

HERMISTON



Photo contributed by Travis Cook
Firefighters work to put out an early Tuesday morning house fire on SE 7th Street in Hermiston.

House fire guts 7th Street residence

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

A fire in the 100 block of Southeast Seventh Street in Hermiston gutted a house early Tuesday morning.

Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services, assisted by mutual aid from Umatilla and Stanfield fire crews, responded to the structure fire at approximately 1 a.m. and had it knocked down within half an hour.

Hermiston fire chief Scott Stanton said the cause is still under investigation. He said the residents were checked out by medics on scene but no one was transported to the hospital.

He said it wasn't clear yet whether the house was a total loss but the damage was "extensive."

Thad Sells was working on salvaging a few items from the ashes Tuesday afternoon. He said his ex-wife Molly Sells and their two sons live at the residence. He said what the family needs more than anything right now is a place to rent, preferably two or

three bedrooms in the \$500 to \$800 range.

"Everyone wants to give us stuff but we have no place to put it," he said.

The family has been able to salvage a few items, including a handful of family photos, but lost most of what they owned.

"They lost their wallets, they lost their driver's licenses, they lost a dog, they lost everything," Sells said.

He said anyone with leads on a rental could call Molly at 541-969-0294 or him at 541-786-1193.

The house fire was Hermiston's second in the space of a week. Shortly after 11:30 p.m. on Saturday Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services responded to a house fire in the 1900 block of Townsend Road.

The single-story house was a total loss but the residents got out safely and were assisted by the Red Cross. The cause of the fire was determined to be accidental.

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

HERMISTON

City council relaxes rules on taxi drivers

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The Hermiston city council officially resolved its disagreement about background checks for taxi drivers on Monday night, voting on an amendment that forgives some crimes after 10 years, but not others.

The original ordinance barred any drivers with past convictions, no matter how long ago the crimes were. The amendment that passed 6-1 (with Doug Primmer in opposition) still bans drivers with convictions more recent than 10 years but only considers "person felonies" like robbery and assault past 10 years.

The amendment passed without discussion Monday night but Primmer had argued at a previous meeting that the city was placing an implicit trust in the taxi drivers it licensed to drive around the elderly and disabled, so it should have high standards for those people.

On Monday the city council also voted to accept up to \$3.3 million in grant money from the Federal Aviation Administration. The money will help fund a project at the Hermiston Municipal Airport to move the airport's taxiway, which

is currently too close to the runway for FAA regulations. The project also includes moving the airport's fuel station and installing a bigger tank.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the project might not seem like a big deal but it will set the airport up for expansion in the future.

The council also approved a lease with Lohman Helicopter LLC out of Lewiston, Idaho for the private helicopter company to build a 6,000-square-foot hangar there.

The company, which provides helicopters on contract for firefighting, stringing power lines across rivers and agricultural use, wants to locate a helicopter in Hermiston.

Acting as the Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency, the council met to approve a change to the façade grant program. Recipients complained that it was hard to find three qualified bids for work on such a small scale, so the requirements were changed to merely require proof that they asked three contractors to submit bids.

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

BOARDMAN

Street renamed for UEC's Eldrige

East Oregonian

Steve Eldrige, outgoing CEO of the Umatilla Electric Cooperative, is being honored with his own street in Boardman.

The Boardman City Council voted Aug. 4 to change the name of Puskarich Avenue at the Port of Morrow to Northeast Eldrige Drive. Construction is already underway to build a new \$5.5 million UEC operations center along the newly renamed road.

Barrett Business Services Inc. is the only other location that will be affected by the name change.

In its resolution, the

city council notes Eldrige's "significant presence" to the growth of the Boardman area during his 44-year career with UEC. Eldrige has served as general manager and CEO of the co-op since 1990.

Eldrige announced his retirement April 18 at the annual UEC membership meeting in Hermiston. He will remain in position until 2016 as the board of directors recruits his replacement from a nationwide search.

Around the same time, UEC plans to finish building its Boardman Operations Center. The facility will be 23,970 square feet and include a drive-up kiosk for 24-hour bill pay.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Muddy Frogwater hops into town

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
East Oregonian

Hop on over to Milton-Freewater as it celebrates the 35th annual Muddy Frogwater Country Classic Festival.

The family fun is Friday through Sunday at Yantis Park.

The parade gets rolling Friday night at 6 p.m. However, lots of fun fills the day, including craft and vendor booths, a food court, Kid Zone, and you don't want to miss a chance to visit Izzy the Camel from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Friday and Saturday). A beer and wine garden runs in the afternoon into the evening. The Rotary Club will serve Kessler's famous chicken from 5-8 p.m. The evening closes out with Joker providing stage entertainment at 7 p.m.

Although the Muddy Frogwater Fun Run has been canceled this year, there are lots of activities to participate in Saturday — from the Elks Annual Breakfast at 7 a.m. through an evening concert at 7 p.m. featuring Eleventh Hour. If your baby turns people's heads, be sure to enter the Pretty Baby Contest at 9:30 a.m. To cheer on your friends and neighbors, be sure to catch the Talent of the Valley finals from 1-5 p.m. If you have the mettle, enter the jalapeño eating contest at 2 p.m. New this year is a Marshmallow Drive. Tee-off on the fluffy treats at 4 p.m. for a chance to win prizes. Also, be sure to bring an appetite for the salmon bake and corn roast from 5-7 p.m.

Sunday's activities include the BBQ Cook-Off, a community worship service, a Christian concert and loads of family fun for kids and adults. The Muddy Frogwater Square Dancers



EO file photo
Elizabeth Peterson decides whether she wants to pet Izzy the Camel during the 2014 Muddy Frogwater Country Classic Festival in Milton-Freewater. Izzy returns Friday and Saturday of the three-day event.



EO file photo
Bodee Graff dances during the Pretty Baby Contest during the 2014 Muddy Frogwater Country Classic Festival in Milton-Freewater.

perform from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. And, don't miss Shaniko as they take the stage from 12:30-3:30 p.m. Area firefighters will have a blast and the audience can cool down at 3 p.m. during the Firemen's Water Fight.

The craft and food vendors are open daily. And food and drinks will be plentiful throughout the park.

For more information, contact 541-938-5563, mfmfrog@mfcchamber.com or visit www.mfcchamber.com for a full schedule of events.

BRIEFLY

Learn to crochet with DIY project

PENDLETON — This month's DIY @ the Library features crocheting.

The instruction, which includes the first steps in making things from yarn with a stick, is Tuesday, Aug. 25 from 6-8 p.m. at the Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave. Although the activity is free, participants are asked to register in advance to ensure there are enough materials.

Held the fourth Tuesday of each month, the program offers fun projects in various interest areas.

For more information or to register, call 541-966-0380.

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com.

Lightning sparks new forest fires

Phillips Creek Fire ruled human-caused

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

Lightning has sparked numerous small wildfires across northeast Oregon, and additional holdover fires are expected throughout the week.

Meanwhile, crews have mostly contained the Phillips Creek Fire near Elgin, which was started Aug. 1 on the Umatilla National Forest by an escaped campfire.

Conditions are dry due to severe-to-extreme statewide drought. The fire danger rating remains at extreme, and forests have implemented tight restrictions on chainsaw and campfire use to minimize the risk of human-caused fires.

A total of 30 new fires have been reported in the area, including: nine new fires on the Oregon Department of Forestry's Northeast Oregon District; 12 new fires

on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest; and nine new fires on the Umatilla National Forest. Most are less than one acre in size.

Joani Bosworth, spokeswoman for the Umatilla National Forest, said the new fires are scattered throughout the forest, from the North Fork John Day Ranger District to the Walla Walla and Pomeroy districts.

"We expect to pick up more fires as the day progresses," Bosworth said.

The region's largest fire, the Phillips Creek Fire, is now 70 percent contained at 2,601 acres, about seven miles northwest of Elgin. Investigators determined the blaze was human-caused.

Despite wind gusts of 40 mph Monday, the fire remained within containment lines. A red flag warning has been issued by the National Weather Service across northeast Oregon Tuesday,

as crews continue to mop up the fire perimeters. Smoke will continue to be visible in the area.

A smaller Type 3 firefighting team will assume command of the fire Wednesday. Other personnel have been reassigned to the new fires reported across the area.

Forest road closures remain in effect, and a pilot car from the Oregon Department of Transportation will be on hand to escort vehicles on Highway 204 between mileposts 32 and 36. Travelers can expect delays.

For more information about public use restrictions on the Umatilla National Forest, call the forest information hotline at 1-877-958-9663. Fire information and updates are posted online at www.bluemountainfireinfo.blogspot.com.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

walla walla clinic

Kevin Andrews, MD
Dr. Andrews joins our Internal Medicine Department with Drs. Eric Ball, Michael Wilcox and Beatrice Song.

To schedule appointments, please call 509-525-3720.

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CHRIS J. LUNDQUIST, M.D.
Family Practice

I am moving my medical office on Oct. 1st, 2015 where I will continue to see my established patients at my new location:

Gifford Medical
1050 W Elm Ave., Suite 110
Hermiston, Oregon

All medical records for patient care will be available at Gifford Medical. Please continue to call our office at 541-276-0852 to schedule appointments at our current and future location. After October 1st, please call 541-567-2995 to schedule appointments or request records. I look forward to continuing to meet your health care needs.

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