

# FAIR: Friday was 104 degrees, one degree short of record

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He said the new arena has been performing extremely well, especially considering how little time there was to complete construction, and so far the rodeo board has only seen minor things to tweak for next year.

“We’re excited,” he said. “We think Friday and Saturday are going to be big.”

While the fair’s staff pull together numbers, volunteers and attendees couldn’t tell whether attendance was up or down due to the larger fairgrounds and different layout.

Linda Perry, who was trying to cool down under a canopy in the food area, said Friday afternoon it seemed like there were fewer people than the afternoon she visited the fair last year.

“There’s a lot less people,” she said. “But it’s also 100 degrees outside.”

Friday reached 104 degrees, just one degree shy of the record for Aug. 11, which was set in 1971. On the same day last year the temperature was 86 degrees, and the average for the day is 91, according to data from the National Weather Service. Many people speculated that the temperature might be keeping some people home or inspiring them to hit up the fair in the evening instead of the afternoon.

Perry said despite the heat she loved the new fairgrounds.

“I don’t feel like it’s so crammed in,” she said. “I think it’s absolutely fabulous they got to come out here.”

Landon Vandehey, 15, was using dribbles of water from a cup to cool off his black Australorp chicken Zanna. The Hermiston FFA student said it seemed to him like there were more people at the fair overall.

“Attendance has been quite good,” he said. “We got a good bit of people visiting the small



Mariano Macias, 13, of Hermiston plays a bottle game at the carnival Wednesday at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

animal barn, because usually it’s less populated.”

He said he felt like the more visible location, and the fact that there was more room to mill about inside, helped bring more people inside the barn.

As the weather continues in the triple digits, volunteers and attendees have been grateful for the chance to escape the heat inside the event center building, which is fully air-conditioned and has Wi-Fi.

Superintendents Suzie Reitz and Kendra Scott were some of the lucky ones stationed inside, in the conference room where the photography was displayed.

Reitz said the number of photography entries was down a little, “probably because of the new facility and people were unsure.” Scott suggested

the new location may also be why it seemed like fewer people were coming to look at the photography to — not everyone knew where it was. Many people had a hard time finding everything from bathrooms to 4-H exhibits, as evidenced by the growing number of signs put up throughout the week.

Still, Reitz said, the superintendents were grateful to make the change to an air-conditioned building where exhibits were safe from the gusting wind that has hit the fair in some years past.

Another change from previous years was the free shuttle that ran Friday and will continue Saturday. The bus runs on a continuous loop from 2-10 p.m. between the fairgrounds, Hermiston Conference Center, city

hall, Hermiston High School’s baseball field and the Wal-Mart parking lot near McDonald’s.

On Friday afternoon the bus helped keep cars from overflowing past the fairground’s paved parking lot by dropping off a handful of families and individuals each half hour.

Alfonso Aguilar, who was waiting in the shade outside one of the fair’s entrance points for the bus to pick him up, said he had parked near McDonald’s and taken the bus from there to avoid the traffic and the five dollar parking fee at EOTEC.

“It’s nice,” he said. “There’s a lot of traffic, you know, so this will make more space.”

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# Wildfire burns on reservation; communities evacuated

WARM SPRINGS (AP) — A fire tore through dry grass and brush on an Indian reservation in Oregon and burned several old, unoccupied buildings as it grew to 53 square miles on Friday.

Fire officials said several small communities have been evacuated.

A Red Cross Shelter has been set up at the Warm Springs Community Center, but no evacuees were staying there yet, center employee Sophia Suppah said. The Red Cross has set up cots, and it has food and first aid equipment ready, Suppah said.

The fire got the attention of Gov. Kate Brown, who announced the state fire marshal is mobilizing resources to help protect buildings. The fire on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation started Tuesday Aug. 8 on adjacent private property. Firefighters using two helicopters, three dozers and 16 fire engines have the blaze only 4 percent contained.

About 105 structures are currently threatened, including those at Kah-Nee-Ta Resort and a nearby fish hatchery, Brown said in a statement. However, employees at the resort said over the phone that they were only under a level one evacuation level, which means people should be aware of the danger and monitor emergency services websites and local media for information. They said the sky was smoky, but they noted that it has been that way for over a week from other fires in the area and in Canada.

The cause of the fire was listed as human in the official incident report, though authorities haven’t announced the cause yet.

On Thursday, large plumes of smoke appeared every 20 minutes or so as the fire torched trees, *The Bulletin* newspaper reported. Ash sporadically fell from the sky like snow in the 104-degree heat.

Wildfire is a fact of summer life on the reservation and in much of Oregon. But Elizabeth Simtustus, whose house was included in an evacuation notice, said this is more dangerous than the standard Warm Springs blaze.

“The other ones weren’t as close to houses as this has been,” she said.

Despite the threat, she and many residents decided to stay put — at least for now — rather go to the shelter.

“It’s my family home,” she said. “I’m the third generation to live in that house. I was born in that house. I don’t want to see it burned up just like that.”

# THEFT: Woods claimed he was never at Fiesta Foods

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and officers took the initial information, including witness/employee statements and secured surveillance video. He said video showed the bank bag was in arm’s reach of the suspect.

Detectives began working the investigation on Monday and two days later interviewed several people, including Wood at his home at 800 E. 14th St., The Dalles.

Wood has relatives in the Hermiston area but claimed he was never at Fiesta Foods, Edmiston said. That story started to crumble when detectives learned about Wood’s traffic stop.

An Oregon State Police trooper at 7:10 p.m. on the day of the theft stopped Wood on the westbound side of Interstate 84 near milepost 97 for driving while suspended, according to a digital copy of the citation. The time of the stop fit the timeline for the theft, Edmiston said, and the police video showed Wood wore the same clothes as the suspect in the Fiesta Foods video.

“Sometimes you just hit a streak of luck,” Edmiston said.

Police were able to obtain a search warrant for Wood’s vehicle, which Edmiston said led to recovering evidence that “blew a giant hole” in Wood’s story and linked him to Fiesta Foods. Edmiston said he could not specify what the evidence is due to the ongoing investigation.

The Dalles Police Department later that evening assisted the detectives in Wood’s arrest and booked him in jail there. The search, however, was not a total success.

“We have not located the bag with the checks,” Edmiston said. “That’s really what we were hoping to find.”

He speculated Wood tossed the bag because there was no hard cash inside.

Hermiston police on Thursday drove to The Dalles and brought Wood to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton. The district attorney’s office on Friday charged Wood with first-degree aggravated theft, accusing him of stealing third-party checks from Fiesta Foods worth more than \$10,000 and creating a loss for the business exceeding \$50,000.

Circuit court records also show Wood has charges pending in Wasco County for endangering the welfare of a minor, furnishing alcohol to a minor and permitting the unlawful operation of a vehicle, all stemming from a car crash and fight on May 26 in The Dalles. Police reports indicated he provided alcohol to a girl younger than 18 and allowed her to drink and use marijuana at his home before the crash.



Students visiting from Minamisoma, Japan, exchange greetings with Cheri Kendrick on Monday shortly after arriving in Pendleton. Kendrick and her family are hosting one of the students at their Pendleton home.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney



Pendleton Mayor John Turner bows to one of the students from Minamisoma, Japan, during a formal greeting of the group during Tuesday evening’s work session of the Pendleton City Council.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

# PENDLETON: Group is here until Aug. 18

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“I’m a little nervous,” she said.

Monday was her first day in Pendleton, or America, for that matter. She’s 4,000 miles away from her home of Minamisoma, Japan.

Kobayashi’s host sister, Jessie Patterson, didn’t miss a beat.

“Don’t be,” she said. “We’re so happy you’re here.”

Patterson can relate to the travel jitters. The Pendleton High School senior had returned from a two-week stay in Minamisoma only a week earlier.

The Pattersons are hosting Kobayashi as part of an Pendleton-Minamisoma exchange program. Since 1998, the program has exposed students from both cities to new perspectives and encouraged them to see the world in a new light.

“I basically got to be a toddler again for a few weeks,” said Lily Williams, a senior at Pendleton High School. “It helps you realize just what else is out there. Pendleton is so small.”

Williams, like Patterson, was selected for the Minamisoma trip from a pool of applicants. The six cohort members, who happened to be all female this year, paid \$400 for the trip — grants, dona-

tions and fundraisers took care of the rest.

“This group was really smart,” said Karin Power, who served as the group’s chaperone. She added that she was impressed by their courage and insight.

For some travelers, it was the first time they’d left the United States, and it wasn’t a normal vacation. The students stayed

in local homes, fully immersed in Japanese culture. During the day, they’d get out and explore Minamisoma, a coastal town with a population of roughly 56,000. They also visited a few other destinations, like Tokyo.

The Japanese students are here until Aug. 18. There’s a string of activities lined up for their stay,

with new additions like a night at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo, a visit to the UAS Testing Range and a hike near Tollgate.

They started exploring Pendleton in earnest on Tuesday. A tour of the Happy Canyon Grounds sparked those nerves that Kobayashi noted.

The suggestion that the students try on a few costumes caused eyes to widen. Giggles filled the air as Happy Canyon Director Becky Waggoner handed out pioneer get-ups and dance hall ensembles, complete with sequins and feather boas. It wasn’t long before the girls were requesting specific colors and accessories, making the most of their limited English language skills.

Similarly, the girls let out gasps as Happy Canyon volunteer Stuart Harris pulled out a few stage guns. But they eased into using the props, even posing for outlaw-style selfies on the stagecoach.

And a break from the heat in Dairy Queen was just the trick for showing them Pendleton is nothing to be nervous about.

As Narumi Tatenuma, 17, dipped into an Oreo Blizzard, she gave the treat a universal sign of approval: two thumbs up.



Three students from Minamisoma take a selfie during a visit to Happy Canyon on Tuesday after donning costumes and boarding a stagecoach that is used in the night show.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney