

PENDLETON

Ag automation the theme at Future Farm Expo

More than 250 people register for three-day event

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
East Oregonian

George Kellerman has four predictions for the future of farm technology.

Speaking before a crowd of several hundred registered guests at the Happy Canyon Arena, Kellerman said he expects all farm equipment will be eventually be connected to the Internet, rigged with sensors, capable of artificial intelligence and able to operate autonomously in the field.

"The future is now," Kellerman said. "If we build the right kinds of vehicles, equipment and technology, I think it's doable."

Not only is it doable, but Kellerman insisted it will become imperative as farm industries contend with a growing labor shortage.

"A lot of people think robots are going to take jobs in agriculture," Kellerman said. "It's just the opposite."

Kellerman, a founding member and chief operations officer of Yamaha Motor Ventures & Laboratory Silicon Valley, delivered the keynote address Tuesday morning at the Future Farm Expo in Pendleton, where he discussed how robotics and automation will save farming in the 21st century.

With that in mind, the Future Farm Expo serves as a forum where high-tech innovators from around the world can rub elbows with Eastern Oregon growers and explain how the latest developments — from drones to smartphone apps — will boost efficiency and production of local crops.

More than 250 people registered for the three-day conference. Jeff Lorton, who manages the Oregon UAS Future Farm program in Pendleton, said the goal is to build connections that can ultimately unlock the potential of agricultural technology.

The Columbia Basin is one of the world's most productive agricultural areas, Lorton added, with a farm gate value of \$20 billion.



Staff photo by George Plagen
Austin Hawkins, right, territory manager for Intelligent Ag, discusses wireless blockage monitoring technology for tillers and seeders Tuesday with Tom Jackson during the Future Farm Expo in Pendleton.



Staff photo by George Plagen
John Church, professor of precision ranching at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia, Canada, flies a drone as part of a presentation on managing cattle Tuesday during the Future Farm Expo.

"This is the perfect place for the creation of a future farm," he said.

Day one of the three-day expo featured presentations about precision agriculture

and how technology is steering farms from automation to autonomy. John Church, professor of precision ranching at Thompson Rivers University in British

Columbia, Canada, provided a live indoor demonstration of drones he uses to manage livestock from the sky.

Drones can be used on the ranch to find lost cattle, map pastures and take livestock inventory using multi-spectral cameras, Church said.

"We can not only manage the cattle, but the pasture these cattle are on with these (unmanned aerial vehicles)," he said.

The final panel of the day brought together industry experts who fielded questions about where they see farm technology heading in the next five to 10 years.

Mel Torrie, founder and CEO of Autonomous Systems Inc., said adoption of any new technology boils down to trust.

"I think the route is going to be just greater and greater automation until that trust catches up to the technology," Torrie said.

The Future Farm Expo continues Wednesday, including UAV field demonstrations at Echo West Vineyard. The conference wraps up Thursday with a pancake summit back at the Pendleton Convention Center.

Contact George Plagen at gplagen@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

PENDLETON

Police arrest two teenagers for arson

East Oregonian

Pendleton police arrested two teenage boys for first-degree arson after two fires Sunday. Police Chief Stuart Roberts said social media played a key role in finding the suspects.

The first report of a fire came in Sunday at 4:21 a.m., he said, and was near the Juniper House Assisted Living Community, 301 S.W. 28th Drive. The next report was at 10:56 p.m. from between Blue Mountain Village Apartments, 2700 S.W. Goodwin Ave., and the old U.S. Forest Service building. He credited the swift response from officers and firefighters for keeping the blazes from buildings and people.

Even so, he said, the burns were around 70-100 feet across and given the conditions the fires could have been far worse.

One witness to the

second blaze reported seeing three boys run away from the area, according to the Pendleton police bulletin. Roberts said officers found four boys were connected to the fires, but a 13-year-old and a 16-year-old from the neighborhood were responsible. They used fireworks to start the fires, he said, and police found social media communications that led to the arrests.

"And this was not just a reckless act," Roberts said. "It is believed to be intentional based on some of the images and comments discovered during the investigation."

First-degree arson falls under Oregon's law for mandatory-minimum prison sentences. The Umatilla County District Attorney's Office has the discretion on whether to prosecute the teens as adults.

Third man takes plea deal for fake money scheme

East Oregonian

The third of five Pendleton men facing charges of forgery is about to take a plea deal.

Dustin James Verrall, 25, has a hearing Friday in Pendleton to change his plea, according to Umatilla County Circuit Court records. He faces five counts of first-degree forgery.

He also has a plea hearing that day on his methamphetamine possession charge and faces a new criminal case.

The district attorney's office is arraigning Verrall on two counts of first-degree theft. The state accused Verrall of stealing two rifles on April 22 from a private owner.

Pendleton police in April broke up a ring that circulated fake \$100 bills and arrested Verrall, Zachary James Norton,

Timothy McMurphy, Dan Elmer Wilson, Jr. and Tyler Dunn for the crimes. Pendleton police detective Howard Bowen said at the time the group used chemicals to wash out \$1 bills, then printed over the paper to make them look like \$100s.

Co-defendants Norton, 33, and McMurphy, 30, pleaded guilty in June to first-degree forgery. Norton also pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine. He is serving two years probation while McMurphy is serving 18 months for the crime.

Two of the defendants remain at large.

Wilson, 33, did not show up for his June 23 arraignment on one count of first-degree forgery. And Dunn, 18, faces two counts of first-degree forgery and failed to appear for his Aug. 1 court hearing. Both have warrants for their arrests.

SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

BRIEFLY

Anti-hate march planned for Thursday in Pendleton

PENDLETON — In light of recent national events, Pendleton Against Hate has organized a march.

The event is Thursday at 5:30 p.m. starting at the park near the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce, 501 S. Main. The group will march down Dorion Avenue to the Umatilla County Courthouse, back to Main Street and conclude at Brownfield Park. Participants are asked to remain on sidewalks and obey crosswalks.

Prior to the march, a signmaking session will begin at 5 p.m. at the park. Posterboard and markers have been donated by Walmart. Participants may also bring their own signs. Organizers request that people create signs that are family-friendly.

Ashley Jones of Pendleton, with input from local activist Casey Brown, organized the event. The purpose of the march is to provide a forum for the Pendleton community to speak up about the negativity of racism. Guest speakers include Pendleton Mayor John Turner and community activist Willa Wallace. Anson Crane is donating his sound system for the event,

and Jones and Jim Tibbits will perform music. For more information, contact Jones at brooklynlady_1414@yahoo.com or 541-215-7201.

Pendleton police catch wanted man as he flees downtown hotel

PENDLETON — Pendleton police captured a man Tuesday morning after he fled a downtown hotel.

Police Chief Stuart Roberts said police were monitoring Jose Medrano, 32, of Pendleton, and waiting for an opportunity to arrest him. Medrano was wanted in connection to a hit-and-run in July that damaged property at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, Roberts said. Medrano was also wanted on another detainer.

"There was information he was armed and made statements he wasn't going to go back to prison," Roberts said. "We have to be considerate of all those things."

Police found Medrano at the Rodeway Inn & Suites, 205 S.E. Dorion Ave. A witness said a gray minivan with its side door open left from the hotel around 11:15 a.m. and turned east onto Dorion. Roberts said officers used their cars to block Medrano, who then bolted on foot, only for police to

catch him a couple of blocks later. "Although we had information he was in possession of firearms, none were discovered," noted Roberts.

Hotel staff would not talk about the event, and police remained on the scene late into the afternoon.

Students partner with Portland community service group

HERMISTON — Hermiston High School's college savings group will partner with a Portland organization to raise money and learn about the needs of the Hermiston community.

Students from the high school club, which teaches students how to save for college, will partner with Portland's CommuniCare Program, which teaches youth about the importance of community service. HHS students will be awarded \$250 in seed money and have to raise \$1,000, which they worked to do by selling water bottles at the Umatilla County Fair. If they are able to meet that goal, the CARE Foundation will supply a matching grant of up to \$10,000.

In the process of partnering with the community service program, HHS students will do research and determine how



to re-invest the money into the Hermiston community.

The water bottles that students are selling at the fair were donated by Oxford Suites, and Smitty's Ace Hardware donated coolers and wagons to help the students fundraise.

Quilts of Valor hosts sewing event

PENDLETON — All area quilters are invited to a work day to create quilts for combat veterans.

Even those who don't know how to quilt are invited to participate in the Quilts of Valor Under Our Wings program.

The Northeast Oregon Quilt of Valor sewing event is Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Thimbles Fabric-N-More, 1849 Westgate Place, Pendleton. Quilt kits are available. Participants of all ages are invited to bring a sewing machine, sewing supplies and a sack lunch. In addition, donations of fabric, thread and cash are always welcome.

Quilts of Valor creates quilts

and then presents them to veterans who have served the country. The first quilt was awarded in November 2003 to a young soldier who had lost his leg in Iraq at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Since that time, more than 166,000 quilts have been given to veterans and service members.

For more information, contact J. Marie Norris at j.marie.norris@qovf.org or 541-966-1190 or visit www.qovf.org.

Umatilla gets ready to rock 'almost totality'

UMATILLA — While Umatilla County isn't in the path of totality, the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is welcoming people to join the celestial celebration.

The Path of Almost Totality Tailgate Party is Sunday, Aug. 20 from 11 a.m.-11:30 p.m. at Umatilla Marina Park. There is no admission charge. Live music is presented by Blue Tattoo and The Outsiders. A beer garden and food will be available for purchase. Also, recreational vehicle and tent sites available for a fee by calling 541-922-3939.

For more information, call 541-922-4825 or visit www.facebook.com/umatillaoregonchamber.

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