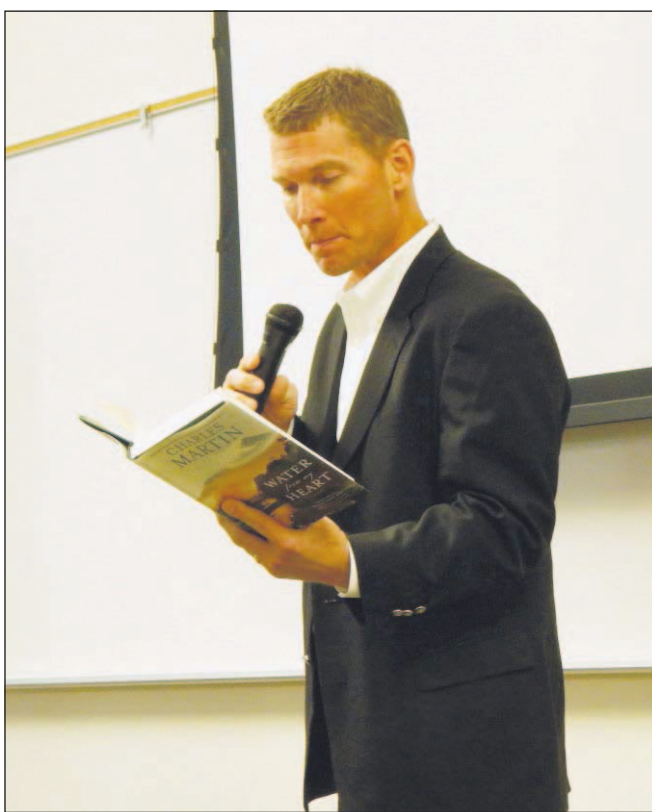


HERMISTON

Writer tells the stories behind his stories

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian



Charles Martin gets choked up while reading the back story of his upcoming novel, "Water from My Heart," at Hermiston Altrusa's One Book One Community night.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Faith and forgiveness were the themes of the night when "A Life Intercepted" author Charles Martin came to town.

Martin answered questions about his book Wednesday night as the capstone event of Altrusa's One Book One Community program.

The novel details the journey of Matthew Rising, a college football superstar who lost his career, his wife and his freedom for 12 years when he was framed for a rape he didn't commit.

One woman told Martin she was deeply touched by how Rising and his friends and family reacted when the culprits behind his arrest were finally revealed.

"They just let it go. They forgave them," she said. "I've really been thinking about that."

Martin said his goal was to write a powerful testament to forgiveness, and since he wrote "A Life Intercepted," "the Lord has really been hammering me on that."

He described an incident in which a coach humiliated his teenage son on the football field over something that wasn't his son's fault. After the game he pulled into a parking lot because he was getting so angry he didn't feel it was safe to drive. While he was busy imagining how good it would feel to punch the coach in the face, his three sons took a different route, praying out loud for the coach until Martin realized if his

son who was wronged could forgive the man, he should too.

"That broke me," he said. "I felt a weight lift. It was palpable, like someone took their foot off my chest."

Another reader said she didn't know until she read the author's note at the end of "A Life Intercepted" that Martin was a devout Christian. She asked whether Martin had thought about including religion in his books.

Martin said he isn't a particular fan of a lot of the liter-

ature marketed as "Christian literature" because it tends to push that angle too hard and drive some people away. He said he would rather write uplifting stories without explicitly mentioning God, following the C.S. Lewis quote, "What we want is not more little books about Christianity, but more little books by Christians on other subjects — with their Christianity latent."

That doesn't mean Martin doesn't want his stories to inspire people.

"If my story acts as a road sign, I'm OK with that," he said.

As part of the event Martin also introduced the story behind "Water From My Heart," his upcoming novel, which was inspired by a humble Nicaraguan family he got to know while documenting the aftermath of a massive mudslide that killed 3,000.

Martin said in Nicaragua he knows families who live in six- by seven-foot huts on less than two dollars a day, yet are more satisfied and happy than people in the U.S. who spend more than \$2 on their morning coffee without blinking.

He said he will never forget the moment when, during his first trip there, he found joy with the people he has come to call his second family, eating a mango in the sunshine despite the devastation that had wiped out their entire village.

"While death had cut a wide swath, the place where I stood was teeming with life," he said.

Martin took those feelings and channeled them into "Water from My Heart." The book describes the journey of Charlie, a successful businessman who travels to Nicaragua in an attempt to make restitution for the tragic consequences of one of his decisions.

"Water from My Heart" will be available in stores and online on May 19.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

First graders gather around as Katie Lompar of the Oregon Department of Forestry, right, shows them the roots of a tree being planted at Bard Park.

Stanfield joins the ranks of tree cities

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

a tree advisory committee and recognize Arbor Day through an official proclamation.

In front of two dozen first graders Stanfield planted its first tree as an official Tree City U.S.A. Thursday.

The tree, a purple robe locust planted in Bard Park, symbolized the city's achievement in joining the ranks of communities recognized for their dedication to trees.

"Echo's had theirs for 26 years now, and I want to extend congratulations from them," Katie Lompa of the Oregon Department of Forestry told the group of students, parents and city officials. "They're pretty happy to have you join them."

She said the designation symbolizes Stanfield's commitment to livability and she hoped the award was the first of many to come.

To get the designation each year a city has to spend at least \$2 per capita on trees, have a public tree ordinance outlining a plan for planting and care, have

Lompa said Scott Morris, public works director for Stanfield, has been particularly passionate about Stanfield becoming a Tree City.

"Scott's been doing a lot of the work over the years, planting one tree at a time all over the city," she said.

During the ceremony Mayor Thomas McCann read a proclamation urging citizens to celebrate Arbor Day and to participate in efforts to make the city a greener place.

"Trees in our city increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas and beautify our community," he read.

Arbor Day began in Nebraska in 1972 when J. Sterling Morton convinced the state board of agriculture to set aside a day for the planting of more than 1 million trees across the state. The annual tree-planting tradition is now practiced across the country.



EO Media Group photo by Jessica Keller

Top of the food chain

McNary Heights Elementary School third-graders get ready to play a game of animal food chain freeze tag Thursday in the Who is Eating Who station during the Umatilla school's Earth Day celebration at McNary Dam.

BRIEFLY

Chase blasts through Pendleton Wednesday

PENDLETON — A high-speed police chase Wednesday night roared through a busy Pendleton street. There have been no reports of arrests. Umatilla Tribal Police at about 9:30 p.m. tried to stop a speeding silver vehicle with Idaho plates on Highway 11 about four miles outside Pendleton. Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said tribal police reported the chase was racing at 100 mph and heading into Pendleton. Roberts said officers were not in position to stop the car as it zoomed into the city's east entrance. From there it hit Court Avenue at 78 mph. "We broke off the chase after about 10 seconds," Roberts said, because it was too risky to continue through

business and residential zones. The car hit Highway 37 and headed north of Pendleton. Nothing in the Umatilla County Jail roster indicates police caught the speedster.

City to hold infrastructure, budget meetings

PENDLETON — A draft budget for the city of Pendleton's 2016 fiscal year is now online for public review. Meeting dates for the city's budget committee also accompany the announcement. In a letter to the budget committee from City Manager Robb Corbett, he detailed his plans to bolster public safety. "Over the past several years, we have reduced our workforce by six full time

positions," he wrote. "This year I am proposing four new positions in emergency services; one patrol position in the Police Department and three paramedic positions in the Fire Department. We expect paramedic positions to be cost neutral, in that it will increase revenues and decrease personnel costs." Staff also carved out space in the budget to hire two interns — one to help bolster the city's burgeoning geographic information system and another to help create a communications master plan that would lead to the eventual hire of a public information officer. The budget committee consists of the city council

and nine appointees. The committee will meet April 28, April 30, May 5 and May 7 at 7 a.m. at the Vert Little Theater at Pendleton City Hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave. In his letter, Corbett acknowledged past budgets haven't met the city's infrastructural needs. To discuss those issues, the city is holding a series of meetings throughout Pendleton. The city will meet at the Pendleton Convention Center April 29, Washington Elementary School May 6 and McKay Creek Elementary School May 13. All meetings will be from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

MILTON-FREEWATER Shootings still hot cases

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

police collected some bullet fragments.

Milton-Freewater police continue to investigate two recent shootings.

Police Chief Doug Boedigheimer in an email reported while there were multiple shots, no one was hit. Police also do not have any suspects.

The first incident was Saturday around 2:35 a.m. on North Main Street, when four people in a vehicle pulled up to a group of four pedestrians, went past, turned around, drove by the group and fired several rounds.

"We're thinking at least eight shots were fired," said Boedigheimer. "That's the number of shell casings recovered, indicating a semi-automatic was used."

No people were hit, he said, but several rounds struck Saager's Shoe Shop, 613 N. Main St. Boedigheimer also reported

Boedigheimer stated witnesses said the vehicle was a newer silver car, possibly with black rims, and the driver was a Hispanic male.

"We're waiting for another local business to help us view some camera footage that may have caught the vehicle on tape so we might possibly identify it," the chief stated.

The second shooting happened Monday night about four blocks away from the Saturday drive-by.

Boedigheimer reported an officer at a traffic stop at 10:27 p.m. on the 100 block of Northwest Fifth Avenue heard five to seven gunshots east of his location. The city's dispatch center also received multiple calls from the area of Eighth Avenue and Ward Street.

Officers rushed to the area and searched but did not find any witnesses or victims.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Maddie Lindsay

HEPPNER HIGH SCHOOL

Maddie is the daughter of Todd and Melissa Lindsay. Maddie is a 4.0 student, Student Body President, a member of FFA, FBLA, National Honor Society, and has won many academic awards. Maddie is a four year letter winner in volleyball, basketball and golf. She has volunteered to put up Christmas lights for senior citizens, gathered food for the neighborhood center and served as a 4H counselor to name a few of her many community activities. Maddie will be attending Oregon State University next fall.

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