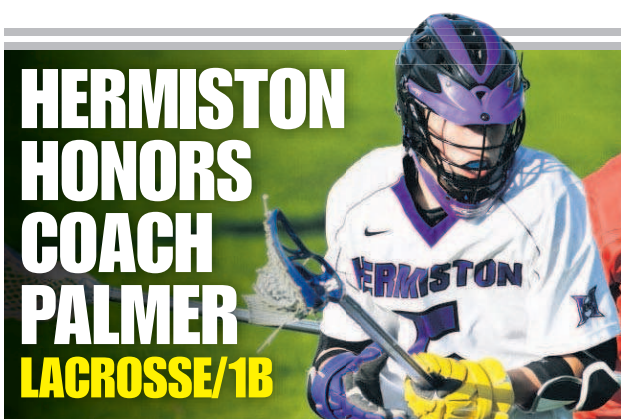




EAST OREGONIAN

APRIL 9-10, 2016

140th Year, No. 126 WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD \$1.50

A taste of Pendleton

International tour operators get VIP treatment

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Travel Pendleton rolled out the leather carpet for a group of international tour operators, even staging a bit of breakfast theater featuring two Western con men at the Pendleton Coffee Bean Friday morning.

In front of an audience from Chinese, Dutch, Australian, Canadian, British, German and French tourism

industries, Travel Pendleton event recruiter Pat Beard played the role of sheriff and brought KOA manager Stuart Howell and Oxford Suites manager Travis Lundquist to justice for the leather bag they swindled.

These nearly two dozen international tour operators were in Pendleton as a part of the Oregon Road Rally, a week-long tour of the Beaver State sponsored by Travel Oregon.

Travel Oregon project manager

Gabi Duarte said international tourists are more likely to book through a travel agent, and these tourism professionals help put together the travel packages they buy.

The goal of the Road Rally tour was to make sure Oregon cities and destinations were included in those packages by giving tour operators a firsthand look at the state.

By the time they reached Pendleton, the tour operators had already been to Portland, Newport and Crater Lake.

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris
A group of international tour group operators serve themselves at a country buffet on Thursday at the Happy Canyon Arena in Pendleton.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Workers with the Stanfield Irrigation District work on patching a ruptured spillway on Thursday in one of their irrigation canals near Echo.

Flowing to the farm

Irrigation season underway for local districts

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

Ray Kopacz shouted over the rumbling of the cement truck Thursday morning as workers patched up a break in the Stanfield Branch Furnish Ditch that cost farmers a full day's worth of irrigation water.

The Stanfield Irrigation District

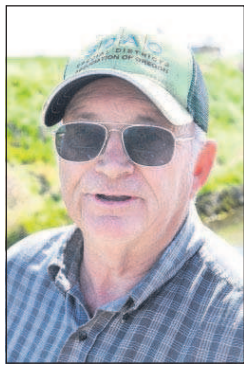
had just started pulling water from the Umatilla River on March 31 and already they were faced with an emergency repair. Fortunately, Kopacz said they were able to catch the leak before it caused serious damage and the system was turned back on by Friday.

"It's getting to be that time of year everybody wants water," said Kopacz, SID manager. "Water is

like gold. If you don't have it, this ground is worthless."

Irrigation season is underway across the Umatilla Basin, and most districts are feeling better than they did during last year's brutal, drought-stricken summer. Local snowpack is close to average, and so long as it doesn't melt too quickly,

See IRRIGATION/10A



Kopacz

First EOTEC building to open May 13

Fundraising committee raised more than \$1.8M

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center's grand opening for its first completed building has been set for May 13.

Rob Drier of Frew Development Group reported to the EOTEC board on Friday that the event center building is essentially done, minus a few small fixes that came up during the punch list walkthrough and building inspection. But audio-visual equipment, signs, lighting and pavement are still in the works.

The board had previously discussed an April 28 grand opening, but board chair Byron Smith suggested that the paving might not be done by then and that it would be better to hold off on officially scheduling the event.

Frew Development Group CEO John Frew was in Hermiston for a visit, however, and urged the board to set a date right then and there. He said in his 20 years of managing projects like EOTEC, he had learned that scheduling an event gave everyone the incentive they needed to meet the deadline. When another venue booked a concert six months before construction was finished, he said "no one wanted to be the one who made the concert not happen."

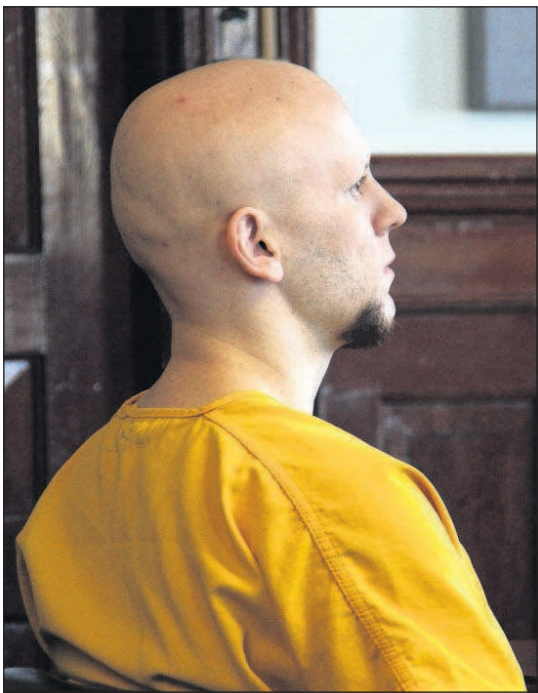
"Uncertainty is our enemy," he said. "Make it happen."

The board decided that the second Friday in May — eight days before the first event booked by a member of the public — was ideal. There was some trepidation and a few jokes when they realized that would fall on Friday the 13th, but in the end the board

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Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton
Travis Michael Martin stares straight ahead during his sentencing Friday in Heppner.

Father sentenced to 10 years for death of infant daughter

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — A judge on Friday sentenced Travis Michael Martin to 10 years in prison for the death of his 10-month-old daughter.

In Morrow County Circuit Court, Martin, 22, of Irrigon, pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree manslaughter, one count of abuse in the third degree and one count of first-degree criminal mistreatment.

On May 28, 2015, Martin reportedly threw his 10-month-old daughter, Savannah, onto the ground. The girl was awake after the incident but appeared

"Whatever happens here today will never bring the child back. But hopefully people will heal, life will go on. We miss her every day."

— Bobby Harris, stepfather of KaSandra Martin,

sick the next morning. When the child later became unresponsive while in the care of her mother, KaSandra Martin, she was taken to St. Anthony Hospital. The child was then flown to Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center and Children's Hospital in Spokane, where she died.

Martin was arrested June 1, 2015. Martin originally pleaded not guilty to the charges but changed his plea earlier this year.

Martin had no prior criminal history.

Bobby Harris, stepfather of KaSandra Martin, spoke on behalf of the victim.

"You should never have to bury a 10-month-old child. ... This will never make sense, no matter what happens today in this courtroom," Harris told the court. "Whatever happens here today will never

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