

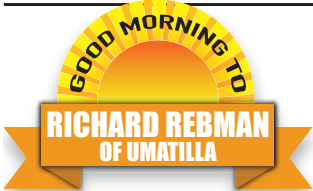


Light fog softens the view of the Umatilla River Monday morning near Riverfront Park in Hermiston. Staff photo by Kathy Aney

EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2016

141st Year, No. 51 WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD One dollar



Enjoy a free double scoop of Tillamook ice cream at the SAGE Center




41/32

AP POLL
Americans hopeful for a better new year
Associated Press

Emotionally wrenching politics, foreign conflicts and shootings at home took a toll on Americans in 2016, but they are entering 2017 on an optimistic note, according to a new poll that found that a majority believes things are going to get better for the country next year.

A look at the key findings of the Associated Press-Times Square Alliance poll:

So how was 2016?

Americans weren't thrilled with the year. Only 18 percent said things for the country got better, 33 percent said things got worse, and 47 percent said it was unchanged from 2015.

On a personal level, they were optimistic about 2017.

Fifty-five percent said they believe things will be better for them in the coming year than in the year that just concluded. That's a 12-point improvement from last year's poll.

Americans interviewed about the poll's results

See POLL/8A

Multiple agencies band to fight Christmas blaze



Pendleton firefighters work to extinguish a blaze at 503 N. Main St., Pendleton, the home of Carter and Nancy Kerns.

BY THE NUMBERS The Pendleton Fire Department fought 278 fires from 2013-2015, according to the department's national reporting data.					
278	47	42	41	21	20
Brush fires	Brush fires	Grass fires	Building fires	Vehicle fires	Rubbish fires

Only seven firefighters on duty in Pendleton when space heater starts fire in century-old home

By PHIL WRIGHT and ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Pendleton had seven firefighters on duty Christmas night, and they all responded to combat the blaze that ignited in a historical home near downtown.

Mike Ciraulo, Pendleton fire chief, said the national standard for taking on a building fire is 15 personnel.

"We were fortunate to have seven on duty," he said. "We never even hit 15 firefighters even after tapping into our neighbors."

The neighboring departments helping Sunday night were from Hermiston, Pilot Rock, and the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Ciraulo called the mutual aid agreements between each agency a "saving grace."

Scott Stanton, chief of Umatilla County Fire District No. 1, based in Hermiston 28 miles away, concurred and said the agreements are essential to firefighting in rural Oregon.

"No one has enough personnel on their own to even take care of their own stuff," he said.

The Pendleton Fire Department responded Sunday at 6:16 p.m. to a fire engulfing the third story of Nancy and Carter Kerns' home at 503 N. Main St. The Kerns and their guests escaped, and no one was injured or hurt.

Firefighters tried to attack the fire from the inside but the fire's intensity forced a retreat.

"That, frankly, scared the hell out of me," Ciraulo said.

Emergency personnel sprayed the third floor from a ladder and outside lines, quelling the blaze enough for fire crews to re-enter the home and extinguish the fire from the inside.

Draped in a blanket while the temperature

See FIRE/8A

"No one has enough personnel on their own to even take care of their own stuff."
— Scott Stanton, Umatilla County Fire District 1 chief

OUR NEW NEIGHBORS

Bair family embraces small town life

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Going from a Seattle suburb to a town of 7,000 people has been a change of pace for the Bair family, but they have found there are upsides to living in Umatilla.

"I love the people," Breilynn Bair, 19, said. "I like how small it is. There's not all the big city lights, you can see the stars at night and it's quiet."

Breilynn, her 16-year-old sister Skyler and her parents Tammy and Jerry Bair moved this summer from Mukilteo, Washington, in part to be closer to Jerry's father and other extended family in Irrigon.

This week we will introduce a few of the people who moved into our communities in 2016 as part of the annual "Our New Neighbors" feature.

"A little bit was family, a little bit was job opportunities," Jerry said.

He grew up in a small town in Idaho, but the kids have never lived somewhere so rural. The family said they are enjoying the friendliness of a small town, though, and Breilynn said she has loved living so close to extended family for the first time in her life.

There are downsides, however, like no fast food joints

right down the street.

"It's not as convenient," Tammy said. "I have to cook more when I come home tired."

Tammy works for Two Rivers Correctional Institution, although she spent most of her career as a high school special education teacher. She and Jerry met 23 years ago while both were working at an Arby's.

Jerry drives school buses for Mid-Columbia Bus Company, mostly for Irrigon, where Skyler attends high school and is involved in cheerleading and band.

He picked a particularly snowy winter to start driving in the Columbia Basin, but he

See BAIRS/8A



Contributed photo by the Bair family
Tammy Bair, left, with Skyler, Jerry and Breilynn pose for a family photo.

