

HERMISTON

Students celebrate School Choice Week

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hit the bowling alley in the middle of the school day? Not a problem for students of the Oregon Connections Academy.

National School Choice Week was alive and well in Hermiston on Wednesday at Desert Lanes Bowling Alley, where a handful of families showed up sporting the movement's signature yellow scarves.

The students at the event were all enrolled in Oregon Connections Academy, Oregon's largest online charter school based in Scio.

Jennifer Malcolm, a Hermiston mom of four, said she made the decision to pull her kids out of their local public schools and enroll them online because of her son Briton, who was often finished with his work before his classmates, was "incredibly bored."

"He also had some health issues, so keeping him at home seemed a good option, but I didn't want to go it alone," she said.

Malcolm said having her children — currently in ninth, seventh, fourth and first grade — attend a virtual academy gives the family flexibility, but also provides more structure and accountability than independent homeschooling.

Attending school online isn't as free-spirited of an experience as some people imagine. Students might be able to choose what time of day to work through lessons, but they still contend with quizzes, homework, deadlines, state tests, grades, textbooks and projects within a semester framework.

Malcolm said her children start school after an early breakfast, each of them working on one of the family's four computers until anywhere from noon to 2 p.m.

"I try to keep them pretty structured," she said.

Her daughter Ashlin, 12, said she



Ashlin Malcolm, 12, bowls during a School Choice Week event at Desert Lanes Bowling Alley.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

likes online school better than sitting in a classroom.

"You can go at your own pace," she said. "If you do something in a normal classroom you have to wait for the other kids to get done before going on."

Brianne Bishop, a sophomore at Oregon Connections Academy, said she liked attending school online because it gave her the flexibility to do a wide range of extracurricular activities like the Willow Creek Symphony without having to miss class for daytime events or travel.

"I don't have to take time off school. I don't have to get a note to be absent," she said.

She also gets a more diverse selection of elective classes to choose from. Last semester she took Japanese.

Carrie Spalione said she enrolled her son Ronn, a high school senior, and his older brothers in the online academy for a number of reasons, including the fact that the family has had to move frequently and the moves wouldn't disrupt Ronn's online classes like they would a regular public school

experience.

She said even though Oregon Connections Academy has teachers holding their students accountable and handing out grades, parents are also expected to act as "learning coaches" by helping their student avoid distractions and procrastination at home.

"I've heard the success rate of these kinds of schools depends on the parents' involvement," she said.

As for the oft-cited concern about social opportunities, Oregon Connections Academy and other online charter schools organize regional events like the bowling activity Wednesday. Students present at the event also cited a list of extra-curricular activities they participated in, including performance groups, Boy Scouts, church youth groups and sports teams.

Ronn Spalione said he likes being a virtual academy student.

"It's pretty nice," he said.

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MISSION

OMSI exhibit opens Feb. 6 at Tamastslikt

East Oregonian

Now more than ever, populations across the globe face serious challenges meeting basic human needs in maintaining sustainable food supplies, clean drinking water and healthy communities. These challenges have inspired innovative solutions from diverse cultures working together.

In *Roots of Wisdom: Native Knowledge. Shared Science* — an upcoming exhibit at Tamastslikt Cultural Institute — visitors will learn how native communities are using their traditional knowledge in conjunction with cutting-edge science to successfully address some of the most pressing issues facing society today.

The Oregon Museum of Science & Industry exhibition tells the story through the voices of tribal elders and youth from diverse American Indian and Hawaiian cultures. It includes hands-on interactive displays, custom video games, audio and video content and engaging graphics.

The exhibit opens Friday, Feb. 6 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Tamastslikt Cultural Institute, located near Wildhorse

Resort & Casino. The opening day is free to the public.

Roots of Wisdom will show examples of successful projects that incorporate both traditional ecological knowledge and western science. The displays introduce visitors to diverse landscapes, including tropical mountains, mighty rivers, ancient forests and coastal inlets.

Visitors will learn how time-tested practices and tools of traditional land management and resource use in concert with western science and technology are restoring waterways, creating sustainable food supplies, helping save endangered species, solving health problems and reviving cultural practices.

Roots of Wisdom: Native Knowledge. Shared Science is specially designed for families and youth ages 11-14. It runs through May 2.

Regular admission to the museum, which is good for two consecutive days, is \$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors, \$6 for youths ages 6-17, free for ages 5 and under or \$25 for a family of four. There's no charge for First Fridays.

For more information, call 541-429-7700 or visit www.tamastslikt.org.



Photo contributed by OMSI

The Roots of Wisdom exhibit provides hands-on activities and displays about how native communities are using traditional knowledge in conjunction with cutting-edge science to address some of the most pressing issues facing society today. The OMSI exhibit opens Friday, Feb. 6 at Tamastslikt Cultural Institute.

BRIEFLY

CREZ approves \$1.2 million for improvements

BOARDMAN — The Columbia River Enterprise Zone approved nearly \$1.2 million in funding for Morrow County community organizations in 2014.

The CREZ committee met Dec. 19 and agreed to split the awards into four categories: education, housing, public safety and community enhancement. Upon distribution, each organization is responsible for using CREZ dollars for specific projects or grant programs.

- Morrow Education Foundation: \$350,000
- Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group: \$175,000
- Boardman Community Development Association: \$200,000
- Irrigon (administered by BCDA): \$125,000
- Boardman Rural Fire Protection District: \$75,000
- Boardman Police Department: \$75,000

- Morrow County Sheriff's Office: \$75,000
- Morrow County Health District: \$75,000

The enterprise zone is made up of two representatives each from Morrow County, the Port of Morrow and city of Boardman. It is managed by Morrow County Planning Director Carla McLane, and provides tax incentives to businesses making new investments in the region.

Blue Mountain Alliance to hold annual meeting

MILTON-FREEWATER — The nonprofit Blue Mountain Alliance will hold its annual meeting Wednesday, Feb. 11 at the Milton-Freewater Public Library in the building's Albee Room.

Discussions will include a brief analysis of the proposed revised Blue Mountains Forest Plan and its impact on

the region. Mike Denny, of the Blue Mountain Audubon Society, will also give a presentation on challenges facing native birds and their habitat.

The Blue Mountain Alliance is focused on protecting natural resources in the Blue Mountains and local surrounding areas. The meeting is open to the public, and new members are welcome.

The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the library, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave.



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Oregon man who killed officer seeks parole after reversal

SALEM (AP) — An Oregon man who killed a police officer in 1992 appeared before the Board of Parole after it reversed a decision to release him, saying he feared for the safety of his family that night after the victim used pepper-spray and failed to identify himself.

The hearing Tuesday came after Sidney Dean Porter was granted parole in May 2013 and the decision was overturned a few months later after Gov. John Kitzhaber and law enforcement objected.

Porter's next release date would be June 7 if the parole panel rules in his favor.

Porter acknowledged to the three-member board that he was an abusive drunk back in 1992. Porter said he struck his wife with the back of his hand during a night of heavy drinking in April of that year.

John Day police officer Frank Ward responded after a neighbor called 911 to report the sound of a woman crying for help.

Porter told the board that Ward never identified himself as an officer, repeatedly shot pepper spray into his eyes, and that Porter feared for his and his family's safety as he and Ward wrestled on the floor.

"I felt threatened — it scared the hell out of me," Porter told the panel and a

crowd of about 30 people in the visiting room at the Oregon State Correctional Institution. The crowd included Ward's widow, Debra Ward.

Porter said he stopped fighting when he realized Ward was an officer. But, he said, Ward pepper-sprayed him again, prompting him to lunge at the officer. Together, they slammed into a wood stove and a stack of firewood. That's when Ward stopped moving, Porter said.

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter said Porter repeatedly smashed Ward in the head with firewood.

"He doesn't seem to recall that he smashed the wood down on Mr. Ward's head," Carpenter said. "He continues by justifying, denying and minimizing his actions."

One reason cited for the 2013 parole reversal was that Porter didn't have a plan to prevent a relapse into drinking, if released.

He said Tuesday he would live on his sister's ranch in remote Monument, 60 miles from John Day, and regularly attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Debra Ward, meanwhile, asked the board to keep her husband's killer in prison for life.

"Every time you open this up, it hurts," she said. "This is going to haunt me the rest of my life."

PENDLETON

Student brings airsoft guns onto school bus

East Oregonian

A Sunridge Middle School student carrying two airsoft guns on a school bus Tuesday inadvertently halted an otherwise routine route in Pendleton.

According to a Pendleton School District press release, the student intended to transport them after school to a family member's home.

Not knowing that the guns were airsoft, at least one student alerted the bus driver after the student got off the bus at the Lincoln Primary School stop.

In accordance with district policy, the driver immediately stopped the bus and called his superiors at the Mid Columbia Bus Co., who then alerted the Pendleton Police Department.

After taking statements from the students, police

were able to locate the student and determine that they were airsoft guns.

While Assistant Superintendent Tricia Mooney said she couldn't comment on the issue because it would violate the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, she said the incident fell under the "replica weapons" section of the district's disciplinary policy.

The policy states that any student carrying a replica weapon on campus or a school bus is subject to seizure or forfeiture.

Under the same policy, bringing a firearm on school grounds requires expulsion of the student for at least one year, although the policy is unclear if an airsoft gun qualifies as a firearm.

Any other weapons violations mandate discipline up to expulsion or a referral to local authorities.

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