

PENDLETON

Fire crews save South Hill homes

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Pendleton firefighters Wednesday morning quenched a field blaze that threatened multiple homes and an apartment building.

The fire occurred around 10:30 a.m. on the brush-covered hill above Southeast Goodwin Avenue at Southeast Third Street. The burn moved toward homes both up the hill and along Goodwin.

Residents helped each other before police or fire crews arrived. Liv and Gary Wyatt said a neighbor warned them to get out of their house at 208 S.E. Goodwin. They joined others across the street in front of the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter and watched the flames reach into a tree near their back yard.

Liz Wyatt said they moved into the home in April, and they had survived a home fire in the 1970s when they lived in Condon.

“We were almost statistics in (that) fire,” Gary Wyatt said.

Shannon Blood said she was on the deck of her house on the 600 block of Southeast Third Street and smelled smoke but didn’t think too much of it, due to the increase in haze from regional wildfires. Then she saw some puffs of smoke, and then ash.

“These hills get really dry around this time of year and there’s nothing you can do about it,” Blood said.

She, her husband and their daughter live in a large house with five chickens, five dogs and two cats — and they were all safe. The couple’s two sons live in the smaller house next door and Blood described how she “pounded and pounded” on the their door to get them out.



Pendleton firefighters battle a brush fire burning on a hillside off Southeast Third Street and Hailey Avenue on Wednesday in Pendleton.



A Pendleton firefighter sprays down a wooden retaining wall while battling a brush fire on a hillside near Southeast Third Street and Hailey Avenue on Wednesday in Pendleton.

Pendleton police arrived within moments, Blood said, and told her to leave the area.

Pilot Rock and the Umatilla Indian Reservation fire departments joined Pendleton in the effort to contain the blaze, as did the Oregon Department

of Forestry. Teams primarily attacked from above to keep flames from an apartment building, Blood’s property and other homes.

Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said the fire was strong when they arrived, so crews

took on “point protection” to keep flames from houses.

“It appears we’ve been successful thus far,” he said on scene. “We haven’t lost any structures.”

Establishing the control line, however, took some time because finding water supplies was a challenge. Crews were able to get on the fire “right away,” he said, but the dearth of personnel meant letting the fire burn west, although that posed no threat to homes.

Even so, firefighters contained the blaze within an hour, but Ciraulo said plenty of work remained and they stayed on the scene into the afternoon.

Liz Wyatt said she was thankful her old home’s windows don’t open and thus kept out the smoke. Blood said the smoke damage might force her family to repaint.

Ciraulo also said the fire’s cause is under investigation.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

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HERMISTON

Disc golfers get ready to drive in the desert

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Area disc golf enthusiasts will soon have another course where they can let the plastic fly and rattle some chains.

A dedication ceremony for Hermiston Desert Disc Golf is Wednesday, Sept. 20, at 5:30 p.m. at the Oxbow Trail, located at 1100 N.W. Elm Ave. The first phase of the course, which includes nine holes, will be available to the public free of charge.

“The nice part of it is the Oxbow Trail meanders through the area,” Fetter said.

Scott Zielke, who works in the maintenance department at Good Shepherd, said the course correlates with the walking trail, but doesn’t require players to toss discs over the path.

A number of key players have pitched in to make the Hermiston Desert Disc Golf course a reality, said Larry Fetter, director of Hermiston Parks & Recreation. In addition to the city of Hermiston, the project is the result of cooperative efforts between the Hermiston Irrigation District, the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation and the board and administration of Good Shepherd Health Care System.

The hospital foundation provided a \$15,000 grant for



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Several discs and bags sit on the gazebo at the Oxbow Trail, which is home of Hermiston Desert Disc Golf. The course will be dedicated Sept. 20.

the project. The foundation, Fetter said, favors projects that are wellness-related and likes the idea that it will get people outside and exercising.

“They really like this project, especially with no cost to participants and everyone can do it,” Fetter said.

Initially a grassroots effort, Fetter said a small group of disc golfers approached the city to discuss possible locations for a course. Zielke and hospital co-workers Jake Flemmer and Kathy Williams

were aware of some hospital-owned acreage. Although the plot of land wasn’t large enough for a course, coupled with irrigation district property it makes for a more than viable location for an eventual sprawling 18-hole course.

A chance encounter between Zielke, a novice disc golfer, and Matt Richmond and Ginger Wilkinson, both officers with the Umatilla Disc Golf Club, resulted in a discussion about the possibility of developing a course in Hermiston.

While returning a boomerang Richmond accidentally tossed on Zielke’s daughter’s house, Zielke noticed a disc golf sticker on Richmond’s truck. Zielke told Wilkinson and Richmond about an upcoming community planning meeting.

Wilkinson and Richmond were immediately on board — spreading the word with other disc golf enthusiasts via the Umatilla Disc Golf Club Facebook page. While talk about a course in Hermiston has been discussed over the years, players walked away even more hopeful after the September 2016 planning meeting.

Flemmer, Zielke said, began researching course designs on the internet. Eventually, he plotted the 18-hole course so it was within regulations.

Having a larger layout with some open areas is an attraction for disc golfers, Richmond said. He expects the Hermiston course will contribute to the growth of the sport.

“It has championship size holes and pads, so that’s exciting,” Wilkinson said. “If you build it, they will come.”

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

HERMISTON

City, irrigation district recognized for reuse project

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

A water-reuse project by the city of Hermiston and West Extension Irrigation District that is the first of its kind in the state is being recognized for its innovation.

The Oregon Water Resources Department gave the project, which uses recycled water from the city for irrigation, the Tyler Hansell Agricultural Efficiency Award.

The water being used comes from the city’s recycled water treatment plant, which churns out a final product that plant manager William Schmittle calls “virtually indistinguishable

from drinking water.”

It is clean enough to be piped into the Umatilla River, but not always cool enough during summer months (rivers that get too warm are unhealthy for fish that swim upstream to spawn). A year ago the city started sending it into the West Extension Irrigation District’s main canal instead during warm months.

Bev Bridgewater, manager of the irrigation district, said every additional bit of water helps the district. “It’s been consistent, reliable and we’ve been able to put it to good use,” she said.

Bridgewater said the project’s uniqueness is probably what contributed to the award. When the district

and the city got the needed permits to start using the water in August 2016, it was the first time anyone in the state had done so.

“We had a city willing to step up and get the work done,” she said.

Hermiston city manager Byron Smith said if the city hadn’t been able to send the water to the irrigation district, it would have had to install some sort of cooling equipment instead. The process to get the needed permits was long and complicated, but he said it was worth it in order to make sure the water was able to be reused in a way that helps contribute to the area’s economy.

“That was a driver for us,” he said.

He said from the city’s standpoint the arrangement has been working well, and they are pleased to have been able to partner with the irrigation district to make it happen.

The Tyler Hansell Agricultural Efficiency Award is given each year to “a recipient that has demonstrated leadership in the area of agricultural water management, increasing the efficiency of water use, while continuing to support agriculture as a vital part of Oregon’s economy,” according to the Oregon Water Resources Department website.

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

HERMISTON

Good Shepherd adds two more surgeons

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Hermiston has two new surgeons in town.

Patrick Harrison, D.O., has joined Advanced Orthopedics and Sports Medicine from Kearney, Nebraska, where he has been practicing since 2015. He is now accepting new patients.

Good Shepherd Medical Group Vice President Troy LeGore said in a statement that having another orthopedic surgeon is good news for Umatilla and Morrow counties, because the area is facing an active, but aging population. Medical journals project that in the next 20 years there will be a 174 percent increase in patients in need of a hip replacement, and a 673 percent increase in knee replacements.

“The addition of Dr. Harrison will help with the demand for care that our community already has,” LeGore said.

According to a news release from GSMG, Harrison has been practicing the anterior approach to hip replacements, custom-cutting guides approach to knee replacements and platelet-rich plasma injections for osteoarthritis, all of

which improve the patient experience by reducing time in surgery and/or recovery.

Harrison brings with him a wife and three children, one of whom is in college. His hobbies include golfing, hunting and fishing.

To schedule an appointment, call 541-298-7075.

Earlier in the month Good Shepherd also welcomed R. Todd Jones, M.D., who is working as a general surgeon. He will work with primary care physicians, emergency room physicians and hospitalists to provide procedures for a variety of conditions, and has extensive specialized training in treating venous disease such as varicose veins, ulcers and deep vein thrombosis.

Jones is a native of Bellingham, Washington, and recently completed his residency at Metropolitan Hospital of New York. His wife Jennifer Poste, M.D., is a local endocrinologist.

“Working in a smaller community really gives me a chance to have a more intimate relationship with my patients and their families — something that ‘big city’ medicine would never have to offer,” he said in a statement.

To schedule an appointment, call 541-667-3804.

BRIEFLY

Pendleton grief support center to hold open house

PENDLETON — Cason’s Place, a nonprofit grief support center based in Pendleton, will hold an open house on Sept. 24 from 2-4 p.m.

“Community members, families, school representatives, pastors, counselors, and all others are encouraged to drop in to see the talking rooms, volcano room, theater room, hospital room, art room and other therapeutic activity rooms and to find out more about the grief support services now offered to children and families in our region,” Debbie McBee, a Cason’s Place board member and publicity chairman, wrote in a press release.

Cason’s Place provides grief support to children, teens and their families who have experienced the death of a loved one. The nonprofit acquired its 1416 S.E. Court Ave. facility, a former hospice, from St. Anthony Hospital earlier this year.

The first grief support meeting will be held Oct. 19. For more information, call 541-612-0828 or visit the organization’s website at www.casonspplace.org.

Library friends set book sale

HERMISTON — The Friends of the Hermiston Library is holding its annual book sale. The event opens

with a preview night for members of the library friends. It is Thursday, Sept. 21 from 5-7 p.m. at the library, 235 E. Gladys Ave. Memberships can be purchased at the door.

The regular hours are Friday, Sept. 22 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday, Sept. 23 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., which features all the books you can stuff into a bag for \$1.

The selection includes a large variety of fiction and non-fiction titles.

For more information, call 541-567-2882 or visit www.hermistonlibrary.us.

Leadership class installs Butte Park benches

HERMISTON — The public is invited to help celebrate the installation of new benches at Butte Park.

The Leadership Hermiston Class 20 raised money for the project this past spring at their class’s service project. The ribbon-cutting event is Tuesday, Sept. 19 at 5:30 p.m. at the park’s soccer fields near the trail leading up to the Hermiston Butte, 1245 N.W. Seventh St.

Leadership Hermiston is a 10-month class sponsored by the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce. Participants meet once a month to network, gain leadership skills, tour facilities and learn more about the community. For more information, contact Debbie Pedro at debbie@hermistonchamber.com or 541-567-6151.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Mason Hegar
RIVERSIDE HIGH SCHOOL

Mason Hegar is a senior at Riverside Jr/Sr High School. As a student at Riverside, Mason has been a leader on the varsity Football, Basketball, and Baseball teams. Not only has he been a leader athletically, Mason has also volunteered in the community as a flag football coach, referee for youth sports and is part of the National Honor Society. Mason is known for his work ethic in the classroom, community and extra-curricular activities. Mason has plans to attend college after graduating this year, and is currently planning to attend Blue Mountain Community College.

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