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Contributed photo
A sink that tested positive for elevated lead levels has been shut off and tagged.

Lead found at four schools

Faucets replaced, another round of testing scheduled

By ALEXA LOUGEE
East Oregonian

Extensive water testing in Hermiston's schools found 19 faucets with elevated levels of lead, but none that were considered primary drinking sources.

The Hermiston School District tested 853 sources of water throughout the district and found instances of lead in four schools:

- Hermiston High School, the largest school in the district, had 13 sources of elevated lead, all of them sinks in science classrooms that are now used for math instruction.
- Highland Hills Elementary had three sources, including two classroom sinks and a kitchen spray nozzle.
- Sandstone Middle School had two kitchen dish-washing sinks with elevated lead.
- Armand Larive Middle School, one of the newest buildings in the district, had one hand-washing station in the kitchen where elevated lead was found.

All other schools, including the district's oldest building — Rocky Heights Elementary School — came back with no elevated lead samples.

The district has already taken measures to remedy elevated lead sources. According to Mike Kay, See LEAD/8A



Inmate Brian Chandler instructs his dog, Jade, to roll over during a demonstration Monday at EOCL in Pendleton. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Prison pups bring purpose

Inmate trainers more successful than civilian counterparts

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Prison inmate Ron Allen knows the power of a puppy.

Allen, incarcerated at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Pendleton, met a blonde ball of fur named Raz about four months ago at the prison. Man and golden retriever came together as part of a program where inmates train canines to assist people with disabilities. Under the guidance of the Salem-based Joys of Living Assistance Dogs program, inmates are teaching puppies to turn off lights, shut doors, retrieve dropped items, load and unload washers and dryers, keep their owners from falling and a multitude of other tasks.

Allen, 39 years old and serving a life sentence for murder in Lane County, has spent more than half his life in prison. He was selected to train the original group of six puppies that arrived at the prison in April. Those chosen as trainers must have records devoid of animal abuse or predatory crime and have demonstrated good



Kingston, left, greets Opal as she sits in the lap of inmate Cresensiano Gonzalez on Monday at EOCL in Pendleton. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



For a video of the training process at EOCL, visit this story at eastoregonian.com

behavior for the past 18 months.

It works this way. One handler serves as the primary trainer while the other provides backup. The puppies sleep in crates in the inmates' cells and go everywhere except the shower with their trainers. The handlers wear pouches of kibble attached to the belt loops of their prison-issue jeans for easy reach during multiple daily drills.

Turns out the trainers are learning as much as, or more than, the dogs.

"Before Raz, I was a tough guy with low self-esteem. Most of the time in here, you live behind a mask,"

Allen said. "With these dogs, there is no hiding behind a mask. There is no manipulating. Raz is a direct product of what I put into him."

On Monday afternoon, Allen and the other handlers gathered to welcome additional puppies to the program, hauled to Pendleton from Salem by JLAD Executive Director Joy St. Peter. As Opal, Outlaw and Olive wriggled and wrestled on the tile of the dayroom floor, the inmate trainers showed off the progress of their current crop of dogs and talked about how their own lives have changed.

One by one, they led puppies through their paces. Seth Arnett lined out Sawyer, who sat on the tile with an expectant look.

"Get the light, Sawyer," Arnett commanded.

Sawyer put one paw on the wall and flipped the switch with his other. Arnett told him to get down, then to roll onto his back, waiting a long second before flipping all the way over.

"Good boy. Back. Back. Back. Wait. Down. Good boy. Stand. Get your leash."

The puppy followed the commands one by one, accepting kibble for his efforts and showing his joy with a swishing tail.

A different dog picked up a paper cup on the floor and put it in the garbage See PUPS/8A

A WEEK AT THE FAIR

Raising lambs a lesson in shear patience

Editor's note: This is the first in a week-long series about 4-H sheep competition at the Umatilla County Fair.

By ALEXA LOUGEE
East Oregonian

Early Monday morning, when most teens her age were still enjoying their summer slumber, Olivia Warner was tending to her lamb, "Blue" at the county fairgrounds in Hermiston.

Freshly shorn, Blue gets his name from his unique gray/blue wool, and stands out from his pale peers.

Warner bought Blue back in May, and it wasn't hard for her to choose which lamb she wanted.

"He was the only blue



Olivia Warner, 15, of Pilot Rock with her lamb, Blue, at the Umatilla County Fair. Staff photo by Alexa Lougee

lamb," she said, "and I liked how he was built."

Looks are important when showing a lamb. A large

frame, good legs and a long loin are among a few of the desired physical attributes

See SHEEP/8A

PENDLETON

Snow days would cut needed hours for K-12

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The construction of new elementary schools at Washington and Sherwood Heights pushed back the start date for Pendleton's K-5 students three weeks, and the effects could be felt through the end of the school year.

The district's three elementary schools will run from Sept. 19 to June 8, with just enough instructional hours to meet the state's 900-hour minimum, Superintendent Andy Kovach said.

But, he added, the

district needs a contingency plan just in case harsh winter weather knocks Pendleton schools days off the calendar and therefore under the threshold.

"How are we going to skin that cat if we have to use a snow day?" he said.

If the district does have to cancel one or more days during the year, Kovach said the district could add days to the schedule or switch one of its in-service or parent-teacher conference days into a regular school day.

The district's other options come with their See WEATHER/8A

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