

## Antlers and Adventure

by Sheryl Puckett

**Josh Smith** grew up in Athol, attending Athol Elementary and graduating from Lakeland High School. After high school, he worked for Sandpoint Ambulance, Sagle Fire, and as a reserve deputy for Bonner County.

His love for the outdoors led him to a unique pursuit: shed hunting. Josh fondly recalls his high school days when he would rush home from the bus to hike and search for antlers. "Back then I didn't have a dog to help me find sheds. However, as soon as I started, I knew this was something I'd do for the rest of my life."



Shedding, or searching for antlers left behind by deer, elk, or moose, is both an adventure and a science. According to Josh, "Moose paddles start dropping late December. Deer also start end December through April. Elk antlers will start dropping around April. We usually begin antler hunting before Christmas and will go until July, if we are home and able. Once it starts getting hot the antlers will dry out and have very very little odor for dogs to find."

Together with his wife, Crystal, who also grew up in Athol, they founded the **North Idaho Shed Dog Club**. Josh serves as president and Crystal as vice president, with both dedicating their time to this shared passion. "There's nothing better than having my wife hike with me and share those special moments," Josh says.

The couple became certified judges through the United Kennel Club (UKC) by flying to Wisconsin for training, fieldwork, and exams. Their club hosts six trials annually, divided into three weekends, with dates set for January 4 & 5, May 3 & 4, and October 4 & 5 in 2025. These events attract some members traveling from out of state to participate.

The club, which meets at **Cedar Mountain Farm** in Athol, welcomes anyone interested in shed hunting, training dogs, or simply observing the competitions.

Competitions are open to all, with divisions for youth, working dogs, and champions. Winners take home ribbons, prizes, and a sense of accomplishment.

Antler shedding is a yearly event. CONT.



Josh and Crystal use lots of trail cameras to track the animals. That way they can see when antlers fall off and they don't have to go in early and put pressure on the animals. According to an article in a

MeatEater publication, "When shed hunters inadvertently push or spook animals, that energy expenditure might be enough to push the animal over the edge."

Josh explains that deer and elk often winter on south facing slopes, where the snow melts early. By hiking hundreds of miles each year, they find antlers in places most people never see.

While some shed hunters sell their finds, Josh prefers to keep theirs. Crystal explains, "We hang onto them. We use them for our trials and we also enjoy making stuff out of ours for family and friends."



The couple trains their six Labrador Retrievers to find antlers, upland birds, and even narcotics. "We love the labrador breed and have four chocolates, one black and one yellow."

They also offer one on one and group training sessions for other dogs, emphasizing that most breeds can be trained to locate antlers, though retrievers excel.

Crystal and Josh's dedication to shed hunting extends beyond their own enjoyment. They aim to share the joy and sense of community the sport brings. "This club wouldn't be what it is today without Crystal," Josh says. "She's the one that does all the behind the scenes work."

Both are lucky to share a hobby they're both so passionate about. Spending time outdoors, training dogs and hunting for antlers is something they love doing together. They're creating a lot of memories. "This is definitely an endeavor that we both pour our hearts into making it work," says Josh.



To learn more about the North Idaho Shed Dog Club, follow them on Facebook or contact Josh at 208-661-0186 or Crystal at 208-661-0488. The club is always looking for donations, especially for competition days and newcomers are encouraged to join in the fun.

# Join the Fun with Mah Jong in Bayview

By Sheryl Puckett

Looking for a fun way to spend an afternoon? Join this Bayview Community Council sponsored Mah Jong group twice a week at the Bayview Community Center.

They meet every Tuesday and Thursday 12:30 p.m.



What started as a once a week gathering has grown due to popular demand. The current mah jong members, led by Carol Trueblood, are excited to welcome new players.

Typically the game is played with four players and involves 144 tiles featuring different symbols and

characters. The objective is to build sets like three of a kind and a pair to create a winning hand. Players draw and discard tiles in turn, while planning strategies and reading opponents picks and discards.

If you're a beginner and curious about the game, you'll find a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Jennifer Birds has offered to teach some private lessons to ease you into the game. If you're interested, contact Jennifer at 208-610-9446.

Come connect with others and enjoy this fun game.

## Meet Athol's Auto Mechanic with Decades of Expertise

Nine years ago, **Ryan Eicher** made the move to North Idaho from Bend, Oregon. With his wife already deeply rooted in the Athol community for over two decades, the relocation felt natural after their marriage.



A Master Certified mechanic with over 35 years of experience, Ryan has worked for large dealerships across Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia. Ryan "hung up his wrenches" to start another venture, a construction company, called **R Home Construction LLC**.

Today, he's back to his roots, offering comprehensive automotive repair and maintenance services. From gas and diesel vehicles to classic cars, tractors, ATVs, and small engines, his expertise covers virtually anything with an engine. While he excludes automatic transmissions and AC evacuations/recharges, his skills encompass an impressive range of repairs.

The inspiration to become a mechanic began in childhood. "My grandfather inspired me when I was a little boy. He could fix anything and boy, did I think that was cool."

CON'T

When asked what are some of the biggest challenges he faces as an auto mechanic? Ryan replied, "Rust, rust, rust. When bolts are rusted into the frame that can be a challenge of strength and time to get them off or grind them down.



Ryan emphasizes the importance of proper maintenance, advising car owners to stay diligent about checking fluids and keeping up with professional servicing. "I've seen engines destroyed simply because they ran out of oil," he warns.

Over the years, Ryan has worked on unique projects, including a restored 1957 Chevy and a Dodge Viper race car. For customers, he offers senior discounts and warranties tailored to specific jobs and parts.

Operating by appointment from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, his shop is located at **9334 E Quarter Mile Rd, Athol**. (See business card above for the phone number.)

Whether it's a classic car or a simple tune up, Ryan's decades of expertise ensure that every job is done right.

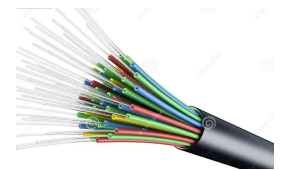
## And Coming to Athol by Sheryl Puckett



Across from Silverwood Theme Park, at the intersection of Highway 95 and Bunco Road, a new 8,200 sq. ft. convenience store with a **76 Gas Station** has been constructed.

One online source describes it as a "state-of-the-art travel center designed to cater to both locals and travelers passing through the area." Opening date is unknown at this time but word is they're stocking the store now.

On the north side of Hwy 54 Intemax is hanging fiber optic cable on the power poles to provide Internet service. Their website states, "Fiber-optic cables run underground or on telephone poles, so they are less susceptible to interference from geography, satellite position, cellular tower coverage or geography."



Unfortunately, Bayview is not included in their plans. Athol, Spirit Lake and Twin Lakes will all have this service available to them.

# HAPPY New Year

Council's Address: P. O. Box 112, Bayview, ID 83803  
Council website: <https://bayviewcommunitycouncil.org/>