HERMISTON

# Jones preparing to say goodbye to high school

By JADE MCDOWELL
*East Oregonian*

Jocelyn Jones may be retiring as principal of Hermiston High School next month, but that doesn't mean she will stop cheering at games, plays and concerts.

"It's hard to let go of something you've done your whole adult life," she said.

Jones knew when she moved from assistant principal to principal three years ago that she was close to retirement, and family health issues have made it clear that now is the time for her to call it quits. But she said it is difficult to leave the school when it has seen such great success this year, from football and wrestling state championships to sending two FFA teams to nationals.

"All of our programs are excelling and that's been fun to watch," she said.

Still, Jones feels that she has accomplished her overarching goal when she stepped into the position of principal. When former HHS principal Buzz Brazeau left, there were a number of programs Brazeau and Jones had just started and Jones said her goal as principal — short though her tenure would be — was to make sure those programs thrived instead of fizzling out under new leadership.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

**Jocelyn Jones in her office at Hermiston High School.**

"I wanted to get it so they were ingrained in the culture here," she said.

The program she is most proud of is Hermiston's emphasis on earning college credit in high school. In her years as an administrator the school has seen a drastic increase in students graduating from high school with college credit.

She said that increase has been most noticeable in low-income students, after the school got a waiver from the state allowing money for the Expanded Options program to be used to pay for college courses for students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

"The idea is that it would level the playing field for students and it has," she said.

Another innovation Jones is especially proud of is "programs of study," which groups elective classes into categories, similar to a college major, and allows students to graduate with certifications and college credits in those areas.

Out of a graduating class of about 300, 139 Hermiston students completed one of the programs of study this year.

"They not only get a flavor of what the career area is, it provides a stepping stone," she said. "Hopefully the message is that education doesn't stop at high school."

Thirdly, Jones said she is immensely proud of how far the staff of the high school has come in recent years through a focus on professional development and collaboration.

"I think our staff has grown tremendously," she said.

The staff and students she works with every day is what she will miss the most, Jones said, but there are things she won't miss either.

"I won't miss testing," she said.

She said she won't miss filling out paperwork and jumping through hoops set by state regulations.

Jones didn't grow up in Hermiston but she has lived there for more than 30 years and she said the community certainly made her job as principal easier because of its support for its schools.

"Hermiston is a very proud community, and very proud of its schools, and it backs its schools all the time, whether it's athletic or academic, whatever is needed," Jones said. "It's the nature of the Hermiston community. It prides itself on growing and changing and being premier. It's easier to strive to be the best when that's very much the belief of the community."

Over her years in the district she taught physical education, health, language arts, business and "whatever people needed along the way." Jones said she didn't start her education career with the goal of becoming an administrator, but she had some good mentors along the way who helped her feel it was something she was ready for.

"One of Hermiston's greatest strengths is the belief that professional development is a must and giving people an opportunity to grow and progress," she said.

Now that Jones is wrapping up her career with the district, she said she hopes to continue to watch it succeed. If she had any parting advice for her colleagues and successor Tom Spoo, it would be to remember what's important.

"Just keep looking for what's best for the kids," she said. "As long as you keep that in the forefront you're going to be OK."

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

## BRIEFLY

### Police catch wanted man after chase, crash

MILTON-FREEWATER — Milton-Freewater police caught a wanted man who tried to flee after crashing a motorcycle.

Milton-Freewater Police chief Doug Boedigheimer reported Ramon Luis Zaragoza, 34, is bound for jail once he is out of the hospital.

Boedigheimer in an email reported a Milton-Freewater police officer Thursday at about 4:30 p.m. recognized Zaragoza riding a motorcycle on North Columbia Street near Safeway. Zaragoza lives in Milton-Freewater and other towns, the chief stated, and he had a nationwide felony warrant as well as probable cause for arrest on local charges.

Zaragoza also spotted the officer and changed directions to head east on Third Street. The officer pursued, and Zaragoza led the officer out onto Highway 11 northbound.

"Speeds reached 120 mph with Zaragoza riding in the center turn lane for much of the chase," Boedigheimer reported.

Zaragoza slowed to 25-30 mph to turn onto Appleton Road, lost control of the motorcycle and crashed. But he jumped up and bolted into Green Acres Mobile Park, 53752 Appleton Road, where he crawled under an unoccupied trailer home.

Police then considered Zaragoza "a barricaded subject," according to Boedigheimer, and set up a perimeter around the trailer. Police from multiple agencies responded.

Approximately 30 minutes into the standoff, Zaragoza gave up without a struggle. Police arrested him for felony and misdemeanor eluding, reckless driving, criminal mischief and lesser traffic charges. Zaragoza also faces charges of burglary, robbery, harassment and menacing for an incident Sunday.

Boedigheimer reported Zaragoza was transported to Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla, for assessment of any injuries. He stayed there overnight, as did Milton-freewarer police.

"From what I've been hearing from my officers there, he did not suffer serious injury when he wrecked his bike," the chief stated.

Zaragoza was awaiting discharge Friday afternoon, according to Boedigheimer, and then police will take him to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendelton.

### Pendleton to end open burning Monday

PENDLETON — The open burning season for the city of Pendleton, Rieth Water District, Lower McKay, McKay Dam and Riverside fire districts will end at 8 a.m. Monday.

Pendleton assistant fire chief Matthew Benedict in a written statement Friday said open burning will resume Oct. 1, weather permitting.

The ban does not include burn barrels within the fire districts. However, according to Benedict, they may only be used on "green days." Call the Umatilla County burn line at 541-278-6397 to find out if a day is OK for burning. Pendleton does not allow burn barrels within the city limits any time of the year.

He said it is illegal to burn any of the following: asbestos; asphalt or industrial waste; automotive parts (including frames); dead animals; plastic or rubber products; tires; waste oil, petroleum treated and related materials; wet garbage and food waste.

Burning stumps, fields, trash, commercial waste, demolition waste, construction debris and bonfires require special permits available at no charge from the Pendleton Fire Department, 911 S.W. Court Ave.

The department also has a complete list of burning regulations, which you also can find online at www.pendleton.or.us/fire-ambulance.

*Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com*

# Federal funds available to Oregon drought counties

By GEORGE PLAVEN
*East Oregonian*

As drought lingers over the majority of Eastern Oregon, federal funding is now available to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is allocating $2.5 million to producers in counties where Gov. Kate Brown has already declared a drought emergency, with the money to go toward enhancing cropland, rangeland and forestry conservation practices.

Those counties include: Umatilla, Morrow, Grant, Baker, Wheeler, Wasco, Crook, Harney, Malheur, Lake, Klamath, Deschutes, Jackson, Josephine and Lane. Additional counties could qualify if they also receive a drought declaration from the Governor's Office.

Funding comes from the Natural Resource Conservation Service through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program, working with private landowners to make soils healthier and more drought-resilient. The deadline to apply for assistance is June 26.

"This funding will help Oregonians in the most drought-stricken areas of the state to mitigate the impacts of drought on cropland, rangeland and forestland," said state conservationist Ron Alvarado. "This funding amplifies the work NRCS continues to do every day to support water conservation, soil health and productivity on Oregon's working agricultural lands and forest lands."

NRCS will prioritize applications coming from counties with the highest drought status according to the USDA Drought Monitor, which is updated regularly on Thursdays. The most recent drought monitor shows nearly all of northeast Oregon in severe drought and near all of southeast Oregon in extreme drought.

For farmers, the NRCS will assist with planting cover crops that can help guard against soil erosion, while increasing organic matter and allowing for better water filtration in fields. On ranches, funds will help develop grazing management plans and install emergency watering facilities for livestock.

Private foresters can use the money to help with wildfire prevention measures on their property, such as creating fuel breaks. NRCS has partnered with the Oregon Department of Forestry to focus funding on areas of high risk for wildfire.

The $2.5 million earmarked for Oregon is part of a larger pot of $21 million from the NRCS in seven other states. California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas also received funding.

Landowners should submit applications to their local USDA Service Center. Centers for Umatilla and Morrow counties are located in Pendleton at 1 S.W. Nye Ave., Ste. 130, and in Heppner at 430 Linden Way.

For more information, call the centers at 541-278-8049 or 541-676-5021.

*Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4547.*

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