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Balloon sent aloft to study eclipse

LEE CLARKSON
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Silverton High School was the launch site of a high-altitude balloon Monday, Aug. 21, and the launch went off without a hitch around 8:45 a.m.

Events leading up to and directly following, however, weren't always smooth sailing.

The high school program was one of 55 teams nationwide that built balloons to capture data and video of the Great American Eclipse, which passed by the Mid-Willamette Valley and crossed the United States. The data will be utilized by NASA and other agencies.

"It actually went as textbook as it could have gone," project coordinator Creighton Helms said of the eclipse-day launch.

Helms said the project faced obstacles in the weeks and days leading up to

the launch: wind forecasts that would have pushed the balloon to restricted airspace above wildfires, GPS units not working and having to be overnighted to NASA for repair and overnighted back, and a camera that required repair up until 1 a.m. on launch day.

The concerns turned out to be no problem at all.

"Everything just came together and allowed us to be able to fly," Helms said. "The winds were light and the conditions were good. The balloon lifted off the ground like a pillow."

Hundreds gathered at the soccer field at Silverton High to witness the event, and an enthusiastic countdown helped set the balloon off for launch.

The project began 10 months ago. This put Silverton's team months behind other projects around the country, so

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PHOTO COURTESY DEREK MCELFRISH / SILVER FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT
Silverton High School students and staff inflate their high-altitude balloon prior to launch on Aug. 21.

Teen isn't sheepish about state fair shot



Dresen Ferschweiler stands with her sheep Batty and Chippy as her mother Amy drives past with Dresen's sisters Lauren and Jennifer.

Silverton girl finds shear joy in tending her flock

COOPER GREEN
APPEAL TRIBUNE

When it comes to raising and showing sheep eventually bound for the market, Dresen Ferschweiler said it's better to have sheared and lost than to have never sheared at all.

"If I don't show it, if I don't get to pick it and use it for a market lamb, I don't ever get to meet this personality," she said. "It's all a business. ... They are cute, but it's gotta go to the food chain."

Ferschweiler, 13, stood with her current projects arranged around her, two in halters strung back to her hand, one meandering through the yard, trying to scratch its rear-end on

a patio chair. The trio were born up the road at the family barn and groomed by Ferschweiler for competition at the Oregon State Fair, which runs Friday through Sept. 4.

But they weren't all picked for their charm.

"You can't do it all on their personality because, again, when you go to eat the animal, you're not really gonna eat their personality," she laughed.

This set of sheep has already been to two competitions this year, including the Marion County Fair where Ferschweiler and her sheep qualified for the Oregon State Fair.

They're Dorset sheep, which are less popular for competition. But even in a less populated category like

hers, Ferschweiler expects the best to be at the fairgrounds this month.

"It's stiff competition. There are a lot of people there that are really, really good. Because if they weren't, they wouldn't go to state fair," she said.

Although placing at the fair won't be easy, it's only a piece of the challenge that comes with preparing animals for competition. After Ferschweiler selects the sheep she'll take, they need to be sheared, cleaned and trained.

Particularly for sheep competing in showmanship, training is the most time-consuming piece - Ferschweiler

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Cross-state search for the perfect eclipse view

ZACH URNESS
APPEAL TRIBUNE

In the sky, the total solar eclipse looked pretty much the same no matter where you saw it.

Whether you were in a Safeway parking lot or on the top of a mountain, you saw the moon eclipse the sun in an awe-inspiring two minutes (or so) that turned daylight into night.

Yet tens of thousands traveled hiked and climbed to Oregon's most remote corners not just to view the cosmic phenomenon in totality, but to do so within the grandest landscape possible.

To find out why people would travel from around the globe and hike into wilderness for two minutes, I went on a rambling and slightly frantic journey halfway across the state.

It started, sadly, with a fire. Two actually.

My original plan was to backpack into Jefferson Park, a meadow at the base of Oregon's second-tallest mountain. I wasn't alone. There were estimates of 5,000 people crowding into the alpine paradise for the eclipse.

The Whitewater Fire changed all that, growing to 5,515 acres and closing the entire area around Mount Jefferson.

Strike one. The next plan was Mount Washington meadows, a lesser-known alpine grassland in the shadow of the 7,795-foot shield volcano.

Then the Milli Fire blew up, causing evacuations in Sisters and, in combination with Whitewater, blanketing the entire Cascade Crest in thick smoke.

Strike two. On Aug. 20 — the day before the eclipse — I was standing at the viewpoint for Mount Washington, unable to see any surrounding mountains, wondering to myself, "what in the world am I going to do?"

"Let's go east," said Jeff Green, a hiking buddy and Salem photographer I'd planned to shoot the eclipse with.

And so we took to the road at 1 p.m. Aug. 20 with no real plan, chasing eclipse totality east, hoping to find someplace, anyplace, where people congregated in a beautiful setting.

We decided against places like

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State schools still face P.E. hurdles

NATALIE PATE
APPEAL TRIBUNE

The majority of Oregon schools failed to meet increased physical education standards this year.

Schools were given ten years, beginning in 2007, to reach at least 150 minutes of physical education per week for students in kindergarten through fifth grade and 225 minutes per week for grades 6-8.

But at a five-year check in 2012, the Oregon Department of Educa-

tion found schools were way behind schedule. More than 90 percent of school districts were still significantly below those benchmarks in 2015-16.

The Salem-Keizer School District was among the few districts on track for compliance, coming up one half-hour short for elementary students. Middle schoolers are not all required to take P.E., but those in Salem-Keizer who do are already reaching the 225-minute standard, according to district of-

ficials.

Statewide, however, only 43 elementary schools (4 percent) and 61 middle schools (6 percent) were meeting requirements in 2015-16. And 11,340 students statewide were not receiving any physical education.

As a result, state lawmakers were faced with a quandary — enforce the requirement and possibly hang schools out to dry or ad-

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