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HERMISTON

Farm Fair blossoms at EOTEC

More space means more seminars, vendors

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

The 43rd annual Hermiston Farm Fair debuted Wednesday at its new home at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center with a series of lectures on potato research in the Columbia Basin. And despite setting out more than 200 chairs in two meeting rooms, space was still limited to standing room only.

It is a testament to how much the event and trade show has grown over the decades. When the Farm Fair was created in 1974, its original location was at Thompson Hall before moving into the larger Hermiston Conference Center. Now, the agricultural showcase has moved once again to EOTEC in search of expansion.

Phil Hamm, director of the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center and member of the Farm Fair Committee, said having a bigger building means they can host more vendors and presentations, which in turn draws more people to learn about Eastern Oregon's farm industries.

"This is a great place," Hamm said of EOTEC. "We have more sessions and more opportunities for learning."

One of those additions included Wednesday's first-ever seminar targeted specifically to small farmers. The lineup featured talks on beekeeping, how to apply pesticides without harming pollinators and integrating chickens onto a small farm.

Colleen Sanders, who coordinates the Umatilla County Master Gardener Program for Oregon State University Extension



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The 43rd annual Hermiston Farm Fair moved into its new home at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center on Wednesday in Hermiston.

Service, organized the session and said she was impressed by the turnout. In particular, she said there has been a growing interest in

bees over the past few years, both as pollinators and for making honey and beeswax.

Likewise, chickens can help out small

farmers not only by producing eggs and meat, but by naturally tilling the ground and

See FARM/8A

PENDLETON

Utility fee paves handful of streets in first year

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

With street repair season winding down as winter approaches, Pendleton city officials are already starting to look ahead.

2016 was the first full year the city committed to a new approach to fixing the city's aging street system.

Following a petition from Southwest Perkins Avenue residents requesting action on the poor quality of their street, city council and staff spent much of 2015 formulating ways to boost funding for roads.

Although voters shot down a city ballot measure to institute a 5-cent gas tax, city council passed a \$5 street utility fee at the end of 2015. Officials said it would bring in \$481,000 in additional street funding per year.

Staff members then compiled a two-year, rolling list of streets that needed repair and subdivided the revenue garnered from the utility fee — 70 percent went to maintaining the city's better-kept neighborhood roads while the other 30 percent was set aside to rehab streets in poor condition.

From that list, which comprised dozens of street segments across the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A street closed sign blocks a section of Southeast Byers Avenue where work crews are replacing a water line in Pendleton.

city, the council approved a \$588,373 bid from Pioneer Asphalt to pave eight of them.

According to the city website, six streets were prepped and paved this year, including Southwest Perkins.

Although uncertain of the exact sections that did not get finished,

public works director Bob Patterson said contractors weren't able to finish all eight because of budget constraints.

Patterson said Pioneer Asphalt won't undertake any new pavement projects for the city this year but will continue

See STREET/8A

Commissioners try to keep fair in the black

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Umatilla County commissioners are looking closely at costs for the annual county fair, hoping to avoid losing money on the event when it moves to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center next year.

Part of that involves the entertainment budget.

The fair board spent \$65,000 to book Creedence Clearwater Revisited for the last night of the 2016 fair, almost half of the overall entertainment budget. County Commissioner Larry Givens at the recent meeting of the board of commissioners said Lucas Wagner, chairman of the fair board, considered the deal a losing proposition.

Wagner, though, said Wednesday he did not know if it was possible to quantify if Creedence was a good use of fair funds.

"The concert area was the fullest I've ever seen it," he said. Wagner noted there was no way to determine what each person spent while at the show.

Still, he said, the fair is considering if spending less on local and regional could draw similar crowds and be better for the bottom line. Those acts can cost thousands of dollars but don't carry the hefty sticker price of a band like CCR.

The move would not happen until 2018 at the earliest. Wagner said the fair is working with the same-sized entertainment budget for 2017 and aiming for a similar caliber of acts.

Robert Pahl, the county's chief financial officer, advised the county board of commissioners that the fair's entertainment budget does not look sustainable. He dug into numbers Wednesday and

See FAIR/8A

Marijuana testing poses regulatory quandaries

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Bureau

WILSONVILLE — Marijuana testing is creating several quandaries for Oregon regulators at a time of overall uncertainty for the newly legalized crop, according to a state official.

Testing for pesticides poses one challenge, as the necessary instrumentation is expensive and complicated, said Jeff Rhoades, senior adviser on marijuana policy for Gov. Kate Brown.

While state regulators want to protect public health, testing is a large barrier to entry into the legal recreational marijuana market, he said during the Oregon Board of Agriculture meeting in Wilsonville, Ore., on Nov. 30.

An overly strict testing regime would be a disadvantage to small growers while favoring large out-of-state companies, Rhoades said.

"It's a very delicate balance with testing here," he said.

One pesticide that's commonly used on grapes, for example, breaks down into hydrogen cyanide when set aflame, he said.

Meanwhile, marijuana is sold not just as a flower, but also in the form of various tinctures and extracts that require specific testing methods, Rhoades said.

"It can't be just a one-size-fits-all approach," he said.

There are also no federally approved pesticides that are specific to the psychoactive crop, Rhoades said.

See TEST/8A



EO Media Group

Marijuana testing is creating several quandaries for regulators at a time of overall uncertainty for the newly legalized crop. Oregon is now one of just four states that has legalized marijuana for recreational use.

