

EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2018

143rd Year, No. 37

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- Winterfest Family Day, Pendleton
- Concerts in Pendleton, Echo, Hermiston
- "Rumors," Pendleton High School

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Weekend Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun
32/23	36/24	38/29

Brown directs \$247M to rural Oregon

Budget has money for broadband, housing, dam at Wallowa Lake

By **CLAIRE WITCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — On the campaign trail, Gov. Kate Brown was eager to tell voters she would represent all regions of the state.

"I'm the only candidate in this race with a track record of bringing Republicans and Democrats together, urban and rural Oregonians together, to tackle the problems facing Oregon," Brown said during one debate.

A month after her reelection, she has laid out a plan to follow through on that claim.

Brown's proposed budget, released last week, includes more than \$247 million for rural infrastructure projects and other increased spending to benefit rural residents.

"I also believe that the work we are doing to continue to grow the economy by investing in infrastructure, housing, broadband, water and of course, career and technical education will benefit

See **BUDGET/10A**

HERMISTON



Santa, aka Hermiston City Councilman Doug Primmer, flips the switch to turn on the city Christmas tree on Thursday night on Festival Street.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Downtown kicks off another Christmas season with tree lighting

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Lights and smiles lit up Hermiston's new festival street Thursday night.

The tree lighting ceremony brought crowds downtown for entertainment, food and a chance to get a picture with Santa Claus.

City manager Byron Smith said the city was excited about the chance to hold the event for another year as it "grows and gets more popular all the time." While the city has placed a giant tree on Second Street every year since 2015, this is the first year since the block

was transformed into a more pedestrian-friendly "festival street" with brickwork, trees, benches and other features. This year's tree is the tallest so far, at 40 feet, and is decorated with approximately 2,000 lights.

Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce director Debbie Pedro asked the crowd if they noticed the extra lights, flowers and other improvements to downtown Hermiston that the city and Hermiston Downtown District have been adding throughout 2018.

"I hope you guys are really proud of what you're seeing down here," she said, prompting applause.

In addition to Christmas lights, businesses decorated their storefronts for a holi-

See **LIGHTS/10A**



Hermiston's Christmas tree glows on Thursday night on Festival Street shortly after Santa switched it on during the tree lighting ceremony.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

BOARDMAN

Port nets \$19M grant

Rail upgrades will open door for new business

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
East Oregonian

In the next five years, the Port of Morrow will see massive railroad expansions with the hopes new jobs and industries may soon follow.

The project will be funded by a \$19 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Developments (BUILD) program.

The money will fund the port's Columbia River Barge Terminal Rail Access Project and will be supplemented by a \$6.5 million grant from the state specifically for rail improvements.

Lisa Mittelsdorf, the economic development director for the port, said this is the third time the port has applied for the grant (formerly known as the TIGER grant), but the amount offered this year was more than in years past.

She said the federal grant offered money for rural infrastructure projects in general, but the port knew right away they wanted to fund a rail expansion project.

"It will be beneficial to existing businesses, which will have the availability to move cargo, whether bulk movement or containerized," she said.

According to an application summary, the project will include constructing rail infrastructure to four separate barge terminals within the port's industrial park, road

See **PORT/10A**

STDs surge across the country

Oregon had sixfold increase in gonorrhea since 2000

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

In the lobby of the Umatilla County Health Department, among the Christmas decorations, is a sign that announces "FREE CONDOMS."

This isn't Christmas cheer gone wild, but rather part of an effort to reduce STDs. The United States is experiencing what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls "steep and sustained increases in sexually transmitted diseases."

The report shows gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis all trending alarmingly upward.

"Oregon is following the national trend," said Tim Menza, who manages the state's HIV/STD prevention program. "We logged 6,000 cases of gonorrhea in 2017, up from 1,000 in the year 2000 — that's about

a sixfold increase."

The gonorrhea spike is especially alarming. The CDC received reports of 555,608 cases in 2017, an increase of 75.2 percent since 2009 and 18.6 percent over the previous year. The increase involved both men and women, and all racial and ethnic groups.

Gonorrhea can lead to scarring, infertility, arthritis, heart valve damage and inflammation in the lining of the brain. The last time gonorrhea rankings came out in 2017, Umatilla County had the third highest rate in the state.

"Our rates were pretty low, but in 2013, they started picking up," said Joe Fiumara, director of Umatilla County's public health department.

Umatilla County had a low of four cases in 2012, increasing to 88 by 2016, then dropping to 67 the next year. With

82 cases so far in 2018, Fiumara said, the county is on pace to equal or slightly surpass 2016 numbers.

Chlamydia and syphilis also increased nationally and statewide last year.

Chlamydia is most common. The CDC received reports of 1.7 million cases of chlamydia, compared with 1.6 million in 2016. In addition, syphilis diagnoses rose steeply from 17,375 cases to 30,664. In the '90s, some thought syphilis had disappeared until it came back strong.

Again, Umatilla County isn't exactly following the wider trend. Instead of increasing, numbers dipped a bit. Last year, the county reported 323 cases of chlamydia compared with 264 cases so far this year. There were zero cases of syph-

See **STDS/10A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Bags of free condoms sit in a holiday display in the front office at the Umatilla County Health Department in Pendleton.



CHI St. Anthony Hospital

Winter Fest

FORMERLY THE *Festival of Trees*

Celebrate THE SPIRIT OF INSPIRED GIVING

Friday **DECEMBER 7th, 2018** | Saturday **DECEMBER 8th, 2018**
Evening Gala | **6:00 pm** | *Family Day* | **10am-2pm**

LOCATED AT THE Pendleton Convention Center

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact St. Anthony Hospital Foundation at 541-278-2627