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\$1.50



VELVA THE UNSTOPPABLE

At 101, Pendleton woman a role model at Roundup Athletic Club with two workouts a day

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Velva Denton is almost always in motion.

The indomitable 101-year-old rises early every day and heads for her treadmill. She says it's impossible to stay in bed past 4.

"My body gets tired of being in bed," she said. "It just kind of spits me out."

Her body complains a bit, bones aching, but Denton beelines for her exercise equipment.

"I'm stiff at first," she said, "but the treadmill takes it away."

After breakfast, as soon as the sky lightens, the Pendleton woman drives to the Roundup Athletic Club for an additional mile on the treadmill and a workout class.

In the afternoon, she returns to the RAC for a third exercise session with her "baby sister," Emogene Martindale, in tow.

At the athletic club, Denton serves as a feisty and energetic role model.



Centenarian Velva Denton gets up on her toes to reach the handles on a lat pull-down machine during a morning circuit training class Monday at the Roundup Athletic Club in Pendleton. Top, Denton works out on the Krank machine during a morning circuit training class.

"She's a legend and an inspiration," said fitness instructor Dale Freeman.

He stood in the doorway of the trainers' office. Across the way, in Amy Smith's Monday morning circuit class, Denton worked an arm machine called the Krank.

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"I'M WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ALL THE TIME. THEY TELL ME I'M AMAZING. I TELL THEM I'M NOT AMAZING, GOD'S AMAZING."

Velva Denton

Staff photos by E.J. Harris

Cigarette tax increase may go to voters

By AUBREY WIEBER
Oregon Capital Bureau

Smokers paying higher taxes would help buy health insurance for low-income Oregonians under a plan being advanced by Gov. Kate Brown.

Brown is proposing tax increase of \$2 a pack of cigarettes, currently taxed at \$1.33.

Backers say the increase would price thousands out of smoking. It would save lives and lower health care costs for all.

According to projections by Tobacconomics, a tobacco-centric economic research firm, the tax hike could get 31,300 Oregonians to stop smoking. Of the Oregonians currently 17 or younger, 13,700 fewer might die premature smoking-caused deaths, according to the projection.

Making cigarettes more expensive also would reduce underage smoking and save millions in health care for Oregonians, Tobacconomics found. If passed, the tax increase is estimated to generate nearly \$300 million in the first two years.

But none of those stats matter if the tobacco tax increase isn't acceptable to Oregonians and their lawmakers. While only an estimated 16 percent of Oregon adults smoke, that group is

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Interim fire chief interested in permanent job

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The timeline for finding a new Pendleton fire chief is still indefinite, but the position has interest from the man currently leading the department.

Interim Fire Chief Paul Berardi said Wednesday that he intends to apply for the permanent position once it opens.

"I like what I've learned so far," he said about his time in Pendleton. "It's a nice place."

While Berardi has expressed interest, when he'll get to apply for the position is still an open question.

The city contracted with Western Fire Chiefs Association to conduct a job search for a new chief.

City Manager Robb Corbett said the association told him it would begin advertising the position after Jan. 1, but he hasn't heard back about a timeline for the hiring process.

Whenever the job is open to candidates, Corbett said he expected the process to go ahead as planned.

Berardi came to Pendleton in October after a 31-year career as a firefighter for the fire department in Kansas City, Missouri, culminating in a five-year stint as fire chief before retiring in 2017.

The Western Fire Chiefs Association

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Berardi

Umatilla County tops state with waste collection event

72 pounds of prescription medication among items collected

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County collected 12 tons of hazardous household waste at its September drop-off drive, topping every other event in the state.

The DEQ is suggesting other counties emulate the program.

Gina Miller in the county's planning department planned and coordinated

the Sept. 22 free disposal of household hazards ranging from old paint to car batteries to medications. She delivered a report summarizing the event's outcomes Wednesday to the county board of commissioners.

Miller said 502 vehicles arrived that day to the collection area at the Pendleton Convention Center parking lot with 24,000 pounds of hazardous household waste, 38 gallons of needles and 72 pounds of prescription medications. She said the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality reported this was the most successful collection event statewide in 2018.

"We succeeded and bypassed all of our goals at this second collection event," Miller said, referring to the prior event from 2016.

These waste collections cost \$65,000-\$80,000, Miller told the board, but a DEQ grant covered the cost, and contractor Clean Harbors Environmental handled all the waste. Making the event a success, she said, took planning and outreach beginning in April, and buy-in from community partners.

Solid waste franchises in the county advertised the event on their billings,

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File

John Orcutt sorts paint dropped off by Umatilla County residents during the Sept. 22, 2018, Household Hazard Waste Collection Event at the Pendleton Convention Center.