



George Plaven/EO Media Group
Dylan Westfall, of Hermiston, delivers a speech shortly before state officer elections Monday during the 2018 Oregon FFA State Convention in Redmond.

Oregon FFA installs new state leaders

Dylan Westfall of Hermiston elected as vice president for statewide body

By GEORGE PLAVERN
EO Media Group

Dylan Westfall, of Hermiston, as vice president; Sundee Speelman, of Adrian, as reporter; and Holly Silvey, of Bend, as sentinel. They will spend much of the next year, post-graduation, teaching and hosting workshops at schools across the state.

Kourtney Lehman, who served as Oregon FFA president last year, said the experience gave her the independence and leadership skills necessary for college, while also shaping her perspectives on life.

"It was amazing," Lehman said. "It really pushes us as people to be responsible, to be better."

Lehman, of Baker City, plans to attend Oregon State University in the fall and will major in agricultural business management with a minor in either marketing or communications.

The state convention, March 23-26, featured a full schedule of events and competitions as students aimed to represent themselves and their schools at the National FFA Convention & Expo this fall in Indianapolis. FFA offers career development in areas such as job interviews, agricultural issues and parliamentary procedure, designed to enhance students' critical thinking, speaking and presentation.

Several workshops also introduced the kids to future opportunities in the working world. The OSU Teach Ag Club hosted "Day in the Life of an Ag Teacher," while the Oregon Department of Agriculture and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service ran down careers available in their agencies to assist farmers and ranchers.

But the convention wasn't all serious business. It afforded members plenty of opportunities to cut loose, dance and laugh with their friends. The final session almost had the feel of a rock concert, as state officers charged onto the stage beneath a tunnel of outstretched arms, music pumping and lights flashing.

The closing address went to Lee Wesenberg, the outgoing state reporter from Sutherlin. He boiled down the keys to success into five main points: personal philosophy, being your own hero, having intellect, conquering your reality and achieving excellence.

Spelled out, the acronym is P.H.I.R.E. "Success isn't about winning or losing. Success doesn't even have a scoreboard," Wesenberg said. "In the end, we must seek the impossible."

The newest members of the Oregon FFA state officer team realized, shortly after their election Monday, that each of them had one simple thing in common when deciding to run for a position of leadership.

They were inspired by a key figure along the way.

Take Andrew Gmirkin, who was chosen by delegates as the 2018-19 Oregon FFA state president. Gmirkin, of Eagle Point, does not come from a traditional agricultural background — his mom is a librarian, and his dad makes jewelry. He initially felt out of place joining FFA, until one of his chapter officers assured him that it does not matter whether he was raised on a farm or ranch.

"You can do anything in this organization you set your mind to," Gmirkin said. "Now we're here."

Or there's Mackenzie Price, of Sutherlin, who was elected state treasurer. As a freshman in high school, Price said she struggled with feelings of self-worth. It wasn't until she attended a leadership camp that others helped her to realize her potential.

"I didn't understand everything I was capable of," Price said.

Together, the group made a commitment to be the same kind of people who help their peers feel confident to achieve their goals.

Devin Thacker, the newly elected State FFA secretary from Canby, said a big part of it is to just be yourself.

"That is honestly the best advice I've ever gotten," Thacker said.

Elections took place Monday morning during the delegate business session, kicking off the final day of the 2018 Oregon FFA state convention held at the Deschutes Fair & Expo Center in Redmond. Nearly 1,500 FFA members — or "blue jackets," as they call themselves — from 102 local chapters attended the convention to compete in career development events, attend workshops and network with colleagues.

In addition to Gmirkin, Price and Thacker, the state officer team includes

HERMISTON

Street project around Newport Park could lead to sidewalk program

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Streets around Newport Park will be under construction this spring after the Hermiston City Council awarded Sinco Construction of Hermiston a bid for the project Monday.

The company will repave and rebuild full-width streets, complete with curbs and gutters, along portions of Southeast Fifth Street, Southeast Sixth Street and Newport Avenue. Neighboring property owners will also be given a chance to access grants for adding sidewalks in front of their homes, which assistant city manager Mark Morgan said will be used as a pilot to start a city-wide incentive program.

Sinco Construction was the low bidder out of seven bids at \$283,885, which came in under what had been budgeted.

Morgan told the council there should be access to the park via Hurlburt Avenue through the duration of the project, which is expected to start soon and wrap up mid-summer.

The result will be wider, better-quality paving on the streets plus curbs and gutters to help direct water that builds up during rainstorms.

The project was reviewed in depth by the city's public infrastructure committee, and Morgan said they discussed whether the city should pay for sidewalks to be added at the same time the street work was being completed.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
A car turns at the intersection of Southeast Sixth Street and East Newport Avenue on Tuesday in Hermiston.

Sidewalks around Newport Park would be in the public interest, considering the number of children who walk on the side of the road to access the park.

However, the committee felt it would set a bad precedent for the city to cover the whole \$60,000 cost when developers building new projects are now required to pay the full cost for putting in sidewalks. The compromise was that Sinco will do prep work such as moving water meter boxes as part of the street work, but if property owners want sidewalks they will still be responsible for materials and labor for the sidewalks themselves.

Some of the properties will be able to access matching funds, however, as the city tests out a pilot program for sidewalk infill.

"We'll see kind of what the response is, how much

interest there is, and then look at bringing it citywide," Morgan said.

He told the *East Oregonian* that the final details of the incentive program were still being worked out, but it would be applicable only to existing developments that had been grandfathered in after the city created rules that developers must add sidewalks. The program would provide a checklist — Is the property on a school route? How long would the sidewalk be? Does it connect to an existing sidewalk? — and the more items an applicant can check off the higher percentage of matching funds the city would provide. He said the rough draft of criteria would provide one Newport Park neighbor with a 75 percent match, several with 30 to 60 percent matches and two with no matching funds because the

lots are undeveloped.

The street project around Newport Park will cover Southeast Fifth between Hurlburt and Newport avenues, Southeast Sixth between Hurlburt and Newport, and Newport Avenue between Southeast Fifth and Southeast Seventh streets.

On Monday the city council also created the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center Advisory Committee. The committee will help the city oversee EOTEC, of which it recently took full ownership, and make recommendations to the city council.

Applications are now being accepted for the five-member board. The board will consist of one representative of the Umatilla County Fair with strong bias given toward fair board members, one representative of the Farm-City Pro Rodeo with strong bias given toward rodeo board members, one person to represent the hospitality and tourism industry and two at-large members. Board members will eventually all serve three-year terms but will start out with terms of varying lengths so that they are not all up for re-appointment in the same year. Preference will be given to Hermiston residents.

Applications are available at city hall, 180 N.E. Second Street.

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

Torrefaction plant planned in John Day

\$9 million facility will turn biomass into jobs and fuel

By RICHARD HANNERS
EO Media Group

A new \$9.1 million torrefaction plant in John Day is expected to bring 13-17 jobs to rural Grant County, according to Matt Krumenauer, vice president for special projects for the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities.

"We've spent three years working on this project," said Krumenauer. "The endowment has invested a lot of money in trying to create markets for small-diameter material coming from stewardship projects in area forests."

According to a January 2016 report from the Oregon Employment Department, the total expected economic impact from a torrefaction plant of this size could be 39 jobs and \$6.8 million per year, including plant employment, business purchases and induced impacts through employee purchases. The total

economic impact during the construction phase could be 63 jobs and \$9.1 million.

Torrefaction is a process in which biomass is baked into a fuel that resembles coal and can be used by utilities at electrical generating plants. A plan to use torrefied wood at the Portland General Electric power plant in Boardman fell through last year.

Krumenauer said construction of the torrefaction plant could start in July, with the plant beginning production under the name Restoration Fuels LLC in early 2019.

The endowment board voted to invest in the 100,000-ton-per-year plant Tuesday. Created in 2006 using \$200 million from a U.S.-Canada timber settlement, the endowment plans to pay half the cost of the \$15.5 million plant. Krumenauer said negotiations continue for the rest of the funding.

Small-diameter wood from thinning and other forest restoration projects will be chipped at the John Day plant and then dried in an 80- to 100-foot-long dryer heated by steam. The dried chips will

be roasted in a 70- to 80-foot-long rotary kiln heated by the reaction inside, Krumenauer said. The torrefied material will then be cooled and compressed into briquettes for shipment. Torrefied biomass contains high energy with low weight, is stable and resists moisture.

Krumenauer said plans now call for trucking the briquettes to Prineville, loading them on rail cars and then shipping them to a coastal port for export, or to a domestic user. He said initial talks have been held with the Port of Longview in Washington.

One possible market for the briquettes is Japan, which is interested in substituting torrefied biomass for coal at electrical-generating plants.

The U.S. Forest Service, which would be a main source of biomass for the John Day plant, has been supportive of

the project.

"We are excited for the opportunity to partner with and support the torrefaction plant," Malheur National Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin said. "It will provide additional infrastructure for processing biomass, like the new post and pole mill at Seneca."

Krumenauer said the plant will start small and ramp up production over the next three years. Possible future changes include loading wood chips in trucks returning from Prineville and using juniper trees as a source material.

The endowment considers the plant to be an equity investment, but unlike the private sector, the Endowment is "more patient and flexible" about its investments, Krumenauer said. The group is willing to take more risk in order to help forest communities, he said.

Morrow County theft defendants to return from Georgia jail

HEPPNER — Two Morrow County car thief defendants who took off and ended up in jail in Georgia are due back to Oregon.

Buddy James Buoy, 42, and Julia Rachell Kraus, 37, along with Michelle Carol McLean, 37, all of Portland, stole five newer model vehicles from two Washington car dealers on Oct. 31, according to the Morrow County Sheriff's Office and court records. They signed release agreements in December and got out of the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton. Buoy and Kraus in early February ended up in jail in Georgia for theft by receiving stolen property.

Court records show the jail in Georgia on March 16 received warrants for Buoy and Kraus from the Morrow County Sheriff's Office. The local circuit court scheduled a hearing Wednesday morning for both if they arrive from Georgia in time.

The Morrow County District Attorney's Office charged Buoy and Kraus

with five counts of first-degree aggravated theft plus reckless driving, attempted fleeing and multiple counts of criminal mischief and trespassing.

McLean also faces the theft charges and one count of unauthorized use of a vehicle. Records show she has been following court orders and appearing for hearings.

Easter Celebration Services

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Service organized by Blue Mountain Christian Cowboys
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12:00* 4:30 6:40 • 9:20

Tomb Raider (PG13)
1:30* 4:10 6:50 9:30

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