



Dick Mason/The Observer

Joe Nuxoll, president of the Association of Oregon and Transit Advocates, speaks at the start of Saturday's Eastern Oregon Rail Summit at Cook Memorial Library.

TRAINS

Continued from Page 1A because of funding issues.

"We need your help if (the return of passenger train service) is going to happen. It will be a longer term effort," said AORTA President Joe Nuxoll of Eugene.

The need for passenger train service in Northeast Oregon is greater now than it was in 1997, Nuxoll said. A big reason is that Greyhound Bus now provides one westbound and one eastbound bus a day, while 22 years ago at least two westbound and two eastbound buses made daily stops in La Grande.

Nuxoll would like to see as much of the Pioneer route, which ran from Portland to Salt Lake City, Utah, restored as possible. However, he said it is more realistic to start small by first attempting to restore the Portland to Boise part of the Pioneer route.

The AORTA president said that when people are speaking up in support of Amtrak, they need to address one of the most common criticisms of it — that its subsidized with government funding. This is a weak and unfair

argument, according to Nuxoll, because all modern transportation receives substantial government funding.

"All transportation is subsidized," he said.

He explained that virtually all highway construction and maintenance is funded by the government and that air travel is possible because of airports, which receive significant levels of government assistance.

Nuxoll emphasized that the best way to get members of Congress to begin looking into expanding Amtrak's routes is for local city councils and county commissions to pass resolutions in support of having local and regional passenger rail service. He said that when senators and members of congress learn of the resolutions they will know that the people they represent want passenger trains to return.

Mark Meyer of Portland, an AORTA board member, said he believes there is strong bipartisan support in Congress for expanding Amtrak.

One of these leaders is U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Portland, who is a supporter of Amtrak, according to Jeff Broderick, a graduate student at Portland State

University who is earning a master's degree in urban planning. He also noted that U.S. Rep. Peter Defazio, D-Eugene, who is chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, is in a good position to help boost Amtrak's expansion.

Broderick, like other speakers at Saturday's meeting, emphasized the importance of communicating with legislators about restoring Amtrak service in Northeast Oregon.

"Your first step should be contacting your legislators," he said.

He said that part of the problem Amtrak faces is that it received a weak mandate from the government when it was created in 1971. This makes it difficult to get large sums of money from Congress.

"It is a fight for it to get funding from Congress each year," Broderick said.

Many of those attending the meeting Saturday talked of how much they miss passenger train service, and the atmosphere in the library's community room was one of hope and excitement.

"You have priceless enthusiasm," said Louis Musso, a member of All Aboard Washington.

STEM

Continued from Page 1A they watched it bubble.

"I'm going to say it released a gas," Eckstein stated before jotting down the observation in her lab book.

Several students at a time rotated through testing stations, and some were a tad reluctant at first to get too near the zombies — university volunteers for the day — in the bio lab. But the girls soon enough tested the poor creatures to see the pupillary response to light, the knee-jerk reflex and their heart beats.

Angela Baird of Baker said this was her first time attending and she enjoyed learning about DNA and using pipe cleaners to make a replica of a neuron.

"I call it Medusa because it looks like Medusa," she said.

Paige Wolfe of Baker said she enjoys learning about science so the whole day was a kick. Madison Bryant with Sunridge gave a similar assessment: "I like all of it."

The event culminated with parents and other family members filling the back rows of Huber Auditorium at the university to witness the groups present their findings and conclusions. The three groups also



Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group

Dr. DeAnna Timmermann, an associate psychology professor at Eastern Oregon University, instructs a group of middle school girls in a series of tests that they will perform during a lab session at the 2019 Girls in Science event at Eastern Oregon University Saturday afternoon.

reached consensus.

The zombies were conscious and human, they said, but as one young scientist told the crowd, Potshard was "sitting there like a bump on a log." Only one scenario accounted for his affliction, they said: Potshard ingested tetrodotoxin, the deadly neurotoxin of the puffer fish. And Potshard subsequently infected the other zombies.

The mystery solved, the girls remained jazzed as they returned to their regular lives. And perhaps the zombies were as well.



Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group

A "zombified professor" is rolled through the group of participants during introductions.

FESTIVAL

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The documentary follows the journey of the world's first "cyborgs" and the scientists and entrepreneurs who are researching the field of neuroscience and its potential for changing a person's life. The three main subjects of the story are Bill, a tetraplegic who is helping researchers discover the possibilities of regaining control of his body through technology; Anne, a woman living with Parkinson's disease who undergoes a surgery to alleviate some of her symptoms; and Stephen, a blind man who is regaining his sight through the implantation of technology in his eyes.

The filmmakers also talked to experts and innovators in the field. One of the entrepreneurs is La Grande native Bryan Johnson.

"It took massive amounts of exploration and research," Gaby said about developing the film. "We had to weed out what was snake oil and what was neuro-technology."

While this technology is not widely available, Gaby said she hopes the film shows its potential and the possibilities it could have for general public application.

"The fear is only wealthy people will have access to one of the biggest breakthroughs in this field," Gaby said.

In dealing with the sensitive topic of people's medical struggles and their journeys, Gaby said, she had to be very careful and considerate during the process. She recalled filming Anne's and Stephen's surgeries and realizing how a speck of dust on the film crews camera technology could mean failure of the surgery because of the field of sterilization needing to remain clean.

"As a documentary filmmaker, you tend to enter people's lives at the most dramatic moments. It comes with a lot of responsibilities and a lot of care," Gaby said. "For Anne to have trusted us to be in (the operating) room, it's a huge weight on your shoulders. As a director, I don't take that lightly. You have to treat these moments like they're life and death of your own life."

Gaby said filming this documentary was like a master class in neuroscience, where observing the research and seeing these advancements firsthand doesn't make you an expert but they provide you with more knowledge than you had before.

"Whatever comes up that feels really important and is about people that inspire me is the next topic I'll do," Gaby said about her next project.



Sabrina Thompson/The Observer

Elena Gaby is one of the co-directors for the film "I Am Human" which explores the simultaneous evolution of humans and technology. The film was shown at a special screening Friday night at EOU.

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