

EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



A heap of rocks and the end of plastic tubing marks the entrance to an artificial home for burrowing owls. The tube leads to a nesting chamber made from a 50-gallon juice barrel and a bucket.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Volunteers work to preserve burrowing owls on depot land

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

A small band of burrowing owls burst out of the dried grass and sagebrush Tuesday as David Johnson drove along a gravel road on the north end of the Umatilla Chemical Depot.

Johnson, director of the nonprofit Global Owl Project, pulled over and watched as the birds scattered over the scrubby desert. It wasn't long ago that burrowing owls nearly vanished from the depot, casualties of an ecosystem knocked out of balance and habitat that could no longer offer refuge.

Instead, biologists and volunteers came up with a plan to rescue the depot owls in 2008, building artificial burrows where they can nest, roost and hide from predators. The project was an astounding success, Johnson said, and populations are now making an impressive comeback.

Volunteers from across the country returned to the depot Saturday to maintain and upgrade the man-made burrows as part of National Public Lands Day, with Johnson leading

See OWLS/8A

"It's a dangerous world for a burrowing owl. Everything wants to eat you."

— David Johnson,
director of the nonprofit
Global Owl Project



Volunteer Julie Conley, of Yakima, flattens the soil over the entrance to an artificial home for burrowing owls on Tuesday at the Umatilla Chemical Depot.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

PENDLETON

Police chief clears the air on odor ordinance

Two citations issued for offensive marijuana odor

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

When the Pendleton City Council passed an ordinance in May 2015 that prohibited marijuana odor from leaving a person's property, the law was satirically compared to banning the stench of farts and earned online ridicule from across the globe.

Now that the viral attention has dissipated, the actual effects of the law have gone less noticed.

Since the ordinance has gone into effect, Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts wrote in an email that his department responded to marijuana odor complaints from six property owners and have issued two citations.

Because officers aren't there to witness the violation firsthand and the reactions people have to it are so subjective, Roberts said the complainants sign the citations instead of police officers.

See ODOR/8A

Sheriff Palmer invokes the 5th when asked about email

JOHN DAY (AP) — An Oregon sheriff repeatedly invoked his right against self-incrimination while being questioned under oath about his email practices.

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer was questioned twice last week by an attorney representing *The Oregonian*/OregonLive, which sued the sheriff in an effort to obtain public records.

The news organization reports Palmer answered questions during the deposition about his knowledge of state law governing public records, his handling of requests for records and his cellphone use.

Questions about his personal email account prompted the Fifth Amendment claims. He declined a follow up request for comment.

Palmer attracted attention earlier this year when he met with those who occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. He



Palmer

See PALMER/8A

HERMISTON

Volunteers pack parks with value

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

In every park in Hermiston, volunteers have left their mark.

Sometimes it's a new kiosk, a freshly-painted fence or a tree. At Funland, it was an entire playground.

"We have a legacy of volunteers in our parks," Parks and Recreation Director Larry Fetter said. "Without them, we wouldn't have the enhancements we do."

In 2015, the city had more than 800 people volunteer for the parks

and recreation department, including youth sports coaches and people who worked on a variety of service projects.

Fetter said the city pays for clean, safe parks and the staff to maintain them, but volunteers are responsible for many of the enhancements that have been added over the years.

"They're the difference between plain old grass and a really nice facility with a playground and shelter and drinking fountain and

See PARKS/8A



Contributed photo by U.S. Bank

U.S. Bank staff, along with friends and family, helped clean up trash along the railroad tracks in Hermiston as part of a recent service project for the Hermiston Parks and Recreation department.

