

PENDLETON

Twilight breakfast serves up a tasty tradition

By EMILY OLSON
East Oregonian

Bella Estrada, 10, has a pretty sound theory for why a few hundred folks came out to Thursday’s Twilight Breakfast.

“Who doesn’t love pancakes for dinner?” she said, sitting with her sisters Emma, 2, Sophia, 8, and Tori, 12.

Bella might have said orange juice instead of pancakes, but she had recently spilled her carton and mopped it up like a trooper.

If her two-year-old brother, Amos, had the proper syntactical arsenal, he might have said “Who doesn’t love butter for dinner?” He’d already gotten his hands on a few packets.

But the children’s parents, Heather and Amo, hit the nail on the head: Brinner (breakfast for dinner) is a hit for all ages.

“I love that I don’t have to fix dinner,” Heather said. “This is my favorite event. It’s all locals, you see neighbors and it’s not too crazy yet.” By “crazy,” she meant Round-Up visitors have not yet taken over Pendleton.

While the festivities officially kick-off next week, the Twilight Breakfast has served as the unofficial start to Round-Up for more than 60 years. Not even poor air quality — the effects of fires burning throughout the region — could stop residents from gathering in Stillman Park to chow down on fresh-cooked pancakes, eggs and ham.

The square meal was prepared and served by amateur chefs decked in complimentary outfits — lime green for the Main Street Cowboys and lovely lavender for the Sidesaddlers. The latter organization officially hosts the breakfast and donates all proceeds to charity throughout the year, including D.A.R.E., Altrusa and the women’s shelter. The group also raffles off prizes contributed from local businesses, such as home decor from Walmart, gift cards from Great Pacific and autographed photos of Round-Up royalty.

For many of the patrons, the warmth of tradition is enough incentive to attend.

“People just love it,” said Vivian Larsen, a long-time member of the



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Main Street Cowboy Chuck Coonfield flips pancakes Thursday during the annual Twilight Breakfast at Stillman Park. The event marks the unofficial start to the Pendleton Round-Up.

Sidesaddlers. “I can’t explain it. Before I even knew what sidesaddlers were, I looked for the breakfast.”

Jan Cavallaro, who moved to Pendleton in 2000, said she’s attended too many Twilight Breakfasts to count. Cavallaro has stopped attending Round-Up out of rodeo fatigue, but she

balanced that out last year, by starting a new tradition for the Twilight Breakfast.

“She’s the one who invited me here,” said Cavallaro’s friend, Georgianna Overstreet. The food alone was enough to make it worth it.

“It’s absolutely delicious,” she said, smiling.

MEDINA: Will help students with goal-setting activities

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their funds. In the years after, districts will have to submit a biennial plan, identifying ways they will address the three main tenets of Measure 98.

Spoo said he hoped Medina’s role will help pick up some of the students who might otherwise get missed in a big school. Currently, Hermiston High School has 1,677 students enrolled.

“I don’t want kids to get lost,” he said. “Omar will probably have time to work with some juniors and seniors, too. We absolutely believe this is a sustainable position.”

The 2015-2016 graduation rate for the Hermiston School District, which included Hermiston High School and the now-defunct Innovative Learning Center, was 65.68 percent, below the state average of 74.8 percent. Hermiston High School’s graduation rate by itself was 87.6 percent.

The Innovative Learning Center has been dissolved and absorbed back into the

high school, but the online courses will still be available to students. That facility had a graduation rate of 4.08 percent, but school officials noted that graduation was not the goal for all students in that program, with many working toward a GED or modified diploma. The completion rate for that program was 37.8 percent.

Medina said he expects his work will vary from student to student, and will rely somewhat on data that shows which students need the most help.

“I think the focus will be on freshmen and sophomores,” Medina said. “We’re really trying to not let them get to the point where they’re juniors and seniors, and realize they need to do credit retrieval. We’re helping them get engaged in the first two years of school.”

Medina said he will be helping students with goal-setting activities, assessing what they want to do after they graduate, and helping them understand what they need to do while they’re still in high school

to get to that point. He acknowledged that while college may not be the goal for all students, a high school diploma or GED is now required for many fields.

Spoo noted that while the results of Medina’s work may not be seen right away, he expects the long-term effects of having a graduation coordinator to be obvious.

“We’re trying to see the number of disengaged students drop,” Medina said. “And the number of students dropping out of school go down.”

Spoo agreed.

“If we see a reduction of kids getting pulled into credit recovery, or kids getting their parents called — if we see that, we’re absolutely being successful. But it will probably take a couple of years.”

Medina received a Master of Social Work from George Fox University, and spent time working in the Reynolds School District doing dropout prevention and gang prevention. He also worked for Northwest Family Services, and as a

case manager for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

Even before Medina’s position was created, administrators discussed the importance of catching students early and trying to recover credits before they fall too far behind. Medina will zero in on that goal.

“I hope to do consistent check-ins, and get to know what’s going on with the students,” he said. “We also need to realize that attendance and school performance are tied to home life. Are their needs being met?”

Medina said he hopes to be able to work with students and their parents, and help both understand what they need to do to succeed.

“In some cases, it might be as much about educating the parents as educating the child,” Spoo said.

“It’s really exciting to be able to help support the whole high school,” Medina said.

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FIRE: In Oregon alone, at least 822 square miles have burned so far this year

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and sharply limiting logging and other forest thinning has created a combustible situation in which forests have grown too thick and too close together.

Oregon state Sen. Herman Baertschiger Jr. wrote to the chair of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, calling for a work group to revamp policy.

“The inability to manage our forest resources due to environmental concerns is threatening the safety and well-being of Oregonians and ultimately damaging our beautiful state,” the Republican wrote.

In Oregon alone, at least 822 square miles have burned so far this year — an area over half the size of Rhode Island. The 2014 wildfire season claimed 911 square miles.

“We’ve allowed forests to develop that never developed naturally,” said John Bailey, a professor of fire management at Oregon State University in Corvallis. “As a result, we have longer and hotter fire seasons that drive these megafires.”

A fire becomes a megafire when it reaches 156 square miles. A megafire burning in southwest Oregon increased to 277 square miles, authorities said Thursday.

Bailey said the solution is thinning forests through logging, prescribed burns and

allowing naturally occurring fires to be managed instead of extinguished.

There is now a record amount of fire fuel such as trees and brush in the West, and forests that were once separate now overlap, he said.

“Oregon is not harvesting enough timber, nor reducing fuel loads, to ensure the health and natural resiliency of our forests,” said Republican state Sen. Sherrie Sprenger.

Paul F. Hessburg Sr., a U.S. Forest Service research landscape ecologist, told an audience in Bend, Oregon, in May that forest fuels are at “powder keg levels.”

There’s “a current epidemic of trees; more trees than the landscape can support,” he said.

He also advocated thinning by managing wildfires and other means.

“If we don’t change a few of our fire management habits, we’re going to lose a few of our beloved forests,” he said.

So far, it has cost federal, state and local governments along with private groups at least \$238.5 million to fight the fires in Oregon, the Oregon Department of Forestry said.

“It is bankrupting us,” Bailey said. “The irony is we steal from the positive things we can do to keep suppressing, even though suppressing makes next year’s fire season worse.”

SMOKE: Football games may be moved to Saturday

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east into our area,” Hull said. “We’ll keep some patchy smoke in the forecast because of that.”

An air quality advisory for most of central and Eastern Oregon is expected to be lifted by noon Friday. Air quality levels remained “very unhealthy” in Pendleton on Thursday, raising concern about Friday sporting events and next week’s Pendleton Round-Up.

According to the Inter-Mountain Education Service District, local schools will continue to monitor air quality and keep students indoors for sports practices, physical education classes and recess.

Troy Jerome, Pendleton High School athletic director, said the school is still planning to play its football game Friday at 7 p.m. versus Rex Putnam High School, a Portland-area school. If air quality has not improved, the game will be moved to 11 a.m. Saturday.

“We are kind of in a holding pattern right now, making decisions on the latest air quality conditions for games and activities based on health and safety for our students,” Jerome said in a statement Thursday.

Hermiston also has a football game scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday at Kennison Field versus Lewiston High School. That game could be moved to 7 p.m. Saturday, depending on conditions.

Parents are encouraged to check school websites for updates and changes in activities and practices. As long as air quality remains unhealthy, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality recommends avoiding physical activity outdoors for children, the elderly and people with heart or lung disease.

Large fires have already consumed 638,338 acres across Oregon and Washington. The Eagle Creek fire, which was caused by fireworks, has swelled to 30,929 acres as of Thursday evening and is just 5 percent contained.

On Thursday, a spokesman for the Oregon Department of Transportation told Oregon Public Broadcasting that Interstate 84 near the fire area will remain closed through the weekend. There is no estimate for when the highway will reopen, which could make things difficult for travelers heading east for the 107th annual Pendleton

Round-Up.

Randy Thomas, Round-Up publicity director, said they are watching the weather forecast carefully, and there are no plans to cancel or reschedule any events. Festivities kicked off Thursday with Twilight Breakfast at Stillman Park, and will continue Saturday with the Dress-Up Parade and concert by country music singer Gary Allan.

“We’re moving ahead at full speed,” Thomas said.

Dr. Brad Adams, medical director for the Round-Up, said his team will have double the amount of inhalers and breathing treatments on hand for the public in case of emergencies. He said the air quality index should improve by next week, though people with respiratory problems need to take the same precautions as when they go outdoors for any other reason.

Thomas said visitors to Pendleton can expect to be treated to a fantastic rodeo.

“We have a saying for such things that has served us well for 107 years: Let ‘er Buck,” Thomas said.

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DEPOT: Land contains areas of religious significance for CTUIR

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hear it, they’re not going to smell it,” he said of proposed projects that have come across his desk. “All they’re going to see is cars heading out there and coming back with big paychecks.”

In some cases, Smith said, delays have come from the Columbia Development Authority (a partnership between Umatilla County, Morrow County, Port of Morrow, Port of Umatilla and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation) wanting to negotiate to make sure the transfer is done right. The Pentagon wanted to give most of the water rights on the land to the Oregon National Guard, for example, despite the fact that the Guard’s own study estimated it needed only about 13 percent. Smith and the board held firm on needing 73 percent of the depot’s water.

But Smith and CDA board member Kim Puzey lay most of the blame for delays on the federal government.

“I have never met a more

inefficient form of government than the military,” said Smith, who is also an Oregon state representative.

Puzey said the bureaucrats in Washington D.C. aren’t motivated to work quickly, so it’s hard to get anything to move.

“They come in, they say ‘I need a year to get to know the stakeholders and then a year to vision,’” he said.

Smith and Puzey said the CDA needs the help of their Congressional delegation to give the Army bureaucrats a push. Puzey said Rep. Greg Walden, in particular, is navigating through some tricky political circumstances right now and it “becomes unseemly for a Congressman or woman to go out of their way to push a bureaucrat to do their job.”

Walden has assisted the CDA in the past, most recently with a phone call that helped get the CDA a “deal points memo” needed to get some of the depot’s infrastructure projects included in the state legislature’s transportation package. He also wrote a letter to then-Secretary of

Defense Chuck Hagel in 2015 when there was talk about charging the CDA for the land. His office said he understands the importance of the project and will continue to provide assistance any way he can.

Smith has always repeated the mantra that the land needs to be free, clean and come with adequate water before the CDA is willing to accept it. Those issues have been worked through, but the holdup now is negotiating with the CTUIR and other entities over protection of cultural and archaeological resources.

There are preserved sections of the Oregon Trail on the depot, as well as areas of religious significance for the tribes. A lithic flake — a piece of stone chipped off by percussive force during the making of tools like arrowheads — was discovered on site, as was a firepit that could be archaeologically significant.

Smith said he’s willing to work with the tribes and historical societies to be accommodating, either by blocking off significant sites

to the public or by taking the opposite route and putting up an educational kiosk. However, the tribes have marked a section stretching through the depot as a religiously-significant Coyote Coulee. Smith said he was willing to preserve sections that run through the portion of the depot destined to become a wildlife preserve, but not the section that runs through the former incinerator site that was previously agreed upon for industrial use.

The CTUIR’s economic and community director Bill Tovey now represents the CTUIR on the CDA board. Smith said he has been working with Tovey and has had good conversations with other CTUIR leaders that lead him to believe they will be able to work out a resolution.

“If we can get this final issue resolved, there’s no reason we can’t get finished in the very near future,” he said.

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