

HERMISTON

Police make five felony arrests

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

Hermiston Police made five felony arrests this weekend, including a man they believe blackmailed a family member and an alleged thief connected with \$4,000 worth of stolen items.

On Saturday, Hermiston police were notified a man was attempting to extort money from a relative in exchange for not releasing sensitive information, according to Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston. When the man went to meet the relative to receive the money, he instead met with Hermiston police officers, who arrested him in a local business parking lot.

Hermiston police charged Robert Gilbert Chandler, 37, of Pendleton, with theft by extortion, criminal conspiracy, felon in possession of a deadly weapon and an in-state hold.

Officers discovered a spring-loaded knife and a stun gun in Chandler's possession, and he had an outstanding warrant from Union County. He is being held at the Umatilla County Jail on \$51,000 bail.

On Sunday afternoon, Hermiston police responded to a report of burglary from a home on East Ridgeway Avenue in Hermiston. Two individuals unlawfully

entered the residence and stole a PlayStation 4, Kenwood car stereo CD player, Sony Vaio laptop, an iPhone 5, an LG TV, a Westinghouse television and three collectible knives.

Taylor Reid McKenzie, 25, was arrested and charged with first-degree burglary, first-degree theft and second-degree criminal mischief.

McKenzie was interviewed and admitted to the crimes, according to Edmiston, and the total cost of the items stolen and partially recovered was \$3,550.

The theft is still under investigation, and McKenzie is lodged at the Umatilla County Jail on a bail of \$37,500.

Over the weekend, Hermiston police also arrested:

•Jesus Zuniga Ayala, 60: six counts of criminal in possession of a forged instrument, two counts of identity theft, providing false information to a police officer, and failure to appear. Total bail: \$63,000.

•Catarino Antonio Montez, 37: probation violation (felony), failure to appear (felony), failure to pay fines. Total bail: \$471,520.

•Anthony Stephen Anderson, 25: DUI alcohol (.20 BAC).

BOARDMAN



Photo contributed by Maureen Roy Photography

Morrow County youths are invited to audition for a Missoula Children's Theatre production of "Rumpelstiltskin." The tryouts are March 21 at Windy River Elementary School in Boardman.

Missoula Children's Theatre to present 'Rumpelstiltskin'

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

The strange little gnome that appears to spin straw into gold is featured in an upcoming production by the Missoula Children's Theatre.

Meet the jester, wizards, a queen and king, knights and a band of busy little bees as children and youths from Morrow County stage "Rumpelstiltskin," a familiar fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. The program is made possible through the North Morrow Community Foundation.

Auditions for the show are scheduled for Monday, March 21 at 10 a.m. in the gymnasium at Windy River Elementary School, 500 Tatone St., Boardman. All those attending the audition should bring a snack. Some of the cast members will be asked to remain for a rehearsal immediately after the auditions.

No advanced preparation is necessary. In addition, Missoula Children's Theatre will provide costumes, scenery, props and makeup, as well as professional trained tour directors.

Students from kindergarten through 12th grade are encouraged to try out for the production. Among the roles are Rumpelstiltskin, Queen Beatrice, Clara, a jester, King Whatsat, villagers, gnomes, wizards, knights and bees. Also, assistant directors and those with essential backstage responsibilities are needed for the production.

Rehearsals are planned throughout the week of Spring Break. The hard work will culminate in two free performances March 26 at 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., also at Windy River in Boardman.

Youth unable to commit to the week-long rehearsals may still participate in other programs offered through Missoula Children's Theatre. Several free theater workshops are planned while the children's theater professionals are in town. The topics include mime skills on March 23, stage makeup on March 24, and story-telling techniques on March 24. The workshop times will be announced by the tour directors when they arrive.

For more info, contact cnrmichael@gmail.com.

PENDLETON

Climate change group talks forest management

By GEORGE PAVLEN
East Oregonian

Seated in a circle around the conference room at Blue Mountain Community College, about 30 people gathered Saturday afternoon to discuss the effects of climate change on local forests and what can be done to make the landscape more adaptable.

Wildfire weighed particularly heavy on the group's minds, which included forest landowners, loggers, ranchers and a multitude of agency officials. Together, they brainstormed conditions on the ground and what management is needed to maintain healthy, productive forests.

The workshop was coordinated by the Umatilla County Climate Change Focus Group, and facilitated by employees from the Umatilla National Forest, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State University Extension Service and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

"There's a tremendous amount of knowledge right here in this group," said Dave Powell, a retired silviculturist and member of the county climate change

group. "I'll be very surprised if we don't realize, by the end of this day, that we're all in this together."

Powell turned things over to Chris Johnson, deputy fire staff officer with the Umatilla National Forest, who reviewed climate change models suggesting the average temperature is rising. One model by OSU indicated temperatures in the Blue Mountains could rise anywhere from 1 to 3 degrees Celsius over the next 75 years.

As the weather gets warmer, Johnson said snowpack is diminishing, which sets the stage for abnormally large wildfires. Oregon's snowpack was the lowest on record for the 2015 water year, setting up a devastating fire season that strained resources across the West.

Forests make up 35 percent of all land in Umatilla County, and 37 percent of those forests are owned by private landowners. The workshop focused primarily on which practices will help those landowners take better care of their property in a changing environment.

"We're not just victims to the climate," Johnson said. "There are things we can do."

Johnson went over the

four "Rs" for adapting to climate change: resistance, resilience, restoration and redundancy. By clearing buffer zones around property and thinning overcrowded tree stands, fires will have less fuel available to spread out of control, and provide better protection for homes.

Fire does have a natural role to play in the forests, said Richie Gardner, supervisory forester with the CTUIR. In the past, wildfires used to burn more regularly in the woods, clearing brush and vegetation below the tree canopy. However, decades of fire suppression have built up a backlog of fuels that are prime for high-intensity blazes.

Prescribed burns are one way of reintroducing fire to benefit the forests, Gardner said.

"When we do prescribed fire, we can do it in a way that's safer," he said. "It's risky, but it's not something I would completely shy away from."

Gardner and Johnson led one of three breakout sessions during the workshop, where participants got to talk more in-depth about their experiences and goals for the forests. Topics ran the gamut from preserving water and wildlife to bolstering

markets for timber — one report suggests timber harvests have dropped 90 percent in Eastern Oregon since the mid-1980s. Everyone agreed the forests need proactive stewardship for future generations.

Jeff Blackwood, a former supervisor of the Umatilla National Forest who helped coordinate the workshop, said he was pleased with the turnout and heard a lot of support for thinning tree stands. He said the focus group will take information shared on Saturday and publish it for the public to use as a resource moving forward.

"Our future is constantly changing," he said. "I think we would look to the experts here to carry the dialogue along."

The Umatilla County Climate Change Focus Group is supported by the Board of Commissioners to help promote education and adaptation to climate change. The group is planning a series of additional workshops covering agriculture, human health, wildlife, fish water and what individuals can do to conserve resources.

Contact George Pavlen at gpavlen@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

BRIEFLY

Semi takes out traffic light

PENDLETON — A semi-trailer crashed into the traffic light at Southwest 13th Street and Emigrant Avenue Saturday afternoon in Pendleton, causing the light and power lines to fall into the roadway.

The driver of the truck, Gary C. Miller of Brighton, Colorado, was headed south on 13th Street when he reported another vehicle pulled out in front of him, causing him to jump the corner at Emigrant Avenue.

Nobody was hurt, according to Lt. Bill Caldera with the Pendleton Police Department. A temporary stop sign has been placed at the intersection between Domino's Pizza and the Pendleton Early Learning Center. Caldera said no citations were issued, and the driver who cut off Miller was not found.



Staff photo by George Pavlen

The traffic light at Southwest Emigrant Avenue and Southwest 13th Street in Pendleton was damaged Saturday afternoon when it was struck by a semi truck.

Witham at 541-561-1998 or easygon@eotnet.net.

Relay for Life meets Thursday

HERMISTON — A group of people committed to raising money for the American Cancer Society invite people to join them in the effort.

The Hermiston Relay for Life meets the third Thursday of each month at the Hermiston Church of the Nazarene, 1520 W. Orchard Ave. The upcoming meeting is this week on St. Patrick's Day. The summer fundraiser begins June 25 at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds.

For more information about Hermiston Relay for Life, contact Trish

ODFW confirms Wallowa County wolf depredation

ENTERPRISE — State wildlife officials on Friday confirmed a wolf depredation in Wallowa County, likely by a member of the Imnaha Pack.

On the morning of Wednesday, March 9, a rancher reported finding a dead steer calf in a pasture on his private land in the Upper Swamp Creek area. Officials from the Oregon Department of Fish and

Wildlife investigated the scene the same day and estimated that the animal had been killed Monday night or early Tuesday morning. The calf was estimated to have weighed about 500 lbs., and the skeleton and hide were mostly intact. All internal organs and most of the muscle tissue had been consumed, according to ODFW.

Evidence at the scene

— including bite marks consistent with a wolf attack, wolf tracks and scat — as well as recent reports of the presence of the Imnaha Pack nearby led officials to declare the case a confirmed depredation.

It was ODFW's fourth wolf depredation investigation of 2016 across the state and the second confirmed Oregon wolf kill so far this year. It was the second investigation in Wallowa County. Wolf involvement in the previous incident — on private land on the Zumwalt Prairie in late February — was categorized as "possible/unknown" after an investigation.

Agape House seeks murder mystery actors

HERMISTON — People with a flair for acting are invited to inquire about participating in the upcoming murder mystery presentation by Agape House.

The event is planned as a Mother's Day evening dessert — Sunday, May 8 — at 5:30 p.m. at Agape House, 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. Participants don't need previous acting experience and no lines need to be memorized.

Agape House serves the needs of low-income residents in the community.

For more information, call Dave Hughes at 541-567-8774.

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March 31 • 6:00 - 8:00pm
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POWERFUL TOOLS FOR THE CAREGIVER:

A FREE program for family caregivers. 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.

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To register, call 541-667-3509

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 healthinfo@gshealth.org