

Local bands, choirs travel to Hawaii

Will participate in Pacific Basin Musical Festival

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Several musically gifted students from Echo, Ione, Irrigon and Stanfield will soon get to travel to Hawaii to share their talents.

Fifty students and 20 adult chaperones will spend spring break at the Pacific Basin Music Festival in Honolulu. The choir and band festival is in its 32nd year, and brings high school and junior high students together from nations in the Pacific Rim, such as Canada, Australia, Japan and the U.S., for a week of learning and performing classical music with their peers.

"They'll perform with other groups," said Stanfield band director Deborah Wryn. "There are adjudicated activities. Our band will meet and rehearse with a band from Perth, Australia."

The students, 10 of whom are singing with the choir and the rest of whom are in band, had to commit to the trip last school year, and since then have been rehearsing once a month.

Each group is learning a collection of songs from different genres of music, which they will perform with another band or choir. They will also perform a few songs with the entire group of students attending the event.

The trip was open to any students from 8th to 12th grade who wanted to go, but students had to find ways to finance the travel. Some parents helped out with fundraisers at local sporting events and activities.



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan
Ione music teacher Bryan Bates directs band students in a rehearsal leading up to their trip to Hawaii, where they will meet and perform with students from several different countries.

"It's pretty exciting. For my senior year, it's cool to get to do something like this."

— Jenny Stanger, percussionist from Irrigon

"It's pretty exciting," said Jenny Stanger, a percussionist from Irrigon. "For my senior year, it's cool to get to do something like this."

The trip will also allow students to learn from their peers. "We're going to play with other groups, and listen to other groups play as well," she said.

A couple of years ago, some of the schools took a spring break music trip to Disneyland. But for many of the students, the trip will be a chance to try something completely new — whether interacting with people from a new culture, or traveling this far away from home.

"I've never done this before," said Yanira Garcia, a senior choir student from Ione Community School. "I'm really excited."

The students will be touching on some new material, including a song in French for which they said they're still unsure of pronunciation. But they'll get to sing some old favorites, as well.

"We're singing 'Pure Imagination,' from 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,'" said Colton Hollis, an Ione Community School senior.

"I'm nervous," said senior Julia Fernandez, a choir student from Echo. "I've never been on a plane before. But I'm excited about the different cultures we'll get to see."

Some of the time will be structured, but students will get some time to explore the island and enjoy their spring break, as well.

"We'll sing five songs in front of an adjudicator, and

three with the mass choir," said Natalie Sherman, a junior choir student from Echo.

Janna Frazier, the choir teacher at Echo School, said it has taken a lot of preparation to get ready for the trip.

"We're doing contemporary, gospel, and some modern rock," she said. "And then we'll have a few mass choir songs."

Bryan Bates, the Ione band and choir director, said his students will learn a march by John Philip Souza, a song called "Carnival," and a couple of ballads.

"It's all very contemporary," he said. "We won't really be playing any classical music."

The students prepared for their big trip, which starts March 24, with a performance for parents and friends Friday afternoon.

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BRIEFLY

Principal resigns to pursue small business

HERMISTON — Sunset Elementary School principal Devin Grigg submitted his resignation for the end of this school year, and the district is seeking his replacement.

Grigg said he and his family are moving to the Phoenix, Arizona, area to start a small business. He has been the principal of Sunset for eight years, and before that a middle school assistant principal for four years, two at Armand Larive and two at Sandstone.

"I love this community, love this district," Grigg said. "There are phenomenal people, they've been very good to us."

Grigg said the hardest part of the decision to move was leaving the people in the district, but he wanted to try to pursue his dream of owning a small business.

Grigg was named district administrator of the year for the 2015-2016 school year.

Applications for the new principal are due April 10, and from April 11-14 district staff will review and screen applications. Candidates will be interviewed and visit the district between April 20 and 21. The new principal will start July 1.



Grigg

Local dance teams score at state

PENDLETON — The Pendleton and Hermiston dance teams scored big at the state competition this weekend, with Pendleton's Rhythmic Mode taking second place for the 5A category and Hermiston's Stardust taking fifth. There were 13 teams in the 5A competition.

The Pendleton dance team, which has 31 students, performed a jazz routine, called "Fear the Mindkiller," and received several individual honors as well. Senior Ashleigh Bolling received a \$1,500 dance scholarship, and senior Abby Rinehart received a \$1,000 academic scholarship. Two students, Bolling and Madison Cates, were also voted to the All-State team, which honored eight dancers from the 5A category.

The Hermiston dance team, which has 18 students, performed a jazz routine titled "The Witch Hunt."

Hermiston senior Aristeia Loveland was also selected to the All-State team.

TRCI inmate dies unexpectedly

UMATILLA — An inmate of Two Rivers Correctional Institution died unexpectedly Tuesday morning.

David Lewis Purcell, 72, was at TRCI, Umatilla, when an ambulance at about 4:15 a.m. took him to an area hospital, according to the statement from the Oregon Department of Corrections. He died at 5:30 a.m. of apparent natural causes.

Purcell entered the state prison system on Dec. 8, 1999, from Clackamas County on three counts of first-degree sodomy and one count of first-degree sexual penetration. His earliest release date was July 21, 2025.

As with all unanticipated deaths in state prisons, the Oregon State Police Criminal Investigation Division is conducting an investigation.

The corrections department also stated attempts to notify the next of kin were unsuccessful and no other details are available at this time.

Pendleton teen goes to prison for rape

PENDLETON — Cole James Pryor, 19, of Pendleton pleaded guilty to raping multiple girls. The 19-year-old now heads to state prison for more than 14-and-half years.

Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus charged Pryor with several cases of raping and abusing girls 16 and younger in 2015 and 2016. Court records show Pryor on March 14 pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree rape, two counts of second-degree rape and one count of second-degree sexual abuse. The state dismissed the other cases against Pryor.

Circuit Judge Jon Lieuallen on Monday sentenced Pryor to prison for 14 years, seven months, the mandatory minimum sentence in Oregon for first- and second-degree rape. When Pryor gets out, he will have to serve 20 years of post-prison supervision.

Pendleton police arrested Pryor on Nov. 10 for first-degree rape of a 12-year-old girl. That investigation led to the others. Pendleton police chief Stuart Roberts at the time said Pryor met some of his victims through their older sisters and others through social media. Pryor and some of the girls were friends on Facebook.

PENDLETON

Ag pad at airport will remain open

Blast wall to assuage safety concerns with drone range

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

The northernmost agricultural pad at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport is open for business.

Members of the Pendleton Airport Commission held a special meeting Monday to resolve safety concerns between the pad and nearby drone operations. The city recently purchased two 40-foot shipping containers that will act as a blast wall to protect sensitive equipment. The containers are expected to arrive at the airport by Wednesday.

Darryl Abling, who manages the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range, previously recommended the airport temporarily close the ag pad while UAS activities are relocated to the north end of the airfield. The concern, Abling said, was planes kicking up rocks and debris that could possibly damage drones or injure flight crews.

After meeting with stakeholders last week, Abling agreed a barrier would be an effective solution in the short term. Crop dusting pilots stressed the need to settle the issue quickly, since farmers are already applying fertilizer to their fields and the window for work is finite.

Two pilots had expressed interest in using the disputed ag pad — Andrew Kilgore, of K2 Aerial Application, and Brad Wahl, of Wildhorse Helicopters. Kilgore hired an attorney after he was denied use of the pad, but never got to the point of litigation.

There was some discussion about making the pad open to the public under a pay-as-you-go system, though that raised questions about who would manage the pad and whether it would open the city to liability. As it is, the airport leases its ag pads to single operators.

The airport commission ultimately agreed it would lease the pad to Wahl,

who would share use with Kilgore.

"I don't think it has to be complicated," Wahl said. "I think I can work with him, he can work with me and that would be fine."

Kilgore's attorney, Michael Schultz, said he felt the agreement was a step in the right direction.

"I am heartened that we are in the position today where we are cooperating," Schultz said.

Robb Corbett, Pendleton city manager, questioned whether the airport commission and city council should consider changes in how the ag pads are managed and leased to ensure a pilot is not excluded in the future.

"I understand there's cooperation going on now, but there may be times when there isn't," Corbett said.

Alan Gronewold, airport commission chairman, said that is a subject they will visit at a future meeting.

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HERMISTON

Senior center construction to begin in April

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The Hermiston City Council approved a contract with G2 Construction to build Hermiston a new senior center.

The Kennewick-based company will begin construction on the Harkenrider Center in April, built with a combination of funds from a federal Community Development Block Grant and the city general fund, will be located on Ridgeway Avenue northwest of the Hermiston Public Library where Armand Larive Middle School once stood.

G2 Construction was the low bidder of three companies, with a \$2,198,000 base bid plus \$80,000 for an elevator. Mayor David Drotzmann said he was pleased to see a bid that came in under budget and allowed for the addition of the elevator.

"Considering the construction landscape we've seen, this is exciting not having to value-engineer everything," he said.

The council also took care of several housekeeping items, including addition of

language in the Transient Room Tax rules that acknowledges that the tax cannot be applied to federal employees staying at a hotel while on official federal business. They approved an update to the employee handbook stating that city employees required to use a cell phone for their job can choose between a \$40 per month reimbursement toward their personal phones or carrying a city-supplied phone to only be used for city business.

The council denied a request from the Hispanic Advisory Committee's Cinco de Mayo nonprofit for a beer garden at Butte Park during this year's two-day Cinco de Mayo event.

Councilor Clara Beas Fitzgerald, who also serves as Cinco de Mayo committee chair, said the celebration can't be held in its former spot along Second Street because of construction on the Harkenrider Center and can't move up to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center as planned because of ongoing construction there. They need the revenue from the beer garden to cover the

expense of the bands they are hiring, she said, and all OLCC requirements for security would be followed.

City councilors weren't keen on the idea of making an exception to the city ordinance against alcohol in city parks, however, especially at an event that will bring a large number of families with small children to the park.

"To me, it's a family event, and when you bring alcohol in it can cause problems," Manuel Gutierrez said.

Mark Gomolski, who recently joined the Hispanic Advisory Committee, told the council they needed to approve the request because the "at this point it's really settled," and it was an opportunity to support Hermiston's Hispanic community.

Drotzmann pushed back, saying that "it's already planned" is not a reason for the council to make any decision and the concern was about selling alcohol in a city park, not about support for the event.

In the end councilor John Kirwan made a motion to approve the request, but it died for lack of a second.

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