

MILTON-FREEWATER

City's 'brightest diamonds' honored

By MARCIA AKES
For the East Oregonian

The Community Building was packed Saturday evening for the 68th Milton-Freewater Area Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet: Dazzling Diamonds "An Evening Filled with Brilliance."

Man of the Year honors went to Dr. Norman Saager, whose list of accomplishments were conveyed by Larry Anderson, last year's winner.

Anderson explained that Saager returned to Milton-Freewater after college and his dad signed him up for membership in almost every organization in town. That started his volunteering "and he has never been able to kick the habit." In 1990, Saager was named Junior Citizen of the Year.

The owner of Broadway Family Dental Care is a consistent sponsor for schools, sports teams, youth clubs and local organizations and events. He helped start the Milton-Freewater Downtown Alliance (MFDA), donated office space and has served as executive director. "He has a passion for helping the community ... which is contagious for anyone around him."

Saager wasn't able to attend the event because of family vacation.

Woman of the Year Judy Chesnut was truly surprised when enough had been revealed that she realized she was the winner. Jennifer Anderson, last year's honoree, noted that the retired school teacher continues to mentor and coach when needed.

Chesnut is involved in her church as a Sunday school teacher, youth leader, secretary and serves on the commission on ministry. She is a member of P.E.O., M-F Chamber Ambassadors and on the board of the MFDA. Walking in the annual Crop Walk, she helps raise funds



Saager



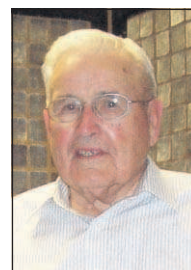
Chesnut



Silva



Jorgensen



Robertson



Lonai



Drury



Abigail Biggs, Hill



Hill



Amon

for the hungry; and she can be seen working at the Muddy Frogwater Festival as well as on various other community projects. "She does not just sit back and watch others do, she leads."

Other award winners included: **Ben Silva: Junior Citizen.** Silva was recognized for all the selfless time he puts into the youth of the community coaching football, wrestling and baseball.

Vivian Jorgensen: Golden Pioneer. Jorgensen has been a volunteer in Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts for almost 50 years. She has been a 4-H leader and school volunteer, taught First Aid classes for the Red Cross, visits the elderly, and has knitted hundreds of stocking caps, lap robes and afghans for veterans and active military.

Charles Robertson: Golden Pioneer. The 93-year-old World War II veteran made substantial contributions to agriculture in the region, coached Little League, was a member of the Jaycees and Masonic Lodge, served on the Eastside School Board and helped repair the school when needed.

Kathy Lonai: Educator. Students writing in support of the Ferndale second grade

teacher said they could tell she really cared about them. Years later, she still recognizes them when they meet somewhere. Lonai has taught for 27 years and is a firm believer that helping a student become a strong reader helps equip them for life.

Sadie Drury: Agri-Business. Drury joined Seven Hills Vineyard as their viticulturist in 2013. Her competency and leadership abilities were quickly recognized and she was promoted to operations manager. Described as a rare individual and vital leader that has a vision of something beyond what they achieve alone, Drury makes sure the needs of Eastern Oregon wine growers are being identified and met.

Abigail "Abi" Biggs: Youth of the Year. Abi's many activities include helping at the Special Olympics, the Crop Walk, community service projects, and working on houses for the homeless. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Mac-Hi Jazz Band and her church youth group, and is active in softball, basketball and soccer. Abi was voted the 2015 Homecoming Queen by her classmates.

Art Hill: Community Service Award. Hill

recently retired as BMCC's Vice President of Economic Development, has mentored small business owners in Eastern Oregon for the last 15 years, and is an author. Noting his positive attitude and integrity, Hill was recognized for his support of the Milton-Freewater community and volunteer help at various local events. "Art is one of the most dedicated and driven individuals ... and one of the finest people to have on your team!"

Debbie Amon: Community Recognition Award. Amon was part of the first collaboration when Blue Mountain Community College opened an office in Milton-Freewater in 1985. In 1992, she went to work for BMCC as office specialist and has helped with countless community events. Amon has received awards and accolades for the many facets of her support and has even received flowers from the local fire department in appreciation of her support to them.

Julie Culjak was recognized for her service with the President's Award from Chamber President Gina Hartzheim.

The ceremony ended with Susan Daniels winning the prize of the evening, a 1/3 carat diamond.

BOARDMAN

Woman escapes from the ex who kidnapped, assaulted her

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

A Boardman woman escaped a man that kidnapped, strangled and assaulted her this weekend, according to Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack.

The suspect, Travis Lane Thomas, 44, pleaded not guilty Monday in Morrow County Circuit Court to 11 counts: four of first-degree kidnapping; two of first-degree assault; and one each of second- and fourth-degree assault, menacing and strangulation.

A caller on Saturday morning at 7:35 asked law enforcement to pick up a woman outside his home on Hill Top Lane, Boardman, according to a written statement from the Morrow County Sheriff's Office. The woman, the caller stated, was an assault victim "covered in blood and only wearing a coat."

Boardman police officer Matt Clinard and Morrow County sheriff's deputy Matt Crowell were the first police on the scene, and the Boardman Ambulance took Heather Payne to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. There she talked to officers before the hospital transferred her to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington, due to a serious head injury.

Matlack said she had bleeding in her brain from the assault, and Kadlec treated her and sent her back to Good Shepherd, which expected to release her early

this week. Matlack said Payne was staying alone in a friend's recreational vehicle in the West Glen Edition of southeast Boardman. Thomas was at his motor home at 70072 Kunze Road on the same property where Payne was.

Saturday around sunrise, Matlack said, Thomas kidnapped Payne and forced her into his home. The two were previously in a relationship and Morrow County records show Thomas has domestic violence convictions in 2015 for menacing and assaulting her.

Thomas bound Payne's feet and hands, the sheriff said, then assaulted and strangled her.

Thomas stepped out around 7:30 a.m. but told Payne he would be right back.

Matlack said Payne broke her bonds, grabbed her coat and left out a window. She made it about 100 yards before getting help from residents on Hill Top Lane.

Members of the sheriff's office and Boardman police tried to contact Thomas at his home, Matlack said, but he did not answer the door. So sheriff's detective Brian Snyder obtained a search warrant.

Matlack said Thomas was wearing blood-stained clothes and sitting on the floor when officers entered the home, and he did not put up a fight during the arrest.

Circuit Judge Eva Temple set bail Monday for Thomas at \$100,000. He remains in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton.



Thomas

HEPPNER

Students sew blankets for children's hospital

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Whoever thinks mathematicians only ponder formulas, factors and probabilities doesn't know Troy Morgan.

Morgan, who teaches math at Heppner Senior High School, also has a heart for children, specifically those at Portland's Doernbecher Children's Hospital. He recently organized a project to benefit the medical center's young patients.

In Morgan's plan, students would sew blankets for seriously ill or hurt children at Doernbecher in an effort to make them feel warm, cozy and loved. The children take the blankets with them when they leave the hospital. During two "Mathathon" sewing sessions, students learned to stitch together two squares of fleece on three sides, turn the blanket inside out and stitch the edges using sewing machines brought to school by community members.

"Even people who had never seen a sewing machine were able to make a blanket and make a difference," said senior Patrick Collins, who sewed before basketball practice.

Pam Norton and Pat Doherty tutored the students in how to use a sewing machine. To make it less daunting for some kids, Norton likened the sewing machine pedal to that of a farm vehicle.

"The pedal is just like a gas pedal on a tractor," she told them. "Just ease into it."



Contributed photo

Heppner students pose with some of the blankets they made for children at Doernbecher Children's Hospital.

After getting them started, she and Doherty just stood back and let them go.

"It was pure joy seeing these kids," Norton said. "They knew they were doing it for a good cause."

Collins, who had no prior sewing experience, admitted, "I was a little out of my comfort zone." Soon, however, under the guidance of the experienced seamstresses, he had his sewing machine humming. Collins and fellow football and basketball teammate C.J. Kindle shared a machine and completed five blankets between them.

Senior Wes Putman, another of Collins' teammates, said he has always relied on his mom for any sewing. He approached the sewing machine with trepidation.

"I'd never touched one before," said Putman, who completed two blankets.

Putman and Collins were among 60 students who cut, pinned and sewed 35 blankets.

Those finished products joined other blankets and quilts sewn by community members for a total of 57.

"I was ecstatic," Morgan said. "I would have been happy with 10. My goal was 20."

Morgan made the blanket-making sessions into mini-math lessons, giving attention to measuring and calculations. As the students sewed away on their machines, Morgan admitted to a lump in his throat.

"There were little seventh-graders and big football players who had just won the state championship," he said. "It tugged at my heart."

Morgan said some local children have stayed at Doernbecher in the past.

"Those kids still have their blankets," Morgan said.

This is the first time students have made blankets. In past years, students raised funds. In 2012, they

raised \$4,800 and, in 2013, \$2,500. After a two-year respite, instead of raising money, Morgan instigated the blanket making, along with asking for donations of school supplies, toys and games.

Collins said he wasn't surprised when his math teacher pitched the blanket idea to students and local seamstresses.

"Mr. Morgan is always looking for some way to help somebody else," Collins said.

"He wanted to get the whole community together for the blanket project," Putman said. "It took off."

Morgan and some students planning on going into medicine will deliver the blankets and supplies to Doernbecher in the near future.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

BRIEFLY

Kennewick woman dies in 395 wreck

PILOT ROCK — Alexxyss L. Therwhanger, 20, was pronounced dead at the scene of a head-on wreck Friday afternoon on Highway 395 south of Pilot Rock, according to Oregon State Police.

At approximately 4 p.m., the Kennewick woman was driving a 1998 Buick Century sedan when it failed to negotiate a left hand curve in the roadway. The Buick, which was traveling northbound, crossed over into the southbound lane and collided with a 1994 Lincoln Continental.

Francis (Frank) Charles Wimberley, 60, of Prairie City, the driver of the Lincoln Continental, was transported to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, by air ambulance with serious injuries. A passenger in Wimberley's vehicle, Donnetta Marie Kulis, 54, of Prairie City was transported by ambulance to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, also with serious injuries.

Highway 395 was closed for approximately an hour and a half. Contributing factors of the crash are still being investigated.

OSP was assisted by Pendleton Fire and Ambulance Department, the Pilot Rock Quick Response Team, the Pilot Rock Police Department, Oregon Department of Transportation and Pendleton Life Flight.

TRCI inmate hospitalized after assault

UMATILLA — An inmate at Two Rivers Correctional Institution was flown to an area hospital over the weekend after an altercation with another inmate.

Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services responded to a report of "trauma" at TRCI at 12:40 p.m. Sunday.

Oregon State Police are investigating the Sunday incident as an assault between two inmates. One inmate suffered serious injuries and was transported by helicopter.

Inmate names and additional information has not yet been released due to the ongoing investigation.

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