

EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2018

143rd Year, No. 46

WINNER OF THE 2018 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

State spent \$1.6 billion extra over two years

Inconsistent buying practices, lack of oversight found in audit

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — State officials could have saved up to \$1.6 billion over a two-year period by being smarter shoppers, according to a state audit released Wednesday.

But, auditors said, old technology and outdated practices largely prevent the state from digging into whether it is spending each dollar of taxpayer money wisely.

Auditors looked at all information technology purchases in 2016 and 2017 by 10 state agencies whose buying is subject to oversight from the Oregon Department of Administrative Services.

They found the state bought 1,300 24-inch Dell monitors for prices ranging from \$176.40 to \$241.15 and could have saved over \$16,500 by always paying the lowest price.

In another example, the state paid 131 different prices for the same surge protector, ranging from \$65.90 to \$173.98.

While focusing on technology, the auditors used their findings and other research to conclude that Oregon could have trimmed up to 20 percent of \$8 billion in state government purchases in the 2015-17 budget.

The Administrative Services Department has "price agreements" with vendors to set prices for goods bought by the state. The state encourages agencies to negotiate for lower prices.

But auditors found that state buyers use multiple systems to track spending and don't follow consistent buying practices.

Some state agencies monitor spending in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Only two state agencies regularly analyze individual purchases, auditors found.

"Without the ability to analyze detailed purchase data for all procurements, Oregon is unable to identify opportunities for potentially millions of dollars in cost savings," auditors wrote.

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WESTON



Weston Middle School teacher Katie Groshong grins after getting a pie in the face on Wednesday as part of a successful canned food drive.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A just dessert

Charitable food drives pies into faces

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Teachers at Weston Middle School dared their unique cohort of students to collect 300 items of food for the small town's food bank.

The dare cost them each a pie in the face Wednesday when the students came back with 1,537 items.

The cans and packages were given to Bill Dobos, the Weston Food Pantry manager and pastor at Weston Community Church, at a surprise ceremony at Weston Middle School.

The drive was the brainchild of the middle school's fourth and fifth grade teachers. Although the fourth and fifth grade classes are in a traditional elementary school format, its approximately 100 students are housed at the Athena-Weston School District's middle school facility.

Searching for a unique identity, the grades' four teachers created The Hub, a term they use to refer to the four classes that includes its own motto and logo.

As a part of the initiative, the teachers looked for a service project the kids could all take part in, developing a food drive that would benefit the Weston Food Pantry.

A few days before the drive was supposed to begin, Olson explained to her class that it would run from Dec. 3 to Dec. 19 and the goal was the 300 food items.

Olson said the drive began modestly — a single can of diced tomatoes — before the flood gates opened.

By the second day, The Hub had collected more than 300 items.

"There was never a cooling off period," Olson said. "We had a bombardment of food everyday."

The teachers revised their goal to 1,500 food items and introduced a new incentive.

In addition to the popsicles and gingerbread houses that were already promised, the students would be able to smash a pie in all of their teachers' faces instead of the single teacher that was set to act as a sacrificial lamb.

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Bill Dobos, manager of the Weston Food Pantry, hugs a Weston Middle School student after being surprised on Wednesday with the donation of more than 1,500 food items.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Budweiser maker teams up with Tilray to explore pot drinks

NEW YORK (AP) — The maker of Budweiser is partnering with medical cannabis company Tilray in a \$100 million deal to research cannabis-infused drinks for the Canadian market.

The alliance announced Wednesday is the latest foray by a major beer company into the cannabis business in Canada, which legalized recreational marijuana in October.

Anheuser-Busch InBev and Tilray Inc. said each would invest \$50 million in the project to study non-alcoholic drinks containing cannabidiol, or CBD, which some claim has calming and healing affects, and THC, the cannabis compound known for its psychoactive effects.



AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar, File

In this March 5, 2015, file photo, Budweiser beer cans are on ice at a concession stand at McKechnie Field in Bradenton, Fla.

Belgium-based AB InBev, the owner of more than 500 beer brands including Budweiser and Stella Artois, said it will participate

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Historical preservation the final barrier to depot transfer

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

As the Columbia Development Authority continues to discuss how best to preserve historical and cultural resources at the former Umatilla Chemical Depot, they got a little bit more to work with this week.

During a CDA board meeting held via conference call on Wednesday, executive director Greg Smith told board members he was in Redmond, on his way to pick up a trove of original construction plans and communications from when the depot was built in the mid-1940s.

"It fell right out of the sky and into our lap," he said. Smith said state Sen. Betsy

Johnson (D-Scappoose) had called him and told him she had found something that would be of interest to Umatilla and Morrow counties.

Johnson's father, Sam Johnson, owned saw mills and other lumber holdings in the Bend and Redmond area, and his business had been contracted to provide the lumber for the construction of the depot's buildings. She offered up the construction plans and corresponding documents to the CDA to preserve as part of the depot's historical record.

Preservation of historical and cultural resources on the former depot land — including original ruts made by the Oregon Trail

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