

Hermiston marching band sweeps awards at Holiday Bowl parade

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

There is going to be a lot less room in the trophy case after the Hermiston High School marching band returns from their Holiday Bowl trip on Friday.

The band swept every award in their division on Wednesday, beating out nine other schools for the overall grand prize at the San Diego Holiday Bowl Parade in addition to bringing home the first place trophies for best music, best percussion, best color guard, best marching, best drum major and best general effect.

Shaelynn Boyd, a senior who plays percussion in the band, described a scene of jubilation when the band found out they had won everything.

"Everyone was cheering and laughing and crying," she said.

The announcement came while the band was getting ready to play at the halftime show of the Holiday Bowl Wednesday night, when the nation watched the Wisconsin Badgers beat the USC Trojans 23-21.

Boyd said getting ready for the trip meant a lot of extra practicing and hard work fundraising, but in that moment there were no regrets.

"It was all worth it," she said. "All the time we put in and the struggles we had, it was all worth it."

The awards meant a lot to the mentors who went along for the trip, too.

Adrian Rodarte, the band's color guard instructor, said



Photo contributed by Danielle Harvey

Hermiston High School took first place in the AA division for the Holiday Bowl parade in San Diego on Wednesday.

he was as ecstatic as the kids about the win. Rodarte was captain of the color guard during his senior year at Hermiston High School in 1999-2000 and then watched the band go through a rebuilding period when it didn't take any major trips again until this year.

"I grew up in Hermiston, and just to see the band come back alive and grow ... it has been just surreal," he said.

Rodarte said the color guard didn't have much time to learn the routine for the halftime show after receiving videos of it, and it was also a tight schedule choreographing and learning a routine for the parade, but the group seemed to have taken his words to heart when he pushed them to

give it their all. "I made sure they knew, 'You need to take this seriously. You're representing your school and your state,'" he said.

Band director Paul Dunsmoor said he went down to San Diego confident the band would measure up well, but to win first place in every category while competing against nine other similarly sized bands from around the country was a "huge surprise."

He said he hoped the students gained a lot of self-confidence from the experience and also learned from the other bands they interacted with while rehearsing for the halftime show.

After working hard to help the band shine in San Diego, Dunsmoor won't soon forget the cheering, crying, hugging and flurry of selfie-taking with the trophies that happened after the awards were handed out.

"They were so excited," he said. "It was incredible."

The band will return to Hermiston sometime Friday afternoon, depending on road conditions. For those who want to see the band's award-winning performance, a national broadcast of the Holiday Bowl Parade will air 5 a.m. Pacific time on Sunday on the Universal HD channel.

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

Umatilla Co. could end outlier status of emergency manager

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County could make its emergency management position full time.

County emergency manager Jack Remillard plans to retire soon, and the county's population of about 76,000 makes it the largest of Oregon's 36 counties without a full-time emergency manager. So the county board of commissioners heard a presentation during its Wednesday meeting from Andrew Phelps, director of the Oregon Office of Emergency Management.

He told the board Oregon law requires counties to have emergency managers, who handle a variety of tasks, from organizing training for local first responders to managing resources and equipment to taking charge of the scene during a disaster. But seven Oregon counties lack a full-time emergency manager.

Four of those — Lake, Grant, Hood River and Klamath counties — plan to move to full-time positions in 2016, Phelps said, leaving Harney, Morrow and Umatilla as the last three with part-timers.

There are federal and state grants that could help cover the cost for a full-time position, he said, including \$62,500 from the Emergency Management Performance Grant, which Phelps' department administers.

County board chairman

George Murdock said it was distressing the county did not have a full-time manager and this is an issue the county needs to explore. And Commissioner Larry Givens said he is promoting emergency readiness for the Cascadia earthquake in his role as president of the Association of Oregon Counties. The board then voted 3-0 to have staff research making the position full time.

The board also reelected Murdock as the chairman for 2016. That role usually changes each year, but Givens' role with the Association of Oregon Counties means traveling to Salem and even Washington, D.C., and Commissioner Bill Elfering serves on other bodies as well, including the Columbia Development Authority, the local organization aiming to take charge of the lands at the former site of the Army's chemical depot near Hermiston.

And during the public comment period, the board heard from Pendleton resident Rick Rohde, who said he and some of his friends are concerned that county taxpayers are going to be "stuck holding the bag" on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, Hermiston.

The county board will discuss the center during a meeting Tuesday, Jan. 19, at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

SKI: Base sits at an elevation of about 5,000 feet

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never had a serious injury or death.

So far, the weather is holding up its end of the bargain. Snowpack has taken an about-face to last year's record low, and a 50 percent chance of more of the powdery stuff is in the forecast early next week.

A smattering of locals turned out on a bluebird day Thursday to carve out some runs before the weekend. Jake Campbell, 18, has been coming Spout Springs for as long as he can remember. His father and grandfather both worked at the resort, and now Jake has also landed a job for the season.

Campbell, who lives 20 minutes away in Summerville, said he is excited to get back to snowboarding after two subpar winters kept the area from opening for a full season.

"I was just completely thrilled when I heard it was reopening this year," Campbell said. "I think the snow's pretty good."

Offyears are not unheard of and tend to happen in cycles at Spout Springs, Murray said. The hill's base sits at an elevation of approximately 5,000 feet and it sports 780 feet of vertical.

Spout Springs has two double-chairlifts, including the Echo Chair for beginners. Frances Knop, 18, of Ione, took a lesson from Waggoner on Thursday. She said she appreciated having one-on-one instruction as opposed to snowboarding with a larger group of students.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Tyler Knight, 7, of Pilot Rock rides the Echo chair with ski instructor Kyle McFarley of Weston on Thursday at the Spout Springs Ski Area in Tollgate.

"Being able to ask for help is nice," Knop said.

Waggoner said boarding is hard at first, but quickly becomes fun and relaxing. She coached Knop on getting to her feet, turning with her heels and, together, they glided down to the chair.

"This is a great place to come learn," Waggoner said. "Everyone here is welcoming and friendly. They'll help you out if you need it."

Spout Springs is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, as well as holidays. It is also the only local resort to offer night skiing on

Fridays and Saturdays, from 5-9 p.m.

The hill will be open for night skiing for the first time this season on New Year's Day.

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

Pendleton couple 'shaken' from home robbery

PENDLETON — Pendleton police are looking for clues to two people who robbed a Pendleton couple's home Wednesday.

Pendleton police detective Howard Bowen said the couple were "understandably shaken" from the ordeal.

Bowen said the crime occurred a little after 5 p.m. at a home on Tutuilla Creek Road. After eating dinner, the homeowner walked into his den and encountered two figures.

"The suspects were hooded," Bowen said. "So we don't have a description."

One of them may have brandished a gun or other weapon, he added. The intruders made it out of the house with some items of little value.

Bowen said no one was injured in the crime, and a check with other local agencies for similar robberies has not turned up anything. He also said police are checking the neighborhood for witnesses or surveillance recordings to help solve the case.

NEIGHBOR: Rystrom and her family are avid hikers, campers

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hospital."

Rystrom's four children (three boys and a girl) are all grown and out of the house, although her youngest son Randall Rystrom is coincidentally completing an internship with Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services. She said neither of them had any idea the other was also applying for a position in Hermiston at the same time.

Rystrom and her family are avid hikers and campers,

and she said the children were raised "kind of off the grid" during their summers off school. Another benefit to Hermiston is that it is not a very far drive for a weekend in the Wallows, she said.

She said the family is also very military-oriented. Her husband served in the Navy, and all four of her children have some degree of experience in the various branches of the military. Her oldest son Jason Walker lost his leg two years ago in Afghanistan while serving his third tour

of duty in the Middle East with the Army.

Rystrom said she is excited to be in Hermiston heading into the New Year and is looking forward to the opportunities for professional growth that her new job will provide.

"My job is to oversee that

we're following the rules and regulations to provide good-quality care, that's the bottom line," she said. "But my goal is to provide outstanding care and not just meet the basics."

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

Lorena Sanchez
Auto Health Home Life
ISU One Responsible Source
541/289-3300 • 800/225-2521
The Stratton Agency
Hermiston/Pendleton • stratton-insurance.com

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