

Tri-County Chamber recognizes award winners

By Edie Moro

The Tri-County Chamber of Commerce recognized two local businesses and an organization at its annual meeting, held Sept. 21 at the Junction City Moose Lodge. 'Large Business of the Year' was awarded to Papa Murphy's Take 'n' Bake Pizza; 'Small Business of the Year' went to Balanced Electric; and the Junction City Police Department was awarded the 'Organization of the Year'.

Papa Murphy's Take 'n' Bake Pizza has been a popular business in Junction City since 1995, when it first opened as Papa Aldo's, quickly becoming Papa Murphy's when the Papa Aldo's and Murphy Pizza corporations merged. The current owners, Richard and Marie Johnson, took over the Junction City franchise in 2005.

This spring Papa Murphy's opened a new, larger and more visible shop in Junction City, showing their commitment to the local business community. Papa Murphy's maintains an AAA rating for service, quality and cleanliness. The business is involved in the community, hiring and training young employees who maintain good grades in college. A total of six full-time and 17 part-time employees work at Papa Murphy's.

Papa Murphy's also supports local schools, including Territorial and Laurel Elementary schools, Oaklea Middle School and Triangle Lake, as well as being a Tiger Club supporter. The take 'n' bake pizza parlor provides certificates to the schools to use as awards and prizes.

Balanced Electric is owned by Michelle Ericson and Kim McBride and has four employees. They have been in business about four years. They take pride in their work and stand by it. They are strong believers in using other community businesses as much as possible, advertising in the local newspaper, shopping at local hardware stores, and utilizing the local printer, McKinley Printing.

Balanced Electric is active in the community, providing funding, labor and materials to JC/Harrisburg/Monroe Habitat for Humanity and to their ReStore. They support Local Aid, volunteer at the Daffodil Festival and are on its planning committee and provide electrical services at the Long Tom Grange. They proudly support local wineries.

Accepting the award for Organization of the Year was Chief of Police Robert ("Bob") Morris and Sgt. Eric Markell. Morris has been chief for almost a year, and under his tutelage, the department has taken several positive steps, especially in the area of community policing and 'team-building' within the department.

Last spring the department partnered with Soroptimist International of Junction City to host a symposium on human trafficking, raising awareness of the problem and the preventive measures.

Earlier this summer, the department acted quickly to diffuse a situation that threatened the safety of homeless people in the town, holding a town hall meeting to give residents a chance to air their concerns. The department continues to provide an officer, Ken Jackson, for the School Resource Officer program, keeping a visible presence in the schools.

The JC Police Department has used creative solutions to provide training and equipment while staying within its budget. New officers are stringently screened, recruited and trained with the thought that they will someday become the leader for the department, providing solid succession-planning. Because of the restructuring and changes in philosophy, the department was in position to act on the city of Monroe's request for help; assuming policing services for Monroe and the residents living between Monroe and Junction City.

Another milestone for the JC Police Dept. was attaining accreditation from the Oregon Accreditation Alliance (OAA) for the next three-year cycle. The process took nearly a year for the department to come into compliance with OAA's professional standards of accountability, management, and operations. Out of the 173 Oregon law enforcement agencies, only 40 have attained accredited status.