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WHEN WILL BEAST MODE RETURN?
FOOTBALL/1B

SWIM TEAM STAGES TALENT SHOW /3A

EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2015

140th Year, No. 52 | WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD | One dollar

HERMISTON

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A construction crew digs a ditch while installing drain pipes on the new EOTEC event center Monday south of Hermiston.

County sorts out EOTEC debt deal

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

EOTEC needs to raise $2 million by March 1 in order to finish construction on the first stage of the project.

Commissioners wait for info before vote

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County could postpone a decision allowing the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center to take on $1.5 million in debt.

The money is part of a financing plan to allow private and corporate donors to pledge big amounts of cash that EOTEC could pay off during the next two to five years while still having capital to immediately finish construction for the county fair and the Farm-City Pro Rodeo on Hermiston's south end.

If a donor promised $5,000 a year for five years, for example, EOTEC would borrow $25,000 up front, then pay it off with the $5,000 a year.

The event center is the result of a partnership between Hermiston and Umatilla County. Hermiston City Council already gave its OK on the debt plan, but the county has to get over one hurdle before it can sign off — the Oregon Constitution.

County counsel Doug Olsen said the state constitution prohibits counties from taking on more than $5,000 of debt. EOTEC derives its authority from Hermiston and the county, so if the county could not

See EOTEC/8A

AmeriCorps RARE volunteer embraces rural life

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Our New Neighbors
Meet Eastern Oregon's newest residents

Haley Meisenholder moved to Pendleton the only time of year when visitors easily outnumber residents.

Pendleton Round-Up week — the week elite rodeo athletes compete, tourists swarm the city and the community endures the only traffic jams all year. The street in front of Meisenholder's new Main Street apartment would soon be jammed with vendors, musical entertainment and hundreds of people on vacation. The Dress-Up Parade was in full swing. The Californian looked around with curiosity as she guided her overloaded Toyota Matrix into a parking place in front of the St. George.

Meisenholder, 21, had an 11-month internship with the city waiting for her. Chosen for AmeriCorps RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) program, she started work Monday of Round-Up week as a volunteer, but found time to soak in her new surroundings, too. The young San Francisco State University graduate had lived in several urban settings in coastal California, but nowhere that could be called rural America. She was more accustomed to rubbing shoulders with surfers than cowboys.

"I had no prior rodeo experience," she said. "I liked it. I enjoyed the people watching. It was so different. The Round-Up was an overall good time."

At work, Meisenholder got ready to tackle several

See NEIGHBOR/8A

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

AmeriCorps intern Haley Meisenholder moved to town in September just as Round-Up got rolling.

It's wet, but will it stick?

El Niño expected to bring drier weather

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

December has been, by far, the wettest month of the year around Pendleton, bringing much-needed snow and rain to the Umatilla Basin.

The question, with El Niño in the forecast, is how long it will last.

Snowfall has ranged from 14 inches at Emigrant Springs to 48 inches at High Ridge, bringing snow-water equivalent — that's the amount of water contained within snow — to 137 percent of normal in the basin. Snow-water equivalent was just 67 percent of normal at the beginning of the month.

Pendleton received 2.26 inches of precipitation for the month, nearly an inch more than usual. Most came in the form of rain, as monitors picked up only 1.6 inches of new snow versus the usual 6 inches.

Despite the sudden soggy weather, Pendleton will close out 2015 nearly 3 inches below its normal precipitation for the calendar year. The U.S. Drought Monitor continues to list northeast Oregon in severe to extreme drought after an abnormally dry spring and summer.

A slight chance of snow

See SNOW/8A

Bill would require grand jury recordings

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The chairman of the state Senate Judiciary Committee is reviving legislation proposed in the last session he says will bring more transparency to secret grand jury proceedings.

Oregon is one of the few states where grand jury proceedings are not recorded.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, is reviving legislation from that would require all grand jury testimony to be recorded. The bill, originally proposed by Rep. Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland, stalled during the 2015 session in the Senate because lawmakers wanted more time for deliberation. Prozanski, who is a lawyer, said he plans to submit the bill again in February.

Prozanski said the 2015 bill is "the starter."

"That is not the end point," he said.

Federal courts and more than 40 states mandate that grand jury proceedings be electronically recorded, according to a count by the Oregon Criminal Defense Association, which supports the bill.

"The national norm is when you have grand jury testimony, it needs to be recorded verbatim," said Gail Meyer, lobbyist for the criminal defense association.

What happens to the recordings after the proceedings differs from state to state.

Prozanski's bill would require all grand jury proceedings to be recorded except deliberations

See GRAND JURY/8A

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