

County seeks full-time emergency manager

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County will no longer be the only large county in Oregon without a full-time emergency manager.

The county board of commissioners voted 3-0 Wednesday on a plan to bump up the position, which has been part-time. Funding for the move came from the county's public health department.

County counsel Doug Olsen said the state provides the public health department with money for an emergency preparedness program. Board chairman George Murdock

said the county combined those dollars with money it receives from the Oregon Office of Emergency Management. Olsen said the full-time position will pay \$57,480 a year plus benefits.

Making the job full time also is a matter of timing. Jack Remillard stepped down Monday after almost five years as the county emergency manager, and Murdock said the public health employee who handled the preparedness program is leaving. That prompted Meghan DeBolt, public health director, to suggest pooling the funds to create one position.

"There's no new money for this

out of the general fund," Murdock said. "It's just a shift of programs."

Remillard recently said the job description is about making sure first responders and emergency agencies are prepared for a crisis and have what they need during one. That can mean coordinating with multiple agencies, for example, to get enough ambulances to take people to hospitals. That was needed during the 2012 tour bus crash near Pendleton that left nine people dead and 39 injured.

Olsen said the new job also will include the duties of the health department's preparedness program. That work ranges from

assessing health hazards and building community partnerships to supporting health preparedness, according to the five-page job description for the post.

The county is also forming an advisory team to help select the new emergency manager. Murdock said the county would like to have Hermiston School District Superintendent Fred Maiocco on that team because of the depth of emergency management experience he gained in the U.S. Army. The team also would include county department heads and representatives from the areas of Pendleton and Milton-Freewater.

Murdock said the advisory team is a response to local law enforcement, educators and others who have called for broader emergency management participation. The county board of commissioners could vote next week to form the team.

Emergency management and preparedness has become a focus in Oregon in light of the eventual Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. Umatilla and Tillamook counties one year ago struck a "sister community partnership" to send public works and perhaps other employees to help when a big emergency strikes.

HERMISTON

The 9 million word journey

Students read the way to landmarks

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

From Yellowstone to the White House, students at West Park Elementary school have taken a sightseeing journey thousands of miles this month — by reading more than 9.5 million words.

"Sightseeing Across America" is West Park's spin on the national "Read Across America" program. At West Park, students read as many books as possible from Feb. 1 to March 2 and unlocked different monuments and national parks with each million words read.

By the end of Wednesday, West Park students had logged 9.5 million words with two days to go in the competition. The top student, fifth-grader Sabrina Stoddard, read 513,458 words, fourth-grader Cristol Santos had 453,037, and fourth-grader Natalie Frear logged 350,488 words.

Fifth-grade teacher SuAnne Fitzgerald, a former media specialist, had the idea over a weekend. She started researching landmarks the students could travel to and picked nine, each with a 3-5 minute video and discussion plan.

"This year, I really wanted to tie in Read Across America and Black History Month to promote reading in a unique way," Fitzgerald said Thursday. "They're learning history along with each of these, so it's really valuable."

So far, the school has seen Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore,



Gabriela Ambriz-Villicana, from left, Maria Rojo, and Nydia Molinez-Tellez read during class at West Park Elementary on Thursday.

Tuskegee Airmen Museum, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, Statue of Liberty, Fredrick Douglass Square and the Lincoln Memorial. On Wednesday — the birthday of author Dr. Seuss and the anchor for Read Across America week — the student passed the 9 million mark and reached the White House, the last monument on the trip.

"I was really hoping they would make it on Dr. Seuss' birthday — and they did," she said. "We made it all the way to the White House. They will have 10 million words by the end of the week."

The school has tracked word counts by using Accelerated Reader, which allows students to take a knowledge-based test on a book after reading it. For many students, the sightseeing opportunity gave an extra push to read more.

"I like the challenge of

getting the words read. It's fun," 10-year-old Brian Davison said. "You get a lot of information, and you get to do a challenge."

Davison had logged 159,446 words as of Wednesday and had the second highest total for his class, second only to Maria Rojo, who had claimed 184,349. Rojo said her favorite book she read in February was "The Lightning Thief."

"There's infinite possibilities in every book," she said. "This was a good program because you can explore new landmarks if you read. People can't visit every landmark, so this is a way to still see them."

One popular landmark featured the Statue of Liberty. Multiple students, including Rojo and classmate Lucy Headings, named the New York icon as their favorite.

"I didn't know she actually had feet — I thought her dress covered her feet — and I didn't know she had shackles, so that was really cool," Headings, 10, said.

Fitzgerald said the project was a joint effort of all staff and students at West Park who came together to make Sightseeing Across America a success. She said all the feedback she has received — especially from students — has been positive, so a similar program will likely return in the future.

"The students are really excited about it. They're always asking 'How many more do we have to go? How close are we?' That is great because that's the whole point of Read Across America: Having them be excited about reading," she said. "That's something so important, and but sometimes it gets lost in the assessments."

HERMISTON



Three-year-olds Faith Corbett and Jaedon Myers won a \$1,000 Ready 2 Learn scholarship. They are pictured with (left to right) Naquasia Smith, Paul Corbett III, Michelle Munro from Ready 2 Learn and Chelsea Myers.

Ready 2 Learn provides scholarships to preschoolers

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Two Hermiston children haven't even started kindergarten yet but they already have a college scholarship.

Faith Corbett and Jaedon Myers, both 3, won \$1,000 apiece in their very own college savings account in a regional drawing that takes place monthly to encourage children to check out books from their local public library.

"It was a nice little surprise," Faith's father Paul Corbett said.

While he and Faith's mother Naquasia Smith might jokingly argue over where their daughter should go to school someday (Smith is pulling for Washington State University, while Corbett is rooting for his alma mater University of Missouri), they both agree that it's nice to know Faith already has some money in a college savings account.

"If you think college is expensive now, just wait,"

Smith said.

Jaedon's mother Chelsea Myers said as a single mom, the scholarship for her toddler means a lot to her.

"I was extremely excited," she said.

Myers said she and Jaedon prefer cuddling up with a book together instead of watching TV. Right now he's into anything with "firetrucks or tractors or monsters."

"We get maybe 30 books a month from the library," she said.

The Ready 2 Learn program encourages children under the age of 6 to get a library card and participate in library activities like story time. Those who use either of those free privileges are entered into a monthly regional drawing for two \$1,000 scholarships and 10 book baskets.

The scholarships are kept in an Oregon College Savings Plan account that families can add to and access once the child enrolls in college.

BRIEFLY

City continues making payments to Kochs

PILOT ROCK — The Pilot Rock City Council voted 3-2 Tuesday night to resume the practice of paying for an easement to a cellphone tower that sits on city land.

Pilot Rock receives \$600 a month from U.S. Cellular for access to a cell tower the company put up in the early 2000s on a hill west of town. The city struck a deal with the late Dr. Richard Koch to pay him \$300 to ensure access to the tower, but a surveyor later discovered the tower and access road was located entirely on city land. The council, however, voted to keep making the payments.

In December 2015, the council decided to stop the monthly payments.

But after consulting with attorneys during a phone

conversation in a closed door meeting, the council on Tuesday opted to renew the payments. Councilors James Hinkle and Raymond Doherty were opposed, and Councilor Terry Womack was absent.

The \$300-a-month payments to Mary Koch have been controversial in the small town for several years. But continuing the payment could be cheaper than a court fight. And the city could renegotiate its contract with the cellphone company to wash its hands of the problem.

Students to present cello recital

PENDLETON — Cello students of Loree McKenna will present a recital this weekend.

The free event is Saturday at 2 p.m. at Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St. Those performing include

Jacob Griffin, Owen Easley, Reilly Lovercheck, Ashtyn Larsen, Caleb Greenhalgh, Caleb Picken, Hayden Garton, Kieric Speakman, Sam Coleman and Jenna Harrison. Myrna Van Cleave will accompany.

In addition, a pair of cello ensembles will perform — Turtle, featuring Sam Coleman, Emily Long, Kieric Speakman and Jenna Harrison; and the Awesome Aqua Armadillos, whose members are Caleb Greenhalgh, Hayden Garton and Caleb Picken.

For more information, call McKenna at 541-276-4237.

Oldies Night to play hits from 1961

MILTON-FREEWATER — This month's Oldies Night in Milton-Freewater will feature 50 hit songs from 1961.

According to BJ the DJ, it was a great year for popular

music — including "Asia Minor" by Kokomo, "Rama Lama Ding Dong" by The Edsels, "Pony Time" by Chubby Checker and "Let the Four Winds Blow" by Fats Domino.

The event is Saturday at 7 p.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, 816 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater. There is no admission charge.

For more information, contact Bob Jones at 541-938-7028 or dubuquer@charter.net.

Author shares life with Parkinson's

HERMISTON — An author who was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2008 at age 62 will share about her new book, "If I Can Climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, Why Can't I Brush my Teeth? Courage, Tenacity and Love Meet Parkinson's Disease."

Sponsored by Hermiston's Parkinson's Disease

Support Group, Parkinson's Resources of Oregon and Altrusa International of Hermiston, Nan Little will speak Monday, March 7 at 6 p.m. in Conference Room 2 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. The presentation is appropriate for patients, caregivers, health care providers and others touched by Parkinson's Disease.

Little is a wife, grandmother, adventurer, cyclist, teacher, volunteer, speaker and Parkinson's

advocate. Her recent book provides honest and raw insight into what one goes through in the diagnosis and treatment of a neurodegenerative disease. Even with the disease, Little has climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, cycled across Iowa four times, trekked to Annapurna Base Camp and hiked the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu.

The book will be available for purchase. For more information, call 541-720-4256.

Frances Stilwell: Oregon's Botanical Landscape

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Tickets may be purchased at the Hermiston Chamber, American West Properties and Oasis Vineyard Church. A table for 8 can be purchased for \$280.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please call or text Nancy Walchli at 541-571-1723.