

Hermiston FFA wins big at state

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

You won't see them on ESPN, but students in Hermiston's chapter of the Future Farmers of America compare themselves to a group of athletes.

"The longer players have been together, the better they work as a team," said freshman Landon Vandehey. "They get more practice together, they get more out of it. Our team is like a sports team."

Several of those team members went to a state-wide FFA competition May 1-2, where students from the Hermiston program competed in five different categories: dairy foods, agriculture communications, crops, meats evaluation and food science. The dairy foods and agriculture communications teams won first prize and will travel to Indianapolis in October for a national competition.

The competitions are all part of the FFA's career development events. The students compete in nearly 20 different such events throughout the school year, some of which require preliminary or sectional contests to qualify. At Oregon State University's competitions, Hermiston was well-represented. In addition to its two first-place teams, its meats evaluation team finished second of 23 teams and the food science team was third of 16.

"In FFA, we probably have 100 to 150 kids that do something ag-related every year," Leah Smith said. That can include competitions, showing at the fair, or teaching agricultural concepts in the schools to younger students.

The students can hone a variety of skills through FFA competitions.

"We get a lot of diversity in the kids that come through the door," Smith said. "Ag comm is very academic — those kids have to do a lot of reading and writing. Dairy foods is more sensory evaluation."

The different competitions also allow the students to see what a career in different aspects of the agriculture industry might look like.

"For dairy foods, we get to step into the business, and decide the production quality (of a dairy product)," said Vandehey, who was part of the winning team.

The students have to test and identify different cheeses, and be able to determine



Photo contributed by Leah Smith

Hermiston FFA students Gissep Marin, Ellen Vander Stelt, Landon Vandehey, Wyatt Paschal and McKayla Dyer were on the team that won the Dairy Foods category at a recent statewide competition.

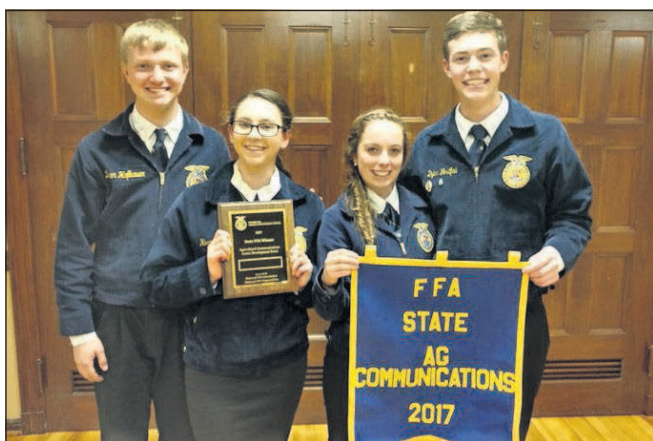


Photo contributed by Leah Smith

Hermiston's Deven Hofbauer, Jessica Sandoval, Alexis Myers and Dylan Westfall were on the team that won the Agriculture Communications category at a recent statewide FFA competition.

which one is made from real milk, and which is from soy or another ingredient. They also have to taste different milks to determine the quality. Based on what cattle have been eating, the flavor of the milk can be altered. The students grade the milk on a scale of 0 to 10, 0 being undrinkable and 10 without defects.

"That's the hardest part of the whole competition," said Wyatt Paschal, a senior and part of the dairy foods team.

Students have to determine whether there are defects in the milk, and grade it based on taste.

Additionally, the dairy foods students take a 50-question test about what's going on in the dairy industry right now.

"It gives them insight into what the industry is," said Alyssa Davies, an agriculture instructor at Hermiston High School. "Where it's been, where it's going."

Smith added that a lot of the competitions replicate actual jobs and skills required in the industry.

"There is someone who identifies whether or not milk is good or bad," she said. "It's an industry skill they can learn."

For the Agriculture Communications team, preparations include studying and honing their presentation, speaking and writing skills.

"We have to cram a lot into a short time," said Lexy Myers, a junior on the ag comm team. "We have about a month to prep."

At this month's competition, the students attended a press conference, where they heard a presentation from a former FFA student. They took notes, and then went into their individual practical exams, which included writing a blog post about what they'd heard. Then, they prepared for the team exercise, giving a presentation of their own, about how a team member of their own promotes FFA in the state of Oregon.

"It's all impromptu," Smith said. "They don't know what the presentation is going to be about beforehand."

Other categories also involve more hands-on skills, such as the meats evaluation team.

"We have to know the cuts of pork, beef and lamb," said Cody Wizner. "We look at four different cuts, and tell which is the best and why."

"You get skills you wouldn't get just sitting in a classroom. It's a hands-on opportunity."

— **Isel Tejada**, Hermiston High School sophomore

The students also have to determine yield and quality for the different cuts, and get to do some of the same things a USDA meat inspector would do.

Many of the students say they are interested in pursuing a career in agriculture.

"Many times I get asked, why do you spend so much time in the ag room?" Asked Isel Tejada, a sophomore. "It's really because you get skills you wouldn't get just sitting in a classroom. It's a hands-on opportunity."

The students are done competing for the year, but the two nationals-bound teams will practice through the summer, and will go to Indianapolis in the fall.

Hermiston has had a strong FFA program for many years.

"The program is very seasoned," Smith said. "We have good participation, good numbers. I don't know if we're rapidly growing, but we have a good following."

Pendleton also had a strong showing at a recent state competition on March 24 in Redmond. Student Macy Rosselle won first prize in the state's Creed speaking competition. Students have to memorize the five-paragraph creed for the FFA program, recite it, and then answer questions about what the statement means.

"I practiced with my advisers, and they grilled me with questions about the creed," Rosselle said. She said she also practiced for at least a half hour by herself every day.

Pendleton High School student Brooklynn Lunny also competed in public speaking, and won third place in her category. Students Kendel Blair and Jordan Crane competed in the agri-science category.

Blair and Rosselle will also be competing at the Nationals competition in Indianapolis in October.

Pendleton High School has 135 students in its FFA program.

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PILOT ROCK Increases to water, public safety approved in budget

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The Pilot Rock City Council approved increases to public safety and water charges in anticipation of passing the upcoming budget.

The council Tuesday voted to bump the city's public safety surcharge to \$4.50 a month, effective July 1. The previous rate was \$3.50. The Pilot Rock Police Department is now at full staff — a chief and three officers — for the first time in several years.

The new rate remains below the \$6 public safety fee the city established in 2010.

And a new water rate goes into effect July 1. The council approved upping the monthly rate \$1.50, or 7.14 percent.

Teri Porter, city recorder and budget officer, in a memo to the council explained the city underfunds the water department, and for the 2017-18 fiscal year the water fund will use \$6,000 of the \$23,000 the city collects to repay loans for water projects.

Even with the increase, the memo states, Pilot

Rock "has one of the lowest, if not the lowest water rate compared with the rates of similar cities."

Approving the increases meant the council made no change to the proposed budget of \$6.29 million for 2017-18, Porter said Wednesday. The total is more than three times the previous year's budget. Porter said the major increase is the city's \$5.2 million project to improve the wastewater lagoon system.

The city applied to the United States Department of Agriculture for a \$1.4 million grant along with a loan for the difference at 1.875 percent interest rate for the cost of the project. The grant required the city raise its sewer rates to \$42 a month.

The budget also includes \$12,000 to the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office for dispatch service, a \$9,000 hike from last year. Porter said the city pays the bill quarterly, and the amount will increase each year until the city can pay the more than \$20,000 the county requires.

Porter said the council will vote June 20 to adopt the budget.

BRIEFLY

Westgate road work underway

The Oregon Department of Transportation's improvements on Westgate in Pendleton are underway.

Peter Murphy, ODOT spokesperson, said Roy Houck Construction of Salem won the contract to repave Westgate/U.S. 30 from Airport Road to Southwest 18th Street. The work also covers upgrades to traffic signals and sidewalks, including ADA compliance.

The \$1.44 million project will wrap up in late June or early July, Murphy said, and much of the paving work will take place at night.

The road construction comes on the heels of the city of Pendleton's waterline work along the same stretch of Westgate.

ODOT in July also plans to improve connections to Interstate 84 at the 207 and 209 on/off ramps. That's a \$4.4 million carry-over project, Murphy said, that includes paving work and re-striping.

That work will also take place at night, he said, and crews will work on one interchange at a time.

Head Start celebrates birthday

HERMISTON — Head Start will celebrate its 52nd birthday Thursday, and will have a couple of special guests to mark the occasion. Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan and City Manager Byron Smith will stop by to read to children in the program. Morgan will stop by at 9:30 a.m., and Smith at 3 p.m. They will be reading the children some new books that have been donated to the program.

"Promoting literacy in every way possible gives

children the best start in life," said Maureen McGrath, Umatilla-Morrow Head Start executive director.

Head Start focuses on literacy and school readiness for children in low-income families ages 3 to 5. Volunteers come in and read with children, and children get to take several books home to keep throughout the year.

Umatilla-Morrow Head Start is looking for volunteers, and those interested can contact volunteer coordinator Gladys Velazquez at 541-564-6878.

Medical grants available for Oregon children

The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation is accepting grant applications from Oregon families in need of financial assistance to help pay for their child's medical needs.

Qualifying families can receive up to \$5,000 per grant with a lifetime maximum of \$10,000 per child. The money can be used for services, treatments or equipment not paid for or fully covered by health insurance.

To be eligible, the child must be 16 or younger, families must meet economic guidelines, reside in the United States and have a commercial health insurance plan. Grants are available for medical expenses incurred 60 days prior to the date of application as well as for ongoing and future medical needs.

For more information or to apply, visit www.UHCCF.org.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

PENDLETON

Commission approves façade grant for Sister's Cafe

East Oregonian

Sister's Cafe will get a considerable face lift courtesy of the Pendleton Development Commission.

The commission unanimously approved a \$126,197 façade grant for the 308 S. Main St. building at a meeting Tuesday. The grant will help pay to remove the stucco exterior to reveal the original brick façade, replacing the windows on the second floor, new awnings, new signs and a rooftop feature that will evoke the historical image of the building.

Sister's owner Rosemary Ramirez said customers have told her that the restaurant's current façade doesn't do the interior any justice, an opinion she agrees with.

"It does not look like a picture of the historic building," Charles Denight, commission associate director, said. "It's going to look completely different if it's restored."

City councilor Dale Primmer asked staff how Ramirez's request would fit into the budget considering that the commission was allocating only \$100,000 for façade grants in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

City manager Robb Corbett said the commission has typically been flexible when it came to the budget —



Staff photo by Drew Langton

The Pendleton Development Commission recently approved a \$126,197 façade grant for Sister's Cafe.

if a project is deemed worthy of investment but costs more than the budgeted allocation, the commission can move funds from one grant or loan program to another to cover the disparity.

Ramirez said she expects the project to be completed over the summer.

Later in the meeting, the commission unanimously approved the urban renewal district's 2017-2018 budget.

The operating fund is \$1.2 million while the debt service fund is \$1.6 million. Budget highlights include \$600,000 for the second story program, \$10,000 for a festival area and \$200,000 for "special projects."

The members spent Tuesday meeting as both the commission and the

city council. Other actions included:

- As the council, members unanimously approved three water line bids totaling \$623,669.

The lowest bidder for all three was Culbert Construction of Pasco, which will now be tasked with replacing water lines at Southwest 20th, Northwest King and Southeast Goodwin.

The city will draw from its water fund and a \$14.9 million loan from the state to pay for the projects.

- The council also unanimously approved the purchase of two heart monitors from Zoll Medical Corp.

Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said the heart monitor request was separate from the \$10 million bond and was already

included in the city's current budget. The fire bond, which includes money for additional heart monitors, ended up passing later that evening.

- As the commission, members unanimously approved a \$50,000 request to hold a second story design meeting for downtown business owners.

According to a report from Denight, a design firm will be hired to show owners and developers how they can historically restore housing spaces to qualify for tax credits and grants.

- Because of time constraints, the commission postponed discussion over a funding request from the Rivoli Restoration Coalition and preserving commission own land abutting the Umatilla River instead of developing it for housing. Those issues will now be discussed at a special commission meeting at city hall on May 23 at 7 p.m.

SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

CONCEALED CARRY PERMIT CLASSES

FRIDAY, MAY 19TH • 1:00 & 6:00 PM

Red Lion

304 SE Nye Ave. Pendleton, OR

Multi-state: \$80 or Oregon only: \$45.00

Required class to get an Oregon or multi-State permit. Class includes:

- Finger printing & photo
- Oregon gun laws
- Washington gun laws
- Interstate travel laws
- Interaction with law enforcement
- Use of deadly force
- Firearm / ammunition / holster selection

360.921.2071

FirearmTrainingNW.com : FirearmrainingNW@gmail.com