

BOARDMAN

Elementary school honors local veterans

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
East Oregonian

Army Spc. Josue Manuel Garcia was just 19 years old and a freshman at Western Oregon University when he learned he would be deployed to Afghanistan.

Garcia, who grew up in Boardman and graduated from Riverside High School in 2013, spent a year in Kabul serving in both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Resolute Support. His job was to provide base security and watch over U.S. forces on missions in the city. He remembers working 12-hour shifts, Skyping daily with his girlfriend and missing birthdays and weddings back home.

Garcia's tour ended in May, and on Tuesday he returned to Boardman where he and other veterans were honored during an assembly at Sam Boardman Elementary School, one day ahead of Veterans Day.

Every veteran was introduced in the school's gymnasium and received a thank you card drawn by the students. Students also stood in the risers and sang a medley of patriotic songs.

Special guests included Garcia, who was invited back to his old elementary school to talk about his experience serving overseas.

"To many, it's a scary place," he told the assembly of first-, second- and third-graders. "It's something I chose to do."

Garcia enrolled in the Oregon National Guard at 17, before graduating from high school. He went off to Western Oregon University the following year to pursue a degree in criminal justice, but just two terms in he found out his unit — Delta Company 2-162 Infantry Battalion — would be heading to Afghanistan.

In a separate interview, Garcia remembered one harrowing day responding to a suicide attack outside



Students sing a medley of patriotic songs during an assembly for Veterans Day Tuesday at Sam Boardman Elementary School.



Third-grader Joshua McDonough, 9, presents Spc. Josue Manuel Garcia of the Oregon Army National Guard with a thank you note for his service during an assembly Tuesday at Sam Boardman Elementary School.

his base on Sept. 16, 2014. According to news reports, the blast killed three American-led coalition soldiers and injured five others.

"You're not supposed to see stuff like that," Garcia said. "It gives you a whole new perspective on life."

Maybe the most stressful thing, Garcia said, was finding time to keep in touch

with friends and family more than 12 hours away in Oregon. Yet he and his girlfriend always found time to chat on Skype, he said.

"I don't think we missed a day," he said.

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, also spoke at the assembly Tuesday, telling the story of his great-great-uncle who served with the

Merchant Marines in World War II, delivering supplies to soldiers fighting in the Pacific Theater.

Smith's great-great-uncle's ship was captured in battle, and he spent two years as a prisoner of war before finally returning home. During that time, he lost nearly 100 pounds and his wife remarried, thinking her husband had died.

"He gave everything he had to his country," Smith said. "When it was all said and done, when asked if he would do it again, he said 'In a moment.'"

Sam Boardman Principal Sarah Kimmell choked up at the end of the ceremony, saying it meant a whole lot to see an entire school honor local veterans.

Garcia said he hoped his speech would help inspire kids to be successful, no matter what they decide they want to do in life.

"I'm honored to be here," he said. "It's been overwhelming, and very, very powerful."

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

PSD discusses American Indian student progress

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

picked up and the last to be dropped off.

The Pendleton School District has started a number of initiatives to help close the achievement gap between American Indian students and their peers, but administrators will have to wait to see if data will show progress.

At the Pendleton School Board's annual meeting on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the district delivered a report detailing the academic performance of its 463 American Indian students, about 15 percent of the district's total student population.

The results were not pretty.

American Indian students, at 90 percent, were 4 percentage points below the overall attendance rate for the district. The chronic absentee rate was even worse: 37 percent of Native American students missed more than 16 days of school, while the overall rate was 20 percent.

Scores on the Smarter Balanced assessment also showed a stark disparity between the overall percentage that met the standards and the American Indian rate. At 62.6 percent, the overall amount of seventh graders that passed the English language arts was one of the standouts for the district. Comparatively, Native American students passed at a 25 percent clip.

Superintendent Jon Peterson said that if the district wanted to boost assessment scores, they need to address absenteeism.

Assistant Superintendent Tricia Mooney said the district is employing multiple methods to try to boost Native attendance rates, including working with families at an individual level.

Sally Kosey, the Indian education coordinator for Washington Elementary, said a small group of kids are contributing to the high chronic absentee rate for Indian students.

To help combat absenteeism, Kosey said she has worked with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to buy alarm clocks for students because many say their parents refuse to wake up to take them to school.

Kosey said the routes used by the Mid Columbia Bus Co. are also an issue for Native students that live on the reservation, with many students the first to be

With the additional transportation time, Kosey said some students get turned off to education by the time they hit middle school.

Mooney and Peterson offered several explanations for the long bus rides, including the Midco bus barn's location on the reservation, the reservation's distant proximity to Pendleton's core and the lack of funding for additional bus routes.

Despite these explanations, Peterson said it might be time to revisit bus routes.

While discussing the issues facing Indian students in the Pendleton School District, there was also a fair amount of time spent celebrating them and the new programs set up to help them.

In addition to American Indian students from across the district that were recognized for their academic achievements, the district also honored volunteer instructors that were working at the Pendleton Early Learning Center to teach kindergartners tribal languages.

Nixyaawii Community School was also given a share of the spotlight, and Principal Ryan Heinrich used his time to showcase two new programs offered at the charter school this year.

Heinrich said Nixyaawii created its first career technical education class, partnering with the CTUIR building department to teach students about building maintenance.

Nixyaawii counselor Michelle Van Pelt is also leading an ASPIRE class to get students ready for college. Van Pelt said she has been taking students to the Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, which in addition to allowing students to be creative, also lends itself well to building a college résumé.

Van Pelt said a student used the prints he made at Crow's Shadow to help gain admittance to the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M.

Lloyd Commander, the CTUIR youth services and recreation program manager, also lauded the district for its efforts to recruit more Indian teachers.

Peterson said he feels like the district is "on the verge" of making progress in American Indian education and is excited to watch from the sidelines when he retires at the end of the year.

HERMISTON

City manager proposes raise for bilingual staff

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston city manager Byron Smith would like to see bilingual city staff get a two percent pay raise.

The move would mirror a change implemented in 2014 that gave city police officers who speak Spanish a two percent raise in recognition of the extra work often required of them when another officer needs a translator.

Smith suggested the incentive be extended to all staff during a Monday work session with the city council to introduce proposed amendments to the city's employee handbook.

Staff currently considered bilingual would be grandfathered in, he said, while new hires or those learning Spanish would have to take an aptitude test. The incentive would apply to any non-English language

spoken by at least 10 percent of the city's population.

Other suggested policies mostly revolved around benefits, including a proposal to cut the amount of compensation time a staffer can accumulate from 240 hours to 120.

"We've been having some challenges from a budget standpoint to plan for when that is going to be cashed out," Smith said.

He said he was also concerned about the amount of vacation time the city gives. Currently staff can earn up to five and a half weeks a year, but Smith suggested putting a cap of four weeks on future employees.

Councilors pushed back on the idea, saying that time away from the job was important for wellness. Doug Smith, who worked for the city as a police officer in the past, said that vacation

time helped him continue to work for Hermiston and he suspected it helped keep other people working for the city too.

"I was getting that five and a half weeks a year and that was huge for me," he said.

Byron Smith said the five and a half weeks for longtime employees, when combined with paid holidays and sick leave, meant some employees were taking two months out of the year off and it sometimes made it difficult to get things done.

Some councilors also disagreed with Smith's suggestion to cap sick leave — which is accumulated at a rate of 10 hours per month — at 2,080 hours.

"If something really bad happens I think a year off is sufficient," Smith said.

He agreed to research what other comparable cities were offering for paid vaca-

tion and sick leave and come back to the council with his findings.

Other proposed changes to the employee handbook included revising definitions of a part-time and full-time employee to match the Affordable Care Act and setting a policy that all city employees will be paid on the fifth and 20th of each month, regardless of whether they use direct deposit.

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

Homecare recruitment events next week

East Oregonian

Recruitment events for homecare and personal support workers will be held in Hermiston and Pendleton next week.

The events, sponsored by the Oregon Home Care Commission, will guide potential workers through the application and enrollment process for the Oregon Home Care Commission's registry that lists "help wanted" ads for homecare or personal support workers and provides referrals to families looking for help.

Homecare workers provide in-home support for seniors and adults with physical disabilities, while personal support workers provide services in and out of the home for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental illnesses.

The commission is looking for workers with good communication skills, attention to detail, flexibility,

problem-solving skills, respect for others, an ability to follow directions, a passion for helping people and the ability to pass a background check.

The two Hermiston events will be 8 a.m. to noon and 1

p.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday at the Best Western, 2255 S. Highway 395. Pendleton's two events will be 8 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday at the Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

GATHERED over TIME & ECHO STATION the vintage shops

CELEBRATE the season in Echo

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 12TH
4:00pm - 7:00pm

CHRISTMAS festivities

VINTAGE, ANTIQUE & ARTISAN GOODS

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK
www.gatheredovertime.com
210 West Main Street Echo, Oregon

www.edwardjones.com

Our thoughts are with the brave men and women serving our country and the ones who served before them.

 Bob Blanc 304 S Main St Pendleton, OR 97801 541-276-6257	 Mac H Levy 244 SW Dorion Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 541-278-1600	 Ben Buchert 348 SW First St. Pendleton, OR 97801 541-278-1200
 Pam Stocker 245 E Main Suite B Hermiston, OR 97838 541-564-9734	 Kacie Levy, CFP® 204 E Main St. Hermiston, OR 97838 541-567-0390	 Casey Hunt 304 S Main St Pendleton, OR 97801 541-276-6257

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

MKT-3673-A-AD Member SIPC