

Working to become TOP DOG

Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter strives to out-raise competitors in tournament

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pioneer Humane Society/Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter is vying in a national fundraising tournament to come out as top dog.

The local humane society and the no-kill shelter it operates at 517 SE Third St., Pendleton, have made it to the “Furry 4” in March Muttness. The Humane Society of Southern Arizona hosts the tournament, patterned after college basketball’s March Madness to determine a national champion. Instead of hoops, shelters vie for donations.

Shaindel Beers, vice president of the Pioneer Humane Society/PAWS Board of Directors, said the organization received a flyer in the mail about the tournament.

“We have never done this before,” she said. “We get invited to lots of things, but we’re a small rescue shelter . . . we don’t have any full-time employees. So some fundraisers are just way too big for us. But this looked fun, and I thought sure, we’ll do it.”

She brought it to the board, which agreed with her to jump in and at least try.

The tournament began March 1 with 64 shelters

across the United States. Pendleton in Round 1 faced off against the Humane Society of El Paso in El Paso, Texas.

“To be honest, I freaked out when I saw we were against El Paso,” Beers said, because the city has a population of almost 700,000. Pendleton’s is about 17,100.

Beers said she even contacted the tournament organizers to make sure the matchup was correct. She said she found out a computer selects the competitors at random. But she also said organizers assured her size does not always matter. Last year’s winner was a small no-kill cat shelter.

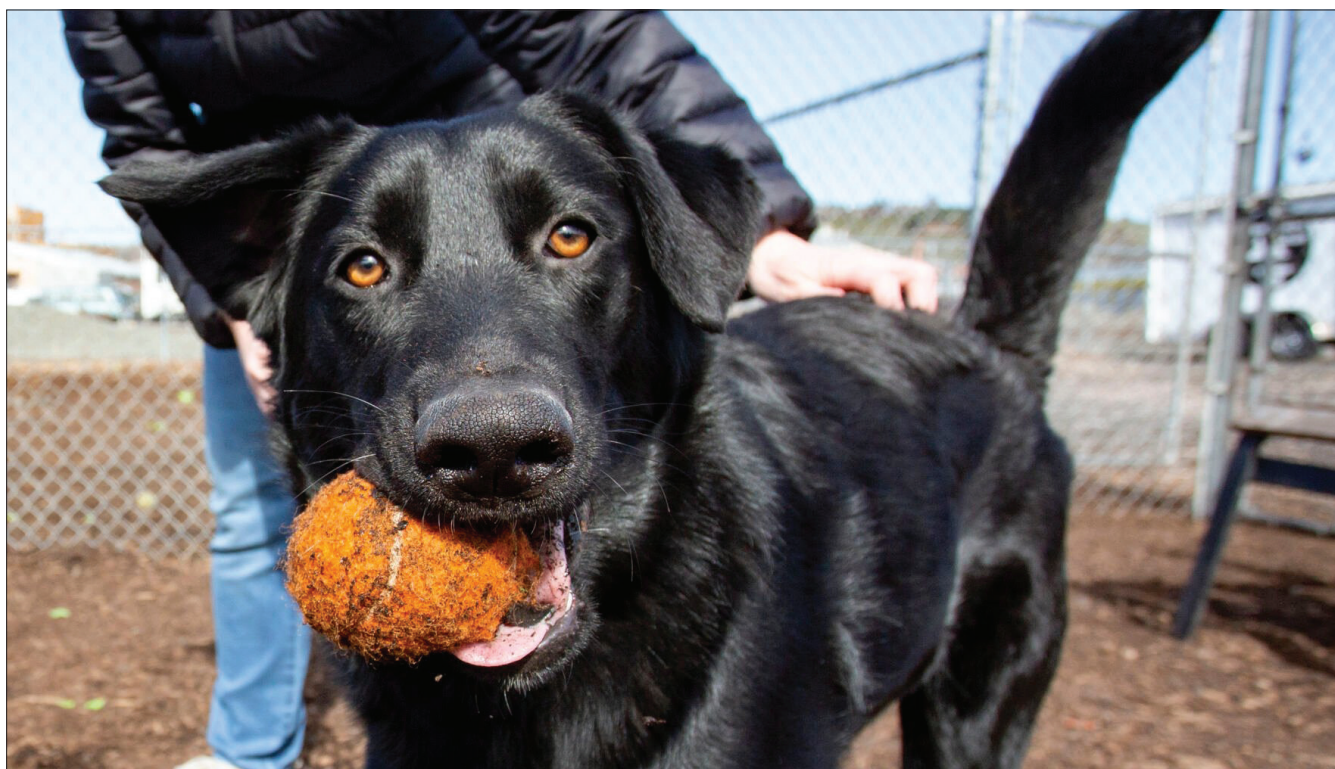
“So that was really crazy,” Beers said. “We totally knew we were the underdog, so we used that in our social media.”

It worked. When the round closed March 3, El Paso reported raising \$4,222.69. Pendleton won with \$4,728.12.

“I was just thrilled,” Beers said. “I did not think we could beat El Paso. They are just so big.”

And Pendleton has continued knocking off the competition.

In Round 2: Thrilling 32, Pendleton faced off against the Floyd County Humane Society in Floyd, Virginia. This time, Pendleton was the big dog against little Floyd, population about 725.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Night, a 1-year-old Labrador/border collie mix, clutches a ball Wednesday, March 16, 2022, at the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter. Pioneer Humane Society/PAWS have made it to the “Furry 4” in the nationwide March Muttness Tournament fundraising competition.

March Muttness

The Pioneer Humane Society and Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter made it to the Furry 4 in the March Muttness Tournament, in which 64 animal shelters nationwide compete to out-raise one another until there is a champion.

Rounds last 60 hours each, from 8 a.m. the day they open to 8 p.m. the night they close two days later.

Round 1: All Tails In! 64 March 1 to March 3

Round 2: Thrilling 32 March 5 to March 7

Round 3: Snuggly 16 March 9 to March 11

Round 4: Excellent 8 March 13 to March 15

Round 5: Furry 4 March 17 to March 19

Round 6: Championship March 21 to March 23

As of Wednesday, March 16, the participating shelters raised more than \$207,000. For more information and to support PAWS in the tournament, visit MarchMuttness.org.

Still, the small town gave a doggone good showing, raising \$1,431.44, just not enough to oust Pendleton, which brought in \$1,699.81.

Pendleton in Round 3: Snuggly 16, took down the Animal Friends Humane Society of Hamilton, Ohio, \$2,019.47 to \$1,701.16.

And in Round 4: Excellent 8, Pendleton again took down a bigger player, but with its smallest dollar amount so far. The Gulf Coast Humane Society in Corpus Christi, Texas — population about 326,000 — raised \$836.83, while Pendleton raised \$931.48.

Now Pendleton takes

on Hermitage No-Kill Cat Shelter and Sanctuary in Tucson, Arizona, in the Furry 4, which began Thursday, March 17, and ends two days later.

Hermitage looks to be Pendleton’s toughest opponent yet.

In Round 1, Hermitage faced Stray Rescue of St. Louis in St. Louis, Missouri. Stray Rescue raised \$22,054.21 — more than what PAWS has raised through the tournament so far. But Hermitage raised \$24,885.81.

While Hermitage has continued to trounce its opponents, its fundraising



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A 5-week-old puppy looks up from a kennel Wednesday, March 16, 2022, at the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter.

also dropped to an average of \$4,551.48 across the last three rounds.

Still, Beers said, Hermitage appears to have donors with deep pockets.

Spreading the word

To generate interest in supporting PAWS, Beers, who handles most of the social media for the organization and shelter, has been posting on Twitter and Facebook about animals the shelter has rescued.

“We’ve had great sto-

ries,” she said, including about Astrid and Butch and their five puppies.

PAWS received tips about people feeding a female dog with puppies that lived in a junk yard behind the Pendleton Walmart.

“There’s a junk yard there,” Beers said, “and this gentleman had the mother dog, father dog and five puppies under his RV.”

The man agreed to let PAWS rescue the whole lot, and the shelter took them in Feb. 21, when overnight temperatures were again dipping into single digits.

“He surrendered them, so we’re really grateful for that,” she said.

PAWS has worked to find homes for the dogs, and the father dog, Butch, was a bit of a worry. He is old, Beers said, and blind, and perhaps even hard of hearing. But a family took him in March 15, with the goal of rehoming him.

“We’re really hoping it works out with him because they have another blind dog, and they know how to work with special needs dogs,” she said.

Baker City issues notice about bacteria in wastewater released into river

Powder River north of town affected

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Baker City issued a notice Thursday, March 17, urging people to avoid entering the Powder River or drinking untreated water from the river north of the city’s sewer treatment lagoons, which are near Imnaha Road about a mile north of town.

The warning does not affect the reach of the river through Baker City.

Wastewater from four lagoons, which is released into the river, have contained higher than usual levels of E. coli bacteria, some types of which can make people ill.

The bacteria is not a health concern for cattle, according to the press release from the city.

The river runs through private property north of the lagoons, so there is little, if any, public access to or use of the river in that area.

The city has been releasing wastewater that exceeds the E. coli concentration limits in its permit due to a leak discovered March 7 in a dike on the largest lagoon, which covers about 70 acres, said Michelle Owen, the city’s public works director.

City workers plugged the leak with soil and bentonite, but as a precaution the city also lowered the water level in that lagoon to below the area where the leak was found, moving some of the water to the three smaller lagoons, each about 10 acres, Owen said.

Now, the city is releasing into the river about the same amount of wastewater that is coming into the

lagoon complex each day, to avoid overflows from the three smaller lagoons, Owen said. That’s been running at about 0.9 million gallons per day.

That’s actually slightly less water than the city usually releases into the river in early spring once the ice melts off the lagoons, Owen said. Typically the city lowers the reservoir levels to make space for the higher volumes of wastewater that start when residents begin to use more water in the warmer days of spring.

Owen explained the wastewater being released now contains higher-than-usual bacteria levels because the natural organisms that consume some of the bacteria aren’t yet active due to recent cold temperatures.

Ice still covers the lagoons, she said, and “we need the ice to come off, and warmer water” to spur the organisms that help to reduce bacteria levels.

The city continues to treat wastewater with chlo-

rine, but that disinfectant isn’t sufficient to keep bacterial levels below the limits in the city’s wastewater permit, Owen said. The city uses sulfur dioxide to remove the chlorine from wastewater before it’s released into the river.

Owen said the city’s newly constructed treatment lagoon, which is east of Interstate 84, isn’t yet available because the pipeline that leads from the current lagoons to the new facility has not yet passed a pressure test. Once that pipeline is available, the city could potentially divert wastewater into the new lagoon.

More information about E. coli is available at www.CDC.gov/ecol.

Owen said the city will be testing water from the Powder River upstream from the lagoons to establish a baseline of E. coli levels and compare the levels there with those in the wastewater the city is releasing into the river downstream.

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