



# OREGON

Kate Brown, Governor

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March 22, 2018

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **State Fire Marshal honors outstanding achievements in fire prevention**

State Fire Marshal Jim Walker bestowed the Office of State Fire Marshal's highest awards for outstanding achievement in fire prevention and safety education during the Oregon Fire Marshals Association's annual conference today.

The Golden Sparky is awarded to a fire service agency or individual for outstanding achievements in fire prevention and safety and the Silver Sparky is awarded to a civilian, company, or non-profit organization for outstanding achievements in fire prevention and safety.

The Golden Sparky award was presented to Umatilla County Fire District #1 Public Educator Gretchen Erickson and the Silver Sparky was presented to the Pendleton Lions Club.

"For the past 14 years, Gretchen Erickson has visited elementary schools throughout the Hermiston School District teaching students how to keep themselves and others fire safe," said State Fire Marshal Jim Walker. "Over the years, Gretchen's lessons have had an enormous positive effect on hundreds of school children. She is certainly deserving of the Golden Sparky."

Proof of Gretchen's lifesaving effect on her students came in 2009 when Jazmin Silva, then a student at Desert View Elementary School, kept a cool head as things heated up during a fire at her home in January of that year. Shortly after black smoke starting filling the air in her home, Jazmin remembered Gretchen's lessons and grabbed her 5-month old cousin, took her 2-year old cousin by the hand, and told her 7-year old cousin to hold onto her shirt as Jazmin led them outdoors to safety.

"The Pendleton Lions Club is also very deserving of the Silver Sparky award due to how the club has embraced fire safety as one of its highest priorities," said Walker. "Club members have

dedicated countless hours and resources to the elimination of fire related injuries and deaths in the community.”

The Pendleton Lions Club is dedicated to the vision of having working smoke alarms in every residence in Pendleton. They have raised more than \$1,000 to purchase smoke alarms, and in partnership with the Pendleton Fire Department they have distributed and installed hundreds of them in area homes. In addition, the club has collaborated with the OSFM and PFD on a focused effort in a low-income area of the city to ensure each residence has a working smoke alarm. Last October, club members, local volunteers, and members of the fire department installed 50 smoke alarms in this area of town in one weekend.

“Oregon is extremely fortunate to have people and organizations such as these working to keep Oregonians safe from deadly home fires,” said State Fire Marshal Jim Walker. People and organizations such as Gretchen Erickson and the Pendleton Lions Club deserve to be recognized for their work and I am honored to present them with the Sparky awards.”

**(PHOTOS BELOW)**

For more information on home fire safety, visit the OSFM website at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/>



State Fire Marshal Jim Walker (far left) awards the Golden Sparky to Gretchen Erickson, with representatives from Umatilla County Fire District #1 at her side.



State Fire Marshal Jim Walker (far right) congratulates members of the Pendleton Lions Club on their Silver Sparky award as a member of the Pendleton Fire Department looks on.