

PENDLETON

Former mayor wins statesmanship award

East Oregonian

He has been out of office for nearly a year, but former Pendleton Mayor Phillip Houk continues to collect accolades.

The latest recognition was the Mark Hatfield Statesmanship Award from the League of Oregon Cities, which was presented at the organization's annual conference Friday in Portland.

Gov. Kate Brown and state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, were among the dignitaries who paid tribute to Houk as he accepted the award, which is given to a "statesman" who has provided lasting benefits to the quality of life for Oregon citizens," according to the league's website.

In an interview, Houk said he was surprised that he had won the award, which isn't granted annually.

He had other reasons to be at the league conference: he was asked to speak at the workshop on city councils, his employer — Union



Photo courtesy of the League of Oregon Cities
Former Pendleton Mayor Phillip Houk, center, receives the Mark Hatfield Statesmanship Award at the League of Oregon Cities conference in Portland Friday. Gov. Kate Brown, third from right, and state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, second from right, paid tribute to Houk during the ceremony.

Pacific Railroad — was an event sponsor, and he thought he was attending the banquet to say a few words about the League of Oregon Cities Foundation.

Houk said the statesmanship award is also usually bestowed on people who hold higher office. Past recipients include the award's

namesake, former U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield, former Gov. Neil Goldschmidt, U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, and several state legislators.

"It just shows that I'm getting old," he said.

In a press release, the league highlighted his 22-year tenure on the Pendleton City Council, which

included 12 years as the city's mayor. Houk declined to seek a fourth term in 2016, citing the increasing demands of his job as a risk manager for Union Pacific. He was replaced by John Turner in 2017.

The league also mentioned his participation and membership in the Oregon Community College Association, Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee, Oregon Solutions Steering Committee and the National Disability Board.

Houk has also served as the president of the League of Oregon Cities Board of Directors, Oregon Mayors Association Board of Directors and is currently serving as the president of the league foundation's board of directors.

Pendleton stayed in the spotlight when it won the gold award from County Insurance Services for having zero time-loss injuries, according to a city press release.

BRIEFLY

Pendleton apartment fire sends residents outdoors

PENDLETON — Pendleton firefighters stopped a small apartment fire Monday morning. It was the second fire-related evacuation in a week at Security Apartments, 130 S.W. Court Ave.

Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said the call came at 6:03 a.m. and crews arrived moments later and saw smoke on the first floor, then found the fire in a room in the first floor's northeast apartment.

The fire sprinkler kept the fire in check, Ciraulo said, and firefighters had the situation under control in about 15 minutes.

He also said the Pendleton team evacuated the building, and one victim suffered smoke inhalation and was taken by ambulance to St. Anthony Hospital for treatment.

The unit and the basement underneath sustained some water damage, Ciraulo said, but residents otherwise were able to go back to their apartments.

Ciraulo also said the cause of this fire is under investigation, but it was "totally unrelated" to Wednesday's evacuation, which occurred after multiple fire alarms went off. Firefighters found no blaze that time.



Stanfield looking for volunteers to paint buildings

STANFIELD — The city of Stanfield is looking for volunteers to help "paint the town" on Oct. 14.

The community service project to paint buildings downtown will begin at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 14 as volunteers meet at the city council chambers, 150 Coe Ave.

The city will provide paint, supplies, equipment, water and refreshments. Community members just need to show up ready to work in clothing that can get paint on it.

City councilor Jason Sperr proposed the project at a recent city council meeting as part of Stanfield's ongoing efforts to revitalize its downtown district.

Contact city manager Blair Larsen for more information or to RSVP so the city has an idea of how many volunteers will be available.

Briefs are compiled by East Oregonian reporters. Send press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

ECHO

St. Peter's church doors opened to the future

By TAMMY MALGESINI
 East Oregonian

A day before the old St. Peter's Catholic Church hosted an open house event in Echo, a handful of curious bystanders stopped in to get a glimpse of the historic building, which was constructed in 1913.

"It's so neat to see the doors open," Matthew Greenup said Saturday as he made his way up the concrete stairs.

The Heppner man was in town looking at antiques and heard there was some activity at the old church. The building was de-consecrated in 1996 and donated to the Fort Henrietta Foundation by the Diocese of Baker. While initial discussion centered around a possible museum, the church has sat empty for more than 20 years. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places on Aug. 28, 1997.

A small group of volunteers with the Echo Kiwanis Club and Fort Henrietta Foundation worked both inside and outside the structure Saturday in preparation for Sunday's open house. In addition to dusting and vacuuming, Kiwanian Phyllis Shovelski said they removed the plastic covers from the ornate statues and other fixtures inside the building. Outside, Michael Duffy, Echo Kiwanis president, cleaned up the parking area with a backhoe.

The Kiwanis, Duffy said, have no interest in taking



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini
Matthew Greenup of Heppner listens to Echo Kiwanis Club member Phyllis Shovelski share about the old St. Peter's Catholic Church in Echo. The Fort Henrietta Foundation and Kiwanis hosted a clean-up effort and open house this past weekend.

over the project. However, he said they want to lend a hand and provide financial support to help in reducing the building's degradation.

"We need to treat this as the treasure it is," Duffy said.

Regardless of their religious upbringing, Shovelski said the consensus from what she hears from the people around town is they don't want to see the building destroyed. In fact, she said the building elicits quite the emotional response from some people.

"A year ago it was covered in bird droppings, dead flies, cobwebs and there was a beehive in the wall," Shovelski said. "It was pretty bad and people were tearful."

The inaugural Echo Oktoberfest, held in 2016,

raised about \$6,000 for the project, Shovelski said. The Kiwanis are again hosting an Oktoberfest event, with most of the funds going to the St. Peter's project. Some of the money, Shovelski said, will be earmarked for the Kiwanis scholarship program for area youths who are furthering their education.

This year's Echo Oktoberfest is Saturday, Oct. 21 beginning at 4 p.m. in downtown Echo. The family-friendly event will include kids' activities, food (German sausage, coleslaw, potato salad, hot dogs and brats) and beverages, including 16 varieties of beer from Hermiston Brewing Co., Cruise Control, an oldies rock and roll band from the Tri-Cities, will perform.

Oktoberfest tickets are \$15. Those purchased in advance will include \$20 in event tokens. They are available at H&P Cafe in Echo, Hermiston Brewing Co. & Nookies Restaurant and from Echo Kiwanis members.

For more information, contact Duffy at 541-303-5730, echokiwanis@centurytel.net, Shovelski at 541-379-6992 or Joe Ramos at 509-366-3980.

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 AB3085
 U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
 STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
 (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

- Title of publication: East Oregonian
- Publication number: 164 - 980
- Date of Filing: September 27, 2017
- Frequency of issue: Tuesday through Saturday
- No. of issues published annually: 261
- Annual subscription price: \$230.58 in; \$269.86 Out
- Complete mailing address of known office of publication, 211 SE Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801
- Complete mailing address of the headquarters of general business offices of the publisher, P.O. Box 2048, Salem, OR 97308-2048
- Full names and complete mailing address of the publisher, editor and managing editor.
 Publisher, KATHRYN B. BROWN
 211 SE Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801
 Editor, DANIEL WATTENBURGER
 211 SE Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801
 Managing Editor, DANIEL WATTENBURGER
 211 SE Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801
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 U.S. Bank 555 NW Franklin Ave. Bend, OR 97701
 Umpqua Bank, P.O. Box 19246, Spokane, WA 99210
- Publication Name: East Oregonian
- Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: August 31, 2017

15. EXTENT OF NATURE OF CIRCULATION	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual Number of Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total Number of copies (net press run)	6198	5587
B. Paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail)		
1. Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	285	523
2. Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies and exchange copies)	316	887
3. Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®	4691	3559
4. Paid Distribution by other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)	0	0
C. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3) and (4))	5292	4969
D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		
1. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	0	0
2. Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	0	0
3. Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	0	0
4. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	274	143
E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))	274	143
F. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	5566	5112
G. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))	632	475
H. Total (Sum of 15f and g)	6198	5587
I. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)	95.08%	97.20%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation		
A. Paid Electronic Copies	243	260
B. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	5535	5229
C. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	5809	5372
D. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100)	95.28%	97.34%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.		
17. Publication of Statement of Ownership		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the October 3, 2017 issue of this publication.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Publication not required.		
18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Kathryn B. Brown Date: September 22, 2017		

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PS Form 3526, July 2014 Publication Date: October 3, 2017

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