

# EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2018

143rd Year, No. 50

WINNER OF THE 2018 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

## Our New Neighbors



Zach Banks, left, and Viet Block are new strings instructors for the Oregon East Symphony in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## A WELL-ORCHESTRATED MOVE

Couple moves to Pendleton to teach music with Oregon East Symphony

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Zach Banks and Viet Block left Portland in part because of the amount of “coals in the fire” they needed to maintain to survive as professional classical musicians.

In the midst of obtaining a master’s degree in music, Banks said he taught private cello lessons on top of performing at weddings, birthday parties, and whatever gigs would come his way. Block said her daily schedule as a violinist was similar.

About four months into their stay in Pendleton, there’s still plenty of coals between the couple.

Banks fills several different roles for the Oregon East Symphony — the youth strings instructor, the conductor for the A Sharp Players, and the conductor for the Raising the Bar program — in addition to serving as the music director for the Grande Ronde Symphony in La Grande. Block is a contract worker with Oregon East Symphony, helping out with the strings and Raising the Bar programs while continuing to teach private lessons.

Life in Pendleton might still be busy for the couple, but the pair feels like they’ve found a good fit in Eastern Oregon.

“Portland was feeling too crowded,” Banks said.

Even getting to Oregon in the first place was a journey for Banks and Block.

Banks, 28, grew up in Merrillville, Indiana, a small town in the northwest part of the state where he started out by playing guitar before transitioning to the cello.

After initially enrolling at a music school in Indianapolis, Banks migrated to



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Instructor Zach Banks teaches the Christmas song “Jingle Bells” to a group of first-year cellists recently at Pendleton High School.

Portland State, where he met Block.

Although Block, 24, is a longtime Rose City resident, her journey to Portland was no less unique.

The daughter of a Vietnamese mother and an American father, she immigrated from Vietnam to Portland when she was 10 months old.

Block said she loved music since she was a young child, evidenced by a childhood picture she took with a ukulele and her parents’ stories.

A violinist, Block went to her hometown school to get her education.

Enrolled in the same music program and playing in a string quartet, Block and Banks knew each other for a few years before they started dating in 2014.

By the time they graduated last spring, they were looking for a change of pace from their itinerant work schedule.

Block said that unless a musician was able to earn a coveted spot in the Oregon Symphony, most classical musicians in Portland make their living out of private lessons and side gigs.

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Colin O'Brady via AP

In this photo provided by Colin O'Brady, of Portland, he speaks on the phone in Antarctica on Wednesday.

## Oregon man first to solo across Antarctica unaided

By AMANDA LEE MYERS  
Associated Press

An Oregon man became the first person to traverse Antarctica alone without any assistance on Wednesday, trekking across the polar continent in an epic 54-day journey that was previously deemed impossible.

Colin O'Brady, of Portland, finished the bone-chilling, 930-mile journey as friends, family and fans tracked the endurance athlete's progress in real time online.

“I did it!” a tearful Brady said on a call to his family gathered in Portland for the holidays, according to his wife, Jenna Besaw.

“It was an emotional call,” she said. “He seemed overwhelmed by love and gratitude, and he really wanted to say ‘Thank you’ to all of us.”

O'Brady was sleeping near the finish line in Antarctica late Wednesday and could not immediately be reached for comment.

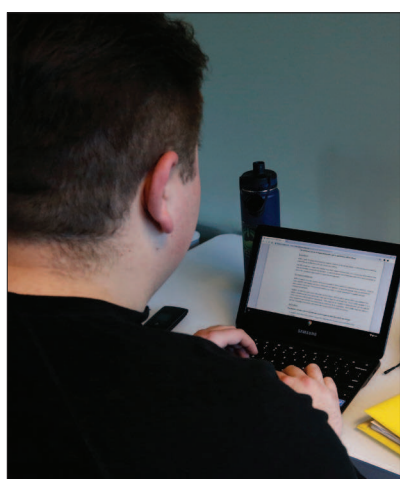
The 33-year-old O'Brady documented his nearly entirely uphill journey — which he called The Impossible First — on his Instagram page. He wrote Wednesday that he covered the last roughly 80 miles in one big, impromptu final push to the finish line that took well over an entire day.

“While the last 32 hours were some of the most challenging hours of my life, they have quite honestly been some of the best moments I have ever experienced,” O'Brady posted.

The day before, he posted that he was “in the zone” and thought he could make it to the end in one go.

“I’m listening to my body and taking care of the details to keep myself safe,” he wrote. “I called home and talked to my mom,

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AP Photo/Martha Irvine, File  
In this Dec. 10, 2018, file photo, Jason, a 24-year-old tech addict from New York state, works on a laptop in Bellevue, Wash., at the headquarters of reSTART Life, a residential program for adolescents and adults who have serious issues with excessive tech use, including video games.

## ‘ADDICTED TO TECH’

Rehab center started for people trying to break away from computers and gaming

By MARTHA IRVINE  
AP National Writer

BELLEVUE, Wash. — The young men sit in chairs in a circle in a small meeting room in suburban Seattle and introduce themselves before they speak. It is much like any other 12-step meeting — but with a twist.

“Hi, my name is,” each begins. Then something like, “and I’m an internet and tech addict.”

The eight who’ve gathered here are beset by a level of tech obsession

that’s different than it is for those of us who like to say we’re addicted to our phones or an app or some new show on a streaming video service. For them, tech gets in the way of daily functioning and self-care. We’re talking flunk-your-classes, can’t-find-a-job, live-in-a-dark-hole kinds of problems, with depression, anxiety and sometimes suicidal thoughts part of the mix.

There’s Christian, a 20-year-old college student from Wyoming who has a traumatic brain injury. His mom urged him to seek help because he was “medicating” his depression with video games and marijuana.

Seth, a 28-year-old from Minnesota, used video games and any number of things to try to numb his shame after a car he was driv-

ing crashed, seriously injuring his brother.

Wes, 21, an Eagle Scout and college student from Michigan, played video games 80 hours a week, only stopping to eat every two to three days. He lost 25 pounds and failed his classes.

Across town there is another young man who attended this meeting, before his work schedule changed — and his work places him squarely at risk of temptation.

He does cloud maintenance for a suburban Seattle tech company. For a self-described tech addict, this is like working in the lion’s den, laboring for the very industry that peddles the games, videos and other online content that long has been his vice.

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