



**BMCC WINS
TEAM TITLES**
RODEO/1B



**GMO measure
could hamper
research** **4A**

EAST OREGONIAN

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139th Year, No. 143 WINNER OF THE 2013 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD One dollar

Farmers covered to offer tours

Measure could help farmers, ranchers supplement income

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

The Oregon Senate unanimously passed a bill Monday that would limit liability for farmers and ranchers to host public tours, events and other attractions on their property — collectively referred to as agri-tourism.

Senate Bill 341 would boost agri-tourism in Eastern Oregon, said Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, by relieving small farmers and ranchers of responsibility for injuries to guests caused by “inherent risks” in the operation. Such risks might include natural conditions of the land, behavior of wild or domesticated animals and the potential for visitors to get hurt if they don’t follow instructions.

With those hazards covered, more farms and ranches could afford the liability insurance they need to run popular agricultural-based activities including you-pick produce and hay rides for children, Hansell said.

“They still need to have insurance, but because of the limited liability by law, it creates a different premium,” Hansell said.

The benefits of promoting agri-tourism are two-fold, Hansell said: first, it allows farms and ranches to supplement their regular income, and also encourages more families from the city or non-rural backgrounds to see firsthand how local agriculture works.

“I think it’s very positive for agriculture to be able to do that,” he said.

SB341 is careful to spell out what constitutes an “inherent risk” on the farm under state law. For example, the bill states a producer would still be held responsible for injuries if they intentionally or negligently omit safety information, or provide dangerous equipment for guests to use.

Property owners must inspect their land, equipment

See **FARMERS/10A**

HERMISTON



A competitor in the Dancing Horse Competition puts his horse through his paces during Saturday's Cinco de Mayo celebration in Hermiston.



Jimena Ponce, 9, got into the spirit by dressing in Mexico's national colors.



Fernanda Guzman, 2, fishes for a toy at a carnival fishing pond as her brother Fernando stands by.

Fiesta de Mayo

Staff photos by Kathy Aney
For more photos, visit www.eastoregonian.com

Gun check bill headed to Brown

Republicans make case for different legislation, voted down by majority

By **HILLARY BORRUD**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A bill to expand background checks to private firearm transfers in Oregon is on its way to Gov. Kate Brown for a signature, after it passed the state House on a nearly party line vote Monday.

Lawmakers passed Senate Bill 941 after roughly five hours of debate. The vote was 32-28, with two Democrats — Rep. Jeff Barker, D-Aloha, and Rep. Caddy McKeown, D-Coos Bay — voting “no.” The Senate passed the bill 17-13 last month.



Brown

Following the vote Monday, Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, said he received assurances that lawmakers will work on a solution to allow gun owners to legally share weapons. Clem voted “yes” on Senate Bill 941, and said it is common for people in many parts of Oregon to share firearms with friends who need them for a specific hunt or simply want to try them.

“I think it will solve a whole lot of people’s angst,” Clem said. “It’s a very, very tough issue for people who grew up in these areas, to interact with colleagues who think it’s really weird we might pass guns around like baseball cards.”

See **GUNS/10A**

States spent \$1B to clear snow, ice

Associated Press

BOSTON — Winter’s full fury arrived late in much of the country, but once it did it was relentless, forcing state transportation agencies to spend more than \$1 billion to keep highways safe and passable, according to a first-of-its-kind survey.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials said 23 states reported combined spending of more than \$1 billion on winter maintenance operations and 8 million work hours plowing or treating state roads from October to March.

The states that responded to Monday’s survey, obtained in advance by The Associated Press, also went through 6 million tons of salt and other huge quantities of brine and liquid deicing chemicals. One state reported using 216,000 gallons of beet juice, which can help salt stick to road surfaces.

“This winter the storms just came one on top of the other and there wasn’t time in between to replenish your salt piles and give your folks some time off,” said Rick Nelson, coordinator

See **WINTER/10A**

Bond supporters put more skin in game second time around

Students get involved in BMCC bond effort

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Abigail Pierson checked her clipboard, took a calming breath and started up the driveway to the front door of a Hermiston home. She knocked and waited.

The 19-year-old Blue Mountain Community College student hit the streets Saturday morning, armed with an address list and information about her school’s \$23 million bond measure. Pierson wasn’t involved in the 2013

campaign that ended in 57 percent of voters rejecting another version of the bond. This time around, Pierson decided, she would do what she could. She and other students got busy canvassing and working the phone banks.

On Saturday, Pierson smiled brightly as the front door swung open. Retired teacher Nancy Carlson stood at the threshold, her eyes taking in Pierson’s blue BMCC T-shirt and the clipboard. The retired teacher waved away any hard sell that might be forthcoming.

“I already sent in my ballot,” Carlson said. “I voted yes. I’m a teacher — I think education is important.”

See **BMCC/10A**



“An extra couple hundred dollars a term for tuition could prevent a student from going to school.”

— **Abby Pierson**, BMCC student, first member of her family to attend college

Abby Pierson looks for her next address as she canvasses for the BMCC bond on Saturday in Hermiston.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

