

IRRIGON

# Melons and music

Lip sync contest and marimba artist keep groove going

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian



Photo by Antonio Sierra

Stephen Pells dances along to "Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)" during the lip sync contest at the Irrigon Watermelon Festival Saturday.

Stephen Pells dutifully mouthed the words to his song at the Irrigon Watermelon Festival's lip sync contest Saturday, but it was his dancing that likely allowed him to retain his crown.

Stephen was the first one on the stage, where he performed Silento's 2015 hit "Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)."

He not only lip synced to the song, but also performed all the dances that are mentioned in the song, including the whip, the nae nae, the stanky leg, the break your legs, the duff, and the superman.

The lip sync contest is in its second year after a 12-year break from the Irrigon Watermelon Festival, an attempt to revive a popular event of yesteryear for a new generation of children, according to event coordinator Charlene Cooley.

Cooley said not as many children participated this year as they did in 2017, but it still found an audience.

"It just takes one kids, and then all the other kids start to flock around," she said.

Performing first meant he

would have to sit back and watch the rest of the competition as they performed their renditions of "Barbie Girl," "Ring of Fire," "Happy" and "Let it Go."

One girl even lip synced "Uptown Funk," the song Stephen lip synced to when he won the 2017 contest.

But in the end, Stephen's non-singing and very real dance moves would not be denied as he won this year's contest based an informal applause meter.

His reward? "Cold, hard cash," according to the emcee.

After Stephen collected his \$50 prize, he explained that he practiced for quite a while in preparation for a title defense.

Learning a half dozen dances was not easy, and when asked which was the hardest to learn, young Stephen was resolute: "All of

them."

The Irrigon Watermelon Festival has the titular fruit for sale and seed spitting contest, but it's more than just melons.

The sweet green and red gourds are not directly involved in the car show, the numerous raffles, the carnival games or the lip sync contest.

It took a while for Alysen Hesselroth to find the marimba, but it led to an unlikely career for the Othello, Washington-native.

Performing as Aly the Traveling Marimba Busker, Hesselroth added a tropical feel to the warm Irrigon afternoon, striking the wooden bars with two mallets in each hand and playing a combination of pop songs and instrumentals.

In between some of her songs, Hesselroth explained that she was used to play-

ing at sidewalks and farmers markets.

"I'm used to moving crowds, so I have to remind myself to do the banter," she told the audience.

As she packed up her marimba after the set ended, Hesselroth, 30, explained how her career in busking evolved from her time at Washington State University.

A music major, Hesselroth was originally a pianist before a professor suggested she look at joining a percussion ensemble.

She was blown away by the instrumentation, and learned the marimba to join the ensemble.

But the thought of busking didn't really occur to her until she took road trips to Austin, the musically rich capital of Texas, and Burning Man, the radical art gathering in the Nevada desert.

## Finalists announced for Port of Morrow GM

BOARDMAN — Finalists for the Port of Morrow manager position will be available for a meet and greet with the public next Monday.

The port's board announced Monday afternoon that the finalists are Dean Gardner, Ryan D. Neal, Stephanie Seamans and Peter M. Wilhelm. They will attend a meet and greet at the Riverfront Room, 2 Marine Drive in Boardman, from 5-7 p.m. on Aug. 6. Appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages will be provided, and the finalists will give a short speech at 5:30 p.m.

The candidate chosen for the general manager job by the port's board will replace longtime Port of Morrow manager Gary Neal, who is retiring at the end of the year.

Finalist Ryan Neal is Gary Neal's son. He is currently the general manager of warehousing for the Port of Morrow and the only finalist from Boardman. He was formerly direc-

tor of operations for Haney Truck Line and regional sales manager for Knight Transportation, according to informati.

Gardner works for Next-Level: Building Enterprise Value and is from Selah, Washington. He is the former CEO of Larson Fruit Company, former CEO of United Pump & Supply and has an MBA in marketing, finance and accounting from University of Texas.

Seamans is a certified public accountant and is the community and economic development manager for Benton-Franklin Council of Governments in Kennewick. She is the former business development manager and CPA for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Wilhelm also lives in Kennewick and is currently project manager for Boise/PCA Paper Mill in Wallula, Washington, through QBM Management, Inc. He is the former plant manager of Zechem, Inc.

## Man fails at armed robbery

HERMISTON — The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office is looking for the suspect that tried but failed to pull off an armed robbery.

Two employees of the Short Stop Gas, 32553 E. Punkin Center Road, Hermiston, were working outside Sunday morning at about 4:15 when an armed man approached on foot from the road. The sheriff's office in a written statement reported the suspect held a black rifle and covered his face in a dark green bandanna.

"According to the employees," the sheriff's office reported, "the suspect ordered one of them to go inside the store. Instead, both employees ran across Highway 207 and called 911."

They also told law enforcement the suspect tried to open the store's cash register, but it was locked. When he could not open the register, he bolted from the store, taking nothing.

He ran west on East Punkin Center and got into a white four-door sedan. The car headed west on East Punkin Center, the sheriff's office reported.

The employees told the sheriff's office the suspect was about 6 feet to 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighed approximately 120-140 pounds. He wore a black hooded sweatshirt, a black baseball cap, dark-colored gloves and white plaid shorts with lime green and navy stripes and white socks that covered his calves.

BOARDMAN

## Lost Valley owner defends against contempt charge

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
EO Media Group

PORTLAND — The owner of Lost Valley Farm near Boardman claims the state government wants to shut down the facility just as it's about to comply with wastewater regulations.

Oregon farm regulators are seeking a court order to stop the dairy from producing wastewater — which would effectively halt operations — because it's disregarding a previous legal settlement.

Greg te Velde, the owner, said there have been "some spills and splashes" at the facility but maintains they've been "nothing catastrophic."

Though he acknowledged defaulting on the legal agreement, te Velde said he'd always intended to honor the deal despite facing "a steep learning curve."

Upgrades to the dairy will soon mitigate wastewater problems, te Velde said during a July 27 court hearing in Portland.

"I think we're on the cusp of having it all done," he said.

In March, Lost Valley Farm settled a lawsuit with the Oregon Department of Agriculture by agreeing to limit its wastewater output to 65,000 gallons a day.

Since then, however, the dairy has violated the deal by exceeding that threshold almost daily and failing to maintain adequate capacity in manure lagoons, for which te Velde should be held in contempt of court, according to ODA.

"On most of these days, it's a pretty significant excess use," testified Wym Matthews, manager of ODA's confined animal feeding operation program.

According to ODA's estimates, the excess ranged from 19,000 to 375,000 gallons per day, he said.

The agency also estimates the amount of manure applied to six of seven nearby fields surpassed the agronomic requirements of crops, which is prohibited due to the possibility of nitrogen pollution.

"It consumes those nutrients so they don't become pollutants, so that balance is critical," Matthews said.

Although ODA is in the process of revoking the dairy's "confined animal feeding operation" permit, it will take two months for that action to become final, or even longer if the order is contested by te Velde.

Because wastewater violations at the dairy haven't ceased, there's a "serious risk" of groundwater contamination unless the situation is brought under control this summer, the agency claims.

It's "particularly important" for Lost Valley Farm to comply with CAFO permit conditions because it's in the "environmentally sensitive" Lower Umatilla Groundwater Management Area, which already

has elevated levels of nitrate contaminants, the agency said.

ODA is worried that pollutants from the dairy will eventually reach groundwater, even if they haven't yet, said Matthews.

"Our concern is the operator is loading the soil," he said.

If the soil continues to be loaded with nitrogen, pollutants would be expected to reach the groundwater within two years under water-saturated conditions, said Kirk Cook, a geologist and program manager of ODA's pesticide stewardship program.

However, the nitrogen remains immobile when the soil isn't saturated and the dairy is in an arid part of the state, he said.

The ODA has requested that Multnomah County Circuit Judge Kelly Skye issue remedial sanctions requiring Lost Valley Farm to cease wastewater production within 60 days and remove waste from lagoons to free up 75 acre-feet of storage capacity.

Of the all dairies inspected by ODA this year, the facility was the only one to have a lagoon overflow and the only one that didn't turn over agronomic data, said Matthews.

The dairy began construction of a fourth manure lagoon to alleviate the storage problems, but it didn't first notify ODA to ensure the con-

struction complied with waste management plans, as required, he said.

"That is a general theme — showing up to find things we should have known about," said Matthews.

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