

PARK: Received a \$1,500 grant to clear brush

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steep ridges on the north side. Zessin said he has seen children demand their families go back home when they can't get online. But for most folks, the park provides the setting to unplug and recharge.

He and Fellows also said the county has no plans to allow a cell tower and change that vibe. But public works has been making steady improvement at the park.

Crews enlarged spaces for recreational vehicles and installed a vault toilet last year thanks to about \$21,000 in grants from the Oregon Parks Department and Wildhorse Foundation, which Zessin said proved to be a boon for day use. Fellows said he plans to seek the grants again for a second toilet.

And the Oregon Department of Forestry provided the county with a \$1,500 grant two years ago to clear out brush and overgrowth that clogged much of the park.

"Someday a fire is going to go through, and we'd just as soon have a park afterwards," Fellows said.

Fire threatened the park this summer. Zessin said on the first occasion the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office



Jose Abriz uses a blower to move dead leaves on Tuesday morning at Harris Park outside of Milton-Freewater.

told locals living nearby to evacuate to the park for safety. On the second occasion, he said, the one occupant at the park had to evacuate. Otherwise, the fire season did not have much affect on the park.

Bears have been an issue in some years, but Zessin said there were no bears in the park this season. Fellows said removing all the overgrowth may have deterred the bears because they lacked cover to mosey into the park.

While camping comes to a close Wednesday, Zessin

said day use remains open until at least Thanksgiving, and some even take to the trails in December.

He and his seasonal help, Marco Lua, have plenty to get done before winter sets in. Removing leaves is the top job now, but they also will make some repairs and prepare vehicles for the winter. The park also gets a hand from people completing community service. Zessin estimated that comes to about 15 hours of labor a week and is vital to maintaining the park.

Camping at the park runs April 1 to Oct. 31, or from "fools to ghouls," as Fellows put it. Reservations go live online March 1.

"We get a lot of reservations right after midnight," Zessin said.

Fellows said the county can expand campsites and other amenities, but that all depends on the need and one over-arching factor.

"You talk about what we've accomplished up here in the last few years," he said, "and you don't do that without the community."



Hales Restaurant has a dragon ready to greet trick-or-treaters for the annual Halloween event, Treats on Main.

TREATS: Several businesses spend \$150-\$250

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Robbins started the event before she worked for the city as a way to draw more people downtown.

"Main Street businesses weren't being noticed, and it was important for me to get people downtown," she said. Most businesses agreed to participate, and since the parks department took over the event seven years ago, it has only gotten more popular.

"It provides such a safe place for kids, and parents don't have to worry about the candy as much," she said.

The biggest worry of all, for many store owners, is running out of the good stuff.

"What goes first — 5 o'clock or candy?" said Michael Gormley, owner of Neighborhood Books and Gifts.

Hale's Restaurant buys cases of candy, totaling about \$500. Several businesses, including Wild Goose Designs and Fresh Image Salon, said they spend between \$150 and \$250 on candy.

"I get the good stuff," said Jennifer Baldwin, owner of Fresh Image Salon. "Snickers, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. We want them to come by, and come back."

Some business owners have come to look forward to the event as much as the eager kids they'll supply

with candy.

"I've participated every year they've done it," said Judy Currin-Pederson, owner of Lucky Endz Gifts. "We dress up, last year we were a princess, a flapper girl and Cruella de Vil. We have fun with it."

The staff of Hermiston Drug comes up with a dress-up theme each Halloween. This year, trick-or-treaters going to the pharmacy will see minions handing out candy.

Though the event was initially created to bring attention to downtown businesses, vendors said they've had varying degrees of success bringing people in from the Treats on Main event.

Some, such as Hales and Hermiston Drug, said it doesn't affect business much. Others said it limits parking, because the street is closed off.

"It's a shame people don't really know what's on Main Street," said Gormley. "It doesn't bring in much traffic."

Currin-Pederson said the day of the event doesn't bring in many customers, because most are focused on trick-or-treating. But often people will stop by afterward.

"All the families are seeing our businesses, and when they want to shop, they can come back," she said.

Treats on Main is from 3-5 p.m., as is Downtown Pendleton Trick-or-Treat.

STARNES: He accepted no donation over \$100

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helped ensure that campaign finance becomes one of the hot topics in the final days of the campaign.

"We can all agree there is way too much money being spent on campaigns," Brown said. "I think we now have a huge incentive to change the system."

Buehler's campaign dismissed the political realignment as just "one tax-and-spend liberal endorsing another tax-and-spend liberal."

And Starnes' party quickly distanced itself from his actions.

"To the people who may have already voted for him, we apologize," the party said in a tweet Tuesday evening. "We disagree with how he handled his decision. Our party does not endorse" Brown.

Starnes exits the political stage as an everyman, the nominee of the Independent Party of Oregon who drove himself from one campaign appearance to another, often alone. He criss-crossed the state pushing his message that money is messing with Oregon politics. He

accepted no donation over \$100, and fought to share the stage with Brown and Buehler, the polished professionals. He made it into one debate, but had no seat at two others.

About a week ago, Starnes was home filling out his ballot and thought about the similarities between his platform and Brown's.

"I realized the big difference between us was campaign finance reform and I needed to talk about campaign finance reform with her," Starnes said.

He crafted an email to Christian Gaston, the spokesman for Brown's campaign who struck a rapport with Starnes after his only debate appearance.

In his email sent at 5:57 p.m., Starnes wrote: "Christian, I know we have less than 10 days before the big day. Would it be possible for you to set a meeting with me and the governor?"

He signed it "optimistically, Patrick Starnes."

Brown learned about the message the following day and agreed to meet. On Tuesday, the two candidates drove separately to southeast Portland, to a labor

union office near Cleveland High School. They met alone in a room, without aides, discussing the need to reform campaign finance laws. The governor agreed to push for such reform, but the two didn't settle on specifics.

At the end of the 40-minute meeting, Starnes surprised the governor with his decision — he would end his campaign and support hers.

They decided to announce the decision at Portland television station KATU, where Starnes had a previously scheduled appearance set for 11 a.m. To fit in the surprise move, Brown canceled time scheduled with U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden for a "get-out-the-vote" effort.

Later, Brown told the Oregon Capital Bureau that while she didn't strike a deal with Starnes, she is committed to getting a constitutional amendment on the ballot to more heavily regulate how state campaigns are funded. She said that could either be done through the Legislature or working with a coalition for a petition to get it directly on the ballot.

Besides capping con-

tributions, Brown said she and Starnes were concerned about the dark money in elections. Dark money comes from outside groups not directly related to campaigns that don't have to disclose where their money comes from and goes until after the election.

Brown said she doesn't have specific caps for contributions in mind. Those decisions would be made after the election, but Brown said Starnes would be a part of her process.

MERKLEY: Gets together with people and talks about the state of the world

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ognition nationally until last June, when he tried to enter a federal facility in Texas where immigrant children were being held. An aide videotaped the scene as he was refused entry and police were called. The video quickly went viral with over 1 million views in a day, and was repeated in newscasts across the country.

In October, Merkley introduced legislation to prevent the Trump administration from forcing asylum seekers into internment camps.

"It's just a simple question of human decency and justice," Merkley said in an interview with The Associated Press. "We're a nation of immigrants. The vast bulk of us have, somewhere in our ancestry, people who fled religious persecution, or famine, or war."

Merkley said immigrants fleeing persecution were being treated as criminals and are being traumatized. He described the forced separation of children from their parents as "an obscenely dark and evil act."

The administration says the crackdown is necessary to stop illegal immigration.

In his trips to other states Merkley has spoken with people "in their living rooms, their porches their backyards, nearby parks."

"You get together with a bunch of people and you talk about the state of the world," he explained. He discussed with them issues he has led on, including ending predatory home mortgages; battling "climate chaos" — as he calls climate change; fighting for equality for the LGBT community; and opposing trade agreements that ship Americans' jobs overseas.

"The feedback's been very positive," Merkley said, though a beat later he added that maybe the people were just being polite.

His father was a millwright maintaining machines in a plywood mill and in the forest, then did other jobs. Merkley lives in a one-story house in the same blue-collar neighborhood of Portland where he grew up, giving him a humble Jimmy Carter quality.

Carter lives in the same house in Plains, Georgia, he built in 1961. He too was a little-known Democrat on the national stage before being elected president in 1976.

Merkley, 62, attributed

his success to "serendipity."

"If I lived a thousand lifetimes I would probably never have been in the U.S. Senate," he said.

As a kid, Merkley excelled in math and science. He applied for college at almost the last minute, being unfamiliar with the process, and was accepted at Stanford and Yale. He chose Stanford for the financial aid.

He was shocked to learn that all the other students in his dorm had visited the campus before. It had never occurred to his family to do so, and they lacked the money anyway.

"It was a stressful couple of years (but) I wanted to prove that the blue-collar kid could keep up with the kids from prep schools, so I had to work a little harder," he said.

His first exposure to national politics began when he interned in Washington, D.C., for Sen. Mark Hatfield, a moderate Republican. He was elected to the Oregon Legislature, and then won Hatfield's former Senate seat, in 2008, narrowly defeating the Republican incumbent. He handily won re-election six years later.

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