

BOARDMAN

STEAM-powered after-school program

Program focuses on science, art, math

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

Staying after school is no longer a punishment.

With a focus on STEAM classes — science, technology, engineering, art and math — Windy River and Sam Boardman elementary schools have joined forces this year to create a popular and growing after-school club.

“From what I’ve seen, a lot of kids are excited about coming, they’re interested in the classes,” coordinator Rian Farwell said. “It’s going really well.”

Farwell, a fifth-grade teacher, had experience working with summer school and after-school programs before coming to Morrow County. This is her first year in Boardman.

Funding for the program comes from the Morrow County School District. But this year, administration at Windy River and Sam Boardman elementary schools opted to pool money to make one large program available to all students. In the past, the program focused only on students who were struggling in school.

The first session, in the fall, was limited to only 50 students, chosen by school staff. In the second, it was first-come, first-serve with a cap of 120 students. The program maxed out and had a waiting list.



Prilica Flores, front, and Emily Vance work on computers during the technology class at the Morrow County after-school program.

Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton

“We opened it up, and the next day we had a flood of kids.”

— Brandon Hammond,
Windy River principal

“We opened it up, and the next day we had a flood of kids,” Windy River principal Brandon Hammond said. “Word-of-mouth is spreading. We’re getting the word out.”

In the next session, which begins next week, the number could top 150 or 200.

“This program is all about getting our students excited about learning,” Hammond



Second-graders Kaylee Christy, from left, America Garcia, Abrianna Lomeli and Jade Arriaga hold up fruit pizzas during the cooking class at the after-school program at Windy River Elementary.

Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton

said. “I think it’s working.”

In the program, students can choose one class to attend on Mondays and one class to attend on Wednesdays. The classes in the winter session included computers, science, art, cooking, book club and LEGO robotics.

In the next session, students will select from art, paper mâché, LEGO robotics, cooking, technology, yoga, dance and a class called “piggy bank,” where they will learn about money and finances through games and activities.

“It’s changing all the time,” Windy River Elementary Principal Brandon Hammond said. “Next year we’re looking at a sewing class and a reader’s theater.

It’s evolving.”

The growing program is also involving the Boardman community. The SAGE Center volunteered to help teach classes, and Columbia River Community Health Services donated 200 lanyards so students can have their names and travel designations — bus, pick-up, or walk — clearly visible. Hammond said the district is “actively” looking for more community involvement through volunteers and local businesses and organizations that may be able to contribute time and expertise.

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



Second-grader Elaina Salgado turns in her badge while Maddyn Morton looks on at the end of an after-school session at Windy River Elementary in Boardman.

Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton

Counties ask parents to fill out health survey

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Health Department is asking for parents’ help to update its profile of the well-being of Eastern Oregon’s children.

A survey is available in print and online across Umatilla, Morrow and Union counties. It will replace national health data from 2012 that is currently being used to create health policy.

“It would be very useful to have some local data on children’s health and what families’ needs are,” said Umatilla County Health Director Meghan DeBolt said Thursday.

“Instead of saying, ‘We assume this is what the community needed,’ we’ll actually know, and we’ll be

able to develop a children’s health improvement plan based on that data,” she said.

The survey is open to anyone in the three Eastern Oregon counties with at least one child age 11 or younger living in their household. The survey has two slightly different versions, one for children ages 0-5, and one for children 6-11. Families with children in both age groups are advised to fill out the survey based on the child who has the next upcoming birthday in the calendar year.

The survey asks about a child’s weight and height, insurance coverage and what types of conditions a child has been treated for or diagnosed with. The goal is to create a “clear picture” of what children’s health care and social needs are

and to help develop targeted interventions and initiatives based on that picture.

The survey should take about 20 minutes. For analysis, Umatilla County must receive at least 350 surveys returned, but DeBolt is hoping for at least 500. The survey launched three weeks ago, and more than 100 have been received from Umatilla County.

“The more we get, the better representation we have of the community needs,” she said.

The survey will be open through the end of April. Surveys can be completed online, turned in at designated events or mailed. Paper surveys will be mailed to an Ohio-based company the organizations have contracted to handle

the assessment. Local organizations will receive the raw data and assessment information.

“We really appreciate everyone taking the 15 to 20 minutes to sit down and fill out the survey so we as policy makers can make targeted decisions on how to use scarce resources in our community,” DeBolt said.

Organizations expect to have the results of the survey by the end of June, and a children’s health improvement plan will be drafted by the end of July to designate three priorities for the county to focus on.

The survey has been mailed to households across the three counties, and it is also available at www.surveymonkey.com/r/OregonChild2016

HEPPNER

Quadriplegic man could get prison time for fraud

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

A wheelchair-bound Heppner man is facing more than three years in prison after pleading guilty to Medicaid fraud. His attorney has pleaded for a circuit judge to let Robert John McEwen serve time outside of prison walls.

McEwen pleaded guilty in October 2015 to five counts of making a false claim and five counts of first-degree theft, according to Morrow County Circuit Court Documents. He also owes restitution of \$132,017.

Because of McEwen’s prior criminal record, the Oregon Department of Justice recommended a prison sentence of three years, three months.

McEwen was convicted in 1999 in Umatilla County of two counts of first-degree sexual abuse. Defense attorney Will Perkinson of Pendleton contended in a Feb. 1 filing that should not have happened. Perkinson stated the testimony of just one person was essential to the conviction, and that person has since recanted.

Sentencing McEwen to prison now “is excessively harsh,” argued Perkinson.

“Mr. McEwen should not be viewed as having a serious prior record considering the abusive treatment of many convicted sex offenders in prisons,” he wrote. “Since he never should have been a sex offender, he should not now be subjected to that level of cruelty, especially considering that he is a 50-year-old quadriplegic

facing a sentence for financial crimes.”

McEwen needs daily, intensive care, according to Perkinson. But from mid-2010 through 2015 he submitted billings to the state and received payments for services above and beyond what he reported. McEwen kept some of the money and paid the rest to caregivers.

Caregivers Justin Carl Hoeft, 31, of Heppner; Danny Andrew Looslie, 60, of Elgin; and Lynne Elaine Uitto, 68, of Umatilla, also made plea deals. Court records show Hoeft and Looslie pleaded guilty in 2015 to one count of making a false claim, and Looslie pleaded guilty in January to one count of making a false claim and three of first-degree theft.

Uitto was sentenced in November to 10 days in jail and three years probation. She also owes almost \$8,500 in restitution. Hoeft’s sentencing is set for June, and he is looking at five days in jail, two years of probation and more than \$7,600 in restitution.

Looslie also could go to prison, according to the records, and owes more than \$110,000. His sentencing is in May.

McEwen’s sentencing is June 23. Perkinson in court documents stated he needs the extra time for investigator Dennis Beyer to talk to the person who recanted. Beyer was the defense investigator in the sex crimes case.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

Rieth-area man jailed for sex crimes against children

PENDLETON — Umatilla County sheriff’s detectives arrested a Rieth-area man for felony sex crimes against two children.

Sheriff’s detectives started the investigation March 9 after a mother reported she suspected Jason Glen Drake, 41, had inappropriate contact with her two children.



Drake

Those children are younger than 12, according to a written statement from the sheriff’s office. The state alleged Drake on Aug. 25, 2015, abused children he is related to, according to court records.

Detectives Erik Palmer and Kacey Ward questioned

Drake about the allegations on Wednesday, according to the sheriff’s office, then arrested and booked him into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, for first-degree charges of rape, sodomy, sexual abuse and unlawful sexual penetration.

The district attorney’s office arraigned Drake on Thursday in Pendleton on two initial counts each of first-degree sodomy and first-degree sexual abuse. Circuit Judge Lynn Hampton set bail at \$400,000. Drake has a preliminary hearing March 31. That could come after a grand jury reviews the case for charges.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FRIDAY, MARCH 25
PENDLETON DELPHIAN CLUB, 1:30 p.m., Vert Club Room, 345 S.W. Fourth St.
PENDLETON MASTERS SWIM CLUB, 5-6 p.m., Roundup Athletic Club pool, 1415 Southgate, Pendleton. Fees are \$5 per session coaching fee; non-RAC members pay \$8 pool fee per session. (Tania Wildbill 541-310-9102).
PENDLETON EAGLES LADIES AUXILIARY KITCHEN, 6-8 p.m., Pendleton Eagles Lodge #28, 428 S. Main St., Pendleton. (541-278-2828).

SATURDAY, MARCH 26
MEN’S BREAKFAST, 8 a.m., Bethel Assembly of God Church, 1109 Airport Road, Pendleton.
RETIRED UMATILLA ARMY DEPOT WOMEN’S CLUB, 9 a.m. no-host breakfast, Pheasant Cafe, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston.
UMATILLA COUNTY POMONA GRANGE, 12:30 p.m. lunch with meeting to follow, Columbia Grange Hall, Diagonal Road, Hermiston.
PENDLETON EAGLES STEAK AND LIVE MUSIC, 6-8 p.m. dinner, music 8 p.m. to midnight, Pendleton Eagles Lodge #28, 428 S. Main St., Pendleton. Open to members and guests. (541-278-2828).

SUNDAY, MARCH 27
HERMISTON EAGLES BREAKFAST, 8-11 a.m., 160 N.W. Second St. Members and

guests welcome.
PENDLETON EAGLES BREAKFAST, 9 a.m. to noon, Pendleton Eagles Lodge #28, 428 S. Main St., Pendleton. Open to members and guests. (541-278-2828).
UNION PACIFIC EMPLOYEES CLUB, 1:30 p.m., Hermiston VFW Hall, 45 W. Cherry Ave., Hermiston. All UP employees, working or retired, are invited to attend. Bring a main dish or dessert and table service. (541-567-5260).

MONDAY, MARCH 28
NATIONAL ACTIVE AND RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES OF HERMISTON, 12 noon no-host lunch, Desert Lanes Bowling Alley. All federal employees, retirees and their spouses are welcome.

IRRIGON MOOSE LODGE TACOS AND BINGO, 6-9 p.m. tacos; 6:30-9 p.m. bingo. Bingo open to the public, 220 N.E. Third St. (541-922-1802 from noon-8 p.m.).

WESTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 6 p.m., Memorial Hall, 210 E. Main St.

V.F.W. POST NO. 922 SOCIAL, 6:30 p.m., VFW Hall, 1221 S.E. Court Place, Pendleton.

UMATILLA-MORROW HEAD START, 6:30-8:30 p.m., 110 N. Fourth St. Hermiston. (Leanna 541-564-6878).

INLAND NORTHWEST MUSICIANS CHORALE, 7 p.m., Harris Jr. Academy gym, 3121 S.W. Hailey Ave., Pendleton. (RaNiel Dunn 541-289-4696).

TUESDAY, MARCH 29
PENDLETON TOASTMASTERS No. 154, 6:45 a.m., Pendleton City Hall community room, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave. (toastmasterdarlene@gmail.com).

BIBLE STUDY, 10 a.m., First United Methodist Church, 352 S.E. Second St., Pendleton. (Rev. Jim Pierce 541-276-2616).

GREENFIELD GRANGE PINOCHLE, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., The Hall, Boardman.

“LIVING FROM THE HEART JESUS GAVE YOU” BOOK STUDY GROUP, 1-2:30 p.m., Bowman Building, 17 S.W. Frazer, Pendleton. (Pat 541-276-6671).

STUDYING THE MIRACLES OF JESUS, 4-6 p.m., Good Samaritan Ministries, 319 W. Locust Ave., Hermiston. (541-564-1041).

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