



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Echo city hall turned 100 this month.

Echo city hall turns 100

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

There was plenty of cake to go around on Thursday as Echo celebrated the 100th birthday of its city hall.

The cream-colored building on Bonanza Street has withstood the test of time pretty well, said Mayor Richard Winters. He said since the city's \$500,000 renovation of the building in 1999, it hasn't seemed like any more of a maintenance headache than the much newer buildings where many of his counterparts in larger cities meet.

"This is every bit as comfortable, and my joy in it is its history," he said.

Of course, it hasn't come without its problems. During the 1999 renovation, paid for through state and federal grants, Echo made national headlines for hauling away an impressive 4.6 tons of pigeon droppings from the attic, accumulated over the course of more than 80 years.

City Manager Diane Berry said the renovation also expanded the library from 800 to 3,300 square feet, restored the ballroom upstairs to its former glory, added central heat to the building and expanded other rooms, including a bathroom that was so tiny people had trouble fitting their knees between the toilet and sink.

"The janitor's closet was bigger than the original bathroom, so that was quite the luxury when we moved back in," she said.

Echo's city hall was completed in 1916, and Berry said Echo residents celebrated with a Fourth of July dance in the ballroom. Later, monthly fire department dances there raised money for Echo's first firetruck purchased in 1949.

For decades the building also housed The Star Theater downstairs; the bay window on the south side of the building is where employees stood while selling movie tickets. The back offices used to hold a jail cell for unruly residents picked up by local law enforcement.

Today the building holds the city offices, the library, various historical



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Echo city manager Diane Berry shows off a Pendleton Woolen Mills blanket, embroidered with the date Echo's city hall was built, displayed at city hall during the building's centennial celebration.

displays and the upstairs ballroom that hosts community events such as Inland Northwest Musicians' free Christmas concert.

Before the reception at city hall on Thursday, about a dozen people gathered on Main Street for the official dedication of a metal tree sculpture by artist Douglas Gisi. The sculpture is one of many art pieces in downtown Echo, but Berry noted it was special because it was the first piece commissioned by the newly-formed Echo Art Committee.

A sculpture of stalks of wheat was recently placed across the street, and a cougar sculpture and piece of art paying tribute to Native American culture are in the works.

The celebrations coincided with a two-day visit by judges from America in Bloom. The national competition recognizes cities for urban forestry, environmental efforts, floral displays, heritage preservation, community involvement and other criteria. Echo is a past winner

in the small cities category.

Judge Steve Pategas, who lives in Florida, said he was excited for his first trip to Eastern Oregon and impressed with what he saw in Echo.

"The blend of history here and how they preserve it and the color in the garden and how they integrate everything, it is just amazing," he said.

Pategas said Echo was smaller than most America in Bloom's small cities competitors (his next stops in Ohio, Indiana and Colorado are all more than five times larger than Echo's population of 700) but what is important is that they are beautifying and improving their community anyway.

"Size doesn't really matter," he said. "The wealth in the community doesn't really matter. It's about what resources they have and how they're using them."

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HERMISTON

Law enforcement investigating exploding mailbox

East Oregonian

Law enforcement responded to an exploding mailbox outside Hermiston on Wednesday and a possible mailbox bomb hoax on Tuesday, but so far there is no indication the two incidents were related.

On Wednesday a man reported his mailbox on Michaels Lane northeast of Hermiston had exploded, shaking the house. Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said a white vehicle was seen speeding from the scene around the time of the incident, suggesting the explosive device was placed in the mailbox instead of mailed there. He said evidence from the scene had been collected and was being analyzed.

On Tuesday a woman on NW 11th Street northwest of the Hermiston city limits called to report that she had removed a

possible pipe bomb from her mailbox and had taken it into her house. Oregon State Police responded and discovered a piece of hose taped together.

"Whether it was intended as a hoax, we're not sure," OSP Sergeant Seth Cooney said.

He said the item was in a clear plastic bag, indicating it had not gone through the postal service but had been placed in the mailbox directly.

Rowan said there had not been any similar events reported recently and there did not seem to be anything tying the Wednesday and Tuesday incidents together. Both Rowan and Cooney said if anyone has reason to believe there is an explosive device in their mailbox they should inform law enforcement.

"I would say they should not remove a suspicious item to their home or vehicle," Rowan said.

West Nile detected near Umatilla, Stanfield

East Oregonian

West Nile virus has been detected in two mosquito samples in Umatilla County, one east of Umatilla and one on the southern edge of Stanfield.

The samples were collected June 28, and testing was done at the Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory on July 6. It's the first detection of West Nile in Oregon so far this year.

Residents can expect an increase in mosquito control operations, including Ultra-Low Volume applications of insecticide from truck-mounted sprayers. Spraying will typically be done after sunset, when mosquitoes are most active. All applicators are licensed by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

West Nile is primarily a bird disease, with magpies, blue jays and crows especially susceptible. Mosquitoes feed on infected birds and can pass the virus to humans or other animals when they bite. Most people infected with West Nile do not become sick, but some

may develop mild flu-like symptoms and, in rare cases, the virus may cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain.

The risk of West Nile is low, but the public is encouraged to take precautions against mosquito bites. People can reduce their exposure to mosquitoes by avoiding outdoor activities at dawn or dusk, when mosquitoes are active, using mosquito repellent or wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants when working in mosquito-infested areas.

Other tips include screening doors and windows, and getting rid of old tires or other containers where water can accumulate and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Those with horses should check with their veterinarians for vaccinations, and be sure to flush or replace the water in their troughs weekly.

For more information and updates on West Nile, visit www.public.health.oregon.gov or call the Umatilla County Health Department at 541-278-5432.

BRIEFLY

Simpson pleads not guilty to Jimenez murder

PORTLAND — Julian Darryl James Simpson pleaded not guilty Thursday in federal court to the murder of Antonio "Tony" Jimenez of Pendleton.

Court records show the United States District Attorney's Office arraigned Simpson, 23, on charges of first-degree murder, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence and felon in possession of a firearm related to the March 19 shooting death of Jimenez, 27, outside a home on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Simpson pleaded not guilty to all counts.

Magistrate Judge Stacie F. Beckerman determined Simpson is a flight risk and ordered his detention at the Multnomah County Jail, Portland.

Beckerman also set a five-day jury trial for Simpson and his co-defendant, Victor Joseph Contreras, starting Oct. 11 in Portland with Judge Anna J. Brown presiding. Contreras faces assault with intent to murder and other charges stemming from the shooting

of Beau Welch. According to court documents, Jimenez and Welch tried to get the two co-defendants to leave a party at Welch's home when the shooting started. Welch almost lost his foot from a bullet wound.

Man who assaulted his ex gets 7.5 years in prison

BOARDMAN — Travis Lane Thomas of Boardman is heading to state prison for seven and a half years for kidnapping and assaulting his ex-girlfriend.

Thomas, 44, pleaded "no contest" on June 30 in Morrow County Circuit Court to first-degree kidnapping and second-degree assault. Court records show the pleas came in exchange for the district attorney dropping several other charges, including first-degree kidnapping and assault. Judge Lynn Hampton sentenced Thomas

concurrently on the two charges, which also was part of the deal.

A plea of no contest means the defendant believes the state has the evidence to deliver a conviction on the charges at trial. The court treats a "no contest" plea the same as a guilty verdict.

Thomas kidnapped Heather Payne in February from where she was staying in Boardman, forced her into his nearby home, tied her up and assaulted her for hours before she managed to escape and get help. Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack at the time reported Payne suffered bleeding in her brain from the assault.

Court records show Thomas has a criminal case

history going back to 1991 with felony convictions for burglary and theft. He also has convictions in 2015 for domestic violence against Payne.

Theater presents sensory-friendly viewing

HERMISTON — A special viewing of "The Secret Life of Pets" provides

a comfortable atmosphere with the lights up a little, the volume down and the flexibility for audience members to move around.

The Arc Umatilla County in conjunction with Hermiston Stadium 8 Cinemas is offering the sensory-friendly showing. Those with special needs and their families or caregivers are invited to attend.

The sensory show is

Saturday, July 16 with the doors opening at 10 a.m. at 355 W. Theater Lane, off Highway 395 in Hermiston. The movie starts at 10:30 a.m. and costs \$5 per person.

The Arc advocates for the rights of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information about programs, services and activities, call 541-567-7615 or visit www.facebook.com/arcofumatillacounty.



Simpson

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Music on the Lawn
FRIDAY, JULY 8
American Forrest
SATURDAY, JULY 9
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Friday, July 8th • 1:00pm-6:00pm
Saturday, July 9th • 10:00am-4:00pm
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