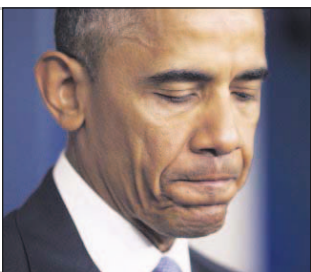




**PENDLETON NATIVE
A PROUD BEAVER
FOOTBALL/1B**



**American killed
by U.S. drone
strikes** **NATION/10A**

EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2015

139th Year, No. 136 WINNER OF THE 2013 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD One dollar

Your Weekend



- **Oregon East Symphony at Vert Auditorium**
- **Eastern Oregon MS Walk/Run in Heppner**
- **Wine Tasting Fundraiser Saturday in Hermiston**

For times and places see Coming Events, 12A

Weekend Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun
57/37	56/33	60/40

Umatilla Co. HR director under internal investigation

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The director and two employees of Umatilla County Human Services Department are on administrative leave and under investigation.

County counsel Doug Olsen said human services director Carolyn Mason has been suspended. Olsen confirmed two other employees also are on paid leave, but he did not reveal who they were.

Mark Royal, the outgoing director of the county's Community Justice, is filling in as the interim director of human service.

George Murdock, chairman of the county board of commissioners, said the county suspended the employees at the end of Wednesday's work day. The moves came in the middle of county budget meetings that concluded Thursday. He said there was not much more he could say while an investigation is underway.

"At this point there have been some questions raised and we're trying to find the answers," added Olsen.

Mason has worked for county for 21 years and has been in charge of human services since late 2013, when commissioners restructured departments and administration. Olsen said county department directors make a base salary of \$75,600 a year, but did not specify her pay.

Stopping a pill popping epidemic

Rx Summit in La Grande tackles problem of prescription drug abuse

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

When Dwight Holton and his wife put their home on the market a few years ago, their real estate agent warned them to lock their medicine cabinet before the open house. Holton didn't need to ask why. The former U.S. Attorney for



Holton

the lure of prescription drugs. "The abundance of prescription drugs in our medicine cabinets is driving an epidemic," Holton said.

Oregon spends a lot of his time thinking about prescription drug abuse. Now CEO of Lines for Life, a nonprofit that helps people with substance abuse, he is well aware of the lure of prescription drugs. "The abundance of prescription drugs in our medicine cabinets is driving an epidemic," Holton said.

Yes, an epidemic. He said someone dies in the U.S. of a prescription drug overdose every 35 minutes — more often than fatal auto accidents. Oregon is a hotspot, leading the nation in non-medical use of opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone and propoxyphene. "Over 100 million opioid pills are prescribed in Oregon every 12 months — about 27 for every man, woman and child," Holton said. A huge number of those pills sit unused in medicine cabinets, a temptation to some and an invitation to crime.

Holton and representatives from medicine, law enforcement, education and public health will discuss the issue at Friday's Eastern Oregon Summit to Reduce Rx Abuse, held at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande. One of the people at the table will be Dennis McCarty, of Oregon Health & Science University's Department of Health and Preventative Medicine. McCarty was appointed by Gov. John Kitzhaber to serve on a prescription

See **DRUGS/12A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A group of Echo Elementary School students make bark rubbings on a tree Thursday in George Park in Echo. Students spent the day learning about the life cycles of trees as part of the city's Arbor Day celebration.

FROM ROOTS TO LEAVES, ECHO LOVES ITS TREES

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

After 26 years as an official Tree City U.S.A. community, people in Echo know a thing or two about their topiary.

The adults in the community passed that knowledge on to the next generation Thursday, manning stations around downtown to teach Echo schoolchildren about the life cycle of trees, how to care for them and their different classifications.

"It's their future," said fifth grade teacher Rick Thew. "Hopefully it will get them to think about it so when they get to be our age they will work on sustaining it for the next generation."

He stood in the gazebo outside city hall, holding up slices of wood from different trees and asking a group of elementary school students why one had 10 rings and one had 20 rings.

Most students knew that the tree



Jeanie Hampton, in blue at right, teaches a group of second-graders how to identify different types of leaves on Thursday in Echo.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

LEAFY NEIGHBORS: Stanfield earns designation of Tree City USA/3A

with 20 rings was twice as old, but Thew threw them a curveball when he asked why the tree that was 10 years old was twice as wide around. "Maybe this one lived somewhere by itself and had all the space it wanted, all the water it wanted and all the sunshine it wanted," he said after the group talked about what ele-

ments help trees grow more quickly. Upstairs in the ballroom above city hall, city manager Diane Berry quizzed students on tree facts and Jeanie Hampton taught students to identify different types of trees based on the characteristics of their

See **ECHO/12A**

PENDLETON Fire station report stokes safety concerns

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

An assessment report of the Pendleton Fire Station No. 1 commissioned by the city confirmed what fire and emergency staff have been saying for months — the 56-year-old fire hall is an impediment to their jobs.

The report, compiled by Portland design firm Mackenzie, details the litany of building code violations, space deficiencies and outright hazards the station has developed over its more than five decades of existence.

The fire station presents a number of

See **FIRE STATION/12A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Droplets of rain collect on the leaves of a honeysuckle bush during a late afternoon shower on Thursday off Northwest Fourth Street in Pendleton. The National Weather Service is predicting clouds but only a slight chance of rain Saturday.

Gun sale check bill advances to House

OSP investigated 1,626 who failed check in last year

By **HILLARY BORRUD**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Senate Bill 941, a measure to extend firearm background checks to cover nearly all gun sales, passed out of the House Committee on Rules on a party line vote Thursday, and it will move next to the House floor.

The bill would require private sellers and purchasers to appear in person at a gun dealer, who would run the background check. Gun transfers between family members would be exempt. If the bill clears the Oregon House, its next stop will be the desk of Gov. Kate Brown has expressed support for the legislation.

The measure already passed the Oregon Senate. Meanwhile, Oregon is nearly a year into a quiet policy change that increased the consequences for people who illegally attempt to purchase guns in the state. That policy got its start last summer, when Senate Minority Leader Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, asked the Oregon State Police what happened when someone attempted to buy a gun and failed the background check. It is a Class A misdemeanor in Oregon for someone prohibited from purchasing a firearm to do attempt to purchase one.

Ferrioli learned the Oregon State Police had not been investigating people who failed the background checks, which the state already requires at gun shows and licensed dealers. The police were relying on a legal opinion that to investigate people who failed the inquiries would violate their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

"I said, that doesn't make sense to me," Ferrioli said in an interview this week. He asked a lawyer for the state Legislature to weigh in, and that attorney issued an opinion that it is legal for Oregon to investigate people who fail the background checks.

Then-Gov. John Kitzhaber directed the state police to begin investigating the occurrences.

The state now has nearly a year of data on the investigations. Since the policy took effect June 17, the

See **GUNS/2A**

