Two Pendleton teachers receive awards

East Oregonian

Hampton

Johnson

Two Pendleton School District teachers recently received professional awards, the district announced Monday.

Sherwood Heights Elementary School teacher Celia Hampton won the Outstanding Earth Science Teacher Award from the National Association of Geoscience Teachers. According to a press release, the award is given to teachers who "put forth exceptional effort and achieved exemplary success teaching Earth sciences in elementary or secondary schools."

"Her classroom is full of rocks, minerals, crystals and fossils," the press release states. "Hampton teaches the geology of the Pacific Northwest, the Cascadia Subduction Zone, the Cascade Range volcanoes and much more."

State Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, selected Pendleton High School social studies teacher Brian Johnson as one of two civic scholars in his district.

As a part of the recognition, Johnson will receive free registration to the Oregon State Capitol in Salem for the Civics Conference for Teachers in December.

"The conference features presentations from each branch of Oregon government as well as strategies from master teachers," a press release states. "The scholars also receive special recognition at the conference, substitute pay while they are away from their classroom and follow-up classroom assistance."

In a statement, Superintendent Chris Fritsch sang Johnson's praises.

"Mr. Johnson is highly regarded by his students and peers alike. He embodies everything that is good about public educators — holding high expectations for all students and providing them the appropriate support to reach those expectations," Fritsch said. "Mr. Johnson is very deserving of this award."

Pendleton school employee union asks board to unfreeze pay scale

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Pendleton School District's union for educational assistants, secretaries and custodians wants to reinstate the top-end of the pay scale for classified employees.

At a Pendleton School Board meeting Monday, Teri McCoy, the president of the classified employee union and an assistant at Hawthorne Alternative High School, read a letter detailing their request.

During contract negotiations last summer, McCoy said the union agreed to a salary step freeze for the current school year in exchange for a new, ninth step on the pay scale. That meant no classified employee would receive a pay bump during the 2017-2018 school year, regardless of accumulated experience or performance.

But when she learned that an administrator had received a 2 percent cost-of-living salary increase, McCoy said she would have felt "remiss" if she didn't lobby the board to have classified employee's pay raises restored.

"A step increase for the classified employees who lost a step would not be a huge cost due to so few of them actually still moving steps, and it is the right thing to do," she said.

With an uncertain state education budget and declining enrollment, the district initially made significant cuts to the budget. At one point, the district laid off 10 employees, before an improved budget projection from the state allowed them to hire many of them back.

In addition to concessions from the classified employees union, district administrators agreed to a one-year cost-of-living freeze to help aid the budget. But after approving the freeze in June, the board reinstated the 2 percent salary increase to Director of Business Services Michelle Jones in July.

"As the president of the classified union, and a hard-working employee of this school district, we are asking for real answers from the school board as to why the classified always have to sacrifice financial gain, and administrators are handily rewarded first, and often without hesitation," she said.

Although all the classified employees who were laid off were eventually offered the jobs back, McCoy said one employee was rehired in the "Secretary 1" position after previously working as a "Secretary 2." The move resulted in a $2,000 annual pay cut, which McCoy said would be softened to $700 if she were allowed to advance on the salary steps.

After McCoy finished reading the letter, board member Debbie McBee expressed her appreciation for classified employees, but the board didn't comment further.

In an interview after the meeting, Lynn Lieuallen, the chair of the board, declined to comment on the letter but echoed McBee's thought.

"Classified employees are valuable team members of the Pendleton school district," Lieuallen said in a statement. "We are thankful and appreciative of the work they do each and everyday."

Lieuallen said she and Superintendent Chris Fritsch would work on an official response later this week.

Fritsch also declined to comment, saying it was out of respect for McCoy and the board.

"I don't want Teri or anyone else to read an opinion or reaction in the paper before I talk to them in person," he said.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

BRIEFLY

Hermiston 76 rebranding as Sinclair

HERMISTON — Fuel dispensers and signs are being replaced at the 76 gas station in Hermiston to rebrand the station as a Sinclair.

Linda Lancaster, store manager, said the business will still be under the ownership of Hattenhauer Distributing of The Dalles.

"It will still be the same good-quality fuel we've had here," she said.

Lancaster said the store is still open, and unless workers run into any problems the new fuel dispensers should be up and running on Thursday, or possibly even Wednesday afternoon.

The station is located at 710 W. Highland Ave. in Hermiston.

Rivoli Theater subject of NARFE meeting

PENDLETON — The restoration progress at Pendleton's Rivoli Theater is the subject of the October meeting of National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE).

The meeting will be held Thursday at 11:30 a.m. at Shari's Restaurant, 319 S.E. Nye Ave. Andrew Picket will be the guest speaker.

For more information, contact Janet Lambert at 541-980-3268.

Relay for Life volunteers meet Thursday

PENDLETON — Relay for Life Umatilla County is getting a head start on organizing its 2018 event.

A planning meeting is set for committee members and team captains. Everyone is welcome to attend to learn how they can become involved in the summer fundraiser that benefits the American Cancer Society.

The meeting is Thursday from 6-7 p.m. at Dr. Patricia Winn's office, 3001 St. Anthony Way Suite 135, Pendleton.

For more information, contact Carol Preston at relaypendleton@yahoo.com or 541-379-6294.

Warming station sets volunteer training

HERMISTON — With fall in the air and the mercury edging closer to freezing, organizers of the Hermiston Warming Station are gearing up for the winter months.

Volunteers are needed to help in keeping the doors open to offer a warm place for those who are homeless. New and returning volunteers must complete one training session. Training sessions are available at 1075 S. Highway 395, Hermiston, on the following days:

- Friday, Oct. 13 from 7-9 p.m.
- Saturday, Oct. 14 from 9-11 a.m.
- Sunday, Oct. 15 from 2-4 p.m.
- Sunday, Oct. 22 from 2-4 p.m.
- Monday, Oct. 23 from 7-9 p.m.
- Thursday, Oct. 26 from 7-9 p.m.

Organizers are hoping to have all volunteers trained by Wednesday, Nov. 1. To meet staffing goals, 200 volunteers are needed. The plan is to have the warming station open each night from Nov. 20 through Feb. 28.

The cost for a background check is $10. For more information, to register or if assistance is needed to pay for the background check, call Amber or Trish at 541-289-2150.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Workers switch the 76 sign to a Sinclair sign as the fuel station on Hermiston Avenue changes brands.

Band students sell donuts to fund tour

HERMISTON — The Stanfield High School band is selling Krispy Kreme donuts to help fund their April 2018 tour to Lake Chelan and Leavenworth, Wash.

Band students will be selling original Krispy Kremes by the dozen for $11 at Walmart, 1350 N. First St., Hermiston, on Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., or until they are sold out.

For more information, contact band director Deborah Wryn at 541-240-1513.

Oregon Rural Action announces annual meeting

LA GRANDE — The Oregon Rural Action annual meeting will feature an old-fashioned social and an informative program featuring a guest speaker from Food First.

Ahna Kruzic will discuss topics central to the theme "The Future of Rural America: Equity, Sustainability and Justice." The event is Saturday, Oct. 14 beginning at 1 p.m. in the 4-H Building at the Union County Fairgrounds, 3604 N. Second St., La Grande. People are asked to bring a dish to share for the community potluck meal. The event, which also serves as a fundraiser, features an auction, raffles and a drawing for a quilt.

The event is free for Oregon Rural Action members and $10 for non-members.

For more information, contact Anna Maria Dill at 541-786-5471, amdill707@gmail.com or visit www.oregonrural.org.

PENDLETON

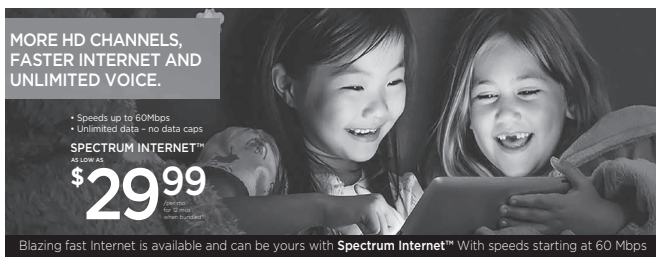
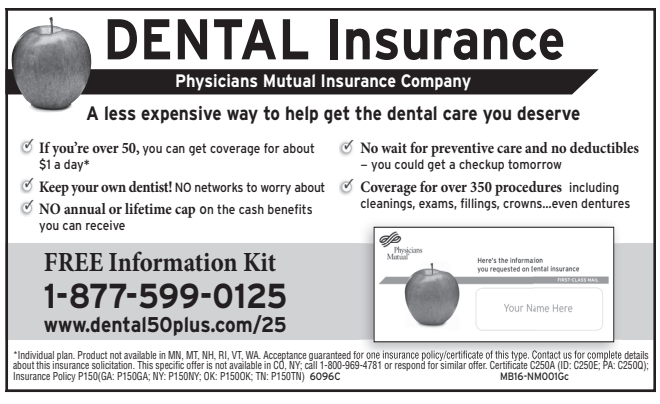
Gas line work will affect Washington Elementary

East Oregonian

Gas line work by Cascade Natural Gas will affect the area in front of Washington Elementary School in Pendleton next week.

According to a Pendleton School District press release, the work between Southeast Fifth Street and Southeast 15th Street on Byers Avenue could begin as soon as Friday on a non-school day due to statewide in-service. The work with the biggest impact on the school is set to start next Monday with the hope that it will be completed within the following three to five days.

"During this time, heavy equipment will be trenching, and work crews will be removing and replacing existing natural gas lines," the press release states. "Normal traffic flows should not be impacted other than potential slower than usual traffic speeds as vehicles and buses travel through the construction area. Traffic control professionals (flaggers) will be present during construction to minimize traffic congestion as well as assist school crossing guards."

The district is advising parents to remind their children to stay away from marked construction areas and use sidewalks and crosswalks.

Superintendent Chris Fritsch doesn't anticipate any health or safety issues during construction, but is reviewing school emergency procedures in case there's an event.