

HEPPNER

# Student ropes in online education

East Oregonian

A Heppner High School freshman has corralled his abilities in the rodeo arena while still keeping up in the classroom — thanks to Morrow Academy.

Jett Stewart traveled to Las Vegas in December to compete in the Junior National Finals Rodeo. He placed third in the world in open team roping and fourth in #10 roping.

Jason and Sybil Stewart, the young cowboy's parents, realized this past fall that in order for their son to travel and compete with the junior rodeo he wouldn't be able to maintain a regular school schedule. Initially hesitant about taking Jett out of traditional classroom settings, the couple stepped out of their comfort zone and reached out to Morrow County School District staff.

The district is in its second year of offering Morrow Academy, an online educational program. The Stewarts were introduced to Betsy Shane, the district's Morrow Academy teacher.

"Mrs. Shane was amazing," Sybil said. "Several times, I was worried that we didn't do what was best for Jett's education, but he gained lots of 'real life' education when it comes to being your own advocate and time management."



Photo contributed by Michelle Madril  
**Jett Stewart of Heppner has found educational success in the Morrow Academy while participating in junior rodeo.**

The Stewarts said Shane has been extremely helpful as they've sometimes struggled through some of the changes. With Shane providing encouragement, Sybil said it has been beneficial as they work their way through some growing pains.

Jett, too, said the program was intimidating at first due to the lack of face-to-face contact with teachers. However, he said Shane, as well as Marie Shimer,

director of educational services at InterMountain Education Service District, have been helpful. He said one thing he has learned is how important it is to reach out when he's struggling.

"What makes it really work for me is the flexibility and getting the one-on-one with Mrs. Shane," Jett said. "Staying on top of the work was pretty challenging because it continues at the same pace and sometimes you need to be your

own advocate and contact the online teachers on your own."

Shimer said the online program is a great option for students who need some flexibility in their school schedule. This could be for academic, medical, outside activities or other reasons.

The local program, Shimer said, is positive because students stay connected with their own school district. It provides students with an opportunity to participate in school activities and benefits the district because they retain the state money for that student.

"When Morrow Academy is a good fit, it's really a win-win for everyone," Shimer said. "We get to retain our students and provide an education that works for them."

Jett credits Morrow Academy with providing the flexibility for him to excel in rodeo while still focusing on academics.

After high school, he plans to attend college to pursue a degree in agricultural business. In addition, he has aspirations to qualify for the National Finals Rodeo.

For more information about the Morrow Academy, contact MCS D superintendent Dirk Dirksen at 541-676-9128 or dirk.dirksen@morrow.k12.or.us.

BRIEFLY

## Ham radio operators warm up with winter test

HERMISTON — Members of the Hermiston Amateur Radio Club will participate in the Amateur Radio Winter Field Day.

The purpose of the event is to practice emergency communication in conditions that are less than ideal, said club member Don Drayton. While the group has participated during the summer field day for many years, this is the second time they will gather for the winter event.

The Amateur Radio Winter Field Day begins Saturday with the erection of antennas at 8 a.m. near the childcare center behind Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. Drayton anticipates being up and running by 11 a.m., and continuing through Sunday morning. Anyone interested in amateur radios is invited to stop by and observe and ask questions.

For more information about the Hermiston Amateur Radio Club, contact Drayton at aa7dd@live.com, 541-314-3138 or visit www.ai7ho.org.

## Tickets on sale for Beach & Beef fundraiser

Tickets for a fundraiser to provide extra money to enhance educational opportunities for Hermiston School District students are now on sale.

The 10th annual Beach & Beef fundraiser benefits the Hermiston Education Foundation. The crab and beef dinner and auction is Saturday, Feb. 2 at 6 p.m. (doors open at 5 p.m.) at Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center, 1705 E. Airport Road. The auction will include artwork created by local students and community members.

Tickets are \$40 each and are available at the Hermiston School District office, Hermiston Chamber of Commerce and online at www.eventbrite.com.

For more information, visit www.hermistoneducationfoundation.org or call 541-567-5215.

## COMING EVENTS

### THURSDAY, JAN. 24

**BOARDMAN SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12 p.m., Boardman Senior Center, 100 Tatone St., Boardman. Cost is \$4 for seniors 55 and over or \$5 for adults. (541-481-3257)

**PENDLETON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12-1 p.m., Pendleton Senior Center, 510 S.W. 10th St., Pendleton. Costs \$3.50 or \$6 for those under 60. Pool, puzzles, crafts, snacks, Second Time Around thrift store 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For Meals On Wheels, call 541-276-1926. (Tori Bowman 541-276-5073)

**HERMISTON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12 p.m., Harker Center, 255 N.E. Second St., Hermiston. Cost is \$4 for adults, free for children 10 and under, \$4 for Meals on Wheels. Extra 50 cents for utensils/dishes. Bus service available by donation. (541-567-3582)

**SENSORY STORY TIME**, 12:30 p.m., Boardman Public Library, 200 S. Main St., Boardman. For children from birth to age 4. (541-481-2665)

**WRITER'S GROUP**, 5:30 p.m., Hermiston Public Library, 235 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. Writing support group offering encouragement, inspiration and motivation. All writers welcome. (Jodi Hansen 541-567-2882)

**YARN CLUB**, 5:30 p.m., Hermiston Public Library, 235 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. (541-567-2882)

**THE ARC UMATILLA COUNTY BINGO**, 6-10 p.m., The Arc Building, 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. Doors open at 6 p.m., seats may be held until 6:30 p.m., then all seats first come, first served; games begin at 7 p.m. Proceeds benefit Umatilla County citizens with developmental disabilities. 18 years or older, must have proof of age and photo I.D. Basic pot \$20, prizes range from \$20-\$750. (541-567-115)

**FIDDLER'S NIGHT**, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Avamere Assisted Living, 980 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston. Enjoy light refreshments, listen to some favorite oldies or join in the jam session. All ages welcome. (Lori 541-567-3141)

### FRIDAY, JAN. 25

**WALKING FOR WELLNESS**, 8:30-9:30 a.m., Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. Get some exercise even when the weather is bad. Free. (Casey Brown 541-276-8100)

**TODDLER STORY TIME**, 10:15-11 a.m., Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. (541-966-0380)

**FREE FRIDAY LUNCH**, 12 p.m., Echo Community Church, 21 N. Bonanza St., Echo. Everyone welcome.

**STORY AND CRAFT TIME**, 2 p.m., Echo Public Library, 20 S. Bonanza, Echo. (541-376-8411)

**VFW BINGO**, 6 p.m., Hermiston VFW, 45 W. Cherry St., Hermiston. Doors open at 6 p.m., games begin at 7 p.m. Everyone welcome. (541-567-6219)

**"SMALLFOOT" MOVIE EVENT**, 6 p.m., Adams Public Library, 190 N. Main St., Adams. Free and suitable for all ages.

### SATURDAY, JAN. 26

**FREE FOR ALL**, 9:30-10:15 a.m., Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St., Pendleton. Free art classes for children up to age 12. Children under 8 should be accompanied by an adult. (Roberta Lavadour 541-278-9201)

# Commission discusses obstacles to development

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Development Commission will spend its remaining \$5 million from the urban renewal district on public projects if it has to, but it wants to try spending it in the private sector first.

Steve Campbell, a member of the commission's advisory committee, said the committee was recommending the commission focus on funding public-private partnerships that would grow the property tax base.

The main obstacle in doing that before the urban renewal district expires in 2023 is a lack of new applications for the district's grant programs, especially the upper story grant

program.

Charles Denight, the commission's associate director, said he's met with every downtown building owner on renovating their upper story spaces multiple times, and he can organize the holdouts into three groups.

The first group are building owners who would like to develop their second stories, but even a grant-assisted project might not make the owner's expected contribution feasible.

"Some of these businesses are small," Denight said. "They're not big corporations. For them to borrow \$300,000 is a big deal for them."

The second group are people who inherited the building from a relative and treat it like a "family heir-

loom," meaning they don't want to alter it in any significant way.

The third group are comprised of out-of-state building owners who aren't interested in making significant investments in the facility.

Despite the building owners' overall reticence, Denight said there's a renewed interest in the upper story grant program after the commission raised the cost percentage the grant could cover from 25 percent to 40 percent, although the grant is still capped at \$200,000.

Although some suggested upping the cap or scrapping it entirely, Councilor McKennon McDonald said she likes the idea of private building owners having a level of buy-in in their renovation projects.

Beyond the upper story grants, Mayor John Turner said the urban renewal district could benefit from a new grant program that would award money to house flippers.

Turner, the chairman of the city's housing committee, said many "zombie properties" — blighted, vacated homes that are stuck in the foreclosure process — are in the urban renewal district.

By February, the advisory committee expects to complete a marketing plan to boost private development in the urban renewal district.

If private development isn't spurred by the end of 2020, the committee recommends using any remaining funds to go toward public projects.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**THURSDAY, JAN. 24**  
**ARTS AND CRAFTS FROM THE DRY SIDE**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Hermiston Assembly of God Church, 730 E. Hurlbert Ave., Hermiston. Use Seventh Street entrance. Monthly business meeting at noon. (541-567-4446)

**CONDON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**, 12 p.m., Gilliam County Courthouse, 221 S. Oregon St., Condon. (541-384-7777)

**PENDLETON LIONS CLUB**, 12 p.m., Roosters Restaurant, 1515 Southgate, Pendleton.

**ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL OF HERMISTON**, 12 p.m., ARC Umatilla

County, 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston.

**MILTON-FREEWATER REPUBLICAN WOMEN**, 12 p.m., Milton-Freewater Community Building, 109 N.E. Fifth Ave., Milton-Freewater. Bring a sack lunch; coffee will be provided. (Suni Danforth 541-215-9389)

**"KNOWING WHAT YOU BELIEVE" WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY**, 1:30 p.m., First Baptist Church, 200 S.W. Willow Fork Drive, Boardman. Ladies are invited to learn more about God's plan for their lives. (541-481-9437)

**CHURCH WOMEN UNITED**, 1:30 p.m., First Christian Church, 518 S. Main St.,

Milton-Freewater. Installation of officers, refreshments and fellowship. Everyone welcome.

**HERMISTON HORSESHOE CLUB**, 5 p.m., Hermiston High School Weber Field, 600 S. First St., Hermiston. (Rick Rebman 541-720-6402)

**ATHENA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**, 6-7:30 p.m., DoubleTree Restaurant, 327 E. Main St., Athena. Current and interested members as well as the public are welcome. (April McKenna or Katie Zmuda 541-310-9557)

**PENDLETON EAGLES BURGERS AND KARAOKE**, 6 p.m., Pendleton Eagles Lodge, 428 S. Main St., Pend-

leton. Members and guests welcome. (541-278-2828)

**INLAND NORTHWEST ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL**, 6:30 p.m., Harris Jr. Academy, 3121 S.W. Hailey Ave., Pendleton. Musicians are invited to join by the conductor. (Salli Ketchersid 541-289-4696)

**A SHARP PLAYERS ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL**, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Pendleton High School, 1800 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton. Intermediate to advanced orchestra for string and wind musicians. Cost to participate is \$120 per year or \$60 for a half year. Registration forms available at the OES office or email info@oregoneastysymphony.

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