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'The Ev

'Stop Requested': To Lakeview, Oregon's 'Mile High City'



By **Lillian Karabaic** (OPB)

Oct. 27, 2024 6 a.m.

Lakeview isn't close to much, but locals figure out how to get 'er done

Editor's note: This is the third installment of "Stop Requested," OPB's multi-part series about a journey to the corners of Oregon by public transit.



Fourteen days, and more than 30 buses — OPB "Weekend Edition" host Lillian Karabaic and producer Prakruti Bhatt experience the joys and difficulties of rural transit and talk to many people along the way.

Tuesday, Sept. 17



Lakeview is proud of its Wild West heritage, and many signs, including the one grocery store in town, Safeway, feature cowboys.

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

Our destination today is Lakeview, and the only way there by public transit is from Klamath Falls. Known as Oregon's "mile-high city," this town of about 2,500 people may be small, but Lakeview boasts a community spirit and picturesque landscapes.

Bus 10: S 5th Ave & Plum Ave > Washburn Way & Hilyard Ave

Basin Transit Service Route 5 & 6, \$1.50, 3.2 miles

We grab a quick ride on [Klamath Falls' hourly local transit service](#), which comes quickly and drops us off at a strip mall. We walk through a large parking lot to find our transit into Lakeview.

Bus 11: Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank > Lakeview Senior Center

Lake County Cloud, \$0, 101.3 miles

To reach Lakeview, we turn to the [Lake County Cloud](#), a transit service run by the Lakeview Senior Center. Lake County Cloud doesn't have any fixed route services. Its crew of eight part-time drivers mostly do by-reservation trips to medical appointments and a few shopping trips. This became even more important after Lakeview's only specialty clinic and hospice closed in 2023.



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Lakeview is far from most everything. But this frontier community in Southern Oregon gets creative to take care of one another.

Rhonda Dial runs Lakeview's fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants rescue, Animal House, out of her house. It's the only rescue for 100 miles. Dial said it was divine intervention that led her to start Animal House.

"I used to use drugs and be an idiot for 30 full years. I went to prison behind it and then I got connected with Jesus Christ and changed my life — and this is what came of it. I just feel like if you're getting really involved in your community in a bad way, doing bad things, when you turn it around, you need to be just as involved with your community for good."

One of her rescue cats, Judge Judy 🐱, is named so because she judges everyone who walks past Animal House on Lakeview's main street. "She checks everybody and everything in and out of the rescue. It can be the meanest dog or the sweetest old lady out front; she's going to go up and get in their business," said Dial.

Click the link in our bio for the full story.

👉 by Lillian Karabaic/OPB (@anomalily)

👉 by Prakruti Bhatt/OPB (@prakrutib)

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Because the nearest city is Klamath Falls, more than 90 miles away, Lake County Transit puts in a lot of miles. It also goes up to Medford, down to California, and even all the way to Portland for chemotherapy.

"We do about 30,000 [or] 40,000 miles a month ... it's a lot for a little town and little crew," says Linda Mickle, transportation coordinator for Lake County Transit.

She's coordinated for us to ride from Klamath Falls to Lakeview with the twice-monthly food pickup at Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank. Tucked behind a furniture store and a Taco Bell is the 1,200-square-foot distribution warehouse filled with pallets of food. Executive Director Lori Garrard says they distribute 2.5 million pounds of food a year.



The Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank distributes 2.5 million pounds of food a year. About 5,000 pounds a month goes from their distribution center in Klamath Falls to Lakeview.

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

“We’re really seeing a huge jump in the need for our communities, especially Lake County,” says Operations Manager Courtney Nichols. She adds that this is especially true as it gets harder to make paychecks stretch at limited grocery store options in highly rural areas like Lake County. The food bank supplies about 5,000 pounds of food to Lake County each month. Today’s bus will take a pallet of food to Lakeview Senior Center for their hot meal service ... and we get to hitch a ride.

We travel on a bright blue 14-passenger bus, decorated with pictures of clouds and parasailers, driven by Larry Brooks.



The Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank distributes 2.5 million pounds of food a year. Twice a month, Lake County Public Transit picks up an order for Lakeview Senior Center's hot meal program.

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

Brooks has been driving for Lake County for about seven years, after retiring from the railroad. "I took a guy to Medford yesterday, to the dentist," says Brooks. "I get over to Baker [City], Pendleton, Ontario. But most of our runs are Klamath Falls, Medford and Bend."

His longest day driving the bus? Twenty-three hours on a trip to Portland. The person he was driving had five medical appointments back-to-back. "We left at 2:30 in the morning and got back at 2 a.m."



Lake County bus driver Larry Brooks, left, helps upload at Lakeview Senior Center. He has been driving for Lake County for about seven years, after retiring from the railroad. "I get over to Baker [City], Pendleton, Ontario. But most of our runs are Klamath Falls, Medford and Bend."

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

Why put in those long days when he's mostly retired? "Helping the people. And people really need it. It's a good service," he says.

Brooks used to drive the bus for shopping trips to and from Lakeview to Klamath Falls but says he stopped doing that because "taking eight ladies shopping is like trying to herd cats."



Larry Brooks has been driving for Lake County Transit for seven years. Why does he do it even though he's mostly retired?
"Helping the people."

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

The bus is loaded up with a pallet of food quickly and then we get on board. Brooks warns us that he hit a turkey vulture on the way in, but the bus doesn't seem any worse for wear.

After two hours of driving over a mountain pass, past many cows, we pull up to Lakeview Senior Center. It's housed in a more-than-100-year-old hospital. "Many people in Lakeview were born here," says transportation coordinator Linda Mickle. Now, it houses a thrift store, a dining room for hot meals, veteran services, and art and theatre workshops. From the old morgue, Mickle coordinates all of Lake County Transit's rides.



OPB "Weekend Edition" host Lillian Karabaic stands in front of the sign that says Welcome to Lakeview.

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

We walk down Lakeview's main street, which is surrounded by mountains and has a charming, Wild West vibe. A pudgy kitty walks up to us from a house with barking dogs in the yard and a sign on it that says "Animal House." The cat's name? Judge Judy.

Judge Judy "works" for Animal House, which is Rhonda Dial's fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants animal rescue run out of her home.



Judge Judy is named so because she judges everyone who walks past Animal House on Lakeview's main street. "She checks everybody and everything in and out of the rescue," said Rhonda Dial.

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

"She checks everybody and everything in and out of the rescue," says Dial. "It can be the meanest dog or the sweetest old lady out front. She's going to go up and get in their business."



"Animal House" is the only animal rescue for 100 miles. Rhonda Dial said it was divine intervention that led her to opening a rescue.

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

Like everything else in this very rural area, Animal House is a creative solution to the lack of resources. It's the only animal rescue for 100 miles, in a town with no animal control. Dial says it was divine intervention that led her to start Animal House.

"I lost a 29-year-old daughter to addiction. And when I was losing my daughter, when we were disconnecting her, I'm in the hospital, you know, saying farewell to my daughter

and God says, 'Well, you're gonna have an animal rescue,'" says Dial. "And I started to argue and then I remembered who I was arguing with."



Rhonda Dial runs Lakeview's fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants rescue, Animal House, out of her house. It's the only rescue for 100 miles. Dial said it was divine intervention that led her to start Animal House.

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

In addition to the animal shelter, Dial also helps organize a free meal program on the holidays. "I used to use drugs and be an idiot for 30 full years," says Dial. "I went to prison behind it and then I got connected with Jesus Christ and changed my life and this is what came of it.

"I just feel like if you're getting really involved in your community in a bad way, doing bad things, when you turn it around, you need to be just as involved with your community for good," she says.

And Dial thinks Lakeview is the community to be in. "Lakeview is a really nice place," she says. "I just think it's a wonderful place on the planet. They couldn't run me off."

Unfortunately, we do have to get run off because early the next morning we're headed to north Lake County.



Next week on "Stop Requested": We find out that Christmas Valley is more wild west and less tinsel town than the name would suggest. We ride along on their weekly so-called "senior party bus" to La Pine.



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