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BOARDMAN

Biorefinery gets USDA backing

Company to turn farm waste to fuel

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

With financing in place, a Minnesota-based energy company plans to build its first commercial refinery that will transform farm waste into natural gas and liquid fertilizer at the Port of Morrow.

Novus Energy has received an \$11 million loan guarantee from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's biorefinery assistance program. Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley and

USDA Rural Development Undersecretary Lisa Mensah made the announcement Friday in Portland.

"This biorefinery will spur economic development, create new jobs and provide new markets for farm commodities in rural Oregon," Mensah said.

Novus plans to take 750 tons of food waste every day — things like potato peels, onion skins and dairy manure — and convert it into renewable gas at the facility. By allowing the scraps to ferment in tanks, organic material breaks down and releases methane that

See **BIOMASS/10A**



A rendering of Novus Energy's proposed renewable natural gas facility at the Port of Morrow. Contributed photo

Revised bill includes biomass provision

By **HILLARY BORRUD**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The latest version of an Oregon bill to double the state's renewable energy mandate would also expand incentives to build and operate power plants that burn wood.

Lawmakers added a provision on biomass to the bill Thursday night, in an effort

See **BILL/10A**

HERMISTON

Clinic 'well' above expectations

School health center seeing as many as 15 patients each day

By **JENNIFER COLTON**
East Oregonian

On Thursday, the 225th patient walked through the doors at the Hermiston School District Wellness Center — a much higher visitation rate than the clinic's operators expected.

Opened after winter break, the clinic serves all students of the Hermiston School District, as well as district staff and their families.

"I'm elated by where we are with this partnership," Jon Mishra, district director of special programs, said Friday. "It's just incredible what has been done here. It's professional, aesthetically pleasing, and I think it's meeting a need."

The Hermiston School District began discussing the option of a wellness clinic in 2013. District staff reached out to the community to find out what was needed — and not needed — for students and staff. The district settled on a clinic on district property that functioned as a satellite office of an outside provider. The clinic would provide preventative and some emergency care but would not handle mental health or reproductive services.

"We know well kids do well in school. If you're sick or you're hurting, it eats at you and you don't do well," Mishra said. "We want to have a place for our students to go. Our purpose is to provide the care so our students and staff get their needs addressed and can return to school, to reduce time away from school for students and staff and to reduce absences."

Once the plan was set, the district started talking with Dr. Derek Earl, of Family Health Associates. The Hermiston medical practice won the bid for the Wellness Center and



Family Health Associates in conjunction with the Hermiston School District opened a wellness center in January on the Hermiston High School campus that offers both students and staff easy access to medical care. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

prepared for the expansion, and in late 2015, district crews and contractors transformed the former print shop with its open warehouse, long counter and rows of shelves into a professional medical clinic.

This week, student artwork provided the final cosmetic touches for the center. The hardest part for FHA was anticipating what needs would arise.

"We honestly had no idea what a school clinic like this would do," Earl said. "Our hope was to get an average of four patients a day so we didn't take a huge financial loss. We beat that in the first week."

The Wellness Center has been open almost two months and has never had a day without a patient visit. Providers have seen as many as 15 patients in one day.

Tiffany Fitzmorris, center supervisor, said the Wellness Center is an added resource for parents and school staff. School nurses can refer students to the center, and parents can keep students on campus instead of taking them out of school for a half or full day.

Parents can schedule appointments at the

See **HEALTH/10A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Learning to fly

Pad Monroe of Pendleton watches as his UAV takes off from a field in Community Park on Thursday in Pendleton. Monroe says this is only the second time he has flown his drone.

PENDLETON

City still facing housing shortage

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Although the overall market is improving, Pendleton still faces a significant housing shortage even though the city's population has remained stagnant.

John Turner, the former president of Blue Mountain Community College and a candidate for mayor, returned to chair a revived housing committee, which held its first meeting Friday after a five year hiatus.

Turner started by reviewing the study the committee commis-

sioned five years ago, which was not encouraging.

That study was conducted by Arizona-based Sabino Community Development Resources. It showed Pendleton's housing options were scarce and of low quality, the median rent was \$453 per month and that many people were forced to commute to Pendleton from elsewhere.

An estimated 30 percent of Pendleton's workforce doesn't live in the city, 40 percent of whom would move to Pendleton if they

See **HOUSING/10A**

