

Fiber a healthy part of Internet diet

High-speed connections made accessible by two local companies

By ANTONIO SIERRA

Technologically, many Pendleton and Hermiston residents have an advantage their urban counterparts don't — access to fiber optic Internet.

Pendleton Fiber offers speeds between 50 and 200 megabits per second, which is fast enough to download a CD in 30 seconds.

Pendleton Fiber is a subsidiary of Wtechlink, an Internet service provider co-owned by Jordan McDonald.

Despite offering fiber optic Internet for more than three years, McDonald said Pendleton Fiber continues to add three to four new customers per day.

Pendleton Fiber now provides Internet for 1,250 residences and 200 businesses.

While some of Pendleton Fiber's initial forays weren't immediately profitable, McDonald said the amount of demand from the North Hill and McKay Creek neighborhoods has made the venture worthwhile.

"We're definitely reaping the benefits now," he said.

Additionally, the fiber service's reliability means Wtechlink saves money on repair costs.

Eastern Oregon Telecom is newer to the fiber market but is starting to reap benefits of its own in Hermiston.

EOT CEO Joe Franell said the company started out conservatively, installing fiber access to 120 homes in the East Highland Avenue and downtown areas.

TECHNOLOGY



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Wtechlink co-owner Jordan McDonald says his company offers fiber optic internet services to 1,250 residences and 200 businesses in the Pendleton area.



"I'm not going to build it and hope they come."

— Joseph Franell, CEO of Eastern Oregon Telecom on expanding fiber service in Hermiston

Joseph Franell is the CEO of Eastern Oregon Telecom, which provides fiber Internet in Hermiston.

Staff photo by Daniel Wattenburger

Demand for fiber meant EOT's service continued to expand, with the company providing high-speed Internet for 750 homes in Hermiston and 1,000 businesses across Hermiston, Umatilla, McNary, Boardman and Irrigon.

Less than two years into offering fiber, EOT is breaking even on its investment, a development Franell not only attributes to consumer interest but the decision to buy fiber from Chinese telecommunications company Huawei Technologies, which offers prices at a much lower rate than American suppliers.

Franell said there's room for growth in the Hermiston fiber market, but EOT wants to expand intelligently.

"I'm not going to build it and hope they come," he said.

To get an idea of which areas want it most, Franell said EOT will launch a website that will allow neighborhoods to compete for fiber access.

Offering fiber Internet to rural customers isn't unique to Wtechlink or EOT, but doing so without government subsidies is.

According to Forbes magazine, the federal government allocated \$3.4 billion for rural broadband projects in 2011, including a \$116 million financial package that went to the Vermont Telephone Co. to build 1,200 miles in the rural Green Mountain State.

Back in Pendleton and Hermiston, not every square foot within those cities has access to fiber — it's much easier to install fiber cable in above-ground utilities as opposed to below ground.

But both Wtechlink and EOT have an eye toward the future, having installed fiber in new housing developments to complement standard utilities.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@

Big changes brewing for Boardman beer maker

Brewery goes from seven to 50 barrels

By KATHY ANEY

Logan Mayfield is in beer Nirvana. Mayfield, head brewer at Ordinance Brewing in Boardman, looks forward to letting his inner brewmeister roam as the brewery expands from seven barrels to a 50-barrel system in coming months.

Let's pause here and talk about barrels, shall we. A craft brewery is defined by its number of barrels. Each barrel contains 31 gallons, which fills two kegs or 330 12-ounce bottles of beer.

Having 50 barrels in his tool chest rather than seven means Mayfield can produce the brewery's mainstays in higher volume and still have room to bring all those ideas fermenting in his brain to reality.

There are only two basic types of beers — ales and lagers — but each has endless possibilities and permutations. They range from blonde to black, sour to stout, bitter to Bohemian, extra-hoppy to smooth and creamy.

The new system "will allow me to exercise my creative side," Mayfield said.

The bearded 28-year-old craft brewer tends his growing collection of fermentation tanks, mash tuns and barrels with the meticulous attention of a nanny overseeing a passel of lively children. He spends his days concentrating on a zillion details as he coaxes his beers to fruition.

The former Colorado brewer said he plans to brew more lagers, for one. Lagers require more fermenting than ales, so they take up valuable space. Most IPAs, on the other hand, are ready in about two weeks.

LIQUOR & SPIRITS



EO file photo

Logan Mayfield, head brewer at Ordinance Brewing in Boardman, got his start making homemade root beer with his dad.

"Lagers take one month at the minimum," he said. "Most take two or three months."

Tart and acidic sour beers also take longer than wheat beers and IPAs. Sour beer, which is gaining popularity especially on the west side of Oregon, ages in oak barrels for months, letting microorganisms do their work.

While experimenting, Mayfield and assistant brewer Ryan Kreps will produce a higher volume of Ordinance's core four — Rivercrest Kolsch, rye-spiced RX Pale Ale, Full Metal Jacket IPA and Old Craig, an old-style English ale named for Craig Coleman, who is one of six owners of Ordinance and the associated Neighbor Dudes Tap Houses in Hermiston, Wilsonville and Silverton.

Coleman said the brewery, which brewed its first batch on Halloween of 2014, will gradually grow into its higher capacity.

"We don't expect to brew at capacity immediately, but it is nice to have the room for growth and an enhanced set of tools for our brewer," Coleman said in a news release. "He's been doing a stellar job with our current equipment, but to strengthen consistency, quality and availability, we decided it was time to step up and prepare for continued growth."

"We're planning on getting bigger," Mayfield said. "This isn't the end of it."

The growth will include changes in distribution and packaging. Ordinance is currently available only in kegs, but beer connoisseurs will soon find the product in bottles and, possibly, cans.

"You'll be able to find us in grocery stores and gas stations," Mayfield said.

Mayfield, who turned 19 with a beer stein in his hand during a trip to Germany, will concentrate on creating his foamy product as he tries subtle and not-so-subtle tweaks and twists. The key, he said, is "learning how different ingredients play together." The brewer got his start as a boy making root beer with his dad.

Mayfield, unofficially known as "the brew dude," has already gotten some love from the beer community. In October, Oregon Beer Growler magazine spotlighted a full-bodied brew called Of Chimpanzees Porter, and named Wheatville and RX Pale Ale as "Perfect Pints." Full Metal Jacket got Best Beer at February's Beerex Fest in Hermiston.

The brewery gets its name from a ghost town between Boardman and Hermiston, once populated by those who worked at the now-shuttered Umatilla Chemical Depot.

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