

EASTERN OREGON PRESENTS...

WINTER WONDERLAND



Frozen fog clings to trees and vegetation on Weston Mountain.

Photo contributed by Barbara Morehead

A couple of area photography enthusiasts recently captured frosty proof of the winter season. People are invited to submit landscape or other interesting photos for possible inclusion in Your EO News. Attach as a high resolution jpg and email to: community@eastoregonian.com. Also include when and where it was taken, any other relevant details and your name.



Camas Creek, located south of Ukiah, provides a frigid reminder that Old Man Winter is still passing through.

Photo contributed by Barbara Morehead



Earlier this week, a fresh blanket of snow covering the foothills of the Blue Mountains could be viewed from the Grecian Heights neighborhood of Pendleton.

Photo contributed by Larry McMillan

Tiny warrior: Conventional treatments limited, alternatives hard to come by

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loan them a condo near the Portland hospital complex where they currently spend much of their time.

After learning about a promising, but wildly expensive sea cucumber extract, Jeff paid \$900 out of pocket for the first month's supply. Later, he was able to get more of the medicine by enrolling Dylan in a study. They are also able to pay for cancer-fighting cannabis extracts that are not covered by insurance — something Casey says families with less income and community support wouldn't be able to do.

U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, the mother of a child with a rare, usually fatal disease, invited the Harrells to visit her family in Camas. They took Dylan to their church, where their pastor prayed over her.

"It was really, really heartfelt," Jeff said. Herrera also used her connections to help the Harrells get access to an experimental drug.

Still, the costs of even standard treatments are astronomical and caring for a sick kid can be overwhelming. On Mondays, family members look after Mason while Jeff, Casey and Dylan go to Portland. On top of daily radi-



LEFT Dylan Harrell's preschool teacher, Jeri Wilson, provides occasional respite care. When she comes to visit, she brings Dylan's favorite foods.

ABOVE Community members have painted dozens of rocks with colorful images and inspiring messages, which they sometimes leave in the driveway for her to find when she comes home from treatment.

EO Media Group photos/Natalie St. John

ation treatments, there are appointments with the neurologist, the oncologist, the naturopath, the cannabis consultant, the physical therapist and the occupational therapist.

Dylan has been a very good sport, her parents say, but certain aspects of her care are major ordeals. Once a week, her providers have to change the sticky dressing that covers the IV

port in her left arm.

"I am not into that," Dylan said. She takes dozens of pills a day. The sea cucumber extract is an unappetizing green-gray slime. It's tasteless when mixed with juice, but Dylan, a skilled and determined haggler, tries to negotiate her way out of every dose.

"Little things don't matter"

These days, Casey and

Jeff shrug it off when one of the kids chips the paint or breaks a dish. If they see a fight brewing over a bowl of snacks, they pour another bowl.

"The little things don't matter anymore," Casey said.

In a house where someone has DIPG, even little victories are big. Two weeks ago, Dylan's hands shook violently as she tried

to eat. She was too tired to talk much, and couldn't walk at all. On Nov. 25, she was steady enough to eat unaided, take a couple steps with her walker and chat as she dressed her Barbie. The radiation honeymoon is working, for now. Her sense of humor is coming back and she hasn't vomited in weeks. She's feeling stronger — she played for about 10 minutes before saying,

"Mommy, I'm getting a little bit tired."

Her good streak brings Casey and Jeff gratitude and joy, but it's bittersweet. They know it will probably end, and they don't know when. They find themselves checking constantly for returning symptoms, watching her while she sleeps to make sure she's still breathing.

"You feel like you have this pressure in your chest, almost like a heart attack," Jeff said. "It's like you have trouble breathing. It's always there."

Regardless of the outcome for Dylan, the Harrells say they'll be pushing for a cure and advocating for DIPG families for the rest of their lives. They hope, eventually, to start a foundation that would help families cover the costs of things like travel and non-traditional treatments.

They want to repay the kindness people all over the world have shown to them. For now, they're squarely focused on making Dylan's life as good as it can be, for as long as possible.

"We aren't giving up hope," Casey said. "We don't want to be the statistic."

Follow Dylan's progress on Facebook at bit.ly/dylan-harrell