

# Applegater

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Applegate Valley Community Newsmagazine  
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Celebrating  
~30~  
Years



Scene from the Upper Applegate Fire in June. Photo: Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF).

## Gratitude and reflection ~ A message from Fire Chief Chris Wolfard

Dear Citizens of Applegate Valley,

As we reflect on the events surrounding the Upper Applegate Fire this past June, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you. Your unwavering support and understanding during this challenging time have been truly heartwarming and have reinforced the strength of our community.

Throughout the fire, we received numerous “thank-yous” from the community in various forms. Dozens of you took the time to call our station, many stopped by personally, and countless heartfelt signs were posted along the roadways. Our firefighters were often approached in stores, receiving personal thanks from appreciative citizens. The outpouring of love and support on Facebook was overwhelming and greatly appreciated by all of us.

During the community meeting, I made several requests of you, and your response was nothing short of remarkable. I asked for patience as we

battled the fire without a dedicated Public Information Officer (PIO), meaning that all our personnel were fully engaged in firefighting efforts. Your understanding of the delays in communication was greatly appreciated. Even in agencies with PIOs, information gathering can divert resources from critical firefighting efforts.

I also requested kindness and empathy toward each other, emphasizing that the fire was started accidentally. The individual responsible demonstrated integrity by attempting to control the fire, calling 911 for assistance, and fully cooperating with authorities. Your compassionate response to this situation was a testament to the strength and character of our community.

Lastly, I urged you to continue showing your appreciation and support, and you did so wholeheartedly. The signs, social media messages, and simple waves to our firefighters have been incredibly encouraging. These gestures let us know

See **GRATITUDE**, page 18.

In numerous ways, appreciative residents thanked Applegate Valley firefighters for their response to the Upper Applegate Fire. Photo: ODF.



## Matt Sorensen, LongSword owner and winemaker, loses battle with cancer

BY KATE VANGELOFF

Matt Sorensen, owner-winemaker at LongSword Vineyard, passed away on July 4, 2024, on his land in Ruch, surrounded by family and friends. He had decided to go into hospice only two weeks earlier, after an arduous two-year battle with stage IV colon cancer.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, Matt grew up with his mother, Mildred Sorensen, and younger sister, Amy Vangeloff. His father, Calvin Sorensen, also lived in Toledo and saw him frequently. Matt graduated from St John's Jesuit High School in 1973 and was accepted into the inaugural Honors Tutorial Program at Ohio University, where he earned a BS in botany. He then earned a master's degree in biochemistry from Purdue University, followed by an MBA from the prestigious Kelley School of Business at Indiana University. He became a research scientist for the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly and Company, where he ran his own lab and worked on groundbreaking medications, including Prozac.

After “serving his time” in corporate America, Matt began looking to pivot his career to one of his deepest passions—wine. As a young man, Matt would visit Napa and Sonoma, traveling with several empty suitcases that he would then fill with wine to enjoy back in the Midwest. After deciding to pursue small-scale winemaking as a career, he spent years



Armed with a passion for wine and degrees in botany, biochemistry, and business administration, Matt Sorensen started LongSword Vineyard in 1999. Photo: Kate Vangeloff.

researching the terroir of the West Coast and identified the Applegate Valley as a unique opportunity—it provided both the ideal Mediterranean climate he was seeking while still being largely undiscovered. In 1999, when he purchased the property now known as LongSword, he became one of the very few initial wineries in the region, helping to lead the way for what is now an

See **MATT SORENSEN**, page 5.

## Help acquire a wildland fire engine for Applegate Valley Fire District

BY LIZA CROSSE

Can you help us? The Friends of the Applegate Fire District (Friends) is busy with an exciting new campaign to acquire a Type 3 Wildland Urban Interface Fire Engine for the Applegate Valley Fire District (AVFD).

Please consider becoming a sponsor or making a donation to help us achieve this goal. All funds raised will go toward acquiring this essential piece of

equipment—for the benefit of the entire Applegate community.

Friends is an all-volunteer organization that has supported AVFD for many years by raising funds for AVFD's needs through fun events, such as our spaghetti dinners and pancake breakfasts. Recently Friends created a dedicated equipment and facilities fund to support excellent fire

See **WILDLAND FIRE ENGINE**, page 20.



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