

**NEW LOOK
T-WOLVES
VOLLEYBALL/1B**

**It's time to be
neighborly
REGION/3A**



EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2015

139th Year, No. 208

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

Elgin on evacuation alert as fire burns in the Blues

Homes, livestock, fish habitat threatened

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Hazy skies settled over the Blue Mountains Monday as wildfire spread quickly on the Umatilla National Forest near Indian Point, about seven miles northwest of Elgin.

The Phillips Creek Fire started Saturday afternoon and has grown to more than 1,100 acres, burning in tall grass, heavy timber and logging slash. It is completely uncontained, and the cause is under investigation.

Union County officials issued a Level 1 evacuation notice for 37

homes along Ruckle Road and Sanderson Springs Road, meaning residents should be ready to leave at a moment's notice depending on fire activity. The fire is threatening structures, livestock, fish habitat and private land.

"There's not imminent danger, but there is cause to begin thinking about a plan to get moved," said Jamie

See **FIRE/10A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A column of smoke rises from the Phillips Creek fire on Monday over Gordon Creek Road outside of Elgin.

Racehorses survive wild ride, baking temperatures



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Gary Morris, a racehorse owner and trainer from Bend, smiles at one of his thoroughbreds Sunday in Pendleton at the NEIGH-bors horse hotel. The brakes and transmission on Morris' truck failed as he descended Cabbage Hill Saturday afternoon towing a horse trailer with three thoroughbreds.

Trouble down the stretch

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

After a harrowing ride down Cabbage Hill with failed brakes and three thoroughbreds, a Bend man won't soon forget his Pendleton adventure.

Gary Morris, a racehorse owner and trainer, was winding his way down the steep section of Interstate 84 Saturday afternoon in a three-quarter-ton truck hauling a horse trailer. Morris was transporting the trio of horses from a race in Boise and heading to another in Tillamook. As he neared a 45-mile-per-hour curve, he applied his brakes.

"The brakes just left. I pumped them and nothing happened."

— **Gary Morris**, racehorse owner

Nothing. "The brakes just left," Morris said. "I pumped them and nothing happened."

Morris dropped into second gear, but slowed little. He downshifted to first only to hear an ear-shattering squeal as the Ford's transmission gave out.

"I had no transmission and no brakes," he said.

Fortunately, his trailer brakes and emergency brake still func-

tioned. Morris, 78, managed to keep the speed below 70 miles-per-hour as he made it safely to Pendleton exit 216 near the Arrowhead Travel Plaza. As soon as his adrenaline subsided, he turned his attention to his cargo. With the mercury hovering around 105 degrees, the valuable thoroughbreds were at risk. Morris, a financier turned racehorse owner, worried about the well-being of his horses.

"They were number one," he said.

About that time, Morris got the first of several doses of Pendleton hospitality.

"A guy and his wife stopped by in their pickup and pulled me to Kenworth," he said.

With disappointment, he learned the truck sales and repair business worked on only large commercial trucks. Service Manager Josh Payne, however, gave approval to move the horse trailer into the repair shop.

"The horses were drenched with sweat. The (Kenworth people) pulled me into one of the

See **HORSES/10A**

MILTON-FREEWATER

Man gunned down in drive-by

20-year-old died Saturday after Friday night shooting

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Police continue to search for the killer of Guadalupe Jose Diaz. The 20-year-old Milton-Freewater man was shot Friday night and died the next morning.

Milton-Freewater Police Chief Doug Boedigheimer in an email confirmed Diaz was the lone victim in what looks to be a gang-style drive-by shooting.

Members of the Umatilla/Morrow Major Crimes team, consisting of detectives and officers from local agencies, is investigating the homicide. Boedigheimer said there are no suspects but there are "persons of interest" investigators want to talk with.

Milton-Freewater dispatchers received a call Friday at 8:48 p.m. of shots fired with a person on the ground near 62 N.E. 13th Ave. Police found citizens caring for the victim and one performing CPR.

Diaz suffered multiple shots to his torso from an unknown firearm, according to Boedigheimer.

An ambulance from the Milton-Freewater Rural Fire Department took Diaz to Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla, for emergency surgery. From there he went to Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, where he succumbed to his wounds Saturday morning.

"This event is likely a drive-by shooting involving perhaps rival gang affiliates or members," Boedigheimer

See **SHOOTING/9A**

Disconnected classroom

Districts look for ways to keep teacher-pupil online interaction professional, productive

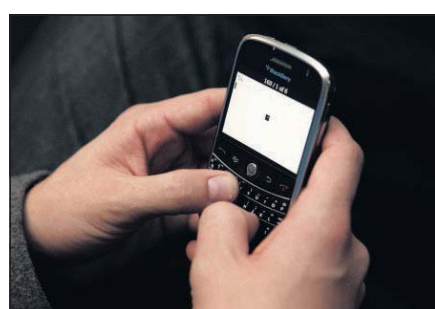
By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

The method may vary but the results are the same.

Kevin Nice, a former teacher convicted of sexually abusing several Pilot Rock High School students in 2010, exchanged text messages with his victims.

Timothy Frey used Snapchat, a messaging app that deletes video, picture or text messages after they are watched, to communicate with a 17-year-old Pendleton student.

Frey, a former longterm substitute teacher, recently pleaded guilty to three counts of second-degree sexual assault



AP file photo

Online contact between teachers and students can be tricky for school districts to navigate.

after an investigation revealed Frey had sex with the student five times between March 13 and April 4.

With social media and electronic messaging playing a key role in local cases as well as other sexual abuse cases across the country, local school districts

See **DISCONNECTED/9A**

MITCHELL

Tiny town adds cell service for all with new technology

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Cellphone service is getting a boost from willing residents in the tiny Eastern Oregon city of Mitchell using in-home devices called network extenders to increase local coverage.

Sold by Verizon Wireless, network extenders act as mini cell towers with enough signal strength to reach several blocks. Wheeler County officials recently bought four of the devices for Mitchell — population 130 — which were installed at strategic locations around town.

Volunteers agreed to have the equipment put in their own homes and businesses, creating a makeshift wireless network that now covers most of the old pioneer settlement.

Though AT&T has an existing cellular tower east of Mitchell, it faces the wrong way to carry reception into the community. That's led to public safety concerns for locals and tourists alike, especially after the nearby Painted Hills National Monument was named one of the "Seven Wonders of Oregon."

Mitchell is considered the

See **EXTENDERS/10A**

