



Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

A student listens excitedly to Greene's presentation. She is holding a traditional Nez Perce necklace.

THIRD GRADERS

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Quality, and more. The students also got the chance to learn about and view four live birds: two hawks and two owls, which were brought to the event by Blue Mountain Wildlife. Public Works Director Kyle Carpenter said he hopes students are excited enough about what they learned to bring the information home to their families. He said this year the event received a grant from the DEQ, but is usually funded by the city. Rebecca Elliott from the DEQ had a station at the event, and she taught kids about air pollution and how to check the air quality on airnow.gov, which

can be useful for people with asthma. At the water conservation table, the children learned about ways they can save water, and how much water is used to make different things. One example provided at the table was how it takes 1,800 gallons of water to make one pair of jeans. Greene has been coming to the event to present for many years, and he said it's always fun. "It's really worthwhile," he said. "We're trying to get kids to realize and understand even the small things that we're able to do (can) make a big difference." He showed the children some traditional Native American objects like drums, a staff and a baby Bjorn. He explained the importance

of taking care of the Earth and not letting things go to waste. He quoted Toohoolhoolzote, a leader of the Nez Perce in the 1870s, to explain the importance of having respect for the Earth. "The Earth is part of my body," he quoted. He also performed a dance and song for the children. He said it's always nice to share a little of the Nez Perce culture with them. The students seemed excited about all of the booths with activities around the room, and especially liked seeing the birds and asking questions about them. ■

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2019 FIRE

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Oregon Department of Forestry, said the rate at which the snowpack melts is especially important in the outcome of fire season for Northeast Oregon. "It all depends on how the snow goes off," he said. "If it warms up within a month to 60 degrees, everything at 5,000 feet will run off, then it's not much of a continuation of keeping fuels wet, which leads to what you get in May or June." Jody Prummer, Grande Ronde Fire Zone management officer, agrees with Williams. "With snow this late, it's how fast the snow comes off the hills that matters," Prummer said. "The slower the snow comes off, the longer it takes to dry and will delay fire season." But Williams said a factor other than the snowpack is more responsible for the onset and the intensity of fire season in Northeast Oregon. "It's all about the weather," said Williams, who has been working with the Oregon Department of Forestry for 30 years. "With late snowfall, people think it would delay fire season, but it's so dependent on the weather. If we don't have any moisture from April to August, we won't know any difference with the snowpack."

Williams said the reason the weather is such a huge factor for fire season is because if "green fuels" — like living grasses, trees and other plants — dry out from little to no rainfall in the spring and early summer, fires will start earlier and spread faster. "In my experience, the biggest predictor we've had of a bad fire season is if we're in drought," he said. "Every year we have our green fires, but in years when green fuels are dry, they become a more susceptible fuel load that contributes to the significance of the fires."

Although fire season for the Malheur and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests once began in August, Williams said it typically now picks up around the Fourth of July. He said this is because of the lack of summer storms in the area. "We haven't had a wet summer for six to eight years," he said. "We're just having abnormal weather and dryness."

To prepare for this year's fire season, the La Grande Wildland Urban Interface Committee — composed of representatives from the City of La Grande, La Grande Fire Department, Oregon Department of Forestry, U.S. Forest Service, Union County Emergency Services and community members — met for the first time in

mid-February. Williams is a member of this committee. "There's been an ask from our community for (wildfire safety) to be addressed by city planners," Williams said. "I think (the increased interest) is probably based on the California wildfires." Last year, the town of Paradise, California, was burned to the ground in the worst wildfire of the state's history. Williams visited the area where the town used to be two weeks ago, describing the scene as "devastating" with vehicles "melted down" and bottles on the shelves of a liquor store reduced to piles of liquified glass. "I couldn't imagine being in a situation like that, with a fire burning and the only option is to get out," he said. The Rooster Peak fire, the worst fire in Northeast Oregon in recent memory, burned through 6,000 acres of land and destroyed six homes near La Grande in 1973. Williams said a fire like that popping up again is a "big worry" for the La Grande Wildland Urban Interface Committee, and their goal is to teach fire safety to the community in order to reduce the threat of wildfire spreading into populated areas. Prummer said the fact that Union County is a rural community gives it a headstart in fire preparedness compared to the more urban areas of the state.

"I do think our community is more educated on fire and fire dangers because it's smaller and more rural, so a lot of folks live and work in the woods," he said. "They understand more about their surroundings because they've lived here most of their lives." As for the 2019 fire season, Prummer said he can't see it starting early based on the current snowpack, but it's hard to say. "As long as the snow comes off at a moderate rate, we likely won't have an early fire season," he said. "Last year we had a good winter, and this year is stacking up to be like last year."

Williams was hesitant to give his input on the upcoming fire season because it's still pretty early and many factors could change, but he did offer this insight. "When green trees are low on moisture and burn easily is when we have our worst seasons in Union County," he said. "We'll have days when the relative humidity is low and the wind is hard, but typically when we have a drought and life fuel moistures are down is when we have the worst fires." ■

ARCHERY

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At the tournaments, there are a lot of different competitions the children can go to. Appleton encourages the club members to try them and find out what they like and what their strengths are. This will make them better all-around archers. "We went to Redmond, where the Oregon State Archery Indoor competition was held," she said. "Some of the kids participated on Friday night at the kids' fun shoot, which isn't part of the competition, and they get awards for that portion." The distance shoot was held earlier this month, and the archers had to shoot twice during that time. Each time the archer shoots 70 arrows, 60 of them are scored. It usually takes about 2-1/2 to 3 hours when everyone is on the line to be able to shoot all those arrows. Two of the youth archers were first-year participants at the competition, and it was the second year for two others. Kloe King and Brooke Huntington were in the cubs position. It was Kloe's first competition, and she had a large group. "Kloe did really well and tried to focus on her shooting rather than her outcome, which makes a really good archer," Appleton said. "Brooke got first in her cubs division, and she set the record for the State of Oregon. She got a perfect 600 score from National."

Two other club archers, Danaka Knight and Cameron Snider, also had good outcomes. "For Danaka, it was a first-time competition. She sat in second place going into Sunday," said Appleton. "On the second day she got a Robin Hood, which means she put one arrow in the target and

the second arrow she shot went into the first arrow." This doesn't happen very often, she said, so that was exciting, especially in a competition setting. "Cameron has been practicing almost daily on form to get better," she said. "He shot a 299 the first day, which is one point shy of a 300, a perfect score. He was then in second place when he went into his next round." Snider hadn't lost any points in this round, and on his very last arrow, he pulled back and held it. It was a tense moment as Appleton watched his hesitation. Then he let it down for a couple seconds. Finally, he pulled it back a second time and let it fly, and he hit his 300, walking away with first place. "Just seeing the confidence that archery has given him and see him come out of his shell and have a good time is wonderful," Appleton said. "I love seeing that in the kids. They are all different ages and it's like family. All of these kids are just great."

Appleton and her husband, John, bought Alpine Archery and Fly almost four years ago. They primarily serve the area hunters, but Appleton wanted to do something for women and kids. "Archery has so many avenues to go and it can be a family thing, an individual thing," said Appleton. "I just wanted to bring everyone together." The next state competition for youth archers will take place June 22-23, and the Flaming Arrows are preparing to attend that along with their parents. To learn more about the youth archery club, visit Alpine Archery and Fly Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. or Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., or call 541-963-4671 during business hours. ■

2018 FIRE

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to fire officials in order to provide strategic risk management decisions focused on "integrating lessons learned into a best practices model that can help bolster decision quality for those managing large fires." The summary also listed the communities most threatened by wildfire. Locations were identified with greater potential for reaching housing units using a purely spatial approach. Among the most threatened communities are Bend, Redmond and Spokane, Washington, ac-

ording to the summary. The full list of communities in Washington and Oregon and their exposure to wildfire in is available as a Microsoft Excel workbook (http://pyrologix.com/ftp/Public/Data/Housing-unit%20exposure--Supplemental%20table_20181029.xlsx). Additional detailed spatial information about wildfire hazard and risk to homes in Oregon can be found at the Oregon Wildfire Risk Explorer. To read the summary in its entirety go to: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd611322.pdf. ■

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