

PENDLETON



John McBee Sr. sits on the Pioneer Park bench that was dedicated in his honor by the Pendleton Foundation Trust Wednesday. Photo by Antonio Sierra

McBee takes a seat

Retired dentist gets a bench at Pioneer Park after 43 years on Pendleton Foundation Trust

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Courtesy of John McBee Sr.'s 43 years of service on the Pendleton Foundation Trust, citizens can now have a front-row seat at the Pioneer Park playground.

Joined by McBee's friends, family, and the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce ambassadors, the Pendleton Foundation Trust celebrated McBee's four decades on its board by dedicating a bench at Pioneer Park Wednesday afternoon.

Without their trademark scissors, the ambassadors handed McBee a knife to cut through the ribbon, officially opening the bench to the public.

Since retiring from the board, McBee told the crowd that he recently read the *Pendleton Record* and approved of all of the foundation's grants in absentia.

Rather than any single thing, the retired dentist and former Pendleton School Board member said he's proud of the foundation's cumulative efforts to support civic projects across town.

"Just about anything done in Pendleton was due to the foundation," he said in an interview.

Kevin Hale, the foundation board's current chairman, said McBee had been on the board for nearly half of the foundation's existence.

Established in 1928 by Roy Raley, the Pendleton Founda-

tion Trust board is composed of four at-large members and three members appointed by the school district, the city and the chamber of commerce.

When McBee joined the board in 1973, Hale said the foundation gave out a total of \$3,040 to organizations like the Umatilla County Library and the Pendleton Little League.

Today, many individual donations the foundation makes to groups around town surpass that figure.

Hale said the foundation donates about \$200,000 per year and has donated about \$4 million in the past eight or nine years, all from interest off a \$5 million trust.

Recent donations include \$25,575 to Neighbor 2 Neighbor Pendleton to replace

the roof on the warming stations and \$6,770 to Veterans of Foreign Wars Let'er Buck Post 922 to purchase a commercial dishwasher, update the electrical hook-up, and expand their storage building at Stillman Park.

When the foundation was scouting out a site for the new bench at the park, McBee said he noticed a "crappy" bench on the north side of the park facing Despain Avenue that should be removed.

Upon closer inspection of the old wooden bench, they found out who placed it there in the first place — the Pendleton Foundation Trust.

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MILTON-FREEWATER

Drive-by shooting called gang related, leads to attempted murder charges

East Oregonian

Milton-Freewater Police Chief Doug Boedigheimer announced two men face attempted murder and other charges from a May 10 drive-by shooting.

Boedigheimer in the written statement said a Umatilla County grand jury Wednesday indicted Francisco Javier Palacios-Garcia, 23, of Milton-Freewater, and Clemente Garcia-Cerda, 21, of Walla Walla, on the following: attempted murder, two counts of unlawful use of a weapon and eight counts of recklessly endangering another person. Garcia-Cerda also faces one count of felon in possession of a firearm.

At around midnight May 10, the pair were in a car that drove by the home at 905 N. Main St., Milton-Freewater, according to Boedigheimer. Eric Rodriguez, 21, lived there and was in the front yard, standing mere feet from the vehicle when Palacios-Garcia and Garcia-Cerda opened fire. Rodriguez was their "apparent target," the police chief stated, but he was not hit.

Several adults and children were in the home at the time, and while bullets penetrated the residence no one was injured.

Milton-Freewater police were on the scene within minutes, and after determining what had occurred, called in two Milton-Freewater detectives, who collected evidence and worked the case.

Milton-Freewater police informed the Walla Walla Police Department about the shooting. Walla Walla police at 1:27 a.m. found a vehicle matching the description and arrested its occupants on Walla Walla and Washington charges.

Boedigheimer reported his detectives within the first few hours of the investigation conducted multiple interviews and followed leads that pointed to Palacios-Garcia and Garcia-Cerda as suspects.

By the weekend of May 13, and with assistance from Walla Walla police detectives, Milton-Freewater detectives developed probable cause and delivered the investigation to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office. Prosecutors took the case to a grand jury, which handed up indictments against the two suspects, leading to warrants for their arrests.

Police served the warrants at the Walla Walla County Jail, Walla Walla, where Palacios-Garcia and Garcia-Cerda remain on Washington charges.

Boedigheimer also reported police determined this was a gang-related shooting.

Sheriff's office says no foul play in fire death

East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office reported its ongoing investigation into the death of Marcos Jesus Gutierrez-Rodriguez has not revealed any foul play.

Firefighters and police found Gutierrez-Rodriguez's body after extinguishing an outdoor fire around 2 a.m. Monday under the Eastside Bridge along the Walla Walla River in Milton-Freewater.

The sheriff's office in a written statement Thursday reported fire and arson investigators from the sheriff's office, the state fire marshal and the Oregon State Police examined the scene, and the state medical examiner in Clackamas completed an autopsy Wednesday, though toxicology reports will not be available for several weeks.

"At this time, no overt signs of criminal activity have been found," according to the sheriff's office. "We will continue to investigate all relevant leads, and await the results of laboratory tests from items at the scene and the post-mortem exam."

The sheriff's office also emphasized anyone with information regarding this case should contact the dispatch center at 541-966-3651.

BRIEFLY

Pendleton fire conducts wildland training near Wal-Mart

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Fire Department announced it will conduct a wildland training burn Tuesday from about 6-8 p.m. on the vacant field just west of Wal-Mart.

"This area of the city has a history of grass fires, especially during the Fourth of July fireworks celebration," according to the announcement. Conducting the burn in cooperation with the property owner mitigates the annual fire hazard and provides valuable training experience to personnel.

The training burn is subject to the weather, and if conditions are not ideal, the department will postpone the burn.

Good Shepherd receives national award for patient safety

HERMISTON — Hermiston's Good Shepherd Health Care System has received an award for its superior performance in preventing the occurrence of serious, potentially avoidable health complications during hospital stays. The hospital has been awarded the Healthgrades 2017 Patient Safety Excellence award, putting it in the top 10 percent of short-term acute care facilities.

The hospital was included in a two-year-long study by Healthgrades, which found that patients treated in the hospitals that received those awards were on average 40 percent less likely to experience an accidental

puncture or laceration during a procedure, and 54 percent less likely to experience catheter-related bloodstream infections acquired at the hospital.

"Keeping our patients safe is a top priority of Good Shepherd," said Theresa Brock, the hospital's vice president of nursing, in response to the award.

Hospital representatives added that in 2016, all employees received a training workshop to emphasize the importance of empathy and compassion in the patient care experience — a training they felt contributed to receiving the award.

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

WATER: Since 1950, the Walla Walla subbasin has seen a 100-foot decline in its basalt aquifer

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The restrictions on new wells do not apply for exempt uses, such as drinking water or livestock watering.

"We're seeing significant declines across the valley," Iverson explained. "We wanted to stop the problem from getting worse."

In addition, farmers and ranchers with basalt wells have until Jan. 1, 2019 to install flow meters and report water usage to regulators. The deadline was recently extended by a year, and OWRD is considering cost-share programs to help farmers pay for meters, which may run \$2,000 to \$4,000 a pop.

One possible option may be through the Natural Resource Conservation Service, where groundwater monitoring is now an approved conservation strategy between the agency and landowners.

"That being said, the funding is still up in the air," Iverson said.

Since 1950, the Walla Walla subbasin has seen a 100-foot decline in its basalt aquifer, including 1 to 4 feet per year over the past decade. The shallow alluvial aquifer is also declining, but not as rapidly, at about a quarter-foot to 1 foot per year.

Iverson said the OWRD is not targeting alluvial aquifers now, but may consider doing so in the future. "I'm not saying that's not an issue," he said.

The Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council did, however, receive



Water is diverted out of one of the Stanfield Irrigation District's canals in April 2016 northeast of Stanfield. EO file photo

a \$346,746 from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board earlier this month to build five new gravel aquifer recharge sites around the area using water diverted from the river during high flows. Recharge sites can either take the form of an infiltration basin — essentially a large pond — or infiltration gallery, with perforated pipe buried underground.

Once groundwater levels are stabilized, Iverson said the next step is for the community to develop a voluntary, holistic approach to reversing the declines. He said the OWRD will continue gathering data around the subbasin, and plans to share its findings across state lines with the Washington Department of Ecology.

NOWA update

J.R. Cook, founder and director of the Northeast Oregon Water Association, was on hand earlier Thursday to provide an update about his group's effort to deliver mitigated Columbia River water to irrigators in western Umatilla and northern Morrow counties.

As it stands, Cook said the pipeline designs are finished and permitting is "well underway" in Salem. Project developers now have until April 2019 to spend \$11 million in state funding that was awarded by the Legislature in 2015.

The challenge is no longer convincing environmental groups or westside lawmakers, Cook said. If nothing gets built, the basin will only have itself to blame.

"It's our fault," Cook said. "We haven't spent the money. We don't have a project in the ground."

Cook alluded to the Central Project, which had been first in line to begin construction until the Westland Irrigation District decided to pull out Monday due to a pending lawsuit in Umatilla County Circuit Court filed by patrons.

The east and west region projects are making progress, Cook said, though those pipelines would cover larger areas and cost more money to build. If successful, the Columbia River water supplies figure to add billions of dollars to the local economy, along with thousands of jobs, and also alleviate stress on groundwater aquifers.

Water taken from the Columbia River will be replaced, at least temporarily, by municipal water rights left in-stream. But those rights are only good for 30 years, Cook said. Beyond that, NOWA is looking to develop a permanent mitigation program that would include basalt bank recovery and upstream storage or restoration work.

None of that means anything unless these projects first get built, he said.

"If we keep showing we can't take advantage of the opportunity the state keeps giving us, they're going to stop listening," Cook said.

Legislative update

Several other bills are also up for consideration at the Legislature that may have an effect on the region.

David Filippi, an attorney with Stoel Rives LLP in Portland, specifi-

cally mentioned Senate Bill 865, which would require local governments to notify irrigation districts of a proposed subdivision if it crosses into the district's boundary.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena), would not give irrigation districts any veto power, Filippi said, but allow them an opportunity in advance to review the project for public safety or other liability. It passed the Oregon Senate unanimously and is currently awaiting a vote in the House.

Filippi also mentioned Senate Bill 866 — also sponsored by Hansell — that would require cities take "reasonable steps" to ensure water discharged into an irrigation canal meets water quality standards. That bill has not budged from the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, and appears to be dead.

Marika Sitz, who was hired as the new coordinator for the Oregon Water Coalition in January, said she was pleased with the turnout at Thursday's meeting, which included both coalition members and representatives of partner agencies.

The coalition was formed in 1992, but nearly dissolved a year ago before it was reinvigorated to keep farmers abreast of regional water news.

"The goal has always been to provide education to members," Sitz said.

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