

**PENDLETON**

# Main Street vendor sells Confederate flags

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

High-flying free speech in downtown Pendleton drew critical eyes this week.

Viola and Sam Moody's Liberty Flags & Gifts from Sutherlin is located near the intersection of South Main Street and Emigrant Avenue. The business is one of many operating during Round-Up under the umbrella of the local nonprofit Main Street Cowboys. But it was the only booth displaying versions of the Confederate flag.

"We've been selling them like crazy," Viola Moody said.

They take the business to about 30 events a year, she said, and the flags are popular wherever they go. Young people seeking to show their rebellious side are frequent buyers of the flag, she said.

She and Sam Moody also said some people buy the flags because the government or liberals try to tell them they can't.

"I always thought 'liberal' meant how I am — accepting of everybody," she said.

After the 2015 murder of nine black churchgoers in South Carolina by a white supremacist who took photos with the Confederate flag, outlets like Wal-Mart, Amazon, Sears and eBay stopped selling the flag and merchandise that includes it.

Johnna Hoff, an eBay spokesperson, told CNN last year that the Confederate flag has "become a contemporary symbol of divisiveness and racism" and the company did not want to profit off it.

Sam Moody initially displayed one of the flags on a staff several feet above the top of the booth. But the couple said that drew a complaint from a nearby Main Street merchant. He took down that flag, but Wednesday morning had three others hanging outside the booth's north-facing side.



Versions of the Confederate flag are on display at Liberty Flags & Gifts in downtown Pendleton this Round-Up.

**"To sit there and say, 'They can't do that because I don't like that,' is un-American."**

— Johnny Blagg, Main Street Cowboy's vendor director

The business also sells U.S. flags, pirate flags and flags displaying a marijuana leaf. Viola Moody said the store in Douglas County also offers Nazi flags. A Donald Trump flag, as well as "Police Lives Matter" flag, fluttered several feet above the booth.

But Sam Moody said there was no way he would display a "Black Lives Matters" flag. That movement, he said, is a terrorist organization akin to Islamic militant organization ISIS.

Johnny Blagg is the Main Street

Cowboy's vendor director and said the organization does not allow politicians to have booths and bans vendors from selling or displaying alcohol, tobacco and pornography. And this year, he said, Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts did not want vendors with marijuana or marijuana-related products and the Cowboys agreed to that.

But there is nothing unlawful or against regulations about displaying Confederate emblems, Blagg said, and if people don't like it, then don't have to buy it. He said he is a retired member of the Air Force and believes in free speech, even if he doesn't agree with what's been said.

"To sit there and say, 'They can't do that because I don't like that,' is un-American," he said.

Contact Phil Wright at [pwright@eastoregonian.com](mailto:pwright@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0833.

**BOARDMAN**

# Teen turns self in for fatal shooting

East Oregonian

Boardman police arrested a 17-year-old boy Monday evening in connection with a fatal shooting the night before in Boardman.

Boardman Police Chief Rick Stokoe in a written statement reported the juvenile turned himself into law enforcement in Cowlitz County, Washington, about 20 hours after the slaying of Evencio Salas Birrueta, 27, of Irrigon. The teen was preliminarily charged with murder and two counts of unlawful use of a weapon.

Stokoe did not identify the teen but confirmed he was the "person of interest" police were looking for in the killing. Police

booked him into the juvenile jail at the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facilities, The Dalles. Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson said he would arraign the teen on initial felony charges today.

The shooting occurred Sunday around 9 p.m. at the Wilson Road Mobile Home Park, 600 Wilson Road, Boardman. Police arrived and found Salas shot in the "shoulder area," according to Stokoe. Police tried to save Salas, but he died.

The case remains an active investigation, and Stokoe urged anyone with information regarding the shooting to contact the Boardman Police Department at 541-481-6071.

**HERMISTON**

# City asking for feedback on free public bus route

East Oregonian

The city of Hermiston is asking for feedback on a planned public bus route.

The bus, operated by Kayak Transit starting in early 2017, will be free to any member of the public. The plan is to make approximately four loops through the city throughout the day.

A short survey available on the city website at [hermiston.or.us](http://hermiston.or.us) asks residents what times of day the bus should operate and which stops are most important for it to make. Suggestions include areas of downtown, the Hermiston Plaza near Safeway, Wal-Mart, Good Shepherd Medical Center and the Hermiston School District offices.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said in a statement the partnership with Kayak Transit will allow the city to use state and federal grant funds it has not been able to access before, allowing the city to continue operating the current taxi ticket program for senior and disabled riders in addition to the free bus route for all residents.

"This is a great opportunity to enhance transit options throughout all of western Umatilla County by partnering with Kayak Transit," Morgan said.

Survey responses will be taken into account by the city's Hermiston Area Regional Transit Planning Committee, which held its first meeting Tuesday.

**BRIEFLY**

## PGG fined for operating grain elevator without DEQ permit

UMATILLA — The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality fined Pendleton Grain Growers \$16,737 for operating a grain elevator at 31005 Launch Lane in Umatilla without an Air Contaminant Discharge Permit.

The permit is required for grain elevators that store 10,000 tons or more in cities of at least 4,000 people. PGG never obtained the permit despite Umatilla surpassing a population of 4,000 at least 16 years ago.

Grain elevators emit dust that can decrease visibility and cause respiratory problems. The air permit ensures dust is kept to minimal levels, according to DEQ.

PGG, which is now in the process of dissolution, reported the error to DEQ and has since applied for the permit. The co-op has until Sept. 29 to appeal the penalty.

All of PGG's grain assets, including elevators, were purchased earlier this year by United Grain Corporation, an export company headquartered in Vancouver, Washington.

## Bag limit lowered to one steelhead above McNary Dam

Beginning Thursday through Dec. 31, anglers will only be allowed to keep one hatchery steelhead caught above McNary Dam on the Columbia River.

The one-fish limit was originally scheduled to begin Nov. 1, but will be implemented earlier to help with the passage of wild steelhead into the upper Columbia Basin. Returns are so far tracking behind fishery managers' expectations.

Reduced bag limits for steelhead have already been announced between Bonneville and McNary dams. For more information, visit the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife website at [www.dfw.state.or.us](http://www.dfw.state.or.us).

# Water fountain tests slightly above lead limit

Retesting underway, results expected soon

By GEORGE PLAGEN  
East Oregonian

An upstairs water fountain has tested positive for slightly elevated levels of lead at Echo School, prompting a re-test and possible replacement of the pipes.

Lab results were released by the school district Wednesday, and while most of the 41 sites that were tested turned up no signs of lead, one fountain did measure above the threshold for taking corrective action as set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA's action limit is 20 parts per billion of lead. The fountain narrowly exceeded that mark at 34 parts per billion. Nonetheless, it has been closed off to students and faculty until the problem is addressed, said Echo Superintendent

Raymon Smith. "We will continue to monitor this and keep communicating to parents and our community," Smith said.

Last month, elevated levels of lead were also found in 10 drinking fountains at McKay Creek Elementary School in Pendleton. Students are set to return to school after this week's Pendleton Round-Up, and Superintendent Andy Kovach said all of the fixtures will be replaced and re-tested. Hermiston also had 19 faucets with high levels of lead that were replaced and slated for re-testing. None were considered

primary drinking sources

Districts across Eastern Oregon banded together over the summer to test their drinking water, and in mid-May the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority collaborated on a plan to help schools protect their students from high levels of lead.

The plan requests that all school districts receiving their drinking water from a public water system test for lead in their buildings. Local testing is done by Table Rock Analytical Lab, and the results are reported back to OHA.

Smith said they decided to re-test their drinking fountain since testing was

initially done while school was not in session. The inactivity may have contributed to elevated lead, and those levels may have fallen back to normal now that the system is flushed and back in use.

"If it comes back that it's still slightly elevated, that's likely going to be a piping issue," he said.

Having one fountain out of commission is not causing any disruption at the building, Smith said.

The Echo District includes one K-12 building, with approximately 280 students.

Contact George Plagen at [gplagen@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplagen@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.

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