

BOARDMAN



Photo by Antonio Sierra

Runners participating in A Very Poplar Run make their way through the course at the Boardman Tree Farm Saturday.

More poplar than ever

About 1,200 turn out for final running of annual race

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Jenny McHill can cross the Very Poplar Run off her bucket list. And not a year too soon.

Having grown up in Spokane, Washington, and now living in Portland, McHill had passed by the Boardman Tree Farm and its seemingly infinite rows of poplar trees many times.

McHill had considered just stopping by and visiting it one day, but she and her wife, Courtney, plan to run a 5K once a month for the entire year and made the two-and-half hour trip to Boardman to check this one off the list.

The couple joined around 1,200 registered participants at the tree farm Saturday morning, almost triple the amount from last year as people tried to log a few more miles amongst the poplars at the sixth and final race.

Runners still had patches of poplars to run through — striking shades of red and orange melded with green leaves still resisting autumn's pull — but the tree farm's slow fade-out was clearly felt, not only in the Very Poplar Run's premature end but also in the sudden expanses of barren land and corn crops.

GreenWood Resources sold the farm's 25,000 acres to AgriNorthwest of Tri-Cities in February, the new owners intent on replacing the poplars with more conventional Eastern Oregon scenery, including a large dairy farm and cropland.

Andrew Bourque, GreenWood's director of resource information systems, was one of the run's progenitors and organized the race each of its six years.

He's moving to Portland to work in GreenWood's headquarters, but he was grateful for the time the company allowed him to not only work amongst Boardman's trees but organize a race.

"This is very unique and I've been privileged to call this my playground for 18



Photo by Antonio Sierra

10K runners get a start on the course at the Poplar Run at the Boardman Tree Farm Saturday. For race results see page 3B.



Photo by Antonio Sierra

A woman grabs some water during her run at the Poplar Run at the Boardman Tree Farm Saturday.

years," he said. While it might not be as enmeshed as some other Eastern Oregon events, it was special enough for people from across the Northwest to pay it tribute.

Joyce Hughes of Pendleton ran the course twice before, but she brought her children and grandchildren to the event this year.

Having "suffered" through the Portland Marathon two weeks ago in the rain, Hughes was happy that the weather had cleared up for the Morrow County run.

As he waited for the 5K to start, Doug DeBok of Pendleton said runs were starting to disappear from Eastern Oregon, with locals needing to drive to Tri-Cities

for a larger race. He preferred the Very Poplar Run's forgiving soil and natural scenery to some of the urban races.

"Take a look around," he said. "It's great."

During its lifespan, the Very Poplar Run has functioned as a fundraiser for the Agape House, the Hermiston nonprofit that supports the homeless and needy.

Executive Director Dave Hughes said he wasn't sure if the unique atmosphere of the Poplar Run could be

"This is very unique and I've been privileged to call this my playground for 18 years."

Andrew Bourque, GreenWood's director of resource information systems; race organizer

replicated, but that didn't mean Agape House was out of the racing game. Agape House took over the Columbia River Best Dam Power Run over the McNary Dam and organized both races as a sort of transitional period.

While the Best Dam Power Run was put on this year mostly to keep the event in the public consciousness, Hughes hopes its reputation will eventually equal that of its predecessor's.

"Hopefully, in six years, we'll have as many as we do today," he said.

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PENDLETON



Staff photo by Antonio Sierra

Oregon National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeremiah Williams of Baker City shakes hands with Rep. Greg Walden while his son Wyatt watches at a decommissioning ceremony for the First Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Pendleton Saturday.

National Guard regiment comes home to praise

Ceremony guests include Rep. Walden and Mayor Houk

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

While some of Oregon's top dignitaries were impressed with the freshly decommissioned Oregon Army National Guard 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment's accomplishments in Kuwait and Iraq, it was all in a day's work for the soldiers' commander.

Eastern Oregon welcomed back the detachment from the year-long tour at a ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Pendleton Saturday, as hundreds of people gathered to pay tribute to the 60 men and women who acted as support staff to all three branches of the armed forces.

The ceremony was presided over by Maj. Gen. Michael Stencel, Oregon Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins, U.S. Rep. Greg Walden and Pendleton Mayor Phillip Houk, many of whom cited the 1.1 million pounds of supplies and more than 10,000 personnel they transported throughout the Arabian Gulf region.

Those who spoke at the ceremony weren't shy about sharing the regiment's exploits, like an instance where they transported a Black Hawk helicopter that ran out of a fuel on a sling load.

"Hopefully you got some good photos of that so you can show your buddies in the (Willamette) Valley so they know where they are in the food chain," Walden said.

Although the regiment may have helped the armed forces in their quest to defeat Islamic State, "a true enemy of mankind" as Atkins described the terrorist organization, Capt. Will Liebhaber said tasks like the Black Hawk transport were fairly routine.

"It's not that big of deal," he said.

Whether Liebhaber was simply being modest or not, his regiment has been busy for the past year.

The 168th flew Chinook helicopters during their missions, traditionally the most requested transports.

Liebhaber said they flew at least one mission per day, which isn't the case with every regiment.

The 168th also had another unique statistic to it — two pairs of brothers serving together in the regiment.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jacob Radke and Sgt. August Radke of Walla Walla were one of those pairs.

Jacob Radke was previously deployed to Iraq in 2004 without his brother, but found some solace in a familiar face this time around.

"It makes it more bearable," he said.

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Share the warmth with clothing collection site

East Oregonian

Residents in south Morrow County are encouraged to look in their closets and drawers for gently used winter apparel to donate to those in need.

A collection container is available through Thursday at Lone Community School, 445 Spring St. At the end of the day, donated items will

be taken to Agape House for its upcoming Winter Coat Sharing Days, which are Saturday, Oct. 29 and Tuesday, Nov. 1 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 500 Harper Road, Hermiston.

For more information about making a donation, contact Lani Bass at lani.23409@gmail.com. For more about the sharing days, call 541-567-8774.

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