

UMATILLA

Homeless residents scattered after cleanup

Hermiston Warming Station opens doors to help those displaced Friday

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office reported over the weekend that a cleanup of the homeless encampment on River Road was successfully completed.

According to a news release, after a warning earlier in the week there were eight people still on site when the sheriff's office arrived Friday morning with a work crew of probationers to help campers pack up their

remaining belongings and throw out everything else.

"The operation began and ended peacefully," according to the statement. "There were no disturbances, and no one was arrested during the event."

John Jefferies, the agency's chaplain, was also on scene, and the sheriff's office reported that he offered those being evicted information about social services and prayed with several of them.

The sheriff's office worked with the Umatilla

Planning Department and Umatilla County Corrections to clean up the camp and trespass the people illegally camping there over concerns about safety and sanitation, including citizens who said they didn't feel safe using the river anymore.

Laurie Love, one of the people trespassed from the encampment, said Monday by phone that she knew of one camper who had left the state, one staying with a relative and a couple that had found shelter for a few days in exchange for cleaning a house. The rest, as far as she knew, were searching for a place to unobtrusively camp on their own.

As for Love, until she found out that the Hermiston Warming Station was going to be open Monday night she had been planning to spend another night walking the streets with her dog.

"I'm 58 years old and I don't know what to do but walk around in circles," she said.

The warming station usually only stays open when the temperature drops below freezing, but volunteer Trish Rossell said in an email that the station would be open every day in March they had enough volunteers in order to help those who had been displaced by the cleanup effort.

Love said she wanted those who were making efforts to help the community's homeless, including the warming station volunteers and those who had stopped by the river camp with food and supplies before it was disbanded, to know that their kindness had been greatly appreciated.

Kimberlee Castellanos said people thought of those who had been staying in the encampment as a group, but they had come to the camp at different times and for different reasons.

Some of them became friends — it was Love who taught Castellanos how to build a fire and keep warm

without giving herself carbon monoxide poisoning — but others just happened to live on the same riverbank for a while and had now gone their separate ways.

The sheriff's office reported that a large dumpster from Sanitary Disposal Services in Hermiston that was full of debris had been removed from the site on Friday. Castellanos and Love said many of the items, including old appliances, had been dumped there by people other than the residents of the encampment.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

HERMISTON



Contributed Photo by Melissa Doherty

The Rocky Heights Elementary team — Elizabeth Doherty, Stephanie Booher, Ashley Treadwell, Katelyn Wadkins — hold up books read for Oregon Battle of the Books.



Contributed Photo

The YMNMs from Sandstone Middle School — Yaloani Alvarado, from left, Maria Tejada, Nazly Chavez, Mirely Reyes, Sally Wooster and coach Krista Fisher — will move on to the state Oregon Battle of the Books.

Students advance to Battle of the Books state finals

By **JENNIFER COLTON**
East Oregonian

Battles were waged and prizes were won this weekend at Blue Mountain Community College, and at the end of the day, two Hermiston teams took home championships.

Thirty-five teams from schools across Eastern Oregon competed Saturday in bracketed play in the Region 6 Oregon Battle of the Books competition. Sandstone Middle School brought home the championship in the middle school division, and Rocky Heights Elementary, also from Hermiston, brought back the championship for the elementary teams.

Both championship Hermiston teams, as well as the second-place teams from each division — La Grande Middle School and McNary Heights Elementary — will compete in the state finals, April 9 at Chemeketa Community College in Salem. This is the first time since 2008 the Eastern Oregon region has had enough participa-



Contributed Photo by Melissa Doherty

Numerous Hermiston elementary students and staff participated in the regional Battle of the Books competition this weekend: Back row, from left: Kristi Smalley, HSD Elementary Librarian, Desert View Team: Kira Grigg, Booke Turner, Megan Palzinski, Cidney Estes, Sunset Team: Keyla Martinez, Lyndsay Egerer, Andrea Schez, Brooklynn Warburton; middle row, from left: West Park Team: Helen Rohrman, Renna Gorham, Sabrina Stoddard, Emily Schwertfeger, Highland Hills: Claire Owens, Lauren Wilson, McKenna Hillman, Madeline White; front row, from left: Rocky Heights Team: Elizabeth Doherty, Stephanie Booher, Ashley Treadwell, Katelyn Wadkins

tion district-wide to send the second-place team to state. This is also the first time McNary Heights has competed at the state level.

The team bracket featured schools from across Eastern Oregon: Adrian, Arlington,

Baker, Boardman, Echo, Ione, Helix, Heppner, Hermiston, La Grande and Pendleton.

In the elementary division, the finals came down to the battle of the heights as Hermiston's Rocky Heights

Elementary faced off against Umatilla's McNary Heights Elementary. The fifth-graders from Rocky Heights squeezed past the third-grade "Bookcraft" team from McNary Heights 48 to 43, according to Kristi Smalley, elementary librarian for the Hermiston School District. Both teams will compete in Salem in April.

As champions, both Sandstone and Rocky Heights received a set of 12 titles for the 2017 Oregon Battle of the Books program.

"Upon receiving the books, Rocky Heights team member Ashley Treadwell immediately asked, 'Can we read them?' and them enthusiastically picked out the title she wanted to read first," Smalley said.

Oregon Battle of the Books is a volunteer-run program sponsored by the Oregon Association of School Libraries. For more information, visit oboblista.pbworks.com/

Contact Jennifer Colton at jcolton@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534

Pendleton man arrested for 31st time

Jody Allen Charged with \$10,000 theft

By **JENNIFER COLTON**
East Oregonian

A Pendleton man went to jail for the 31st time over the weekend, thanks to two police departments, \$10,000 in theft and a long record.

Hermiston Police arrested Jody Jack Allen, 47, of 810 S.W. Court St., Pendleton, on Saturday and he was charged with felony aggravated theft, unauthorized entry into a motor vehicle and second-degree criminal mischief. Saturday's events also marked Allen's 71st criminal charge.



Allen

According to Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston, between 10 p.m. Friday and 5 a.m. Saturday a suspect took items valued at more than \$10,000 from a vehicle in the back parking lot of the Hermiston Best Western Inn. The stolen items included more than \$6,400 worth of tools and farrier equipment as well as a generator valued at \$1,300. A toolbox was also damaged.

The vehicle was parked within view of the hotel's security cameras, and a suspect and his vehicle

were captured on video.

While the theft was under investigation, a Hermiston police officer overheard Umatilla County Sheriff's Deputy Parsons responding to a call on Highway 334 that matched the vehicle in the video. Parsons was contacted with a description of the stolen property, and photographs from the scene matched items in the theft report.

Law enforcement arrested Allen on three outstanding contempt warrants from Hermiston Municipal Court, and a search warrant was obtained for the vehicle. The vehicle was impounded and searched for other stolen items related to the case.

The aggregate value of items taken was more than \$10,000, which elevated the incident to aggravated theft, a felony.

"We are appreciative of the support offered to us by the sheriff's office with the traffic stop and identification of Mr. Allen," Edmiston said.

Allen is in custody at the Umatilla County Jail on a total bail of \$56,000.

Contact Jennifer Colton at jcolton@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534

UMATILLA

Former city manager wins Man of the Year

East Oregonian

Bob Ward may no longer work for the city of Umatilla, but he's still near and dear to many citizens' hearts.

The former city manager was honored with the Man of the Year award at the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet Saturday.

The chamber praised Ward's honesty and integrity in helping city hall become a place people want to visit.

Vicky Borden was named Woman of the Year.

Her highlights include contributing to local schools and the chamber of commerce and was singled out in collecting the signatures for the chamber awards' silent auction.

Taking home Business of the Year was Carlson's Umatilla Drug Store and its owner, Catherine Putnam.

The chamber honored Putnam because of her strong customer service, helping fill orders for residents who can't leave their home and then helping them administer injections before she leaves.

In the community, she serves in the Umatilla/Irrigon Lions Club, Two Rivers Correctional Institution's Prison Advisory Committee, the Agape House and the chamber of commerce.



Ward



Putnam



Borden

Conditions ripe for wheat fungal disease

Stripe rust could cut into yields by as much as 53 percent

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Northwest wheat farmers face a potentially severe epidemic of stripe rust this growing season, as mild winter weather has allowed the disease to develop much earlier than normal.

Forecasts indicate stripe rust could cut into wheat yields by as much as 53 percent in some varieties, according to a report by Xianming Chen, research plant pathologist with Washington State University. Other more resistant varieties might suffer losses between zero and 26 percent.

Stripe rust is caused by a fungus that grows on the leaves of wheat plants in cool, rainy conditions. The disease attacks the plant's enamel, which causes leaves to lose water and eventually produce less grain. Once stripe rust develops, it spreads by spores that are picked up in the wind.

Oregon State University scientists have already identified stripe rust in an irrigated wheat field near Hermiston. Stripe rust has also turned up in a number of fields across southeast Washington.

Richard Smiley, a professor emeritus of plant pathology at OSU's Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center in Pendleton, said fields can become infested if farmers don't deal with the problem quickly.

"Once an infection gets started in a small number of plants, it can explode



Submitted photo

This sample of winter wheat infected with stripe rust was taken from a field near Hazelton, Idaho in 2014.

prolifically if the weather conditions permit," Smiley said. "Growers ought to be monitoring the fields."

Smiley said it's been four or five years since the last major stripe rust infection. But with recurring rainfall and generally overcast weather, that looks like it will change this year.

"There are many winters where the winter kill is substantial. That obviously didn't happen this winter," Smiley said.

Northeast Oregon and southeast Washington are part of the same agricultural system when it comes to dryland wheat, Smiley added. Therefore, if Washington is predicting

"Once an infection gets started in a small number of plants, it can explode prolifically if the weather conditions permit. Growers ought to be monitoring the fields."

— **Richard Smiley**, professor emeritus of plant pathology at OSU's Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center

an explosion of stripe rust, Oregon farmers can expect the same.

The two regions harvested a combined 72.6 million bushels of spring and winter wheat in 2015.

It was Larry Lutchter, soil scientist with OSU Extension Service in Morrow County, who first found stripe rust near Hermiston. Lutchter said he hasn't heard of any other reports, but plans to survey fields again on Friday.

Don Wysocki, with OSU Extension Service in Umatilla County, said he plans to do the same.

"If we continue to get rain and be moist and humid, those are conditions where stripe rust can be more of a problem," Wysocki said.

Farmers are advised to check their fields before applying fungicides. They should also consider planting more resistant varieties of spring wheat to avoid a possible infestation.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

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