

MLK: Volunteers cleaned the Pendleton Center for the Arts as a day of service

Continued from 1A

said. Hurt and thinking they were glaring at him because of his race, he said, he went home and recounted the incident to his wife — who revealed to him that his zipper had been open.

“The point of the story is, “know what you’re talking about,” he said.

Rome discussed the challenges King and other people in the civil rights movement faced.

“You had people putting their life on the line daily,” he said. “I have a dream’ is so powerful. Those who have a dream can change history.”

John Carbage, president of the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club, invited anyone in the audience to say a few words.

Rev. Robert Eadie recalled hearing a speech by King when he was a young man, and how it continues to impact him today.

“He said, ‘I might not get there with you,’” Eadie said. He pointed out the importance of teaching young people about the movement.

“We are not here permanently,” Eadie said. “But we must always put that into our young children’s minds and hearts — we all have to overcome something.”

Many marchers said the comments President Donald Trump made last week, derogatory to several other countries, did not affect how they felt about the event.

“I think the significance of the event is probably the same,” said Cynthia Baker, who has been coming to the march for 10 years. “We just keep praying for the country and hope it gets better.”

Carol Johnson, one of the event’s organizers, said they try to keep the event from being political.

“Hermiston has a broad array of political views,” she said. “We really try to keep it as inclusive as possible. We want to have an event where everyone can come together [around] Martin Luther King’s example.”

Rome agreed. “The president speaks for himself,” he said. “He doesn’t speak for anybody else. It doesn’t mean any less [of] the human spirit.”

Primmer quoted King’s speech accepting the Nobel Prize, where he likened himself as a curator of a precious heirloom.

“It’s now our time to be that curator and pass that treasure on to our children,” Primmer said.

Putting words into action

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is the only federal holiday designated as a Day of Service. The Pendleton Center for the Arts used the opportunity to keep their historic facility well maintained.

About 45 volunteers descended on the art center Monday to clear out the gallery, wash the baseboards and all the other menial tasks it takes to keep the nonprofit running.

Taking a break from wheeling a dolly near the entrance, Executive Director Roberta Lavadour said the art center has held volunteer maintenance days since the Arts Council of Pendleton finished converting the old Umatilla County Library in 2001.

Given that MLK Day was already a day of service, the art



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Don Rome of Portland, a founding member of the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club, formerly known as the Black International Awareness Club, speaks about growing up in Hermiston on Monday for Martin Luther King Day.

center decided to combine the two days last year.

“We thought it would be a great opportunity to kill two birds with one stone,” Lavadour said.

Late Monday morning, volunteers could be found in every room, scrubbing, vacuuming and wiping every surface they could find. A small group of volunteers were focusing on the Alice Fossatti Ceramics Studio with explicit instruction to get out the clay from the walls, sinks and tables.

Two of the volunteers had a special connection to the room — Fossatti’s daughters Jeanne Christensen and Donna Collins.

A longtime kindergarten teacher and artist, Fossatti used to take her students into the hills near Poverty Flat to find clay for figurines and pinch pots.

Although Fossatti was alive to see her namesake ceramics studio open — she died in 2016 at the age of 102 — Christensen said her mother never got the chance to go down to the studio and observe a class in progress.

If she were alive today, Christensen said, Fossatti would be “giddy” to see how much the studio is put into use.

The volunteers’ thoughts wandered from namesake of the Alice Fossatti Ceramics Studio to the namesake of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

“It think MLK would approve,” Collins said about the clean-up day.

All the volunteers had different



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Hermiston city councilor Doug Primmer reads a speech on the steps of the Hermiston City Hall during a Martin Luther King Day march Monday in Hermiston.

reasons for being there. For Kathy Keener, it was literally helping clean up the mess she made.

A frequent attendee of the weekly Hip and Handmade drop-in classes at the art center, Keener said she enjoyed going to events at the art center because she could make a mess in a dedicated paint room instead of at her home.

The desire to give back helped motivate Keener to clean the paint stains and the dried gum off the tables.

MLK in music

Almost 50 years after Martin Luther King Jr.’s violent death, Americans hold him close.

Maybe this year closer than ever.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Georgina Johnson, Margaret Mayer, Dan Haug, Ellen Wardell and Erin McCusker sing the traditional folk song “This Little Light of Mine” on Monday during a Martin Luther King Day Celebration at Great Pacific in Pendleton.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Kaleb Hansen uses a long-handled duster Monday at the Pendleton Center for the Arts as part of the National Day of Service.

“We shall overcome someday”

Event organizer Sarah Woodbury said King’s message continues to resound during this time of political polarization, social media bickering and disrespect for anyone who doesn’t share the same point of view.

“He was interested in changing the world non-violently — without shouting, without creating disunity,” Woodbury said. “He wanted to move forward and he wanted to do that without hate.”

The minister’s non-violent stance made him a target, though. He was arrested and assaulted. Someone planted an explosive device on his front porch that blew out his front windows.

“He held his course,” Woodbury said. “That’s something that is really hard to do. He said, ‘You need to love those people who hate you. We’re going to kneel, we’re going to march, but we’re not going to throw stones.’”

George Winter, who participated in the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi in the mid-60s, spoke a few words to the crowd. MLK, he said, had both heart and eloquence.

“He spoke truth that was hard to speak,” Winter said. “He wanted us to share the work and start loving each other.”

For two hours, the tunes rolled, ricocheting off the GP’s brick walls and reminding everyone anew of a decade past that still offers so much.

Somewhere MLK was smiling broadly and snapping his fingers to the rhythm.

MISSILE: A state employee had inadvertently ‘pushed the wrong button’

Continued from 1A

island of Oahu. Hull, who co-owns the Delish Bistro in Hermiston, has family on Oahu and had just arrived at a gymnasium where his grandson had an early morning basketball game in Waiialua on the island’s north shore.

“Everyone who was there got the alert at the same time — all 60 or 70 of us,” Hull said.

Amazingly, he said, “everyone was really rather calm.” Luckily, a Homeland Security employee who is a friend of Hull’s son-in-law was there to watch the game.

“She was immediately on the phone to someone at Wheeler Air Force Base,” Hull said. “She knew right away it was a false alarm and got the word out.”

Hull nonetheless had several minutes to ponder his fate before learning the alert was an error. He gathered his family around him close to a concrete wall for whatever protection that might offer. Later, he watched news about the scare. People had abandoned cars on a major highway north of Honolulu and fled to a nearby tunnel. Others had scurried for basements and even removed manhole covers and lowered their children into the sewer system.

“I had no idea how much



Anthony Quintano/Civil Beat via AP
In this Saturday photo provided by Civil Beat, cars drive past a highway sign that says “MISSILE ALERT ERROR THERE IS NO THREAT” on the H-1 Freeway in Honolulu. The state emergency officials announced human error as cause for a statewide announcement of an incoming missile strike alert that was sent to mobile phones.

panic it caused,” he said.

Thirty-eight minutes after the original alert, another message said the missile warning was a false alarm. Gov. David Ige sent out a statement after the incident.

“I know first-hand how today’s false alarm affected all of us here in Hawaii, and I am sorry for the pain and confusion it caused. I, too, am extremely upset about this and am doing everything I can do to immediately improve our emergency management systems, procedures and staffing.”

Ige told CNN that a state employee had inadvertently “pushed the wrong button.”

The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency

(HI-EMA) website posted a timeline of the false alarm.

8:05 a.m. — A routine internal test during a shift change was initiated, involving the Emergency Alert System and the Wireless Emergency Alert, but no warning sirens.

8:07 a.m. — The warning test was triggered.

8:10 a.m. — State Adjutant Maj. Gen. Joe Logan validated with the U.S. Pacific Command that there was no missile launch. Honolulu Police Department were notified of the false alarm.

8:13 a.m. — The Civil Danger Warning Message was canceled to prevent the initial alert from being rebroadcast to phones that

may not have received it yet, such as those out of range and coming back into cell coverage or people getting off planes.

8:20 a.m. — Public notification of cancellation appears on Facebook and Twitter.

8:24 a.m. — Governor Ige retweets cancellation notice.

8:30 a.m. — Governor posts cancellation notification to his Facebook page.

8:45 a.m. — After getting authorization from FEMA Integral Public Alert and Warning System, HI-EMA issued a false alert message.

These 38 minutes of panic in paradise led some to wonder why it took so long before the second cell phone message went out. The governor suspended all future drills until a full analysis of the incident is completed.

Having been temporarily whipsawed from his Hawaiian vacation bliss, Puzey said the event brought current tensions between the U.S. and North Korea closer to home.

“My greatest concern,” he said, “is with the potential for mistakes of a much greater magnitude and the inflammatory rhetoric between two woefully intemperate national leaders.”

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Missile-alert error reveals uncertainty about how to react

HONOLULU (AP) — The blunder that caused more than a million people in Hawaii to fear that they were about to be struck by a nuclear missile fed skepticism about the government’s ability to keep them informed in a real emergency.

The erroneous warning was sent during a shift change at the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency when someone doing a routine test hit the live alert button, state officials said.

That employee has been reassigned to a job without access to the warning system amid an internal investigation, agency spokesman Richard Rapoza said Monday. No other personnel changes have been made, he said.

Officials tried to assure residents there would be no repeat false alarms. The agency changed protocols to require that two people send an alert and made it easier to cancel a false alarm — a process that took nearly 40 minutes.

The error sparked a doomsday panic across the islands known as a laid-back paradise. Parents clutched their children, huddled in bathtubs and said prayers.

Students bolted across the University of Hawaii campus to take cover in buildings. Drivers abandoned cars on a highway and took shelter in a tunnel. Others resigned themselves to a fate they could not control and simply waited for the attack.

The 911 system for the island of Oahu was overwhelmed with more than 5,000 calls. There were no major emergencies during the false alarm, Mayor Kirk Caldwell said.

President Donald Trump said Sunday the federal government will “get involved,” but didn’t release details.

An investigation into what went wrong was underway at the Federal Communications Commission, which sets rules for wireless emergency alerts sent by local, state or federal officials to warn of the threat of hurricanes, wildfires, flash flooding and to announce searches for missing children.

The state of Hawaii “did not have reasonable safeguards or process controls in place to prevent the transmission of a false alert,” FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said in a statement, calling the mistake “absolutely unacceptable.”