

PENDLETON

# Lions Club celebrates 100 years with state convention

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Visitors to Pendleton's downtown on Saturday morning encountered a procession of Lions walking down Main Street.

It was no visiting circus or escape from the zoo, just Lions Club members from around the state celebrating the centennial anniversary of the first Lions Club.

The parade was part of a three-day state Lions Club convention held in Pendleton, which drew chapters from all around the state for leadership workshops, motivational speeches and networking. On Saturday the group donned Lions Club shirts and lion costumes and marched down Main Street with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and a Pendleton Fire Department truck for a "birthday" celebration.

John Taylor, a board member and past president of the Lions Club in Pendleton, said he has been a member for 32 years.



The Milwaukie Lions Club marches in a parade celebrating the Lions Club's centennial anniversary in Pendleton.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

"Our motto is 'We serve,' and doing service has been so rewarding personally, I just stuck with it," he said. "It's become a way of life

for me." Taylor has served in a variety of positions in the club and been the "main instigator" of many local

projects, but he said he always gets more out of his participation in Lions Club than he puts into it. "It's been tremendously

rewarding," he said.

He can't pick just one Lions Club project he has enjoyed the most, but helping with the annual car show is always fun, as is the "fun and hectic" time running a concessions booth at the Pendleton Round-Up.

So far, he said, the convention had been inspiring and fun. He said it is always fun socializing with people from other parts of the state, and he had enjoyed a talk by a man who was able to turn his life around thanks to assistance from the Lions Club sight program in getting him surgery to restore his sight.

Carol Brink, district governor for Lions Club District 36E covering southern Oregon, said Pendleton had given visitors for the convention a warm welcome, including a visit from Mayor John Turner and from representatives of the chamber of commerce. She said it was fun to come see Pendleton and to get to participate in the convention.

"The conference is a way to meet up with old friends and get new ideas," she said. "We're just a happy, fun-loving group that loves to serve."

The Lions Club was started by businessman Melvin Jones in 1917 in Chicago and has grown to be the largest service organization in the world, according to the club's website.

The service club helps communities in a variety of ways, from food drives to scholarships, but has become particularly well-known for its focus on vision after Helen Keller addressed the club's international convention in 1925 and challenged them to become "knights of the blind." The club recycles eyeglasses, provides hundreds of thousands of vision screenings each year and helps provide funding for medical procedures to save or restore sight.

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## DA beats debt collector in court

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson fought a major debt collection company in court last week and won.

"Large, out-of-state debt collection agencies like Evergreen Financial Services Inc. are required to comply with the same rules as the everyday person who files a small claim," Nelson said in a written statement, "and we should hold them to that standard to protect the rights of individuals in Morrow and Umatilla counties."

Evergreen Financial Services Inc., of Yakima, Washington, sued Nelson in Morrow County Circuit Court for \$495.91 plus \$27.64 in interest stemming from an April 1, 2016, bill from Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington, according

**"I encourage anyone who receives service of a small claim case to review the claim carefully, and to review the small claim laws for Oregon."**

— Justin Nelson, Morrow County District Attorney

to court documents. The company sought a total of \$664.08, including a \$53 filing fee and a \$87.53 service charge.

Nelson in court documents asserted Evergreen failed to comply with Oregon laws for filing small claims when it did not make a good faith effort to collect the bill before suing, nor did the company provide evidence to support its reason for the lawsuit.

Nelson and the company met in court Friday. Senior Judge Michael Gillespie ruled for Nelson, records show, awarding him \$153 — the \$53 is for costs and services and the \$100 is for

Oregon's prevailing party fee.

Evergreen came away with zero.

Nelson stated Evergreen has a history of failing to comply with Oregon's small claims laws, and since April 7 the company filed 31 small claims in Umatilla and Morrow counties. In each case, according to Nelson, Evergreen did not follow the law and make good faith effort to collect the debt before filing the claim.

Most people, however, according to Nelson, fail to respond to the claim, and the court awards a default judgment for Evergreen.

The collection company then uses the default judgments to place garnishments against the people it sued.

"I encourage anyone who receives service of a small claim case to review the claim carefully, and to review the small claim laws for Oregon," Nelson advised.

He also stated he hoped Evergreen learns from this and reviews its process for filing small claims in Oregon. The district attorney also encourages the courts to consider rejecting small claim filings that "do not substantially conform" to the court practices and rules.

The *East Oregonian* left a message for a representative with Evergreen, but no one replied by deadline.

Contact Phil Wright at [pwright@eastoregonian.com](mailto:pwright@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0833.

### BRIEFLY

#### Sheriff's office investigates fire-related death

MILTON-FREEWATER — Authorities discovered the burned body of a man early Monday morning after extinguishing a fire underneath the Eastside Bridge along the east bank of the Walla Walla River in Milton-Freewater.

The fire was reported at about 1:35 a.m. After it was put out, the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office arrived to investigate and found the body among burnt debris between two bridge abutments.

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said the department had a possible identification of the victim Monday afternoon but had not yet confirmed it or spoken to next of kin. He said the death did not appear to be criminal in nature, though it hadn't been completely ruled out.

Due to severe burning, the sex and race of the person were not immediately determined. The area where the body was found is often frequented by transients, according to the sheriff's office, and has been secured pending further investigation.

#### Hermiston High School holds research night

HERMISTON — Hermiston High School will host its first annual "Research Night" on Tuesday, where students will present findings on a variety of subjects they've been studying all year.

The event is organized by the Oregon Teacher Pathway program, and will feature presentations from six students, covering a variety of subjects. Isabel Bartley will explore the ways music affects academic performance. Paola Carmona will look at how technology affects student performance in school. Hayden Meyers will examine the impact of extracurriculars on student grades, and Alexis Mercado will talk about how GPA requirements affect student-athletes. Haylie Rahm will discuss how the timing of the current school day works with the amount of sleep teenagers need, and Morgan Wilson will look at how standardized testing affects academic achievement.

The event will take place at Hermiston High School's library, at 600 S. First St., Hermiston.

### PENDLETON

## Business Oregon to open new office in town

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Business Oregon is expanding its footprint in Eastern Oregon.

Business Oregon, the nickname for the state's business development department, plans to open a new office in Pendleton over the summer.

Melisa Drugge, the lead regional development officer for Business Oregon, said the department underwent a restructuring earlier this year that redefined its regional service areas and the responsibilities of some of its employees' responsibilities.

Although Drugge now oversees development in Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, and Wheeler counties, she's still based in La Grande, necessitating a move into her new region.

Drugge said Business Oregon's new Pendleton office will house three

employees — herself, another officer and a regional project manager. The La Grande officer will continue to operate under a different regional development officer.

Drugge said the reconfiguration would allow her office to focus on a smaller collection of counties and better collaborate with local partners.

One of Business Oregon's local partners is Eastern Oregon Business Source, which will share its

245 S.E. Fourth St. building with the state agency and the Oregon Water Coalition.

Eastern Oregon Business Source president Susan Bower said she was excited by the opportunity to work closely with Business Oregon.

Eastern Oregon Business Source's services include grant writing for local nonprofits, coordinating professional development for Umatilla County and operating the Schools to Careers program for the

Pendleton School District.

Contact Antonio Sierra at [asierra@eastoregonian.com](mailto:asierra@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0836.

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