



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Lavender Mercantile Co. made little cakes with Earl Grey lavender ganache and competed in Saturday's Chocolate Derby at the Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery in Pendleton.

Chocolate Derby raises funds for growing horse therapy group

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Kentucky Derby isn't for another three weeks, but the race was already on at the Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery in Pendleton Saturday.

Dream Catcher Therapeutics, a nonprofit that offers therapy to people with emotional, physical and mental challenges through horse riding and grooming, sponsored a derby-themed chocolate competition among Pendleton's top restaurants and organizations.

Since the nonprofit reorganized last year, Dream Catcher executive director Morgan Matteson said their client list has grown from three people to 33. Proceeds from the Chocolate Derby would go toward scholarships that would subsidize therapy fees — two-thirds of Dream Catcher's clients use financial assistance — and maintenance costs at the Dream Catcher ranch south of Pendleton.

Matteson said she was inspired to do the Chocolate Derby from other fundraisers she has attended on the coasts, and although the Kentucky Derby theme fit in with Dream Catcher's equine mission, she had ulterior motives.

"It's an excuse to wear a dress and a hat," she said.

Ladies arrived in sun dresses and sun hats covered in elaborate flower bouquets and lace. Although derby etiquette requires men to don seersucker blazers and straw hats, most of the men who attended the charity event stuck to jeans and boots.

But the star attraction remained the chocolate competition, which featured treats from Alexander's Chocolate Classics, Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's and more.

Attendees piled their plates high with various cakes and confections like chocolate covered chips from Cimmiyotti's and espresso brownies from Prodigal Sun Brewery & Pub. Their vote for the best entry would go toward a people's choice award.

The responsibility of determining win, place and



Photo by Antonio Sierra

Kacy Christensen serves herself some cake at the Chocolate Derby in Pendleton Saturday.

show was on the shoulders of a three-judge panel — Donna Biggerstaff, an executive assistant for the city of Pendleton, Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Elfering and Margaret Gianotti, the executive director of the Blue Mountain Community College Foundation.

Although they were sworn to secrecy before the winners were announced, the triumvirate agreed to speak about what made for ideal chocolate.

All three said texture was an important attribute for chocolate. A good chocolate texture produced smoothness and a melt-in-your mouth lightness.

Seated at one of the tables, John and Dena Summerfield and Mireya Wolf sampled the Chocolate Derby's offerings.

John and Dena said good chocolate balanced bitterness with sweetness, dark chocolate being their personal preference. The trio gave plaudits to EOCI's mint julep — a mint chocolate cake — and Alexander's flourless chocolate cake.

The judging panel praised dishes that used other flavors to enhance their chocolate offering, although they agreed



Photo by Antonio Sierra

Inmates from the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution won first place and the people's choice award at the Chocolate Derby in Pendleton Saturday.

that one treat rose to the top. Judge Biggerstaff predicted that the judges' choice would align with the people's choice.

In the end, Biggerstaff's prediction was proven prophetic when EOCI took first place and the people's choice award, with the Safeway bakery taking second and Alexander's taking third.

Liza Emory, EOCI food services manager, was on hand to accept the award on behalf of the inmates who

made the chocolate mint julep.

Emory said EOCI's victory was a tribute to the inmates and their work ethic, which led them from chocolate novices to competition winners in a couple of weeks.

"This is beyond inmates," she said. "They did an incredible job."

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Ukiah man faces manslaughter for fatal Morrow County crash

East Oregonian

Anthony King Enriquez of Ukiah faces the charge of first-degree manslaughter for the crash last month that killed Joshua Kenneth Herrig of Heppner.

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson said his office on Monday arraigned Enriquez on that preliminary charge plus reckless driving and driving under the influence of intoxicants (alcohol).

Nelson also said he plans to take the case to a grand jury for an indictment. If the grand jury hands up a true bill, he said, he would arraign Enriquez next Monday afternoon on those charges.

Enriquez, 42, was driving a 1999 Dodge pickup north on Highway 74 near Lexington the evening of March 21 when he lost control and the vehicle rolled several times, Oregon State Police

reported. Enriquez suffered non-life threatening injuries, but the crash ejected Herrig, the lone passenger, who died at the scene. He was 35.

State police at the time reported, "Alcohol, speed and safety restraints are being considered as factors in this crash."

Nelson said the OSP investigation culminated Friday with Enriquez's arrest at his home in Ukiah. Troopers booked him into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton. Nelson said Circuit Court Judge Dan Hill set bail in the case at \$250,000.

Court records show Enriquez has convictions in 2016 in Umatilla County for driving while suspended and driving uninsured and in years past for other driving offenses. He also has convictions starting in 1994 for second-degree burglary, fourth-degree assault and drug possession.



Photo contributed by Oregon State Police

Joshua Kenneth Herrig of Heppner was ejected from a rollover crash and died March 21 near Lexington. The driver, Anthony King Enriquez of Ukiah, has been charged with first-degree manslaughter.

BRIEFLY

Pilot Rock wood business looks to expand

PILOT ROCK — Lankford Logging Inc. is looking to buy 10 acres from the city of Pilot Rock to increase its product line and add employees.

The land is near the north side of the city's off-highway vehicle park, or the Bike Pit. Jerry Lankford, company president, in a letter to the city stated the property would allow the business to expand to create products such as firewood, chips and lumber. The company employs four to six people for nine or 10 months a year, according to Lankford, and acquiring the property could boost those numbers.

Lankford Logging would pay \$1,700 per acre in two equal payments of \$8,500, according to Steve Draper, city public works director. The city council will consider the offer when it meets Tuesday at 9 p.m. in the council chamber.

The council in other business will consider changes to the city's employee handbook and

scheduling the city's cleanup day, which allows residents to dispose of garbage for free.

Guentert named new Clara Brownell principal

UMATILLA — Dawn Guentert has been hired as Clara Brownell Middle School's new principal for the 2018-2019 school year.

Guentert already works for the Umatilla School District as an instructional coach, a position she filled in 2015. She was a high school science teacher with the district from 2008 to 2015 and before that worked for Elgin School District.

"Dawn has been a tremendous science teacher at the high school level and she's brought instructional coaching to new levels in Umatilla to support our staff," superintendent Heidi Sipe wrote in an email. "I am thrilled to have her leading CBMS moving forward."

Sipe said Guentert will work with current principal Liz Durant, who is leaving at the end of the year, to ensure a smooth transition.

Echo fire gets grants, large funding asks get held

East Oregonian

The Echo Rural Fire Protection District is getting two grants totaling more than \$10,000.

The Echo Community Benefit Plan Board of Directors on April 11 voted to recommend the fire department receive \$4,922 for a security system and \$5,600 to purchase a thermal imaging system. The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners will consider the requests during its meeting Tuesday at 10 a.m. at the county courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton.

Payments from Echo Windfarms Project fund the grants under the Oregon Strategic Investment Program. According to public documents, the program has \$84,621.32, but the Echo Community Benefit Plan Board held off making recommendations for larger requests due to confusion about how much money is in the fund.

The grant board ques-

tioned whether the fund includes \$24,485 for the Echo School District's grant from last April for a plasma cutter and shop tools. Likewise, the board could not decipher if \$50,000 in grants for Echo's walking trails remain in the fund.

The Echo grant board members said they want to know clearly how much is available.

The county commissioners also are considering giving free Hermiston office space to Dr. Joel Rice, owner and operator of Blue Mountain

Associates, the only provider in Umatilla County of medication assisted treatment for substance abuse.

Amy Ashton-Williams, director of Umatilla County Human Services, in a memo stated her department works closely with Blue Mountain Associates and shares many clients. Rice has office space in Pendleton and would like expand into Hermiston. She asked the county board to give Rice space in the Sam Cook Building, Hermiston.

"The county does not routinely offer free office

space to outside providers," according to Ashton-Williams, but this move would allow citizens on the west side of the county access to medication assisted treatment.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners also will consider renewing solid waste franchises and approving vehicle purchases.

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