

Fair: Couple known for volunteering

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“As a couple, they are more than deserving,” Miller said. “Dan and Terri are valued members of our team.”

Tears were plentiful as the 2018 fair court — Laiklyn Fields, Rebekah Miller, Bobbie Sharp and Olivia Warner — said their final farewells. A video with candid and posed shots provided a glimpse of their role as ambassadors for the fair and county.

“The girls do a lot of traveling and have a lot of fun,” said Alice Newman, fair court chaperone. “It’s also a lot of hard work.”

Newman invited the 2019 court to the stage and each of the young ladies introduced themselves and their families. They are: Nive Hamilton, 15, and Kyleigh Sepulveda, 16, both of Hermiston, and Madison Pryor, 15, of Pendleton.

Others recognized during the event included Terrie Dennis, who was selected as female volunteer of the year for her ongoing work in the sheep barn.

David Fesler received male volunteer of the year for everything from his support of the fair court to helping on the grounds.

The business partner of the year went to Velasco Used Car Sales. Fair board chairman Lucas Wagner said for the past handful of years, Miguel Velaso’s family-owned business has been instrumental in supporting Latino Night.

Steve Wallace of Western Ag Improvement received



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Kyleigh Sepulveda, 16, and Nive Hamilton, 15, both of Hermiston, and Madison Pryor, 15, of Pendleton, were introduced as the 2019 Umatilla County Fair court Saturday at Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center in Hermiston.

special recognition for countless hours provided to abate dust at the EOTEC site, as well as other volunteer activities.

In addition, Wallace was introduced as one of the new fair board members along with Doug Bennett. The two are replacing outgoing board members Gay Newman and Don Miller.

Wagner could barely contain his excitement about this year’s main stage entertainers.

Since several have yet to sign contracts, he could only reveal two of the acts — Tuesday, Aug. 6 brings Tracy Byrd to the stage. While his self-titled debut album reached “gold” status, people likely will recognize his chart-topping hit, “Watermelon Crawl,” which

appeared on “No Ordinary Man.”

And, Wednesday, Aug. 7 features Jackson Michelson, an up-and-coming country musician from Corvallis. He has opened shows for Lee Brice, Blake Shelton and Zac Brown Band.

General admission to the concerts is free with fair tickets. The sale of reserved and premium seats will be announced.

The Umatilla County Fair is at EOTEC, 1705 E. Airport Road, Hermiston. For more information, contact 541-567-6121, fair@umatillacounty.net or visit www.umatillacountyfair.net.

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A McDonald's employee takes orders from drive-through customers on a busy Saturday made even more hectic by the Best of the West AAU basketball tournament, which brought about 4,000 people and 119 teams to town.

Hoops: Weekend event draws players, parents ... and paying customers

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hard to find a table.”

While some teams were left scrambling to find a restaurant to accommodate a large group for a Saturday night team dinner, others planned ahead. Shortly after lunch, the Southeast Boise team placed an order for more than a dozen pizzas from Ye Olde Pizza Shoppe, said Nicole Roldan.

“The pizza place was really busy but because we called so early, we didn’t have to wait,” she said.

Members of the Idaho Elite teams were scattered at several different hotels, said Blaine and Dusty Moriarty. The Boise couple and their two sons, Parker, 11, and Cooper, 8, booked a room about a month ago at Oxford Suites.

While Cooper gave it a “thumbs up” for the swimming pool, Dusty was impressed with the hotel scheduling extra help to assist with the complimentary breakfast.

“The tournament people do a good job of letting the town know,” Blaine said. “The town appeared ready for all the teams.”

Kelly Schwirse, who’s in charge of marketing and

communications with the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, forwarded an email to its membership that the weekend tournament was the biggest yet. The Hermiston Youth Basketball Club hosts four, with the final one — For the Love of the Game — scheduled for Feb. 9-10.

The Moriartys said the weekend would likely cost their family about \$500-\$600 — including lodging, meals, gas and snacks. Roldan, whose daughter plays on the Southeast Boise team, estimated her weekend costs at around \$500.

In October, Robin Evans, the Southeast Boise coach, reserved rooms for the team at the Holiday Inn Express. Selling points, she said, included a complimentary breakfast and swimming pool.

“Also, it’s centrally located with the games and restaurants,” she said.

Roldan said they heard about the Hermiston tournament from other Boise-area teams. In addition to a shorter driving distance than going to Portland, she said the gymnasiums were more conveniently located.

“The schools and their facilities are amazing,”

Blaine Moriarty added.

Also, Usher said little things like having food vendors outside a couple of the schools and onsite custom printing of tournament gear are added touches that people like.

Anna Francis of AJ’s Printed Apparel had stations set up at the high school and Armand Larive Middle School. In addition to T-shirts, sweatshirts and dri-fit long-sleeved shirts with tournament logos, people could have their names and uniform numbers added.

Francis, who launched her business in 1996, gives a percentage of her sales to the Hermiston Youth Basketball Club.

Also, Usher said she prints up special shirts for the winning team and the second place team. The tournament logo gear, Usher said, is a great way to promote and market the event.

“The tournament is a great opportunity for our community,” Francis said. “It’s great to see that many people in town. It’s a lot of work but it’s worth it.”

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Starnes: Pushing to limit donations

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gave \$2 million to Buehler’s campaign.

Those contributions helped make 2018 the most expensive governor’s race in Oregon’s history.

While Starnes is pressing for a \$1,000 limit, the governor prefers matching the federal limits of \$2,600 per individual and \$5,000 per political action committee.

Starnes admitted his number probably won’t appeal to most lawmakers.

“I don’t think it’s viable, but one still has to haggle,” Starnes said.

When Brown testified at the first meeting of the new Senate Committee on Campaign Finance Wednesday, Starnes watched from the audience with his signature smile.

She spoke to kick off the committee’s work on campaign finance legislation.

When the governor entered the meeting, Starnes intercepted her to shake her

hand and did the same thing when she left the meeting.

She declared her support for a constitutional amendment and requiring “dark money” groups to disclose the names of their donors. Such groups include political nonprofits that can legally receive unlimited contributions from corporations, unions and individuals and spend it without identifying donors.

“Political interests should be able to speak out publicly but not to be able to disguise their voices and financial interests in the outcome they seek to influence,” Brown said.

In late 2018, Starnes’s mission to reform campaign finance found a nexus with Jeff Golden. Golden, a freshman senator from Ashland, chairs the campaign finance committee.

During his campaign, he vowed not to accept contributions from political action committees to show he wouldn’t be influenced by special interests, accord-

ing to the *Medford Mail Tribune*.

Golden said he asked Senate President Peter Courtney to establish the committee, an effort that went hand-in-hand with the governor’s agenda.

“That’s why he says the stars aligned,” Starnes said of Golden. “It’s just like this crazy huge moneyed campaign, me running in it, him running in it. It seems like the public is ready, even across party lines.”

Starnes said he has asked House Speaker Tina Kotek to convene a campaign finance committee in the House but has not received an answer yet. Starnes said: “The good news is they didn’t say hell no.”

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