

WATER: Elementary school students can participate in challenge via an essay contest

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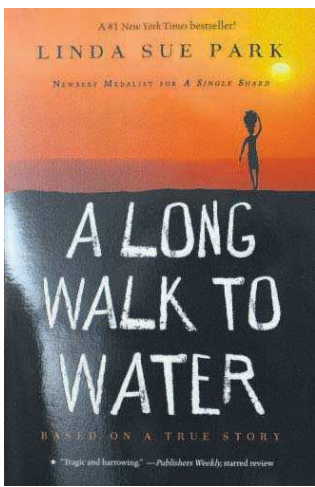
community and people are asked to read it and pass it on to a friend.

Hughes said after the committee read the book she began researching what Altrusa could do to help and found the Water Project. One thing that drew her to that particular nonprofit is its transparency. Donors are told what project their donation went to and can track its progress online through pictures, field reports and GPS coordinates. The Water Project also stays after construction is complete to train villagers on how to maintain the well and practice good hygiene with the water.

"They don't just build the well and walk away, they continue to work with the community," Hughes said.

Projects to bring water to the Sahara vary in cost depending on variables like the depth of the well, but Hughes said the Water Project spends an average of \$23 for every person a project serves. Depending on how much Hermiston raises, the community could end up sponsoring an entire well or just helping finish a project that was already started.

Hughes said if people aren't up to giving up their morning coffee or have a health reason not to fully participate (children shouldn't give up milk, for



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
There will be 150 copies of the book "A Long Walk to Water" by Linda Sue Park passed out to the community.

example) they can still give money or do a modified challenge.

She said it was ironic that drinking only water would be a sacrifice for Hermiston residents, while drinking that same water would be a huge blessing for people in other parts of the world.

"If anyone really drinks just water for two weeks I can imagine they will be far more aware of it," she said.

To kick off the challenge, Altrusa International is hosting an event from noon to 2 p.m. on Saturday at McKenzie Park with refreshments, giveaways and a water-carrying obstacle course. Participants will be given a Water Project wristband and a chart to track the money they are saving. A

second event will also be held at the park on April 30 to celebrate everyone's achievements and collect donations. People can also donate to Hermiston's challenge page online at thewaterproject.org and search for Hermiston under "Find a fundraising page."

Elementary school students in Hermiston are also being given the opportunity to participate in the challenge via an essay contest about the need for clean water in Africa, due April 22. They can get information about the essay prompts and word minimums from their school library.

Hermiston School District children's librarian Kristi Smalley said "A Long Walk to Water" was an Oregon Battle of the Books selection this year, so many children in the community have already read it.

"They don't have to read the book to do the essay, but we encourage it," she said.

On Monday night the Hermiston City Council helped recognize the challenge by reading a proclamation encouraging people to join. The council also helped kick off the fundraising portion after councilor Doug Primmer challenged everyone on the council to donate \$25 right then.

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EDUCATION: Audience supported expanding career technical education

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state's standardized testing system needs to be examined and said Every Student Succeeds should give the state the power to broaden the scope it uses to analyze student performance.

"Instead of basing everything on the test, we can look at different categories," he said.

Many in the audience were supportive of boosting focus on academic subject areas outside math and English, such as history, art and science.

Students in the audience, many of them from the

Future Farmers of America, spoke in favor of increasing the variety of courses offered at high schools to keep students engaged.

Audience members exemplified career technical education as a way to offer students a path to success and employment, especially those that are skilled but not academically inclined.

Other persistent ideas from the audience for improving schools included reducing class sizes, establishing more rapport between students and teachers and fostering better relationships with

parents and the business community.

Noor and the department of education will continue to tour the state over the next few months to collect input from the public.

The department will use input from the Pendleton forum and elsewhere to create a draft plan, which it expects to publish for public comment in August.

The department expects to produce a final state plan, pending federal approval, in the fall.

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LAGOON: Moore said some local growers were interested in using the biosolids to enrich their soil

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million upgrade of the plant resulted in a much better liquid handling process, churning out clean water into the Umatilla River and — once the permits come through — the West Irrigation District's main canal.

The upgrade didn't include the solids side of the plant, however, which still sends everything filtered out of the recycled water to be stored in an open-air lagoon behind the plant.

Moore said that side of the process works fine and meets all of the government standards, but the city is

paying to store, haul and dump a lot more liquid mixed in with the solids than it needs to. He said if the city invested in dewatering equipment and a dump truck, it could cut the cost per ton to \$350 and take a couple of loads of sewage to the landfill a week instead of storing it outdoors for years.

Moore told councilors the investment would pay for itself within three to four years and the equipment would last about 15 years. Not using the lagoon would also cut down on odors coming from the plant.

"I think this deserves some critical attention for

the money it could save the city," he said.

Moore said he had some preliminary discussions with local growers and some of them were interested in using the biosolids to enrich their soil instead of seeing it sent to a landfill. Currently the landfill charges the city \$16 per ton to dump it. Moore said the city would have to weigh the cost of staff time for going through the DEQ permitting and soil testing processes if it cooperated with growers.

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