

MLK Day events encourage unity

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Celebration, remembrance and building a sense of community are the focus of a pair of local Martin Luther King Jr. Day events. Groups of people in both Pendleton and Hermiston invite the public to join them during the Monday, Jan. 21 gatherings.

In Pendleton, the event is coordinated by a committee, including representatives from the Pendleton Baha'i Community. The program features music and the reading of writings of King, said Ellen Wardell.

"The words of MLK are powerful, motivating and moving," Wardell said. "Music is a way, a unique way, to celebrate and unify people."

Open to all ages, the gathering runs from 6-8 p.m. at Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St. People are encouraged to bring their smartphones, as there will be links provided to access words for songs included in the sing-alongs.

The third Monday in January was designated as a federal holiday in King's honor by President Ronald Reagan. More than merely a day off, Wardell encourages people to recognize and celebrate the life and achievements of Martin Luther King Jr.

A social activist and civil rights leader, King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.



Georgina Johnson sings "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize" during a 2018 Martin Luther King Day event in Pendleton. The public is invited to an all-ages celebration Monday, Jan. 21, at Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co.



A group of people turn onto Main Street during the 2018 Martin Luther King Day march in Hermiston. This year's march and program is Monday, Jan. 21, at the United Methodist Church.

Also a pastor and author, he was assassinated in 1968 on the balcony of a motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

"His life work to end racial segregation and for racial equality in the United States left lasting effects on all citizens," she said.

John Carbage, president of the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club, is equally enthusiastic about an upcoming celebration. The Martin Luther King Jr. Day March begins at 11 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 191 E.

BRIEFLY

Truck driver dies after hitting gas line

A man driving a pickup truck Tuesday morning hit a gas main line on Feedville Road, and succumbed to injuries from the crash.

Michael Patrick Gallegos, 47, was alone in the car when he rolled his vehicle, and was found unresponsive with apparent head trauma, according to a news release from the Hermiston Police Department. The Pendleton man was pronounced dead after being transported to Good Shepherd Medical Center. The department said there were no known witnesses, and speed may have been a factor in the crash, but there were no obvious signs of impairment. They said the investigation is ongoing.

Umatilla County Fire District battalion chief Ed Clark said employees from local businesses, including Circle C Equipment and New Holland Agriculture, were evacuated for the rest of the day, and that Cascade Natural Gas had turned off the line by about 10 a.m., limiting any further danger to the public.

Walden cancels town halls in Pendleton, Boardman

PENDLETON — U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, is canceling several stops on a town hall tour through Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, including events in Umatilla and Morrow counties.

In a press release, Walden attributed the cancellations to a schedule change made by Democratic leaders. While Congress was originally supposed to be out of session the week of Jan. 21, business will now restart on Jan. 22.

"It is disappointing that the Democratic Leader made last minute scheduling changes in the House that interfere with my town hall schedule as it currently stands," Walden said in a statement. "We will reschedule the town halls impacted by the revised House calendar next week and will announce the details for those town

halls as soon as we can."

The cancellations include Jan. 23 town halls at the Pendleton Convention Center and the SAGE Center in Boardman.

State withheld discovery, dismisses theft case against convicted drug dealer

HERMISTON — Former big-time drug dealer Carlos Joaquin Barragan of Hermiston is out of jail and no longer facing theft charges.

Barragan, 40, was on the hook for stealing jewelry worth more than \$1,000 in November from residents at the Country Squire Estates, the trailer park at 1500 N.E. 10th St., Hermiston. That was until Friday, when Daniel Pachico, Umatilla County deputy district attorney, revealed the state withheld discovery — reports, documents and other evidence — from defense attorney Herman Bylenga. Bylenga credited Pachico with coming forward.

"Mr. Pachico is one of the most honest men I know," Bylenga said. "He has integrity and brought this to my attention."

Circuit Judge Christopher Brauer dismissed the case without prejudice, meaning the state can bring charges again, and freed Barragan.

Barragan in the late-2000s ran an illegal drug operation that reached throughout northeast Oregon, and in 2011 he ended up serving almost six years in a federal prison for his role in the largest illegal marijuana crop in Grant County. Hermiston police arrested him in November after he allegedly ripped off the Hermiston Classics Car Club.

Larry Storment, recent club president, said Barragan stole and cashed checks from the club. The Umatilla County District Attorney's Office charged Barragan on Nov. 19 with multiple counts of forgery and theft. The judge dismissed that case after the parties reached a civil compromise. Storment said Barragan's family made restitution and gave the club the \$1,000 it was out.

Local United Way to join Columbia, Walla Walla counties

East Oregonian

The United Way of Umatilla and Morrow Counties will merge with the United Way of Walla Walla and Columbia Counties to become the United Way of the Blue Mountains.

The change, which coincides with the retirement of Cricket Nicholson, will occur this summer, said Christy Lieuallen, who will lead the regional nonprofit. Nicholson has been the executive director of the United Way of Umatilla and Morrow Counties for 12 years. Lieuallen is the current executive director of United Way of Walla Walla and Columbia Counties.

"We feel confident the time is right," Nicholson said. "More importantly, Umatilla and Morrow counties will benefit from the continued local presence and focus, with the added capabilities and support that United Way of Walla Walla County brings."

Lieuallen stressed that

local presence in both markets will be a priority. The organization, she said, will continue to seek extensive, local stakeholders and community involvement throughout the region. In addition, Lieuallen said that much of the office functions can be shared in a more efficient way. Merging the two operations benefits the respective communities by streamlining operations, creating efficiencies and reducing duplication of effort, she added.

With a new regional board of directors including representatives from each county, Lieuallen said that local steering committees will drive fundraising and community investment within the respective communities.

"What won't change are those things that make United Way such a vital resource in our local communities," she said. "As always, monies raised will be invested within the community where they were donated."

Combined, the two United Way operations invested more than \$385,000 last year to support multiple nonprofit partner agencies and local initiatives. United Way's mission is to empower donors, volunteers, advocates and agencies to improve the health, education and financial stability of people in the Blue Mountain region.

Nicholson previously worked for The Salvation Army for 10 years, served for more than eight years as executive director of Domestic Violence Services and ran her own business for a couple of years, which included grant writing and consulting.

"I love helping people see their options and supporting them through the process of growth and positive change, so I sort of fell into a career in social services," she said in a past interview.

The new regional United Way will maintain offices in both Walla Walla and Pendleton. For more information, call Lieuallen at 509-529-1183 or 541-276-2661.



Nicholson

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