

PENDLETON

# Grass fire narrowly misses homes

By WILL DENNER  
East Oregonian

A grassy hillside caught fire north of the Interstate 84 overpass on Highway 11 in Pendleton Monday evening, forcing a few residents to evacuate.

Smoke filled the homes of Nancy Nash and her mother, Iris Campbell, who live on Southeast Sixth Street. Firefighters instructed them to leave their homes, though the fire didn't reach the structures.

"I've never (seen) it do this," said Nash, who has lived in the house for eight years. "This is kind of scary."

Firefighters responded to a 9-1-1 call about the fire at 5:32 p.m., according to Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo. Ciraulo commended the quick response time of local agencies.

"Had it been another minute," Ciraulo said, "We would've been mopping up two homes."

Neighbor Pete Tadao first saw the fire near a public staircase that connects Southeast Sixth Street at the top of the hill with Highway 11 below. Fearing the fire would spread to his home on Sixth Street, Tadao drove down to Highway 11 to get a better view. Tadao estimated that the fire came within five to 10 feet of the staircase.



A Pendleton firefighter watches as flames burn through a field near S.E. 6th Street on Monday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pendleton Police and ODOT briefly blocked Highway 11 northbound, but reopened the road once the fire was contained.

In addition to Pendleton Fire Department, the fire departments of Pilot Rock, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Bureau of Indian Affairs responded

to the call. Ciraulo said the fire was contained within an hour of the response.

As temperatures continue to rise, Ciraulo urged citizens to be cautious and when necessary alert the Fire Department of potential hazards.

"We need people to be ever-vigilant" Ciraulo said.

UMATILLA

# Landing Days builds community bond

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Umatilla Landing Days was a little smaller than usual on Saturday, but Umatilla residents in attendance didn't seem to mind.

The annual event, which celebrates Umatilla's history each summer, was originally scaled down to just the fireworks show after a struggle to find enough volunteers, but later the parade, afternoon entertainment, food, games and an evening concert were all added back in. The only major components that ended up missing were the craft vendors and tours of Old Town.

Leah Garza, who attended Landing Days when she was a child and was back again for the first time in years, said the important thing wasn't so much the event, it was the excuse for community members to mingle.

"We don't have too many events every year in Umatilla, so it's good to do something to bring the community together," she



Umatilla High School cheerleaders and alumni perform during Umatilla Landing Days on Saturday.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

said. Candelario Escovado, a single dad who was taking a break in the shade watching his three children in a bouncy house, said he was just happy for something to keep the kids entertained.

"There's nothing to do but the library and the river, and we heard about this, so here we are," he said.

Nancy and Jeremy Evans, who have lived in Umatilla for about eight years, were enjoying teriyaki chicken kabobs in the shade on Saturday afternoon. They

said they used to run a Fourth of July celebration in Idaho, and the event fell apart after they left because no one was willing to step up. So they understand that sometimes events have to be changed when volunteer levels falter.

That's no reason the show shouldn't go on, however, Nancy said.

"I think it's worth having because it gets a lot of people out with their children, and I know it's hard to get people outside," she said.

Jeremy said they enjoyed the small-town celebration after previously attending parades in Las Vegas, where it was sometimes an eight-hour ordeal to travel downtown, find parking, watch the three-hour parade and then fight wall-to-wall traffic getting back home.

"We come (to Landing Days) when we can, just because we like to be outside and watch the people and the boats," Nancy said.

Jennifer Wylie, Umatilla Chamber of Commerce president, said organizers were thrilled with the weather, which featured cloudless blue skies and temperatures in the eighties.

"It's just a fun event overall, and people love the fireworks," she said.

The afternoon featured entertainers from around the region, including the Round-Up City Cloggers, Umatilla High School cheerleaders and young Hermiston dancers Daytona Tracy and Phillip Mecum.

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HERMISTON

# Relay brings people together for cancer research

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

It's a rare person whose life doesn't end up being affected by cancer in one way or another.

It's no surprise, then, that people of all ages and walks of life came together at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds on Saturday for Hermiston's 20th annual Relay for Life to raise money for cancer research.

Some of them were survivors, some had lost a loved one to the disease, some were caregivers and some came in support of friends and family. But they all had one goal in mind: beat cancer.

"I have friends that 20 years ago would have died, but research has made all the difference," said Jan Evans, who has been involved with Relay for Life for the past 21 years after surviving breast cancer. It was her sixteenth year running the silent auction, which featured more than 350 items donated by the community.

Evans said she participates in part out of gratitude that she managed to survive a disease that takes hundreds of thousands of lives in the U.S. each year. She said she would likely retire from being in charge of the auction next year but it wouldn't stop her from continuing to be involved with Relay for Life in other ways.

Kristy Gifford said she also came to the fairgrounds on Saturday to help support the research that could save lives in the future. She had traveled from Independence, Oregon, to join a team of friends and family in remem-



Cancer survivors enter the opening ceremony for the Hermiston Relay for Life on Saturday at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

brance of her brother-in-law Dennis Wade, who died three years ago of pancreatic cancer. Her husband is a cancer survivor.

"For people facing the battle, it's not easy," she said. "It's those dreaded words. But they're always coming out with new research."

Beyond supporting new cancer research, Relay for Life also provides an opportunity for survivors, current cancer patients and caregivers to make new friends who understand what they are going through.

Heidi Howard was at Relay for Life with her son and nephew for that very reason, after having a brain tumor removed about a year ago. She said it was her first time at the event, and she was looking forward to understanding what it was all about and meeting other local cancer survivors.

"I love all of the support for everyone," she said. "I even noticed some co-workers

here. ... My surgery was out of Seattle so I didn't get to know many people around here."

This year's grand marshals were Lou Ann and Bryan Wolfe. Lou Ann faced breast cancer a couple of years ago after being one of the Hermiston Relay for Life's original co-chairs, and Bryan was diagnosed with Stage 4 mantle cell lymphoma, which can be treated but not cured, in August 2015.

During the opening

ceremonies Bryan said he was "new to this journey many of you have taken or are taking," but said he was deeply grateful for the sacrifices and research that had allowed him to continue to keep his cancer at bay.

"I'm looking forward to a lot of time left to come, a lot of memories," he said.

Lou Ann said she and her husband were learning to let things go that used to bother them, and to say no sometimes when they needed to. She said she was grateful for the support and friendships that her involvement in Relay for Life had brought when it was her family's turn to battle cancer.

"There is always someone out there who knows where you've been, who knows where you're going and can stand alongside you and tell you it's going to be OK," she said.

She said that God's grace had allowed them to continue to find fulfillment in life even when times got tough.

"Our days are not always filled with laughter, but they are filled with joy," she said. "Joy is not dependent on sunny circumstances and good news."

# Monmouth boy drowns in John Day River

EO Media Group

Authorities recovered the body of a Monmouth teen who drowned in the John Day River Sunday near Spray.

The body of Cody Lane Watson, 16, was recovered from the river near mile post 82 on Highway 19/207 at about 10 a.m. Monday, Wheeler County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Michael Boyd reported.

At about noon Sunday, Wheeler County deputies responded to a report that Watson had disappeared beneath the surface of the river while swimming with friends about 8 miles west of Spray. They were assisted by Wheeler County Search and Rescue,

Wheeler County Fire and Rescue, the Oregon State Police and members of the Spray Fire and Ambulance departments, which searched extensively without success.

About two hours after the search began, members of the Grant County Fast Water Rescue Team also responded to help.

Boyd said the initial investigation indicated the incident was an accident.

"The John Day River continues to be deceptively dangerous with sudden changes in both the current and the underwater features of the riverbed," Boyd said in the press release. "Swimmers should use extreme caution when swimming in any natural waterway."

BRIEFLY

## Two new outdoor basketball courts ready for play

PENDLETON — New basketball courts will soon be ready for play in two Pendleton parks.

Donnie Cook, Pendleton Parks and Recreation director, estimated that construction began on the half-courts in late April. Concrete Specialists laid the concrete for the courts, while Pendleton Parks handled all other phases of the project.

"Other than labor and equipment, there was no taxpayer money used for any of this," Cook said.

Besides adding sod around the edge of the courts, construction is complete at Grecian Heights Park at 1910 SW Athens Ave. The Rice Park court, at 2220 SW Quinney Ave, will be finished once the concrete slab settles.

Donors for the project included Pendleton Youth Basketball Association, Wildhorse Foundation, Pendleton On Wheels and Altrusa Club of Pendleton. In late April, Northwest Farm Credit Services awarded the organization a \$1,500 Rural Community Grant to meet the project budget, estimated between \$9,000 and \$10,000, according to Special Projects Coordinator Deb Whitaker.

Although Pendleton Parks doesn't have the final cost of the project, Whitaker said it will slightly exceed the budgeted amount.

Whitaker said the addition of the basketball courts will offer additional opportunities for outdoor recreation. "Providing opportunities for active play in our parks contributes to improved health for all ages and basketball is a low-entry cost sport, which makes it accessible to nearly anyone," she said in a press release.

## Blues Cruise revs up holiday fun

IONE — There's still time to spiff up your car in preparation for the Ione 4th of July Blues Cruise.

The event revs up at 9 a.m. (8:30 a.m. line-up) at the Sinclair station in Lexington. The route cruises through Heppner to Ruggs to Rhea Creek then north along the creek to Ione.

The show is open to all makes and models of cars, trucks and motorcycles. The registration fee is \$25, which includes a dash plaque, goody bag, T-shirt and a door prize raffle ticket (early entries

will receive two tickets). Money raised from the event will support the Ione FFA Chapter.

Registration runs from 10:30 a.m. to noon at Ione City Park. Also, participants are encouraged to participate in the parade, which begins at 1 p.m. Awards are at 3 p.m.

For more information, contact Rick Sanford at [rockinsfarm2002@yahoo.com](mailto:rockinsfarm2002@yahoo.com) or visit [www.facebook.com/bluescruise.ione.oregon](http://www.facebook.com/bluescruise.ione.oregon).

## Program offers Wallowa County exploration

ENTERPRISE — Local experts and community partners provide a unique opportunity to explore Wallowa County through Wallowa Land Trust's Into the Wallowa series.

Upcoming activities all run from 9 a.m. to noon. Participants need to dress appropriately for the elements and bring sunscreen, hiking boots and water. The activities include:

- Words of Nature on the Moraine, Saturday, July 2. Participants will join artist Jacob Hasslacher and representatives from Fishtrap, which encourages creative writing. Provided with iPads, participants will write stories or poems inspired by the surroundings.

- Geology of Wallowa Lake, Saturday, July 16. Hike with renowned geologist Ellen Morris Bishop while enjoying breathtaking views. Learn about the geology, natural history, cultural significance of the moraines.

- Music of Nature at the Confluence, Saturday, July 23. Birds, water, leaves and wind all create their own music, inspiring songwriters and musicians. Explore the rhythms of the outdoors with Wallowa County musician Janis Carper.

- Meander the Wallowa, Saturday, Aug. 6. Explore a stretch of the river with botanist and naturalist Janet Hohmann. View the first big river remeander project in Eastern Oregon on the property of Doug McDaniel and Gail Hammock.

Events are free, but donations are accepted. To register and information about meeting place, contact [info@wallowalandtrust.org](mailto:info@wallowalandtrust.org), 541-426-2042 or visit [www.wallowalandtrust.org](http://www.wallowalandtrust.org).

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