

UMATILLA

Students spend Earth Day at McNary Dam

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

You can learn about the Earth right in your own backyard.

That's the point McNary Heights teachers tried to drive home for their students on a schoolwide Earth Day field trip to McNary Lock and Dam. The facility, which is only a short drive from the elementary school, is also home to a fish hatchery, some nature trails and small parks.

Groups of students roamed the grounds, learning about various aspects of the dam from employees, park rangers and high school students who hosted informational booths.

On a small perch above the rushing water, Denise Griffith stood and talked to a group of children and parents about the fish collection process.

"We collect salmon for 24 hours, and put them in tanks," she said. "At 7 a.m. we examine them and make sure they're healthy."

She pointed to a fish separator, a metal chute with bars that divide it by size, to separate bigger fish from smaller ones.

"So they don't eat each other," she said.

She added that someone works at the station around the clock, making sure certain types of fish are released.

"Steelhead kelt," she said. "They're endangered, so we let them go right away."

A kelt is a salmonid that is returning from the sea to spawn.

Students got a chance to see all aspects of the dam: the powerhouse and water turbines, the fish



Fifth graders from McNary Heights Elementary School pose for a photo in front of the McNary Dam during an Earth Day field trip Thursday in Umatilla.



Second graders from McNary Heights Elementary School walk across a foot bridge during an Earth Day field trip Thursday at McNary Dam Wildlife Area in Umatilla.

hatchery and viewing area, as well as the natural areas surrounding the facility. It offered students the chance to learn not just about the dam, but about animals and plants in the area.

A park ranger demonstrated to a group of kinder-

garteners, using deer hide, how to tell the difference between a white-tailed deer and a mule deer.

"They're herbivores," he tells the rapt students. "So they won't eat you, just plants. But you don't want to touch them, either, because

"You'd be amazed at how many kids have never been down here."

— Ann Johnson, first grade teacher at McNary Heights Elementary School

they can carry lots and lots of ticks."

Ann Johnson, a first grade teacher whose class was learning about fish habitats, said the school comes to McNary Dam every year.

"We're going to learn about birds of prey, and about the habitats in our own back yard," Johnson said. "You'd be amazed at how many kids have never been down here."

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BOARDMAN

Police leaders vie for posts to decide emergency communications

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The 7-year-old Umatilla Morrow Radio & Data District, tasked with keeping emergency services in touch with one another, could be in for a major shake-up in the May special election.

Rick Stokoe, Boardman police chief, is challenging Position 2 incumbent Kathy Lieuallen, Umatilla County Sheriff's Office communications manager. And Loren Dieter, lieutenant with the Boardman Police Department, is looking to oust Mike Roxbury from the Position 1 seat. Roxbury is a Umatilla city councilor and the former chief of the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District.

Wins by the challengers would boost the board's Morrow County members to four, with Mark Pratt, Boardman police sergeant and Ken Matlack, the Morrow County sheriff already on the board. Keith Kennedy, Umatilla police lieutenant, would be the lone member from Umatilla County.

Voters approved the district in 2010 to make sure police, fire and ambulance services in the two counties — excluding Milton-Freewater — can communicate with each other. The district maintains relays and antennas, for example, and provides agencies with emergency radios. Stokoe said while he has heard some people

are concerned with a "Morrow County takeover," the district directors stand for the whole and not for either county. He said it is akin to his service as one of the five commissioners for the Port of Morrow, who are representatives of the entire county and not any one city or community.

The real issue in the election, he said, is about having a board that makes wise financial choices with limited funds to ensure reliable emergency communications, which he stressed is vital to public safety.

The district budget is a little over \$2 million and employs a director, an administrative/technical assistant and a communications technician, all for about \$329,000. District resources include \$181,000 in state grants

and about \$100,000 in various payments and user fees. The biggest chunk of the budget — about \$1 million — comes from property taxes with a rate of 17 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

"That's not a lot of money for a system of that kind," Stokoe said, so the district directors must be frugal.

He questioned that frugality at the board's meeting on March 17, when members and director Shawn Halsey discussed options to replace the aging Motorola radios the district uses. The company no longer makes them and is ending its support for the system.

Stokoe, who attends most of the board's meetings, according to the minutes, asked the board about the costs of replacing the radio system. Stokoe said no one could provide an answer.

Halsey, the minutes state, said the cost would depend on the vendor, and Stokoe told the board "to spend the tax payer's money correctly and to know the amount the system will cost before making a decision."

Stokoe said that was frustrating for him, and he also wants to bring his 27 years of public safety work to bear on the issue of emergency communication, as well as his military experience in that area. He added he also has experience working with public budgets.

Dieter, too, said he has a fiscally conservative attitude and replacing the radios is the major question the board must answer.

"It's time to upgrade our system and look into the future," he said, and doing that means considering all options.

Stokoe said he has the support of several law enforcement agencies in the two counties, and Dieter said he might take to Facebook to help generate votes. Both also said they are relying on word-of-mouth and have not decided if they are going to go door-to-door to ask for votes.

Lieuallen nor Roxbury returned messages Thursday.

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HERMISTON

Principal candidates interview at Sunset

Decision will be made as early as next week after public forum

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Sunset Elementary School staff members met the final four candidates for the school's soon-to-be-vacant principal position Thursday, after the candidates went through a round of interviews and school visits that morning.

The final candidates are Lisa Arriaga, Eric Fuchs, Christine Petersen and Stephanie Seals.

Each candidate had about five minutes to speak about their background and qualifications to the audience, followed by a brief question-and answer period.

Petersen spoke about her 27 years in education. She currently works as an assistant professor at Corban University, a school improvement coach for Education Northwest Network, an adjunct professor at George Fox University for Educational Leadership and an administrative consultant.

She said while she enjoys her current roles, she's ready to be back in a school.

"As a leader, I'm very relational," she said. "I'm looking forward to building

a community where I can spend the rest of my career, 12 to 15 years."

A native of San Diego, Petersen said she developed a passion for teaching reading when she taught fourth grade in Virginia.

"I had fourth graders who were non-readers, and a lot of their parents were incarcerated," she said. "People had given up on them."

She said her childhood, in which she grew up with a single parent, inspired her to get into education.

"It was the teachers in my life who saw my potential," she said. "To me, fair isn't equal. Fair is kids getting what they need to be college and career-ready."

Fuchs, a native Oregonian, has worked at Edwards Elementary School in Newberg for 19 years.

"I'm an elementary person through and through," he said.

He emphasized the importance of supporting students and teachers not only in the classroom, but in other interests such as clubs and school activities.

He said his policy as an educator is to build strong relationships with the students and staff, as well as

the community.

"To be an effective educational leader, you need character and competence," he said.

Stephanne Seals, an assistant middle school principal at the Wichita Public Schools in Wichita, Kansas, has taught and served as an administrator and coach in middle schools.

"I'm very passionate about public education," she said. "It's our social contract with our students, and with our nation. They're our future."

Seals said while the bulk of her experience is in middle schools, she thinks her skills would translate.

"I believe a leader is a leader," she said. "I know how to lead staff and students. I think I can have an impact in the lower grades as well as the middle."

Seals is in the process of getting her ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) endorsement.

Arriaga has served as the assistant principal of Sandstone Middle School for the past two years, and as a background teaching elementary school and English as Second Language. She has worked as an instructional

coach, an AVID teacher and an ELL teacher, including at one of the lowest-performing schools in the state of Washington.

Arriaga said she learned a lot from working at that school, and working in an elementary school was one of her strengths.

She also discussed her experience working in low-income schools.

"Every school I've worked in has been Title I," she said.

Arriaga said she has enjoyed being in Hermiston, and thought the school would be a good fit.

Assistant superintendent Tricia Mooney said a decision will be made after superintendent Dr. Fred Maiocco reviews the candidates and does reference checks. He will then provide a recommendation to the board. Mooney said the soonest a decision will be made is at the end of next week, but did not have an exact date.

Devin Grigg resigned the principal job to start a business in Arizona after 12 years as an administrator in the district. Desert View Elementary School will also seek a new principal for next school year with the resignation of Michael Roberts.

Debt collector takes Morrow County DA to court

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson is on track for a courtroom showdown with a debt collector.

Evergreen Financial Services Inc., of Yakima, Washington, filed a claim on March 2 in Morrow County Circuit Court asserting the prosecutor owed \$495.91 plus \$27.64 in interest stemming from a April 1, 2016, bill from Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington. The collection outfit seeks a total of \$664.08, including a \$53 filing fee and a \$87.53 service charge.

A representative for Evergreen said she could not discuss the case without permission from Kadlec. Nelson declined to speak

about the case but said he had a problem with how Evergreen operated.

"I wasn't given any notice of it," he said.

Court documents show Nelson filed a motion on March 14 to dismiss, asserting Evergreen failed to comply with Oregon laws for filing small claims. Evergreen did not make a good faith effort to collect the bill before filing the claim, according to Nelson's request, nor did the company provide "any affidavit of any sort" to back up its reason for the collection effort.

Two days later, Circuit Judge Dan Hill of Hermiston denied Nelson's move but noted the need for a hearing to consider the matter.

Evergreen responded with a motion of its own on March 31 — to have

someone call the court for all hearings rather than appear in person. The request claimed the company's "schedule and availability for the number of hearings scheduled before the court does not permit him to travel one entire day round trip from Yakima to the court's location."

Hill denied Evergreen's request.

He also disqualified his four fellow judges of the Sixth Judicial District from the case, rescued himself and ordered another judge to preside over the claim.

Pro Tem Judge Michael J. Gillespie of Oregon's 15th Judicial District will hear arguments for and against dismissal starting at 9 a.m. on May 19 in Morrow County Circuit Court, Heppner.

Live Music 9:00 PM
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