possible, and then, of course, tailor to their inju-

ries. Each home has over 40 major adaptations in it that makes it completely accessible to our veterans in their wheelchairs." Adaptations include wider doorways, higher outlets, lower countertops, and windows, and roll-under-

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## Water Main Break Quickly Reconnected

**Chloe Harrington**  
Contributing Writer

A 12 inch water main was broken when the subcontractor of a telecommunications company was boring on the corner of Crawford and Airport Rd., according to Deer Park Water/Wastewater Manager Clint Drury. Deer Park maintenance staff responded to the call around 3 p.m. on Jan. 19.

"A 12-inch main can flow a lot of water, so it definitely turned on

all our pumps and was dropping the water level in our tanks," Drury said. "But staff was able to get out there and get it isolated, shut off, and fixed very quickly. Luckily, they were able to get parts. Really, it could have been a lot worse. They did a great job."

Drury was uncertain whether any lasting damage was caused in the vicinity and did not know of any businesses that contacted the contractor or city staff about damage.

## Bus Driver Shortage Impacts Local School District

**Cami Krema**  
Managing Editor

Deer Park School District (DPSD) canceled nine bus routes on Jan. 20, as a result of a driver shortage. DPSD officials said this was a unique situation caused by driver shortages and sickness.

According to the district, Routes 1, 5, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 20, and 21 did not run in the morning.

Transportation Supervisor Kerri Liefeld said this problem resulted from lack of substitute drivers to cover regular drivers who were out on sick and med-

ical leave. "Some [drivers] have been out for months. And then you could have people call out sick, and then your subs call out sick, it equals a storm," Liefeld said.

Throughout the morning, Liefeld worked to ensure that students and parents who rely on the buses could still get picked up. During her interview with the *Deer Park Tribune*, Liefeld called local daycare centers to ask if any children needed to be picked up. One parent also called to ask where the nearest bus was to drop off his daughter, and Liefeld coordinated with the closest bus driver to pick her up. DPSD stated that they've had

one driver return to work and others from outside the district step in to help. The bus schedule returned to normal on Wednesday, Jan. 21.

DPSD Superintendent Alexa Allman said, "We work diligently every day to problem-solve and have been working to recruit bus drivers for a couple of years now; unfortunately, this is not a new dilemma. We do work together as a team to fill in wherever needed. This challenge is also not just isolated to Deer Park, it is a local, state, and national challenge."

Liefeld said, "I support my team 185%. However, the shortage is impacting us."

## Blood Supplies in Washington at Critical Levels

**Brandon Hansen**  
Contributing Writer

Blood supplies across Washington have dropped to critically low levels, prompting an urgent call for donations as health officials warn that shortages could begin affecting patient care.

Bloodworks Northwest reported it has less than one-to-two days worth of several essential blood types and

platelets available, a situation the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) classified as a "code red" on Friday, Jan. 23.

Health officials said the shortage is severe enough to threaten both routine medical procedures and emergency care if donation levels do not rebound quickly. Type O blood and platelets are especially scarce, yet are among the most frequently used components in trauma care, surgeries, and oth-

er lifesaving treatments.

Blood shortages occur periodically due to the limited shelf life of blood components and fluctuations in donor turnout, DOH officials said. This winter, however, a combination of factors has significantly reduced donations. Officials said severe weather, holidays, rain, and flooding across the region led to canceled blood drives, temporary center closures, and transportation disruptions. Low turnout

forced at least two donor centers in Washington to close early this week.

To meet immediate needs, Bloodworks Northwest and the American Red Cross have been transporting blood from other regions of the country, but state officials said that approach is not sustainable long term.

Adding to the situation, severe storms and a tough flu season are disrupting donation schedules. DOH officials said when appointments are

canceled or donors need to stay home, hospitals still rely on a steady, dependable blood supply for everyday care and unexpected emergencies.

Bloodworks Northwest officials said they have approximately 38,000 open donation appointments through February, with 23,000 of those needing to be filled by Valentine's Day to stabilize supplies statewide. Officials noted that a single pint of donated blood can help

save up to three lives, and roughly 1,000 donations per day are required to meet ongoing demand.

Spokane's local Red Cross number is 509-326-3330, you can also contact <https://www.vitalant.org/donate/locations>.



(USPS 520-680)

## ADAPTED HOME...

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tops sinks and stovetops. Joshua Elliot said, "Some of the things I'm really looking forward to about a specially adapted house are the accessibility features in the kitchen and the closets. Having a kitchen that is handicap friendly and accessible is going to make that even more of a joy than it already is."

Samantha Elliot added, "He is an amazing cook. He can just look in the pantry and in the fridge at ingredients and just put them together and it's usually quite amazing."

In addition to cooking, Joshua Elliot is also the founder and director of Angel Peak Adaptive Sports and is a retired professional para-alpine skier. In a HFOT press release, he said, "An HFOT home would allow me to invite athletes to my home for fittings, safety briefs, and relaxation before and after events. This access would be beneficial to every injured person we've worked with so far."

A ceremony will mark the completion of their home, giving the community an opportunity to tour the home and meet with the Elliots, Ivey

said. HFOT also organizes a volunteer landscaping day about a month before completion, which will be around May for the Elliots. "We want to get the community involved as early as possible," Ivey said.

Another mark of HFOT's mission is offering lifelong support. Ivey continued, "We're really the only nonprofit that builds homes that is as aggressive in that mission as we are. We have seven people on our staff [who's job is to] follow up for their veterans." HFOT conducts regular check-ins, connects veterans with financial part-

ners for three years, and monitors property taxes. "We also build our network of other nonprofits and government organizations so that we can act as one point of contact for our veterans," Ivey said. "If they don't know where to turn, they can call us, and we link them up with another organization if we can't help them with our expertise. It's a package deal."

HFOT also performs financial background checks on veterans to ensure "that they can be responsible for homeowners," Ivey said. "It's all about setting them up for success. I'm sure you have read stories about veterans receiving a home from an organization, and then losing it. We do the work up front to make sure that won't happen to our veterans. And then we monitor to make sure that it doesn't happen. If their finances are a mess, we will link them up with a financial planner early and not

bring them into the program until they are stable financially."

Applicants must also provide military data, DD Form 214 honorable discharge paperwork, medical records, Specially Adapted Housing eligibility, and criminal background check. Ivey said the process can last from several months to a year. The first criteria is that the veteran sustained severe injuries – such as blindness or the loss or paralysis of at least two limbs – in Iraq or Afghanistan after Sept. 11, 2001.

HFOT has built 429 homes in 46 states, including nine in Washington, since 2004. Six of their 63 active projects are located in the state. Ivey said the organization is on track to complete 25 this year, supported by their national donor base. Sixty-five percent of their revenue comes from individual donors, fundraisers, and foundations, with the re-

mainder from corporate partners.

Based on veteran responses, Ivey said, "Over 93% of our veterans and their spouses say that their stress level goes down after moving into their homes. And I think most readers will be able to understand that lowering stress is a good thing, no matter what we do." Proper housing also increased the percentage of veterans who were saving, volunteering, and pursuing a degree or trade certificate. More than 275 babies have been born to HFOT families since 2010.

"Employment went up 110% after moving into their Homes For Our Troops home," Ivey said. "But the impact on their spouses and caregivers was even greater, their employment went up 295%. So it's not just about the veteran. What the great American public helps us do impacts the entire family for the veteran."

# Avista Rate Hike Proposed for 2027

Makenna Springman-Garland  
Contributing Writer

Avista officials announced on Jan. 16 that the energy company has filed to raise the rates of usage over the next four years with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). Officials stated WUTC has up to 11 months to review and make a decision on the general case filings.

"New electric and natural gas rates are proposed to start Jan. 1 of 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030," officials said. "The proposed first year increase is larger because it includes costs from past investments and updated power supply costs that are not in current rates. It's important for customers to know the exact impact of any increase depends on their rate schedule and how much energy they use."

Several factors are being considered for the request of increasing rates, Avista officials said, such as the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) signed into law in 2019. CETA language states that the act aims to decrease the emission of greenhouse gasses by electricity powered energy by the year 2045. Washington State Department of Commerce officials said, "Clean electricity will allow Washington residents and businesses to power their buildings, homes, vehicles and appliances with carbon-free resources such as wind and solar. Reducing fossil-fuel use will improve the health of communities, grow the economy, create family-sustaining jobs, and enable the state to achieve its long-term climate goals."

According to the Department of Commerce, CETA is also intended to provide electricity that is more afford-

able for residents. Another factor considered for the submitted proposal is the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) that follows a similar agenda as CETA. According to the Department of Ecology, the mission is to reduce carbon emissions of greenhouse gases and to switch to clean, renewable energy.

"The CCA caps and reduces greenhouse gas emissions from Washington's largest emitting sources and industries, allowing businesses to find the most efficient path to lower carbon emissions," Ecology officials said. "This powerful program works alongside other critical climate policies to help Washington achieve its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 95% by 2050." The rise in cost for power generation was also considered for the proposal, Avista officials explained. Lena Funston, in charge of media and communication with Avista, spoke on behalf of this insight.

"The main drivers of this raised rate proposal are the rising costs of power generation and supply," Funston said. "In turn, with the clean energy acts, there are things we must do at the utility plant to keep up with infrastructure." Funston said wildfire safety and prevention requires vegetation management and wildfire risk monitoring. In this regard, this is another driving factor for cost increase, according to Funston.

Avista states that there are programs available for residents struggling to pay for electricity. Programs such as My Energy Discount and Comfort Level Billing are for eligible residents. "If people do find they are struggling, they are encouraged to call," said Funston.

For more information, call 509-495-4174 or visit myavista.com.

## Is It Just Aging?



Dr. Basil Griffin

Dr. Basil Griffin

I frequently hear from patients that their aches and pains, muscle loss, weakness, fatigue, or mental fog are just due to their age. While getting older may make these things harder to make progress on, they are not impossible to improve on. Researchers have recently discovered that the brain can make new connections at any age. Sarcopenia, or the loss of muscle mass and therefore the loss of independence, can be reversed under most cases. Inflammation, aches, and fatigue can be treated and often reversed if not at least modified. There are medications that can help with these issues if there is a true deficiency, but changes in diet and exercise routine may also help.

There is mounting data offering evidence that a healthy diet can have a tremendous impact on inflammation, energy levels, brain fog, and muscle mass. There are a few different types of scientists looking at this. Some are approaching it from a gastrointestinal bacterial perspective and some from a mitochondrial health perspective, but they agree on several things such as sugar and carbohydrates can produce inflammation. Bad bacteria in your gastrointestinal tract eat sugar and carbohydrates and can produce IL-6, which is an inflammatory cytokine that causes inflammation in your gut. This bacteria may get into your bloodstream, causing muscle and joints to hurt. Carbs and sugar may also reach your liver and cause it to signal the release of insulin, which can be inflammatory. It can oxidize Low-Density Lipoprotein cholesterol, increase the size and number of fat cells, and may be toxic to nerves and blood vessels.

Avoiding sugar and carbs, ex-

cept those found in whole fruits and vegetables, may improve the way you feel. Good fats such as extra virgin olive oil, fish oil, avocado oil, and good-old-fashioned butter can be anti-inflammatory as well. These good fats feed healthy gut bacteria that may produce healthy fatty acids and can decrease inflammation. Fermented foods such as sour kraut, kimchi, kefir, and Kombucha may also heal the lining of the gastrointestinal tract and reduce measurable blood levels in inflammation. Avoid seed oils as much as you can as well. These can have too much omega six fats in them and lead to inflammation.

Other things that may help with your gut microbiome include vitamin D, vitamin C, a small square a day of 72% (or higher) dark chocolate, lots of different colored fruits and veggies in the whole form. Avoiding bad foods and eating good foods can markedly change, for the better, the way you feel.

Other scientists have focused on exercise and determined that it may slow the effects of aging. I mentioned in an earlier article the need for increased protein intake as we get older, to around 100 grams a day. This is generally considered safe unless you have kidney problems and is required to keep from losing muscle mass. The other side to keeping muscle on is that you must use it. Any exercise is typically better than doing nothing. Resistance training can help to build muscle mass and cardio can be important for energy metabolism. If you are just starting out exercising, then keep it simple and just do something. Just getting up and walking around the house three times a day may increase lung capacity and strengthen the legs. Squatting down while holding onto the kitchen counter can build leg muscles. Doing push-ups against a wall can build arm strength. Start doing something and as these simple things may get easier then you can increase your activity.

Health and happiness to you all!

*Basil Griffin, M.D., trained in family medicine, is a solo, private practice physician focusing on preventative care in Deer Park, Wash. He has also served as a flight surgeon in the United States Air Force.*

## Snow Report for Winter Sports

Cami Krema  
Managing Editor

Local mountains received little snow over the last week, yet trails are still open for winter sports such as skiing and snowboarding. The information on snow conditions below is provided by Ski the Northwest Rockies, skinwrockies.com/conditions, and was current as of Monday, Jan. 26.

**49° North Mountain Resort**, located at 3311 Flowery Trail Rd., Chewelah, Wash.

No new snow was recorded over the weekend or on Monday.

Current snow depth: 22 inches.

Surface conditions: skier packed snow, groomed snow. Officials noted, "Coverage is good, but low snow conditions exist, so please ski and ride with care."

72 out of 90 trails are accessible, 9 of which are groomed.

The temperature is 17 degrees.

**Mt. Spokane Ski and Snowboard Park**, located at 29595 N. Mt. Spokane Park Dr., Mead, Wash.

No new snow was recorded over the weekend or on Monday.

Current snow depth: 27 inches.

Surface conditions: machine groomed

No trails are accessible.

The temperature is 11 degrees.

**Silver Mountain Resort**, 610 Bunker Ave, Kellogg, Idaho

No new snow was recorded over the weekend or on Monday.

Current snow depth: 40 inches.

Surface conditions: early season conditions

65 of 77 trails are accessible, 11 of which are groomed.

The temperature is 18 degrees.

**Lookout Pass**, Shoshone County, Idaho

The summit and base both received 0.2 inches of snow over the weekend.

No new snow was recorded on Monday.

Current snow depth: 36 inches.

Surface conditions: machine groomed packed powder

More trails opened; 47 out of 59 trails are accessible, 27 of which are groomed.

The temperature is 14 degrees.

**Schweitzer Mountain**, Sandpoint, Idaho, information pulled from schweitzer.com

No new snow was recorded over the weekend or on Monday.

The snow depth is 90 inches.

Surface conditions: machine groomed, variable conditions

34 out of 92 trails are accessible, 18 of which are groomed.

The temperature is 25 degrees.

## Man Arrested for Tesla Arson

Bruce Rushton  
Contributing Writer

A man was arrested at gunpoint in Ford after allegedly setting fire to an automobile. He could be facing prison time.

A 2021 Tesla Model 3 sedan was fully engulfed when firefighters were

summoned to the owner's home on Jan. 10, shortly after 8 a.m., according to a Stevens County Fire District 1 report. The owner said he smelled gasoline upon discovering the fire. Another person told a Stevens County sheriff's deputy that he saw a man identified as

Garry Lane Norman, 41, running away from the burning car, according to a Stevens County sheriff's deputy's report.

Norman, a cousin to the car's owner, had been allowed to spend the night due to cold weather,

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*The health information provided in this column is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you have read in this publication. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or 911 immediately. Reliance on any information provided in this column is solely at your own risk.*