

CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST TEEN IN GORGE FIRE
NORTHWEST/2A

SPORTS/1B
DODGERS HEAD TO WORLD SERIES



EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2017

142nd Year, No. 4

WINNER OF THE 2017 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

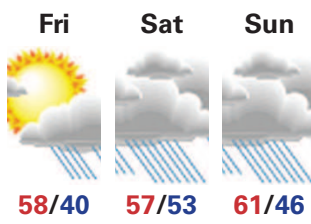
Your Weekend



- **Echo Oktoberfest downtown Saturday**
- **Fall Festival at Harris Jr. Academy**
- **Echo Corn Maze and Pumpkin Patch**

For times and places see **Coming Events, 3A**

Weekend Weather



Watch a game



Redmond vs. Hermiston
Friday, 7 p.m.,
at Kennison Field

California fires cause \$1B in damage, burn 7,000 buildings

By **JANIE HAR** and **MICHAEL R. BLOOD**
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The wildfires that have devastated Northern California this month caused at least \$1 billion in damage to insured property, officials said Thursday, as authorities increased the count of homes and other buildings destroyed to nearly 7,000.

Both numbers were expected to rise as crews continued assessing areas scorched by the blazes that killed 42 people, a total that makes it the deadliest series of fires in state history.

State Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones said the preliminary dollar valuation of losses came from claims filed with the eight largest insurance companies in the affected areas and did not include uninsured property.

See **FIRE/12A**

Punishment softened for hard drugs

Local police chiefs, district attorney question bill that turned possession into a misdemeanor

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
East Oregonian

It is no longer a felony in Oregon to be in possession of small amounts of hard drugs — the first time around.

As per House Bill 2355, first-time offenders found with usable amounts of heroin, methamphetamines, cocaine and other hard drugs are charged with a misdemeanor instead of the felony charge that used to accompany possession.

The law went into effect Aug. 15, passing 36 to 23 in the House and 20

to 9 in the Senate.

According to state lawmakers who voted for the bill, the purpose was to stop filling up prisons with people who could instead receive treatment for drug use.

Several entities worked with legislators to craft the bill, including the Oregon Chiefs of Police Association and the Oregon Sheriff's Association.

Local law enforcement officials said the impact of the new law is not yet clear, but its divisive nature is.

See **DRUGS/12A**



Photo contributed by the Hermiston Police Department
Black tar heroin (left) and methamphetamine (right) confiscated by the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team.

"The stigma of a felony charge is gone."

— **Justin Nelson**, Morrow County district attorney



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Birdie on the golf course

A blue heron sits perched on the banks of a pond at the Wildhorse Golf Course on Thursday in Mission.

PENDLETON

Mystery infection puts band director in hospital

Teen musicians react with understanding after concerts canceled

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Band director Andy Cary never canceled a concert in his 14 years Pendleton High School — until a recent mystery infection brought him down.

A few weeks ago, he noticed a pain on the left side of his chest and immediately worried about a heart issue. After noticing a lump near his sternum, he figured the problem was muscular. He started icing down his chest and taking it easier. Maybe it was a torn pec muscle or a cracked rib, he reasoned.

With no improvement, he finally saw a chiropractor and then a doctor, had blood tests, X-rays and physical therapy. Finally, he ended up at the St. Anthony Hospital emergency room Thursday night in unrelenting pain. He was admitted and Monday traveled by ambulance to Oregon Health & Science University Hospital in Portland.

"I was getting steadily and exponentially worse," Cary said groggily Wednesday morning by phone from his OHSU bed.

Slowly he responded to antibiotics and he hears he'll be released soon with a treatment plan. The specific root of his troubles, however, is still to be determined.

"It's not for lack of trying," Cary said. "I've had all sorts of blood tests. It's been a process of elimination. We're waiting on lab results right now."

Cary's significant other, Emily Callender, has stayed close. Because Callender directs the high school choirs, she and Cary opted to cancel both band and choir concerts scheduled for next Wednesday and Thursday.

"In my 19 years as a band director (five at Umatilla High School), I've never canceled a concert. It was not something we came to lightly," Cary said, "but the kids reacted with understanding. They are more

See **CARY/12A**

PENDLETON

Library cracks open multi-year plan

Seeks to boost community engagement

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Public Library has more to offer than books.

That's the message conveyed by Library Director Mary Finney and the library's 2017-2020 strategic plan, which was recently completed.

"We have so much to offer," she said Thursday.

Among the plan's goals is to increase adult programming, boost library card holders and increase participation in library surveys to assess what the public wants.

According to the plan, the library will aim to schedule six author visits per year, collaborate with community partners to bring in 2-4 issue-based programs per year and work with the Pendleton School District and Blue Mountain Community College to assign extra credit for attending these events. Additionally,



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Adan Gomez, 12, and Weylin Walton, 8, play video games on computers at the Pendleton Public Library on Thursday in Pendleton.

the library would like to bring in more health care, work skills and parenting education programs to the library.

The goal is that these increased programming options will culminate in a 10 percent increase in the number of adult programs participants per year.

With its plethora of informational resources and lack of bias, Finney said the library is the ideal

venue for these types of events.

"It's a neutral place," she said. "That's one of our strengths."

The problem is that many of these happenings are poorly attended.

To get a better idea of what the public wants, the plan calls for the library to create a new survey asking patrons questions about adult and teen programming and

increase participation in the library's annual survey by 10 percent.

"I know what I want to go to, but that's not necessarily what my neighbor wants," Finney said.

The library also wants to better utilize its social media accounts and website.

Already maintaining a Facebook and Twitter

See **LIBRARY/12A**

"It's a neutral place. That's one of our strengths."

— **Mary Finney**, Pendleton Public Library Director on the lack of bias

