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WIENER WEEKEND STRETCHED REGION/3A



LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL TOURNAY SPORTS/1B

EAST OREGONIAN

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140th Year, No. 177

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

HERMISTON

Fire damages, shuts down Columbia Court Club



Firefighters work to contain a structure fire at the Columbia Court Club north of Hermiston.

By ALEXA LOUGEE
East Oregonian

A fire spread through the Columbia Court Club north of Hermiston Monday morning, bringing firefighters from around the region to douse the blaze that did massive damage to the city's oldest health and fitness club.

Hermiston Fire Department first received a call of black smoke filling the Columbia Court Club building at 11:24 a.m.

Firefighters located a fire on the first floor near

the women's locker room, and the fire spread upwards to the second floor. Crews contained the fire within a half hour of the initial 9-1-1 call, but black smoke could still be seen coming from windows, doors and vents throughout the busy lunch hour.

Steve Watkins, owner of Columbia Court Club since he established it in 1978, was repairing a drinking fountain toward the back of the building when the lights flickered and then turned off. Knowing there were people using the facilities,

See COURT CLUB/8A



Clinton, Trump or Mickey?

Disney's mouse is top fictional write-in candidate in Oregon's primary; handwritten votes tedious for officials

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

As voters contemplate a likely choice between two of history's most widely disliked presidential nominees in November, they have other options.

They can vote for a third-party nominee. But thanks to America's write-in system, they can also vote for Mickey Mouse, Archie Bunker, Miss Piggy or Elmer Fudd — all "candidates" who received write-in votes in Umatilla County during the May primaries.

One voter in Umatilla County voted for Mickey Mouse as a Democrat, but elsewhere the Disney character — who is the most popular fictional character write-in candidate in the state — received an even higher number of votes for Republican and Independent nominations. A total of 70 votes for Mickey Mouse were cast in statewide races, according to data obtained from the Secretary of State's office.

Kim Lindell, Umatilla County elections manager, said even though the write-in process was meant for real, live candidates, people can write in whatever name they wish. There are always some who take the opportunity to cast a vote for a fictional character or a celebrity instead.

"Every election and every race we see a few of those," she said.

The write-in space can be used to elect candidates who fail to file for a spot on the ballot before deadline but have decided that they want to run anyway. It can also be used by incumbents in the primary to stave off a challenger in the general election.

State Representatives Greg Smith (District 57) and Greg Barreto (District 58) are both members of the Republican Party, for example, but will also be running as the Democratic Party and Independent Party nominees in November. No Democrats or Independent Party candidates filed to run for their seat in the primary, so by urging their supporters from those parties to write in their name, they managed to clinch the nominations from all three of Oregon's major parties, which could weaken any write-in campaign from a latecomer to the general election.

State Senator Bill Hansell (District 28) also locked up the Democratic nomination through the write-in,

See WRITE-IN/8A

MILTON-FREEWATER

Officials discuss creating Hispanic committee

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Leaders in Milton-Freewater are considering spinning off an idea used by Hermiston on the other side of Umatilla County to increase Hispanic participation in city government.

Two members of Hermiston's Hispanic Advisory Committee met with Milton-Freewater city officials June 8 to discuss starting a similar committee there.

Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Elfering said he asked committee member Eddie de la Cruz and former Hermiston City Councilor George Anderson to give a presentation on Hermiston's committee after Milton-Freewater officials expressed interest in increasing civic participation from its sizable Hispanic population.

See HISPANIC/8A

New fires erupt as heatwave sears West

LOS ANGELES (AP) — New wildfires erupted Monday near Los Angeles and chased people from their suburban homes as an intense heatwave stretching from the West Coast to New Mexico blistered the region.

Towering columns of smoke rose from the San Gabriel Mountains as two fires a few miles apart devoured brush on steep slopes above foothill suburbs.

Police in the city of Azusa and parts of Duarte ordered hundreds of homes evacuated. Others were under voluntary evacuations.

"It's crazy. It's super close," said 17-year-old Tawni Atencio, whose family was evacuating their home in Bradbury.

She said the flames were just a couple miles away and were making the house hot despite air conditioning. She watched as smoke from the fire billowed outside and helicopters dropped retardant on the flames.

"It looked like a bomb exploded," she said. "It's scary. We're just praying it doesn't get to our house."

The two fires had grown to a combined 5 square miles.

The first was sparked by a fatal car crash, the California Highway Patrol said.

The second was much closer to foothill neighborhoods and brought quick evacuations. Its cause has not been found.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

The Umatilla National Forest veterans crew, facilitated by the VetsWork GreenCorps program, heads to a practice fire Friday near the Marcus Whitman Trail off Summit Road.

Heat of battle

Veterans team up to take on northeast Oregon wildfires

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

The military veterans marched single file toward a plume of white smoke, dressed in full gear and ready for their first taste of action on the front lines.

Armed with pulaskis, shovels and chainsaws, they quickly surrounded the slow-moving forest fire and dug a ring of dirt to stop it from spreading. Taking cues from their squad boss, the team worked in lockstep and called out every move in order to stay together.

It's not exactly the same as the military, but Ben Barnett said there's a structure and



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Two members of the Umatilla National Forest veterans crew, facilitated by the VetsWork GreenCorps program, cut line around a practice fire Friday near the Marcus Whitman Trail off Summit Road.

discipline to wildland fire-fighting that reminds him of his four years in the Navy. He missed that brotherhood while attending college in Georgia, and decided to make his way

west to Oregon to embark on a new career.

Barnett, 31, is one of several young veterans participating in this year's Vets-

See HEAT/8A



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