

HARVARD: Had a 4.27 GPA, 1390 SAT score

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college when Michael was four or five-years-old, a frequent topic of discussion while their father was taking college classes of his own.

Michael's brother Matthew asked Amy what was the closest college, to which his mother replied Blue Mountain Community College.

After Matthew declared his allegiance to BMCC, Michael asked what was the best college to attend. Amy's answer began Michael's unwavering commitment to becoming a Harvard Crimson.

Ann Vescio, Michael's fifth-grade teacher and now the principal of Weston Middle School, said the clarity of Michael's goal made him stick out.

"I think when you have a 10-year-old saying he wants to go to Harvard, it stands out," she said.

Vescio stayed in touch with Michael as he ascended grade levels and helped him hone his admissions essay when it came time to apply. Vescio helped Michael develop his essay's theme around how rural students needed to make their own opportunities.

By that time, Michael had created opportunities for himself and his classmates.

When Michael jumped from middle school to Weston-McEwen High School, he wrote his own grants to bring iPads to the school.

By the time he finished high school, he had compiled a list of accolades worthy of an Ivy Leaguer — student class president, valedictorian, 4-H ambassador, holder of an associates degree.

The extracurriculars were matched by a 4.27 GPA and a 1390 SAT score, a score he had been honing since he first started taking the SAT in eighth grade.

Despite all of Michael's accomplishments, there was no guarantee it would translate into a Harvard

acceptance letter.

According to the Harvard admissions website, the university admitted only 5 percent of the students who applied for the class of 2021.

Complicating things further, only 15 percent of Harvard's student population are first generation college students, the rest having parents who have graduated from a four-year university. John has an associates degree from Walla Walla Community College while Amy took some college classes but doesn't have a degree.

In the days leading up to Harvard's decision, the Shafers were getting mixed signals.

John said Duke University sent a letter denying admission, which shook their confidence a little, but Georgetown University gave Michael a thumbs up.

March 30 was the day the Ivy League schools sent their acceptance emails, putting any doubt to rest.

"I knew that with his work ethic, if anyone was going to get into Harvard, it was going to be him," John said.

While Harvard has been a constant goal, his professional interests are a little more fluid. Michael spent time wanting to become a doctor and a lawyer but his focus is now settled on politics.

It helped that his father became the mayor of Athena and the Shafers' longtime family friend was state Sen. Bill Hansell, an Athena native.

As Michael's interest in politics sharpened, Hansell said he began inviting him to Salem, making him an honorary page and having him sit in on meetings.

Hansell said Michael's interests could change once he gets to college. But if he sticks with politics, the state senator thinks Michael could make a great government official.

Harvard has an alumni base that would make any political aspirant excited —

eight presidents have attended Harvard in addition to countless senators, representatives and elected officials from around the world.

Despite all his excitement and career possibilities, Michael acknowledges Cambridge is a very different city than Athena.

Maggie Armato knows that firsthand.

The Heppner High School graduate was the first Morrow County resident to ever attend Harvard, a fact that didn't escape Michael.

Shortly after she received her acceptance letter Armato met Michael, then a sixth grader, at the Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co. in Pendleton.

Back then, Armato delivered advice on how to build his résumé to attend the school. Now, Armato now has the benefit of hindsight as a Harvard graduate. Surrounded by legacy students and magnet school alums, Armato remembers feeling like a Harvard official would come to her dorm to tell her that they had made a mistake in admitting her.

She went from knowing the same classmates from preschool to high school, to being surrounded by an international student body.

Now an operations worker for a financial services startup in the San Francisco Bay Area, Armato urged Michael to embrace the newfound diversity Harvard has to offer.

For his part Michael seems ready for it, having already visited the campus a few times. "I want to get my experience on the East Coast," he said.

When the summer ends, John and Michael will pack their bags and make the cross-country road trip to Massachusetts. True to form, they plan on stopping at several state capitals and presidential libraries along the way.

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WAGES: Federal min wage has been \$7.25 since 2009

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If everyone paying minimum wage to at least some of their employees raise their prices on consumers, Bumpaous said the raise won't make a bottom line difference in the personal budgets of minimum wage workers.

Melissa Troppmann, who tends the bar at the Pheasant, tended to agree with her boss's assessment.

"I think it's all going to get eaten up in taxes," she said.

She did say she didn't think that higher prices as restaurants and bars due to the increase would necessarily cause people to leave smaller tips, however.

"It hasn't in the past," she said.

While most people think of minimum wage workers as inexperienced teenagers, Troppmann is married with children and joked she has worked at the Pheasant for so many years she is "part of the furniture." The median age for minimum wage workers is 25, compared to 42 in the general workforce, according to the Oregon Employment Department.

Some workers are excited for the new increase.

Audra Arias, who works in housekeeping at Oxford Suites in Hermiston, said after 10 years with the hotel she makes more than minimum wage, but when the new housekeepers get a minimum wage bump, the more seasoned employees usually see a corresponding raise to keep them from sliding back down toward the minimum.

"I live paycheck to paycheck, so this is going to be helpful for me," she said.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 63 percent of minimum wage workers are women. Arias is single but raising her nephew, and she said many of her co-workers are single moms or married women who are working because their family needs two paycheck to make

ends meet. She said she feels a minimum wage increase is especially good for women and could help address some of the pay gap between the genders.

"I'm glad they're doing this for Oregon," she said.

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the new minimum rule will increase wages for about 14 percent of jobs in the state. The department estimates that 4,209 workers in Umatilla County and 435 workers in Morrow County were directly affected. It is unknown how many jobs may have been indirectly affected by an employer deciding to give comparable raises to workers above the minimum, or by reducing their labor force.

Nakul Butta, manager of the Rodeway Inn in Hermiston, is one of those employers who has been paying his employees above the minimum but will be affected as the minimum wage continues to jump by 50 cents each year.

He said he prefers to have the discretion to give his employees raises based on their achievements, rather than being directed by the government to give them a raise whether their performance has improved or not.

Butta is part of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association, and said he has discussed Seattle's new \$15 minimum wage with fellow association members who own hotels there. The city's minimum wage was \$9.47 in 2014 when the city council voted to ratchet it up to \$15 by 2017.

Butta said hotel owners there have told him they cut their employees' hours back, or cut employees altogether, when the first increases hit. Many then raised their prices when it went from \$13 to \$15 this year for large employers that do not provide health insurance. Employers that do provide insurance will see a similar increase in 2018.

"The quality of work is not getting better,"

Butta said. "The quality of employees is not getting better."

While much has been made of kiosks at places like McDonald's replacing workers when they get too expensive, Butta said even hotels are finding ways to replace their workers with machines. Hiltons now send people a digital "room key" on their smartphone instead of having them check in with a live person at the front desk.

Some studies have determined that Seattle's large wage increases have not had a noticeable effect on the number of minimum wage jobs available. But a recently published study by researchers at the University of Washington found that workers' hours had decreased by an average of 9 percent, resulting in smaller paychecks than they had been taking home before the wage increase. Studies on both sides of the equation have been called into question by proponents and opponents of the Fight for \$15, and it's too early to say what the overall effect of the 2017 increase has been.

Federal minimum wage has been \$7.25 since 2009. Oregon is one of seven states that currently has a minimum wage of \$10 or more in an effort provide a "living wage" that helps those working full-time avoid having to rely on government assistance despite having a job.

The new minimum wage in Oregon seems to at least be helping workers keep up with inflation that might otherwise price them out of their apartments. The Oregon Employment Department reported last year that the "purchasing power of Oregon's minimum wage today is similar to the purchasing power of the minimum wage in the late-1970s, while nationally the minimum wage has lost purchasing power."

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FARM: Final expo day features a 'pancake summit'

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tested in vineyards around Echo, seeking to overcome a chronic shortage of manual labor in the wine industry. Using the virtual reality platform, skilled workers can essentially take command of the robot from anywhere in the world — a Chinese office building, for example — potentially opening a global workforce.

Young Kim, CEO of Digital Harvest, said the company tried a number of different tools to operate the ROVR, such as joy sticks and game controllers. However, none were able to duplicate the same level of speed and accuracy from workers in the field.

"By using virtual reality as an operator interface, we not only improved manual dexterity but also opened up the possibility of human workers being able to teleport to work from anywhere," Kim said in a statement.

The ROVR will be fitted with remote sensors to provide real-time crop data, such as the size of grape clusters and estimated yield, and moves via driverless

golf cart, which was donated to the project by Yamaha Unmanned Systems.

Like Digital Harvest, Yamaha has set up shop at the Pendleton UAS Range, where they help to form the backbone of the Oregon UAS Future Farm program. Jeff Lorton, Future Farm manager, said adopting automated technology is key for agriculture moving forward. Future Farm exists to help bridge the connection between Silicon Valley-types working to make those machines a reality, and farmers who can best explain the issues they face.

"The idea is to bring the people who can develop these solutions here, and give them the benefit of agricultural wisdom in the Columbia Basin," Lorton said.

For three days, the Future Farm Expo helps to facilitate a meeting of those minds.

"The whole goal is to bring these two groups of people together and create an environment where they can learn from each other and form personal relationships," Lorton said.

Lorton, who also serves as creative director for the Duke Joseph advertising agency

in downtown Pendleton, said this year's Future Farm Expo has assembled perhaps the greatest ever panel of farm automation experts. The event's keynote speaker is George Kellerman, a founding member of Yamaha Motor Ventures & Laboratory, whose presentation is titled, "How robotics and automation will save farming in the 21st century."

In order for agriculture to thrive, Lorton said farmers need to be forward-thinking.

"Nationally, we are bleeding off (individual) farm owners every year," he said. "We have to turn to technology."

The final day of the Future Farm Expo will also feature a "pancake summit," where participants can learn more about joining Future Farm and accelerating the development of farm technologies. Lorton said he hopes to see their industries run with the program.

Registration for the Future Farm Expo can be done online at www.futurefarmexpo.tech. The cost is \$125 for all three days, though participants can save 25 percent by using the promotional code "earlybird."

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Thursday, May 18th at 2:00 p.m.

Brain Fitness for Seniors

Brain exercises are important to keep the mind sharp.

It is important to encourage memory exercises when you are a senior caregiver. Asking your loved one to share a favorite memory or stories about their lives can bring them joy, strengthen their memory and increase their brain function. Learn about a variety of techniques you can use to encourage brain fitness.

Thursday, July 20th at 2:00 p.m.

Senior Finances, How to Help

Employ strategies to protect the finances of your loved ones.

As our parents and loved ones age they may lose the ability to fully track their finances. When seniors are unable to manage their daily finances they may become susceptible to financial abuse, lose their home or risk having their utilities turned off. Learn how you can make arrangements for financial assistance to protect your loved one.

Thursday, June 15th at 2:00 p.m.

Managing Chronic Conditions

Self-management support provides tools to improve health.

In the U.S., statistics reveal that one in four seniors over the age of 65 are challenged with managing one or more chronic medical conditions. Self-management support tools can help you and your loved one better understand how to manage their illness day-to-day and encourage them to take an active role in their health care.

Thursday, August 17th at 2:00 p.m.

Effectively Manage Chronic Pain

Pain management is a crucial component to caring for seniors.

As a caregiver, it can be difficult to know how to help a senior minimize and manage chronic pain. Older adults often encounter chronic pain as their muscles and joints become stiff and they become less agile. We'll provide tips to understand the various medications used to treat pain and potential side effects.

Location: Classes are held at St. Anthony Hospital, conference room #1: 2801 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton, OR 97801

Call us at (541) 276-1987 for more information or to reserve your seat(s). Hurry space is limited. Refreshments provided.

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