

Diplomas offer new beginning for EOCI inmates

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Pendleton High School and Blue Mountain Community College had already wrapped up their graduation ceremonies, but pomp and circumstance played one more time in Pendleton on Friday.

As the graduates walked down the aisle, blue jeans stamped with the Department of Corrections logo peeked out from underneath black robes, hinting at the rough road each graduate had traveled to get there — a road that had landed them in Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

No one had taken as long of an educational journey as Eric Burnham, who was recognized for earning a master's degree in Christian counseling from Liberty University. When Burnham was first incarcerated 17 years ago he didn't even have a GED.

"I fell in with violent friends, got in a fight with another man and it went real bad and I caught a lot of prison time," he said.

He credits his educational opportunities in prison with taking him on a journey of self-discovery and change.

"You begin to realize there's a fundamental problem with the way you view other people and the way you view yourself," he said. "I realized I could contribute to society. I didn't have to be a drain."

Most of the men in caps and gowns were there to receive a GED, but Mark Fernandez was getting his associate of general studies from Blue Mountain Community College.

The degree was made possible by the New Directions Education Project, a Pendleton nonprofit that uses private grants and donations to fund college courses at the prison. After accepting his diploma in front of family members who had traveled from other states to see his graduation, Fernandez had a long list of people he wanted to thank, including instructors, peer mentors and prison staff.

Because New Directions only has the resources to offer inmates a couple of college classes per quarter, Fernandez said getting a college degree from BMCC was a "slow process" he began in 2008.

"It was an escape from prison life, to concentrate on learning," he said.

Stan Prowant, who was one of Fernandez's instructors from 2008 to 2013, told



Inmates at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution stand after receiving their GED in a graduation ceremony at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.



Mark Fernandez, right, receives his associate of general studies degree at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

the audience that he was a "very excellent student" who was quiet, personable and always prepared.

The 32 students receiving a GED at the ceremony, represented by class speaker Donald Klein, was the largest group of graduates at one of the EOCI's quarterly ceremonies since the requirements for a GED were increased in 2014.

John Remington, speech and literature instructor, congratulated them in his keynote address for having the courage to come to class each week.

"Your education is the one thing that no one can ever take away from you, the one thing you will always carry with you," he said.

There are critics who say the opportunity to get a college degree in prison takes away from the punishment of incarceration, but after Friday's graduation ceremony New Directions board member Bonnie Douglas said there is clear research showing that the more educated an inmate is, the less likely they are to return to prison after they get out. And a majority of them will get out at some point.

"Most of them will be your neighbor someday," she said.

Prowant added that the connection seems obvious — if someone gets out of prison with no education and no job skills, it makes it hard to find a way to support themselves without resorting to crime.

He described teaching college courses like geology at the prison as "teaching at an all-boys school where they all wear uniforms" — with some exceptions, of course.

"They always ask me, can we take a field trip? And then they all laugh," he said.

His students landed in prison for serious offenses, including violent crimes, but only the best-behaved, most motivated inmates are recommended to New Beginnings, so Prowant said in some ways they were easier to teach than his classes on the regular BMCC campus were.

"You ask them to do homework, they all do their homework," he said. "They're always there."

Mardel James-Bose, an instructor and board member, said she and most other instructors are able to look up what their students were convicted of, but usually try

hard to avoid knowing what they are in prison for so that it doesn't cloud their judgment of the student's academic work.

Douglas said New Beginnings was started 16 years ago after a federal rule change that denied inmates access to Pell Grants. Inmates in the New Beginnings program pay only \$10 per credit hour out of their own pockets, which she said is "a lot more money" on the inside than in everyday society. Since New Beginnings only offers two classes at a time, and they're not always the classes an inmate needs to finish up their degree, getting just an associate's degree is a years-long process, which is why only six inmates have actually graduated so far through New Beginnings even though there are many more taking classes. After leaving New Beginnings, some inmates can earn a more advanced degree by finding acceptance to one of the shrinking number of colleges that still offer "snail mail" correspondence courses that don't require internet access.

For more information about New Beginnings, visit bluecc.edu/community/correctional-facility-education/new-directions.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

PENDLETON

Food truck regulations on city council agenda

East Oregonian

With the increasing presence of food trucks in Pendleton, the city wants to create a set of regulations for them.

At a meeting Tuesday, the council will consider an ordinance that would create new rules for mobile food vendors. According to a staff report, the ordinance was put together using the approaches other communities have taken to the issue.

If the ordinance passes, vendors will be required to obtain a business license and a consent agreement that shows that the vendor is insured and has passed a health inspection.

Mobile food vendors can only be located in a parking lot and cannot be located within 100 feet of another vendor that sells similar food. None of the location standards apply to vendors that are being used in conjunction with special outdoor events.

The ordinance also establishes a "mobile vendor plaza" at Riverfront Park on Southwest Court Avenue, where multiple vendors can locate.

The council will also meet as the Pendleton Development Commission, where the commission will

discuss a contested piece of land it owns north of the Umatilla River.

A group of residents attended the previous meeting and requested that the commission reverse course and set aside the land for preservation. The commission had previously looked at marketing the land for riverfront housing.

The commission's advisory committee has recommended continuing to work with the group through Jan. 1, 2018, which would provide the group with time to devise a plan that could include purchasing the property for preservation purposes.

The commission will also consider raising the maximum amount of a second story development grant from \$25,000 to \$150,000. If the development includes a new elevator, the applicant would be eligible for an additional \$50,000.

A vote is also scheduled to establish the Fresh Start program, a grant program for new downtown buildings that will pay up to 10 percent of a project's cost up to \$100,000. The new Pendleton Veterinary Clinic on Southwest Emigrant Avenue will be grandfathered into the program.

Hermiston hosts receipt contest

East Oregonian

Local residents need to dig into their pockets and dresser drawers and pull out receipts made for purchases at businesses that are members of the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber is holding a Summer Receipt Reward Contest for a chance to win a Body Champ Cardio Dual Trainer from Big 5 Sporting Goods, which is valued at \$299.99.

Purchases must be made between June 1-30. For a list of eligible businesses, review the chamber membership directory at www.hermiston-chamber.com.

Receipts, which people can keep, need to be taken to the chamber for verification by Friday, June 30. Every \$50 spent equals one entry. The office is open Monday through Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395.

The drawing will be announced Saturday, July 8 during Hermiston FunFest. The winner doesn't need to be present.

For more information, contact 541-567-6151 or info@hermistonchamber.com.



Pendleton High School Senior Class of 2017 graduates and Parents appreciates the support from the following businesses for their generous donations to sponsor the Drug and Alcohol Free activities.

SPONSORS

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Jason Walker, D.M.D. | CHI – St. Anthony/RAC |
| Arrowhead Travel Plaza | Pendleton Buckaroo |
| Dean's Pendleton Athletic | Booster Club |
| Frank Szumski, D.O. | Pendleton City Club |
| Kelly Lumber & Supply | Pendleton Electric |
| Mid-Columbia Bus Co. Inc. | Rotary |
| | T. Blair Smith, D.M.D PC |
| | Thews Sheet Metal/Air Condition |
| | Wal-Mart Supercenter – Pendleton |

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Courtesy Home Furnishings | Elite Taxi Inc. | Premium Tire & Lube |
| Altrusa of Pendleton | EOCI | Premium Wash, Inc. |
| Bi-Mart #656 | Farm Equipment Headquarters | Prodigal Son |
| Big John's Home Town Pizza | Frazier Office Supply Inc. | Quiznos |
| Bisnett Insurance | Golden Fountain Restaurant | Safeway |
| Blue Mt. Creations | Gordon's Electric | Silverwood Theme Park |
| Blue Mt. Foot Specialist | Hallman & Dretke | Shari's Restaurant |
| Bud Rich Potatoes – Hermiston | Hamley's Steakhouse | Smith Frozen Foods |
| Burns Mortuary – Pendleton | J & B Automotive | Soft Step Interiors |
| Byrnes Oil Co. | KFC | Sorbenots |
| Cash & Carry | Landmark Tax Service | Stratton Insurance |
| Cayuse Technologies | Little Ceasars | State Farm Insurance – Stan Henderer |
| Cheesecake Factory | Master Printers | Sundown Grill |
| Cockburn & McClintock LLC | McLaughlin Landscaping | Triple Play Family Fun Park |
| Community Bank | NW Farm Credit Services | Vision Source Pendleton |
| Cunningham Sheep Co. | Papa Murphy's Take n Bake Pizza | Wal-Mart Distribution Center – Hermiston |
| D & B Supply | Pendleton Round Up/Happy Canyon | Wheatland Insurance |
| Dave & Cindy Gallagher | Pendleton Underground Tours | Whitney & Assoc. |
| Durk Irwin, DMD PC | Pendleton Woolen Mills | Wildhorse Resort & Casino |
| Dynamic Computer Consulting | Pepsi | Zimmerman's & Co. |
| Eastern Oregon Physical Therapy | Pioneer Chapel | |

CONCEALED CARRY PERMIT CLASSES

JUNE 22ND • 1:00 & 6:00 PM

Best Western

2255 Highway 395 South. Hermiston, OR

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

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

- Fingerprinting & 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

Children's Museum of Eastern Oregon

DOGTONA 400

ELEVENTH ANNUAL

FRIDAY JUNE 23

400 BLOCK • OF MAIN STREET
PENDLETON

DACHSUNDS ONLY

Wiener Dog RACES

RACE REGISTRATION

Pre-registration \$20.00 • Day of Event \$25.00

Forms available at CMEO or online at www.cmeo.org

RAFFLE • FOOD • KIDS' ACTIVITIES • HOTDOG EATING CONTEST

Proceeds from this event help maintain and update exhibits at the Children's Museum

Questions? contact us at 541.276.1066 or find us on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/cmeo)

PLATINUM SPONSORS

GOLD SPONSORS