

**MEMO FROM EMMETT MAYOR GORDON W. PETRIE**

**SUBJECT: POTPOURRI FOR THE NEW YEAR**

I love the smell of Christmas. Growing up in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley Banana Belt while attending high school in the mid-60s, we seldom experiencing anything below 32 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter days. So I focused on the smells at Christmas time. There certainly wasn't much snow! Those were the days! The eclectic smells of real Christmas trees and real Christmas wreaths, Grandma's freshly baked cookies, and another favorite, Dad's peanut brittle. To me, it was a Christmas Potpourri. In a way, so is this Memo...hopefully not due to smell, but because we are covering a mixture of topics, all of which should bring some cheer—nothing like starting the new year on a positive note!

In the I-Like-to-Brag-on-These-Groups Department, I neglected to mention *The Squaw Butte Retired Educators* (SBRE). This group's membership is open to anyone who retired from school employment in any capacity. With 84 members, it comprises the second largest chapter of retired educators and support personnel in our state. In case you missed the significance of that last statement, consider this: Ada County has THE largest population in Idaho at about one-half million. Gem County comes in 19th with just under 17,000. Nevertheless, Gem County has the SECOND largest chapter of education retirees in Idaho!

SBRE is set up to support teachers and their students. It hosts a Back-to-School Brunch for local school staff each year and loves giving mini-grants to teachers in the district for projects they wish to undertake but lack funds. Through monthly programs and speakers, members are made aware of various issues confronting our society, e.g. child trafficking, projected needs in vocations, and public safety. Last month the Emmett High School Band (which received a SBRE grant for new uniforms) performed for the chapter to show their appreciation.

Yet, SBRE isn't just about getting together once a month over cookies and juice! In 2018, its members volunteered more than 7270 hours in service to youth and adults. Members volunteered in classrooms, served as judges and mentors for the High School Senior Project, helped out at cross country and track events to list a few examples. Also in 2018, SBRE members donated more than \$21,730 to our community. Their generosity helps fund and prepare the Gem County Education Foundation Cheer Baskets in conjunction with Friendship Coalition to be sure there aren't duplicates. Throughout the year, members collect specific items needed by youth who attend the Black Canyon program and are homeless. They also collect items to donate to other schools such as hygiene kits, sweatpants, coats, gloves, hats and cough drops. Lastly, it has a yearly book drive ear-marked for school donations.

Thanks to the SBRE members and their remarkable leadership of Joanna Clausen, President; Mary Pawlik and Barbara Loeding, Vice-Presidents; Sue Gunter and Pam Walker, Recording Secretaries; Betty Griffith, Communication Secretary; Linda Decker and Judy Alder, Service Secretaries; and Rhoda Gerrard and Roy Hansen, Treasurers, the organization understands we are here to serve one another, not for adulation, but simply as a by-product of our humanity.

We have good news on the feral cat survey. Much interest has been generated and some significant, well-thought out proposed solutions have been made. I will soon be consulting with the Idaho Humane Society and local experts.

Finally, the numbers are beginning to show what a great job your city staff did last year. It appears Public Works saved over \$1 million through its "we'll build it and maintain it in-house" model; while all departments, which now eschew the needlessly wasteful model of "use it or lose it", took the city's allowance of \$8.25 million but spent only \$7.19 million. Savings will go far in asset management planning this budget year. Stay tuned.