

BRIEFLY

Bird causes power outages after flying into substation

HERMISTON — About 2,900 Umatilla Electric customers lost power Friday morning when a bird flew into power equipment at the Hermiston Butte substation.

The power failure affected people in Hermiston, Irrigon and Boardman from 9:43 a.m. until 10:41 a.m., with most customers getting power back before noon.

Several areas around Umatilla and Morrow counties were without electricity Friday morning, according to the Umatilla Electric Cooperative's outage map.

Steve Meyers, a spokesman for Umatilla Electric, said most of the customers affected receive power from the Butte substation. The areas that appeared to be hardest hit were in the northern part of Hermiston near East Punkin Center Road south of Walls Road, the area around Diagonal Boulevard and in southwest Hermiston south of Highland and west of 11th Street.

Senior center will reopen after month-long closure

PENDLETON — Following through on a promise to end the closure "come heck or high water," the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon will re-open the Active Senior Center of Pendleton on Monday.

The nonprofit had closed the 510 S.W. 10th St. facility in early June to address a prolonged cook shortage. Although a new cook hasn't been hired yet, Marci McMurphy, CAPECO director of food and nutrition, said they are looking at candidates and intend to reopen with their existing staff.

McMurphy said there are no plans to close the senior center again in the near future.

The senior center serves lunch four days a week as part of CAPECO's congregate meals program, normally attracting between 25-50 seniors per day.

The vacant cook position has been open since April 20, but CAPECO has had difficulty finding a qualified applicant willing to work the 35-hour-per-week job.

CAPECO has talked with St. Anthony Hospital about using its kitchen staff to prepare the senior center meals, and McMurphy said that option remains on the table.

Hermiston City Council to hear NOWA update

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council will have a work session Monday to hear updates from the Northeast Oregon Water Association.

The work session begins at 6 p.m. at city hall, followed by a regular council meeting at 7 p.m.

The agenda for the

regular council meeting includes committee reports, a proclamation for National Night Out and authorization of the city manager to accept state and federal grant funding to hire a consultant for updating the Hermiston Municipal Airport's master plan.

The council will also be asked to consider an agreement with Umatilla County to transfer a portion of Highland Avenue, between Southwest 11th Street and Southwest 15th Place, from the county to the city. The request is tied to a developer's plans to build a commercial mini-storage facility on a vacant lot there. The county requested during a planning commission hearing on the development that the city either take over the road or prohibit installation of curbs and gutters there.

Echo gears up for Open Air Market

ECHO — Produce, crafts and more are featured during the Open Air Market in Echo.

Held the third Saturday of each month, the next event is Saturday, July 15 from 4-7 p.m. at George Park, located at Bonanza and Dupont streets. There is still space available for people who would like to sell their wares.

Proceeds from vendor fees goes to the Echo Museum. Last year's markets resulted in a \$600 contribution to the museum.

For more information, contact echoopenairmarket@gmail.com or visit www.facebook.com/echoopenairmarket.

Astronomer to shed light on solar eclipse

PENDLETON — An upcoming astronomy talk will provide insight about the Aug. 21 total solar eclipse.

Shane L. Larson, a research associate professor at CIERA — the Center for Interdisciplinary Exploration and Research in Astrophysics at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago — has presented yearly lectures in Pendleton.

During his talk, the former La Grande man will explore some of the important ways that eclipses have helped in developing a better understanding of the Earth and its place in the cosmos.

The free event is Sunday, July 16 from 6-8 p.m. at The Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. People who would like to dine at the pub are asked to do so before or after the presentation, as food will not be served in the theater.

For more information, contact Matthew Barnes at mhvalcar@gmail.com or 541-276-6090. For more about Larson, visit www.writescience.wordpress.com.

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

UKIAH
Local YCC teens put out fire

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Several teens saved a Ukiah woman and child and their home Thursday morning, putting out a fire before any major damage was done to the structure.

The six teenagers, all aged 14 and 15 and members of a Youth Conservation Corps crew with the North Fork John Day Watershed Council, were helping Ukiah School employee Trent Douglas set up a greenhouse at the school when they spotted a fire coming from a home nearby. They went to look and discovered that the porch of a home was on fire.

Douglas said the teens acted fast. "From the time they spotted it and got over there, it probably took 45 minutes to an hour," he said. "They got it out pretty quick, but because the porch had caught fire, I didn't feel safe leaving it on the side of the house, so we pulled the porch off the side of the house and hosed all the pieces down."

Douglas said he did not know how the fire started, but there was very little damage to the actual home.

The woman renting the home was at work, but her young daughter and a babysitter were in the house and were unharmed.

Douglas said there was a garden hose

running in the front yard, which the teens grabbed to douse the fire. While the Ukiah fire hall is near the house, Douglas said the teens had it under control before the fire department had to be called.

"It was flaming pretty good," Douglas said. "But they were on it. The kids were pretty impressive."

Douglas said Friday was the crew's last day in Ukiah, and they will now be working in the mountains near Olive Lake for the next two weeks.

The students, all from around Umatilla and Union counties, are Ben Combs, Austin Kendall, Tovias Niel, Quinton Orr, Khai Robertson and Colton Schock.

MERKLEY: Thanked for helping save rural postal service

Continued from 1A
his field representative Karen Wagner.

Lunch at the diner gave Spurgeon extra time with Merkley, and as they chatted, the conversation inevitably turned to health care.

"I keep talking to people about it because we have a very stressful health care system," Merkley said. "Ordinary people don't have the time to research all this and figure it out. It's a big national discussion because peace of mind on healthcare is a quality of life issue."

Spurgeon, who owns a business with her husband, shared that they have had to change health insurance plans four times in four years and are currently on the Affordable Care Act exchange. As Merkley talked about structure of the ACA versus new proposals by Republicans in Washington, D.C., however, Spurgeon said the real problem as she sees it is not insurance, but the price of health care spiraling out of control. Spurgeon is a cancer survivor and said it was literally impossible for her to find out how much various appointments or treatments would cost at different hospitals.

"It's ludicrous," she said. "If I take my car into the shop, they're responsible to give me a bid."

Most of the conversation revolved around more local topics, like grants for restoring Weston's historical buildings and a new committee Spurgeon has created to discuss education. Small town mayors, Spurgeon commented, "don't have the luxury of being partisan."

That was true in the other small towns that Merkley visited on Friday. He started the morning in Echo, where Mayor Jeanne Hampton and City Administrator Diane Berry showed the senator around Echo's historic buildings. Merkley paused to take a photo in front of the Echo museum's wooden sign, and later to read a plaque describing a daring bank robbery in the early 1900s. A few minutes later, back at city hall, he brought up Echo's sewer system challenges and asked if there were federal regulations that were contributing to the problem. Berry said the maze of sometimes-conflicting regulations from multiple federal agencies had thrown up extra roadblocks.

When Merkley next



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Sen. Jeff Merkley visits with rural carrier Ken Hasenbank on Friday at the U.S. Post Office in Helix. Sen. Merkley co-sponsored a bill that helped save rural post offices, including the one in Helix.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Sen. Jeff Merkley walks down the center of Concord Street with Helix Mayor Jack Bascomb while taking a tour Friday in Helix.

arrived in Helix, Mayor Jack Bascomb greeted him in front of city hall with a smile.

"Thank you for saving our post office," he said.

In 2012 Merkley introduced an amendment which prohibited the U.S. Postal Service from closing rural post offices if certain conditions of timeliness cannot be met. The Helix post office, which features the longest mail delivery route in Oregon, had been slated to close but was taken off the chopping block by the new rule.

Bascomb walked with Merkley through the streets of Helix, pointing out the park that always floods and problems with the bridge over the creek there. A couple of minutes later they made it to the post office in question,

where Bascomb introduced Merkley as "the man who saved our post office."

The senator chatted with employees there and Helix School District superintendent Darrick Cope, who had come to check his mail, before Merkley's staff reminded him that he had another appointment to get to.

In Adams Merkley met with Mayor Dane Holmes, who showed him the property where the city hopes to one day have a community center.

"Now this is where I'm supposed to beg," Holmes said. "We need money for it."

Merkley offered up his staff's services in help navigating federal grant applications, and the two

men spent most of the rest of Merkley's short visit talking about the water table and the wheat harvest.

In Athena, Mayor John Shafer took Merkley on a walk down to the park where volunteers were setting up for the weekend's Caledonian Games. They discussed the town's pool, the new bank and stopped to admire the rose garden featuring the names of U.S. presidents of Scottish-Irish descent. Shafer's son Michael came along, and when Merkley found out he has been accepted to Harvard and plans to study government there in the fall, he offered advice about applying for internships in Washington, D.C. and about the Shafers' upcoming visit to the nation's capital.

In Weston, the last of the small cities tour, Merkley said it was one of the few incorporated cities in Oregon he had never visited. When Spurgeon apologized for "talking your ear off" he waved it away, commenting that he had learned a lot.

"It was very helpful," he said. "That's why I'm out here."

Merkley hosts town halls in Union, Wallowa, Baker, Malheur and Harney counties this weekend.

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

Please Welcome



Aimee Rogers, MD
Urologist

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Dr. Rogers is originally from Southern California and graduated from Loyola University in Chicago. She attended medical school at the University Of Louisville School Of Medicine, and completed her residency in Urology in Morgantown, West Virginia at West Virginia University. She then spent three years at Reid Hospital in Richmond, Indiana. Dr. Rogers is Board Certified, American Board of Urology. Dr. Rogers has purchased a home in Pendleton and looks forward to being involved in the community.

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Worried About Falling

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Thursday @ McKay Creek Estates 1:30pm
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Presented by Ken Hall, Area Manager, Encompass Home Health

This presentation is free and open to the public.

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