



EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2016

140th Year, No. 132

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

PGG asks to dissolve co-op

Members will decide at May 2 meeting

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

The sun appears to be setting on PGG Country. Members of Pendleton Grain Growers will vote whether to dissolve the local farmers' co-op at a meeting May 2, according to a letter sent Friday. If the motion passes, it will spell the end for PGG, which has served Eastern Oregon farmers since 1930.

It's been a tumultuous few years for the co-op, which has bled money and lopped off multiple arms of its business trying to restore profitability. Retail stores closed in 2014; the agronomy division later sold to a company based in Colorado; and most recently, PGG has been in negotiations to sell its grain assets to multinational United Grain Corporation. Now, PGG's Board of Directors is recommending

dissolution as the best course of action. That would mean selling everything — grain, energy, seed, transportation and the Precision Rain irrigation subsidiary — in order to pay off debt and have some equity left over to return to members. If growers choose not to dissolve PGG, the co-op would likely still fold and members would be less likely to recoup any equity. In the letter, which was obtained by

the *East Oregonian*, board chair Tim Hawkins stated that operating costs are too high and grain receipts too low to continue offering the same services.

"The decision to move toward a plan of dissolution was not easy, but we believe it is the best alternative to return what equity we can over time to members and allow the businesses to operate independently or with partners who can bring new resources and value to our

See PGG/10A



Pendleton Grain Grower's Rew Elevator stands as a longtime landmark west of Pendleton. EO file photo



PRISON PUPS

Raz, an 18-week-old yellow lab, waits to be introduced to the team of inmates that will be training him to be a service dog Monday at EOCI in Pendleton. Six puppies will start their training at the prison in a two-year program where inmates live with and train the dogs to help those with disabilities.

EOCI inmates train dogs to assist people with disabilities

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Six new inmates arrived Monday at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. Unlike most newbies, these guys seemed genuinely happy to arrive at their new home. They wagged their tails, romped and licked the faces of every correctional officer they met. These newest prison residents hadn't actually broken any laws —

they are puppies that will be trained by inmates to assist people with disabilities. Under the guidance of the Salem-based Joys of Living Assistance Dogs program, the trainers will teach the dogs to perform such tasks as turning off lights, shutting doors, retrieving dropped items, loading and unloading washers and dryers and keeping their owners from falling. Yesterday, the 12 inmate trainers

See DOGS/10A



Inmate Seth Arnett receives an 8-week-old golden lab puppy named Sawyer from Janet Yarbrough on Monday at EOCI in Pendleton. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

HERMISTON

Mooney chosen to replace Smith

East Oregonian

Tricia Mooney, assistant superintendent for the Pendleton School District, likely will move back to the west end of the county.

Monday, Hermiston Superintendent Fred Maiocco announced he will recommend Mooney as assistant superintendent of human resources for the Hermiston School District, replacing Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith. Smith recently accepted a position as superintendent for Walla Walla Public Schools and will be leaving the Hermiston School District on June 30. Mooney would begin July 1.

A press release from the Hermiston School District points out Mooney started her educational career in 1995 as a teacher in the Hermiston School District. In 2005, she took over as principal of Rocky Heights Elementary School, and in 2007 she became principal at Armand Larive Middle School. In 2008 she was hired by the Pendleton School District to be its director of human resources, and in 2009 she was promoted to assistant superintendent.

"I am extremely grateful to the Pendleton School District for the valuable experiences and relationships I have built over the last eight years," Mooney said in a written statement. "Although I will miss Pendleton, I look forward to the next step in my career."

The Hermiston School Board will consider Mooney's employment during its next regular business meeting, May 9. Pendleton Superintendent Jon Peterson is also leaving the district this summer, to be replaced by Andy Kovach from Ontario. Peterson announced his retirement in 2015 and Mooney and Smith were both finalists for the position. Smith withdrew his name before accepting the Walla Walla job.



Mooney

PENDLETON

Unopposed mayoral bid in time of change

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

In a Pendleton municipal election teeming with hopefuls, mayoral candidate John Turner is a rarity — an uncontested candidate. Barring a successful write-in campaign, Turner will take over for longtime Mayor Phillip Houk in January. According to Turner, Houk played a role in convincing the former president of Blue Mountain Community College to take another stab at political office.

"In January, I was not really considering running for mayor," he said. "But I started getting a lot of phone calls from the mayor and city council members, saying, 'Our mayor's

not running for re-election. Would you consider running?' I've been retired for a couple of years now, I got my batteries recharged and I said 'Yeah, I'll do that.'"

Despite having spent most of his life outside Eastern Oregon, Turner has quickly become a prominent voice in Umatilla County politics and government since moving to Pendleton 13 years ago. Born in Texas and raised in Oklahoma, Turner went on to receive a bachelor's degree in political science



Turner

John Turner

Age: 62
Occupation: Retired, former president of Blue Mountain Community College
Hometown: Tulsa, Okla.
Years in Pendleton: 13
Highest level of education: Masters degree, Catholic University of America
Family: Married, two children, four grandchildren

from the University of Oklahoma and a master's degree in international affairs from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. before beginning a 28 year career with the U.S. Marine Corps. Turner spent his last four years as

See TURNER/10A

