



Staff photo by Phil Wright

Hearts in motion

Elementary Team A from Jr. Jam Dance, Pendleton, performs an "I Love Lucy" themed dance routine Saturday at Pendleton High School in the 29th Hearts in Motion Dance Competition. The event is the annual fundraiser for the school's Rhythmic Mode Dance Team. Jr. Jam chairwoman Kristen LeGore said 350 dancers on 10 teams from across Oregon participated.

Two Rivers inmate dies after being found unresponsive in his cell

East Oregonian

An Oregon Department of Corrections inmate died Saturday at a Portland-area hospital.

The inmate had been incarcerated at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla. The death has been classified by the Department of Corrections as an unanticipated death and the Oregon State Police Criminal Investigation Division is conducting an investigation.

According to the Department of Corrections, staff at Two Rivers found inmate Joel Abbot, 60, unresponsive in his cell on Saturday. He was taken off-site for medical care at approximately 10:30 a.m.

The name of the Portland-area hospital where Abbot was taken was not released. The DOC said

Abbot was pronounced dead at 5:05 p.m. Abbot had been in DOC custody for nearly 23 years, since March 23, 1993, and was serving a life sentence on one count of first-degree murder out of Deschutes County.

According to *The (Bend) Bulletin*, Abbot was convicted of killing Carolann Payne, who disappeared in 1985 at the age of 35. Her body was never found. Payne was

Abbot's girlfriend at the time of her disappearance. Abbot was arrested in May 1992 after a prolonged investigation by the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

Next of kin has been notified. DOC said no other details were available at this time.

Two Rivers Corrections institution houses about 1,800 inmates in Umatilla.



Abbot

BRIEFLY

Stripe rust found in wheat field

HERMISTON — Stripe rust was recently spotted in an irrigated wheat field near Hermiston, according to scientists with Oregon State University.

It is the first report of the fungal disease in Eastern Oregon in 2016. Stripe rust grows on the leaves of wheat plants and can reduce yield in severe cases.

Larry Lutchter, soil scientist with OSU Extension Service in Morrow County, said the disease is thus far limited to just one field. It has not yet been found in any dryland wheat.

Stripe rust tends to thrive in cool, moist conditions when farmers would otherwise expect a promising harvest, Lutchter said. The last year with substantial rust damage came in 2012.

"There's more rain, more humidity, more leaf tissue and more opportunity for the fungus to grow," Lutchter said.

The early start to rust season suggests farmers should take extra care scouting their fields, Lutchter said. Fungicides can help if the infection is found and treated early.

Dryland fields emerge much later than irrigated wheat. However, growers should be aware of the potential for rust later in the season.

Meetings scheduled on forest restoration

PENDLETON — The U.S. Forest Service has scheduled a series of meetings for the public to weigh in on an ambitious restoration project on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Ochoco national forests.

The Forest Resiliency Project aims to accelerate the pace and scale of restoration in the area, restoring the Blue Mountains to healthier condition and lowering the risk of severe wildfires.

Foresters would thin a combined 610,000 acres of trees and brush across the three forests, and use prescribed burns to reintroduce the natural role of fire on the landscape. Treatments would span 13 counties in Eastern Oregon and southeast Washington.

Public meetings will be held to share information and discuss concerns among residents. Project leaders will visit the Pendleton Convention Center on Thursday, March 10; the

Heppner Ranger District Office on Tuesday, March 15; and the Blue Mountains Conference Center in La Grande. All meetings will run from 6-9 p.m.

Public comments will be accepted on the project through April 5. For more information, visit www.fs.usda.gov/goto/forestresiliencyproject or contact Darcy Weseman at 541-278-3755.

Tom Insko, Nils Christoffersen reappointed to forestry board

PENDLETON — The Oregon Legislature has reappointed Tom Insko and Nils Christoffersen to the state Board of Forestry.

The seven-member forestry board is responsible for appointing the state forester and adopts rules regulating forest practices in Oregon. Members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate.

Insko is the president of Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, and a former regional manager of Boise Cascade, which manufactures paper and other wood products. Christoffersen, of Enterprise, is the executive director of Wallowa Resources, a nonprofit group focused on stewardship, renewable energy and business development.

Cindy Deacon Jones, a consulting fisheries biologist from Medford, was also reappointed to the board. Their terms will officially begin Tuesday and run for four years through Feb. 29, 2020.

The board is required to meet once per quarter. The next regular meeting will be March 9 in Salem.

Potts named interim fire chief

UMATILLA — Steve Potts is now the interim chief of the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District.

Fred Sheely, chairman of the Umatilla Fire Board, confirmed Monday the board had named Potts to the position during its February meeting.

Potts has handled most administrative duties for the district since September, when Chief Michael Roxbury went on medical leave. Potts and Roxbury are the only two paid employees of the Umatilla Rural Fire

Protection District.

The fire chief and recruitment/retention officer supervise the district's buildings, equipment and volunteers. Umatilla's roster includes 20 active volunteer firefighters and three reserve firefighters.

Potts became a volunteer firefighter with Umatilla in 1988. He accepted a full-time position as EMS coordinator in 2012 and shifted to recruitment and retention officer after the district contracted with Hermiston Fire and Emergency Services for ambulance services. The Umatilla district maintains quick response medical services as well as fire functions.

The Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District Board next meets Wednesday. Roxbury remains on medical leave.

Smith appointed to second small business committee

SALEM — Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner) is representing small businesses on another state committee.

Smith was appointed by House Speaker Tina Kotek as co-chair of the newly created Special Committee on Small Business Growth. Earlier in February Gov. Kate Brown also appointed him to the Governor's Small Business Advisory Cabinet.

Smith is the only Eastern Oregon representative on both committees.

The House committee's primary goals are to gather industry-specific information on small business needs, identify solutions to maintain

and grow small businesses in those industries and develop recommendations and draft legislation for the 2017 session.

In addition to his legislative duties, Smith is also a small business owner specializing in economic development and commercial and industrial financing. He said in a news release that his hope is to bring "private sector experience and rural perspective" to the committee's work.

Retired educators meet Thursday

PENDLETON — Students on the National History Day Team from Griswold High School in Helix will tell about their program during the upcoming Morrow-Umatilla Retired Educators Association meeting.

Guests are welcome to attend the no-host gathering Thursday at 11:30 a.m. at The Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave. Pendleton. The event includes a short business meeting.

Membership in MUREA is not limited to retired educators but is open to anyone interested in education. For more information, call unit president Bill Mayclin at 541-276-4540.

Local author to discuss new novel

PENDLETON — Local author Peg Willis will sign copies and discuss her new book, "Rise Above."

A historically accurate

novel, Willis tells the story of one man's quest to reunite with his children following the devastating Hepper Flood of 1903.

Presented by the Pendleton Public Library and Armchair Books, the event is Thursday at 7 p.m. in the Community Room, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton.

The unexpected cloudburst turned an otherwise mild day into one that Heppner would never forget. Willis blends factual accounts and real heroes of the Heppner flood with a fictional storyline about residents impacted by the disaster.

For more information, call 541-966-0380 or 541-276-7323. For a

book review, visit www.eastoregonian.com/eo/book-reviews/20151212/tragic-flood-basis-of-new-novel.

Sports boosters set steak feed

HERMISTON — The 37th annual Hermiston Booster Club steak feed is this weekend.

The event, which includes a silent auction, raffle and live auction, is Saturday at 5:30 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Tickets are \$40 and are available at Eastside Market, the HHS athletic office or the door.

For more information, call Joe Thompson at 541-564-5811.

BABYSITTING BASICS

For babysitters ages 10-15. Learn childcare techniques, children's developmental stages and what to expect, basic first aid and infant and child CPR. \$30, includes lunch & all class materials.

9:00am - 3:00pm
March 12 or April 2

Must pre-register and pre-pay, call 541-667-3509

SELF DEFENSE

Learn self-defense techniques, including: Awareness, home security, verbal de-escalation, evading and escaping maneuvers. This is a contact class. Age 12 and up. Free, but must pre-register. Call 541-667-3509.

March 31 • 6:00 - 8:00pm
GSMC Conference Center 2

LIVING WITH ALZHEIMER'S MID-STAGE:

This FREE program is designed to provide caregivers with the knowledge, tools and strategies needed to cope with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

March 10 • 2:00 - 6:00pm
GSMC Conference Room 2

POWERFUL TOOLS FOR THE CAREGIVER:

A FREE program for family caregivers. Build a toolkit for taking better care of yourself while caring for a loved one. Learn how to reduce stress and relax, communicate effectively, reduce guilt and anger, make tough decisions, set goals and problem solve. Must attend the first class. Registration is required as space is limited. **Sign up by 3/18.**

Tuesdays • 4:00 - 7:30pm
March 22 through April 26
Call 541-667-3509

TRYING TO QUIT TOBACCO?

Contact our tobacco cessation specialist to schedule your free consultation. Call 541-667-3509 for more info or to schedule an appointment.

HEALTHY FRIDAYS

FREE health screenings & health coaching: Blood pressure checks, weigh-ins, body mass index, cholesterol and glucose.

First Friday of each month
9:30 - 11:30am
Third Friday of each month
2:00 - 4:00pm

GSMC Conference Center 7 (by Education Dept)

Information or to register call (541) 667-3509 or email

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37TH ANNUAL HERMISTON SPORTS BOOSTERS STEAK FEED & AUCTION

Saturday, March 5th • 5:30pm
Auction starts at 7:00pm
Hermiston Community Center

FOR TABLE RESERVATIONS, call Paul 541-567-5215 or formore info., call Joe 541-571-4478

Everyone 21 years & over welcome.
All proceeds will assist Hermiston High School boys and girl athletic programs.

\$40
per person

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