

Last Umatilla County Fair for manager Anderson

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Umatilla County Fair manager Peggy Anderson will oversee her last fair for the county next week, before heading to her native Josephine County to take a similar position there.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners announced Anderson's planned departure Tuesday and said that her replacement would likely be a part-time employee in light of the fair moving to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center next year.

Fair board director Don Miller said Anderson's position as manager



Anderson

has included taking care of the fairgrounds. EOTEC has a full-time facilities manager of its own which may mean the new fair manager doesn't need to work all year long.

"Looking at the budget, it makes it very difficult to consider a status quo," he said.

Miller said Anderson has been an asset to the fair and the board is sad to see her go, but they also support her in taking an opportunity she is excited about in the area where she is originally from.

"She has given us adequate notice to continue to make the fair a success and implement a smooth transition in whatever direction we

decide to go," he said.

Anderson has managed the Umatilla County Fair since 2006. During her nine-year tenure attendance at the fair grew by 20 percent and cash sponsorships increased by \$130,000 a year, according to the county.

Fair Board Chair Lucas Wagner said Anderson has done excellent work for the fair.

"There is a level of professionalism and knowledge and expertise in working with the public and with sponsors that is unparalleled," he said.

Anderson is planning on sticking around through September to help wrap things up on the 2015 fair. Wagner said between her transition time and the competent office staff the board will have the time to do a

proper, thoughtful job of coming up with a plan and hiring her replacement.

Anderson said she had not been looking to leave the Umatilla County Fair, but she grew up in Josephine County and she and her husband wanted to retire there.

"An opportunity fell into my lap that I couldn't ignore," she said.

Anderson first lived in Pendleton and later moved to Hermiston and was active in both as a business owner and as a former president of the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce.

"Pendleton gave me a great start and Hermiston embraced me later," she said.

She said she is proud of the way the fair grew under her management, both in quality and size. In the

announcement of her new position, she said even though she will miss the Umatilla County Fair she is looking forward to applying the lessons she learned here in managing the the county fair in southwest

"In a way, the Josephine County Fair is about the same place the Umatilla County Fair was when I became manager," she said. "It will be exciting to see if we can duplicate the success we had here in a different county."

Josephine County, in southwest Oregon and bordering the California border, has about 83,000 people compared to Umatilla County's 77,000.

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

PENDLETON

Can you spell c-h-a-m-p-i-o-n?

By JONATHAN BACH
East Oregonian

Lolita Hess wasn't always good with words.

When she was younger, she did not spell well. But then she got into writing and delved into books like *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* from the "Hunger Games" series.

In May, she became the first person from Pendleton in recent memory to win the Umatilla County spelling contest. Now the soon-to-be sixth grader is looking to compete at the Oregon statewide spelling championships, hosted during the state fair.

Celia Hampton, Hess' teacher for fourth and fifth grade at West Hills Intermediate School, said the girl is the first student from the school to carry the day in the regional academic competition. West Hills principal Brenda Giesen noted the scarcity of Pendletonians who have won the county contest.

"It's been a long time since we've had someone from Pendleton win at this level," she said, estimating the last person from the town to have been best in the county was about 20 years ago.

"Lollie" Hess, 12, works a paper route for the *East Oregonian* and has even picked up substitute routes to help pay for the trip to Salem, said her mother, Matilda Williams. Hess wakes up at 3 a.m. to work her route by the old hospital.

Hampton applauds Hess' getting up so early in the morning throughout the year for the paper route, which she considers rare among today's kids. And the teacher has even helped her pupil prepare for the spelling contest. Hess asked Hampton for a dictionary with which to practice. Hampton said she gave her student a 4- to 5-inch thick dictionary replete with etymologies.

"She has a natural curiosity for words," Hampton said.

At May's InterMountain Education Service District Spelling Contest, Hess said she felt nervous because she thought the officials were going to



Staff photo by Jonathan Bach
Matilda Williams, 39, and her daughter, Lolita Hess, 12, sit outside their Pendleton home Monday. Lolita wants to attend the 2015 Oregon statewide spelling championships, so her mother set up a GoFundMe account in the hopes that donations will help to cover the expenses thereof.

have contestants stand up and spell the words aloud. But instead, participants wrote the words out on paper.

Lizette Barryessa with the IMESD said that is the difference between a spelling contest and a bee.

The most difficult word for her that day: aerosol.

Williams, 39, works two jobs to support her family of five, so when her daughter got the chance to compete in the statewide competition, she started reaching out for help.

Williams said she set up a GoFundMe account online with a goal of raising \$1,500 to cover travel expenses to the state fair for her family of five. Williams is the sole supporter for the family and said she will do what it takes so that her daughter can compete next month.

Williams works at Sodexo, a company that provides food to Pendleton schools. In the summer, long work weeks are hard to come by — she

averages just 16 hours per week.

"For a family of five, that doesn't suffice," she said. "So I got a second job at Walmart."

Williams dropped out of high school at 15 to help raise her sister's child. She obtained a GED and started college, but soon left after she became pregnant with her first daughter. Lolita's father died when Lolita was 5 years old.

Williams said she worked hard to be where she is today, but she sees a spring of potential in Lolita. She said her daughter has a chance to complete college and be a writer.

Hess' father was Japanese. The young academic said she wants to be a writer of manga, or Japanese comic books, when she grows up. Though she wants to write in English, she is teaching herself the Asian language via online videos and comics.

The family's GoFundMe page can be found at www.gofundme.com/8f-nfjc.

HERMISTON

City ready to hire architect for new senior center

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

After years of planning, the city of Hermiston is ready to start moving forward in earnest on a new senior center.

Hermiston Parks and Recreation director Larry Fetter said a grant administrator has been hired and the city council will be asked to approve a contract with Lenity Architecture on Monday.

Construction on the Harkenrider Center is expected to start in the spring.

"Our goal is to have it done and be moved in by Dec. 2016, and today we're on target to do that," Fetter said.

Last week the council approved a series of resolutions concerning accessibility and equal housing opportunities that are required for Community Development Block Grant funds from the federal housing authority. Fetter said that step cleared the way for the city to get documents that will enable it to start using the \$2 million awarded to the project.

The city council and building development committee both chose a piece of property off Fourth Street behind Wal-Mart, known as the Aspen site, as their top choice for the new center. Fetter said the land is privately owned but the grant administrator has begun negotiations to purchase the property.

"When utilizing federal money there is a very prescriptive process for land acquisition," he said.

The current senior center, located on the Umatilla County Fairgrounds, will no longer be available for use at the end of 2016 after Hermiston School District takes over the property and the fair moves to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center south of town.

Pat Williams, who was eating lunch with other seniors at the current building on Tuesday, said she hopes the activities she has enjoyed at the center, such as the Christmas bazaar, will carry over to the new location.

"They have good meals here," she said. "I hope it's similar in the new building."

Mary Mallery said she wanted to see an increase in activities, like craft afternoons or service opportunities.

"It would be nice if we could get some entertainment in for the seniors," she said. "There are a lot of people our age that are very talented."

She said she wasn't very happy that the city, which is the entity that was awarded the \$2 million federal grant for the new building, will have control over the senior center. She said she hopes the city will gather plenty of input from all seniors, not just the building development committee, for improving the preliminary designs created for the new building.

"I would encourage the seniors to be more involved with the building ... and the city to come and listen," she said.

Mallery said the city would be wrong to ignore all of the wisdom, experience and expertise to be found among the senior center's volunteers when building the center.

"We're not dead yet, and we're not stupid," she said.

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BRIEFLY

Photographer reception planned at library

The Hermiston Public Library will host a reception for photographer Adam Sims from 4-6 p.m. Thursday.

He started studying photography in 2007. Although he was unable to take formal classes in college because of his schedule, he learned through tutorials, books, critiques and practice.



Photo courtesy Adam Sims

"I believe my interest in photography branched off from my interest in video recording lightning and other subjects," he said. "I have always been someone that loved to be outdoors, and I feel like photography really gave me a way to interact with the beauty that is out there."

Sims uses different software to edit RAW photo files to highlight details he saw in the scene.

His work is on display at the library throughout the month.

Presentation highlights walwá·ma experience

ENTERPRISE — For those interested in regional history and culture, an upcoming presentation features the walwá·ma experience in the Wallowas.

Walwá·kinix: Of the Wallowas, Wallowa Band Nez Perce is presented by Tim Nitz of the National

Park Service. As part of the Into The Wallowa Summer Outings & Lectures, the free event is Thursday, Aug. 13 at 7 p.m. at Stage One, 116 E. Main St., Enterprise.

The discussion will explore different aspects of the walwá·ma experience, many of which are unknown or often forgotten by today's residents.

For more information, contact julia@wallowalandtrust.org, 541-426-2042 or visit www.wallowalandtrust.org.

Big truck day at Pendleton library

PENDLETON — Big Truck Day is coming to the Pendleton Public Library.

The big rigs and employees from the city's public works department will be on hand Thursday from 2-4 p.m. at 502 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton.

Kids of all ages are invited to meet with the big rig operators. LEGO construction sets will be raffled off during the event.

For more information, call 541-966-0380.

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