



BUCKS BEAT THE DALLES TO CLAIM CRC TITLE
BASKETBALL/1B



WEEKEND EDITION
HAM RADIOS READY TO RESPOND
LIFESTYLES/1C



STRONG WINDS WREAK HAVOC
HERMISTON/2A

EAST OREGONIAN

FEBRUARY 20-21, 2016

140th Year, No. 91

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

30,000 CHICKENS / 20,000 SQUARE FOOT HEN HOUSE / 40 ACRE FARM / 8,500,000 EGGS PER YEAR

HOME TO ROOST



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Lohmann Brown chickens mill around in a hen house owned and operated by Mahlon Zehr at his farm east of Milton-Freewater.

College bound

Lure of free community college attracts flood of applications

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Employees in the Blue Mountain Community College financial aid department are getting a workout these days.

They are processing a big pile of federal student aid applications (FAFSAs). By last week, the school had received 1,095 such documents, compared with 392 last year — a 180 percent increase.

The reason is likely a new Oregon program that makes community college tuition virtually free for those who qualify. To apply for Oregon Promise, one must also fill out a FAFSA, hence the flood arriving at community colleges. The torrent will ease soon enough. The deadline to apply for Oregon Promise looms on March 1.

Statewide, 17,599 students have started the application process. Among those, 11,111 have finished, according to Endi Hartigan, a communications and policy specialist at the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

“We’ve had a strong response. We’re very pleased,” Hartigan said. “We’re trying to get the message out about the deadline.”

To qualify, students must be within six months of finishing high school, earning

See COLLEGE/10A

Man opens cage-free farm in Milton-Freewater

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Mahlon Zehr walks carefully down the middle row of his cage-free hen house, clapping his hands to scatter the flock of chickens that gather close around his feet.

“They’re very curious,” Zehr said. “If you’re working in here, they’ll come right up pecking at your hands and pecking at your shoes.”

For Zehr, the chickens came first — all 30,000 of them — and the eggs won’t be far behind. Zehr signed a 10-year contract last July to raise commercial eggs for Wilcox Family Farms of Roy, Washington, and has built a production facility at his home on Edwards Road in Milton-Freewater.

The chickens arrived on trucks earlier this month and Zehr said they should start laying eggs in the next week or two. He expects to



More online

Watch EO photographer E.J. Harris walk the ‘chicken gauntlet’ at eastoregonian.com



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Chicken farmer Mahlon Zehr holds one of the 30,000 Lohmann Brown chickens he has at his egg production facility outside Milton-Freewater.

“The cage-free market is growing. It’s what people want.”

— Mahlon Zehr, chicken farmer

See CHICKENS/10A

PILOT ROCK

One dead in highway 395 wreck

East Oregonian



Staff photo by Antonio Sierra

One person was killed Friday in a car accident about 4 p.m. on Highway 395 between Pilot Rock and Ukiah.

One person was killed and two others were injured Friday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash on Highway 395 south of Pilot Rock.

Oregon State Police Lt. Mike Turner said authorities were called to the scene at 4:04 p.m.

A LifeFlight helicopter flew one of the survivors to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, and an ambulance drove the other to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, according to Turner.

Emergency crews worked to remove the body of the victim from one of the vehicles.

The identity of the victim was not available by press time, and will not be released until next of kin are notified.

See COUNCIL/10A

Highway 395 ODOT construction update

Oregon Department of Transportation work on Highway 395 will continue during the week of Feb. 22 between SE Fourth Street by Safeway and Theater Lane.

Between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. crews will be tearing out sidewalk ramps along the highway and pouring new ones, causing some single-lane closures while cement is poured.

From 6 a.m. until dark workers will continue making preparations to replace the traffic signal at Jennie Avenue, which may cause some delays at the intersection.



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