

Unity school extends invitation to Portland students

By ERIC MORTENSON
EO Media Group

A tiny Eastern Oregon school has an invitation for Portland high school students: Come stay with us for a semester and learn about ag and science.

The program, which will begin next school year with eight Portland girls visiting the first semester and eight Portland boys arriving for second semester, is a deliberate attempt to span the urban-rural divide. And Oregon does not get more rural than the Burnt River School in Unity, Ore., about 50 miles east of John Day.

The Burnt River School District has a single building, a K-12 charter school. In the 2015-16 school year — they're already out for the summer — the district had 34 students. Fielding an eight-man football team last fall required an allegiance with Prairie City School. Cattle ranching is the primary way to make a living in the area.

District Superintendent Lorrie Andrews also serves as school principal, teaches personal finance and careers, helps seniors with their portfolios and advises the yearbook kids. She's been there 30 years. "Time for me to go, huh?" she jokes.

She's been working on Burnt River's invitation to Portland for a couple of years, with noteworthy help from state Rep. Greg Smith, a Republican from Heppner, state Rep. Cliff Bentz, a Republican from Ontario, and Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett. Now they are ready to try it.

"It is something we've thought a lot about," Andrews said. Burnt River has a "great school and an excellent staff," she said, but the district's enrollment has declined



The entire student body and staff of Burnt River School poses on picture day in September 2015. The Eastern Oregon school invites Portland high school students to come stay for a semester and learn about agriculture and science. Lorrie Andrews, the superintendent and principal who also teaches careers and personal finance, is on the far right.

for several years. Twenty-eight of the school's 34 students are high school age.

"We were just thinking we need to think outside the box, so to speak," Andrews said.

Over the May 21-22 weekend, Portland Public Schools sent an email to its high school families, telling them of the opportunity to take part in the Burnt River Integrated Agriculture/Science Research Ranch program, or BRIARR.

On Monday, May 23, Andrews responded to 23 emails about the

program. A bunch more arrived Tuesday.

Portland students will get a semester of hands-on learning in what Burnt River describes as a "variety of natural resource settings." They'll learn about animal production science, sustainable rangeland science and forest restoration studies, and do water quality monitoring with the Powder Basin Watershed Council.

She said it made sense to extend the invitation to Portland, by far the state's largest urban center. The city has more than 49,000 students

in 78 schools, including 10 high schools.

"We were thinking there probably are students out there who would enjoy a rural experience and a small school experience at the same time," Andrews said. "I think it's a way to bridge that divide. I think there are a lot of misconceptions in both directions. I think we can all learn from one another. Kids are usually open to that."

Attracting more students helps the district's budget. The Oregon Department of Education pays school districts a standard per-stu-

dent amount of \$7,100, and that funding will follow the Portland students to Burnt River School. The students will be hosted by local parents, but the details haven't been finalized.

Andrews said the district is engaged in a number of alternative ways to stay viable. The school became a charter school so it could offer "distance learning," and attract students outside the district who attend class by Skype, the on-line system. The district also has successfully hosted a number of foreign exchange students over the years, Andrews said.

Burnt River partners with other institutions. Blue Mountain Community College, in Pendleton, put on a short-term welding class for Burnt River kids. Welding, GPS use and small engine maintenance will be offered as mini-courses next year, and Andrews hopes to have a mobile livestock artificial insemination lab visit the school. She's talking to Treasure Valley Community College about an equine science unit.

Students can take college credit courses, and the district pays for it, she said.

"It's important," Andrews said. "It's a priority for the school board to have students prepared to go on, even though we're so rural."

The district will interview applicants in June, looking for students who will be the right fit for Unity, population 75.

"If it's important to you to spend a lot of time at the shopping mall or the movies, this isn't the place for you," Andrews said. "Because that's not where we are."

Application forms and a brochure are available on the district's website: <http://burntriver.k12.or.us/home>

BRIEFLY

Oldies Night spins 'The Genius' of Ray Charles

MILTON-FREEWATER — Ray Charles had his first hit on the rhythm and blues chart in 1949, broke the pop charts eight years later and then added country and western hits to his repertoire.

To hear 49 songs of Ray Charles, along with tidbits about his music and life, head to Oldies Night in Milton-Freewater. BJ the DJ will spin such hits as "Georgia on my Mind," "Hit the Road, Jack," "Ruby" and "I Can't Stop Loving You."

The free event is Saturday beginning at 7 p.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, 816 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater. Refreshments will be provided by the Frogs.

For more information, contact Jones at 541-938-7028 or email dubuquer@charter.net.

Radio show rekindles memories

PENDLETON — Reminiscences of the good old days when people gathered around the radio is featured during a special presentation at McKay Creek Estates.

The public is invited to "Reliving Radio, the Way Radio Was" Sunday from 2-3 p.m. at the assisted living facility, 1601 Southgate Place, Pendleton. The event is free.

Featuring Dick Karman's show, the presentation showcases samples of entertainment, commentary, news and variety that made up the time-treasured memories of radio from the 1920s to the 1950s. The opening bars from a favorite theme song will rekindle the long forgotten memories of hearth and home from childhood.

Due to space limitations, those planning to attend are asked to RSVP by calling 541-276-1987.

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

Pools open in coming week

East Oregonian

The Hermiston Family Aquatic Center will open for the summer on Saturday, just as temperatures near triple digits for the first time this year.

The Pendleton Family Aquatic Center will open Thursday, June 9.

Season passes are on sale at the Hermiston pool, 879 W. Elm St., on Thursday from 6-8 p.m.

On Saturday the preseason swim schedule begins at 1:10 p.m. Preseason hours run June 4-12 from 1:10-6 p.m. with the exception of Monday, June 6 when the pool will be closed. Regular season hours run from June 13 to Aug. 14 from 1:10-7 p.m.

Daily admission for 2016 is \$4 for children under 13, \$5 for teenagers age 13-17, \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors and \$20 for a family of up to two adults and four children residing in the same household.

Children under age nine are not allowed into the aquatic center unsupervised.

Over the spring the city made repairs to the pool, including replacement of the crumbling tile in the multi-use pool, new rebar and repair of a leak.

For more information contact the Parks and Recre-



Lifeguard Donte Robinson takes a slide during his break at the Pendleton Aquatic Center during the 2015 season.

ation office, 541-667-5018 or Hermiston Family Aquatic Center, 541-289-7665 after the pool opens.

At the Pendleton aquatic center, 1901 NW Carden Ave., a 10 percent discount is available for season passes until the day the pool opens June 9. There are also discounted

passes for low income families within Pendleton city limits.

Without a discount, a season pass is \$55 for children (or \$4 for one day) or \$65 for an adult (\$6 a day), and punch cards for multiple visits are available.

The pool is open daily from noon-8 p.m.

PENDLETON

Police arrest man for park assault

East Oregonian

A Pendleton man assaulted and fractured another man's jaw on Sunday, according to Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts.

A m o s Mitchell Burton, 27, faces charges of fourth-degree assault, third-degree robbery, third-degree theft and interfering with a peace officer. The robbery charge is a class C felony in Oregon, the rest are misdemeanors.

Roberts reported officers at 3:40 p.m. Sunday responded to Roy Raley Park, 1205 S.W. Court Ave., to investigate a report of an assault. Police found Ezra Bennett, who said a man he did not know followed him from the Bare Bones mini-mart, 1304 S.W. Dorion Ave., to the restroom at the park.

"Shortly after entering the restroom, allegedly

Bennett was struck from behind rendering him unconscious," Roberts reported. "He awoke to find his backpack and wallet gone."



Burton

Bennett reported he had a bump on his head, according to police records, and Roberts stated a medical exam found he suffered a broken jaw from the assault.

Through the use of video surveillance and statements from Bennett, officers established Burton as a suspect, Roberts stated, and found him a little after 5 p.m. on the Umatilla River levee. Burton had Bennett's backpack, but not the wallet.

Police arrested Burton. He is in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, in lieu of \$20,000 bail and pleaded not guilty Tuesday to charges in circuit court in Pendleton.

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