



**HAYSTACK
FIRE NEAR
RIETH
REGION/2A**



**FORMER SPY
SPEAKS TO
STUDENTS
REGION/3A**



**Hermiston
comes up short
against Corvallis
GIRLS BASKETBALL/1B**

EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

140th Year, No. 104

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

JOSEPH Avalanche kills skier

Victim was backcountry safety instructor

EO Media Group

The well-known director of the Wallowa Avalanche Center was killed Tuesday by the catastrophe he had taught many students to avoid.

Kip Rand was killed in a steep fall and avalanche while backcountry skiing near Chief Joseph Mountain, west of Joseph in the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

Rand was skiing in the area with a friend. At about 4:30 p.m., Wallowa County Sheriff Steve Rogers said dispatch received a signal from a GPS beacon that initiated a response from the county's Search and Rescue unit. The unit arrived at the area around 9:30 or 10 p.m., around the same time a local backcountry ski group also responded to the incident.

Rogers said his investigation indicates that Rand was caught at the top of an avalanche and was carried about 600 feet down a nearly vertical slope.

Rand initially survived the avalanche, his skiing partner told authorities. But Rand was deceased by the time help arrived, despite attempts at CPR.

According to a statement by



Kip Rand

the Wallowa Avalanche Center, Rand joined the nonprofit in November 2015. He grew up in Boise, Idaho and had "many years of experience as a guide, avalanche educator and pro observer."

Rand taught winter survival and avalanche awareness courses at the center and elsewhere, and relentlessly preached the importance of safety.

Occupiers face new charges

By STEVEN DUBOIS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — The federal government on Wednesday leveled additional charges against Ammon Bundy and dozens of others who staged an armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. One weapons allegation carries the possibility of life in prison.

A grand jury indicted Bundy and most of his co-defendants on a new charge of firearms possession in a federal facility after the group seized the nature preserve in January to oppose U.S. land restrictions. Others are accused of a second firearms allegation, theft or damaging an archaeological site considered sacred to the Burns Paiute Tribe.

The new charges come as the government cracks down on Bundy, his family and others for leading armed standoffs in a long-running dispute over management of public lands in the Western U.S. Federal authorities have charged Bundy's father, Cliven Bundy, and several others in recent months with conspiracy, assault and threats in a 2014 armed standoff over grazing rights near the patriarch's Nevada ranch.

In a packed courtroom in Portland, the younger Bundy and others pleaded not guilty to the new allegations Wednesday. All 26 defendants were previously charged with conspiracy to impede officers of the United States.

Ammon Bundy's attorneys told the judge that he wanted to be advised of his rights. U.S. District Court Judge Anna Brown denied the request, noting that they were read at three prior court appearances.

See STANDOFF/8A

Custodian works 27 years with Hermiston School District



Photo by E.J. Harris

Lead custodian Debbie Stephens moves a rack holding student meal ID cards during lunch on Wednesday at West Park Elementary School in Hermiston.

The unsung hero of West Park

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

For 27 years she has worked in the background — the "unsung hero" of West Park Elementary.

Debbie Stephens, lead custodian, unlocks the school doors each morning. She makes sure the walkways are clear and the building is ready for staff and students. From polishing the floors to moving boxes, cleaning the windows to taking out the trash, Stephens does it all.

"Nobody notices what we do

"The best part of the day is knowing I'm going to come in and get a hug. When I decide to retire, I'll have to figure out what I want to be when I grow up."

— Debbie Stephens, lead custodian at West Park Elementary

until we don't do it," Stephens said. "I like my job. Twenty-seven years has gone really quickly."

As a custodian, Stephens is one of 191 classified employees in the Hermiston School District.

Classified employees work hourly and are not "certified" employees such as teachers and school administrators. This week is "Classified Employee Appreciation Week," a time set aside to recognize school employees

who often work outside of the limelight, including custodians, groundskeepers and maintenance workers, school secretaries, assistants, lunchroom staff and bus drivers.

Stephens never planned on having a career as a classified employee.

At the "old" age of 30, Stephens was a potato worker who realized she needed a job with benefits and more standard hours. Her parents suggested she

See CUSTODIAN/8A

Records requests changing in digital age

Inconsistent policies can mean long waits, high fees

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

As public records requests have migrated from paper to online, some public agencies have not kept up with the shift.

Most records generated by a government agency — including police reports, emails about government business, meeting minutes, maps, applications, budgets and contracts — are public record, meaning anyone has a right to view them. But inconsistent public records policies can sometimes mean long waits and high fees.

A state audit released in November found that public records policies were inconsistent between state agencies, ranging in cost from \$15 per hour to \$40 per hour for staff time.

It also found that while routine requests usually took less than two weeks, more broad requests sometimes take months, leading to the perception that state agencies were dragging their feet in order to thwart investigations by journalists and concerned citizens.

On a local level, many public agencies are still charging per page instead of by the hour despite the fact that public records requests are moving away from physical copies of forms and on to emails, videos and text messages.

In December the Hermiston City Council rejected an attempt by fees to amend the city's public records fees, which had not been updated since 2003, from 25 cents per page to \$35 an hour for any request taking longer than 15

See RECORDS/8A

HERMISTON Highway 395 group may skip tax credit to pave loop dirt cheap

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Property owners on Umatilla County's Highway 395 North Technical Advisory Committee are hoping their neighbors will agree to voluntarily contribute to road improvement efforts instead of forming a local improvement district.

The committee of landowners and business owners has been working with the county on finding ways to foster economic development in the area between Hermiston's urban growth boundary at Punkin Center and Umatilla's at

Bensel Road.

One of the committee's top priorities is improving the roads branching off the highway that are public roads but not owned by any specific jurisdiction.

"A lot of them are in pretty rough shape," county planning director Tamra Mabbott said during a meeting Tuesday. "They probably weren't built to stand and nobody has taken responsibility to maintain them."

Committee chair Steve Watkins, who owns the Columbia Court Club, said the first order of business is getting the loop of Baggett Lane to West Fourth Street

to Kik Street and back to Highway 395 paved. The loop is bordered by a patchwork of commercial and industrial property, including a strip mall along the highway, Eastern Oregon Machine and Hermiston Sanitary Disposal.

To pave the road, property owners could form a local improvement district or handle the project privately.

Forming a local improvement district would only require 50 percent of landowners to agree, and money contributed to the district would mean a property

See HIGHWAY/8A

