

HERMISTON

District pulls elementary schools from statewide Battle of the Books

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Hermiston’s schools have been enthusiastic competitors in the statewide Battle of the Books competition, but they won’t be at next year’s event. The district’s five elementary school principals have chosen to withdraw from the statewide competition, stating that one of the books on the elementary school reading list is incompatible with the district’s curriculum.

The elementary school principals sent a letter to parents stating that the novel “George,” by Alex Gino, was not appropriate for their third- through fifth-grade students, based on their adopted human growth and development curriculum.

The book, which is not described in the letter sent home to parents, is about a child who is born male and known to all as George, but identifies as female and prefers the name Melissa. The book details how Melissa comes out to her best friend, and eventually to others, through the help of a school play.

The letter stated that Hermiston’s middle and high school teams would still participate in the statewide competition.

Hermiston’s elementary school teams will instead participate in a district-wide competition, reading a list of titles compiled from books read in previous years. The letter also stated that if the statewide list for the 2019-2020 school year was deemed appropriate, the elementary schools would once again participate in the statewide program.

Hermiston School District elementary librarian Kristi Smalley said she was aware of the process, but she was not involved in the decision to pull the elementary schools from the statewide program. She said the decision, based on the subject matter of the book, was up to the administrators.

Hermiston’s elementary students have been heavily involved with the program in past years, with a team from Highland Hills placing 16th at state this year. The letter noted that Hermiston School District has been involved in Battle of the Books for 36 years.

Smalley said the program would look roughly the same from the ground level, with students still competing and reading, and answering the same types of questions.

“The misalignment with the curriculum really needs to be the focus,” she

said of the book. “There are a lot of hot-button issues that could misconstrue this, but we need to focus that this is a reading program.”

She said administrators did discuss Hermiston students not reading “George” but remaining in the state competition.

“I advised them that we can’t just not use one title, because the children would still be exposed to those questions,” she said. “But I’m really glad the district was looking out for the well-being of children.”

Smalley said the book was not available at the elementary school libraries.

She said while parents were not included in the decision, the only feedback she had heard from parents so far had been positive.

She acknowledged that the book’s placement on the statewide list had been controversial.

“There was a lot of input given to the state committee on this title that, in my opinion, fell on deaf ears,” she said.

The letter to parents was signed by principals Jake Bacon, Jerad Farley, Kevin Headings and Christie Petersen, and interim principal Bryn Browning.

HERMISTON

‘In Her Shoes’ walk shines light on domestic violence

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

A handful of community members braved windy conditions to participate in an experiential walk to raise awareness about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Organized by Domestic Violence Services, “In Her Shoes” featured a number of stations set up Saturday at Riverfront Park in Hermiston. The exercise provides insight as to the obstacles and barriers victims face when they reach out for help, said Kathryn Chaney, executive director.

“We tried to choose the most realistic response,” said Rev. Mark Adams of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. “But we can make all the right choices and still end up at the funeral home.”

Adams, who participated in the activity with his wife, Tess Adams, Bethlehem Lutheran Preschool director, said it’s important for pastors and lay persons alike to have an understanding of what victims go through. The more they know, he said, the better equipped they are to respond to those reaching out for help.

Sharon Neuirth, the agency’s volunteer coordinator, and Mary Adams, program coordinator, said statistics indicate victims of violence often return to their abuser seven to nine times before permanently leaving a dangerous situation.

“When they return, it’s not necessarily they are choosing the abuse, it’s just that at that time they see it as their only option,” Mary Adams said.

Chaney, Adams and Neuirth said many barriers and obstacles come into play when a victim seeks help. Everything from limited resources and not knowing help is available to shame and guilt can keep victims stuck in a situation.

“Often, the victims don’t necessarily want the relationship to end,” Chaney said. “They just want the violence to end.”

Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence. In addition, staff and volunteers attend many additional trainings that make them more equipped to assist victims of violence.

“We want everyone to be able to respond to people that come in,” Chaney said.

Chaney said events like “In Her Shoes” are designed to raise money for the program as well as provide awareness about the services available locally. It’s a great educational tool, she said, in regards to what victims of violence are faced with.

“People can realize there are options,” Chaney said. “And, they can begin to understand what some of the obstacles are for people.”

Recent laws passed by the Oregon Legislature, including one making strangulation a felony, are important steps in protecting victims, Chaney said. When talking about strangulation, rather than accepting minimizing words such as “choking” or “obstructing the airway,” they focus on the severity of the act.

“It’s important to make the statement, ‘Someone is trying to kill them,’” Chaney said. “We’ve had clients tell us, ‘Yes, he was trying to kill me.’”

An upcoming training for the 24-hour crisis line begins Wednesday. Other volunteer opportunities include yard maintenance at the shelters, office work, direct service with clients and assisting with events.

Also, representatives from Domestic Violence Services are available for in-house trainings at businesses, service clubs and civic organizations. The next fundraiser is the annual bowl-a-thon Saturday, July 21 at Desert Lanes in Hermiston.

For more information, call 541-276-3322, 541-567-0424 or visit www.domesticviolenceservices-or.org.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539



Celebrating a new record



James Dean Kindle (above) and the Eastern Oregon Playboys perform during a record release party Friday night at the Vert Auditorium in Pendleton. James Dean Kindle (left) sings and plays the piano as Peter Walters (right) plays the saxophone and a choir of local voices backs the band. “Roaming Charges May Apply” is the band’s fourth album.

Staff photos by Kathy Aney

BRIEFLY

Freel murder case set for settlement conference

PENDLETON — The murder case against Evan Freel of Milton-Freewater moves into settlement talks Wednesday.

Senior Judge Patricia Sullivan will preside, according to Umatilla County Circuit Court records, and there is a court order to have Freel present for the negotiations. Confidential memos from the defense and prosecutors with the district attorney’s office were due two weeks prior to the conference.

Freel, 18, faces charges of murder and first-degree criminal mistreatment related to the June 2016 death of his infant son. His attorney, Kara

Davis of Pendleton, reported in March the case was on track for the closed-door conference.

Most of the court action in the case has not focused on Freel’s innocence or guilt but whether he could understand proceedings and participate in his defense. He underwent treatment for competency in 2017 at the Oregon State Hospital.

Law Enforcement Appreciation Week

HERMISTON — Several local groups will be thanking law enforcement in the weeks to come, and offering a chance for others to do the same. As National Law Enforcement Appreciation Week (May

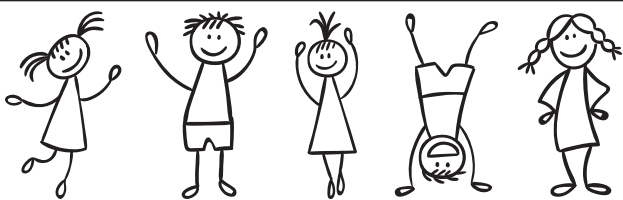
13-19) approaches, local businesses will be carrying blue ribbons that patrons can pick up for free, and display on their vehicles in support of police officers.

The ribbons display the acronym “COPS,” which stands for “Concerns of Police Survivors.”

“It’s people in these organizations who have lost

a loved one in the line of duty,” said Hermiston Police Chaplain Terry Cummings. “It’s just a way of saying thanks.”

The practice of honoring law enforcement started in 1962, when President John F. Kennedy designated May 15 as National Peace Officers Day. Congress later marked a whole week to honor officers.



Pendleton Presbyterian Preschool Fall Registration

Monday, May 7, 2018 at 6:00 pm
201 SW Dorion Ave.
\$50.00 registration fee & \$25.00 supply fee
Early Learners (3 year olds) Tue & Thu
Pre-Kindergarten (4 year olds) Mon, Wed, Fri

For more information 541-304-5012
pendletonpresbyterlanpreschool@gmail.com



RENOVATION & TUNE-UP

We will be **TEMPORARILY CLOSED**
Sunday May 6th & Monday May 7th
BACK IN ACTION Tues May 8th

HAMLEY STEAKHOUSE, SALOON & CAFE

8 SE COURT, PENDLETON • 541.278.1100

RE-ELECT LARRY GIVENS

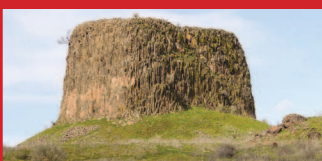
UMATILLA Co. COMMISSIONER • POSITION 2

*Experience,
Honesty,
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*For the Citizens of
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*Learn from the Past, Live in the Present,
Plan for the Future*



The Land



The People



Our Heritage

Authorized and Paid for by Re-Elect Larry Givens Committee
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