Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Kelly Shy wipes a tear from her eye while being presented with a check for $5,000, and another for $850, to help in her fight against cancer Friday during an assembly at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston. Students at Sandstone and Armand Larive middle schools raise the funds in a coin drive.

Pennies: ‘This was an opportunity for the kids to use kindness’

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Summers is the advisor for the school’s Kindness Club, a group of about 80 students that do random acts of kindness throughout the school. That includes small projects like giving thank-you notes to the bus drivers and I.T. department, handing out buttons with nice messages to local businesses, and volunteering at the ARC’s Valentine’s Day dance.

“This was an opportunity for the kids to use kindness,” said Armand Larive principal Stacie Roberts. “Instead of ‘March Madness,’ we do ‘March Kindness.’”

The Kindness Club decided to spearhead a penny drive, starting in early March. Each class talked about the purpose of the drive, raising money for Shy’s treatment, but all managed to keep it a secret from her.

Teachers and staff at Armand Larive sweetened the deal to encourage their students to bring in coins — for each level of fundraising, the teachers would do something different — some of the male teachers agreed to dye their beards or wearing a tutu to class.

The movement gained traction outside the school, as well. Sandstone Middle School spent the last week collecting pennies, and donated more than $800. And, the school had a supporter in the Midwest.

“We had a motivational speaker come to Armand, and the kids loved him,” Summers said. “We decided, when we started the penny drive, to ask him to send a video to encourage the kids.”

The speaker, Cory Greenwood, was moved by the idea, and told the students that if they documented their acts of kindness by writing them down, he would donate 10 cents for each one. If they raised $5,000 on their own, he promised to come back and deliver the money in person.

Shy, who is in treatment, said the money will help.

“It’s much appreciated,” she said. Overall, she said, she’s feeling good.

“I feel tired and achy,” she said. “But I haven’t been too sick.”

Shy’s colleague in the kitchen, Debbie Spinden, said she has never heard her complain about her illness.

“Kelly is so positive, I’ve never seen another person like that,” she said. “I don’t know what more to say, but I’ve never heard her say a darn thing.”

In addition to the entire staff and student body, Shy’s sister and nephew came to support her on Thursday.

“They’ve all been very supportive,” she said.

Ban: ‘It’s just systematically taking away Second Amendment rights’

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As the prohibition drew near, RW Arms in Fort Worth, Texas, featured a countdown clock on its website and heavily promoted last chances to buy the accessories. By the time the ban took effect, RW Arms was left with 60,000, probably worth millions, since they sell for around $150 to $250 each.

The company turned over crates of them to the ATF, and a video showed boxes being loaded onto a conveyer belt and fed into an industrial grinder.

Washington state set aside $150,000 to offer owners $150 for each device they turned in to police. Within weeks, the money had been used up.

The ATF declined to say how many people brought their bump stocks to an ATF office.

T.J. Kirgin, owner of a firearms tactical gear company in St. Peters, Missouri, said that in the weeks before the measure went into effect, he made one last sweep through his warehouse to make sure he didn’t have any more devices left.

And then he took his very last one and with some friends held a mock funeral for it, reducing it to a hunk of melted plastic embedded in a rock.

AP Photo/Rick Bowmer, File

In this Oct. 4, 2017, file photo, a device called a “bump stock” is attached to a semi-automatic rifle at the Gun Vault store and shooting range in South Jordan, Utah.

While gun control activists welcomed the end of the line for a device blamed for horrifying carnage, Kirgin called it not just the day bump stocks died but the day freedom died.

“If they can do this with a piece of plastic, then they’ll be able to do it with another piece of plastic and another piece of metal, another piece of plastic,” he said. “And it’s just systematically taking away Second Amendment rights.”

Cannabis banking bill advances in U.S. House committee

DENVER (AP) — Legislation that would provide federal protection for financial institutions that serve state-authorized marijuana and ancillary businesses passed a U.S. House committee on Thursday.

The House Financial Services Committee voted 45-15 to advance the proposed bill after amending it to include provisions to provide a safe harbor for insurance companies and improve access of financial services to minority- and women-owned cannabis businesses.

“This is a historic and critical step forward for the nation’s burgeoning cannabis industry,” Steve Hawkins, executive director of the Marijuana Policy Project, said in a statement. “Regardless of where members stand on legalization, they can agree that it is in the public interest to make banking available to cannabis businesses in states where it is legal.”

The proposal was originally introduced by Reps. Ed Perlmutter of Colorado and Denny Heck of Washington state, both Democrats, and Ohio Republicans Steve Stivers and Warren Davidson. It now goes

AP Photo/Jae C. Hong

In this June 27, 2017, file photo, the proprietor of a medical marijuana dispensary prepares his monthly tax payment, over $40,000 in cash, at his Los Angeles store.

to the full House for consideration, the Marijuana Business Daily reported.

Banks generally balk at servicing the marijuana industry for fear it could expose them to legal trouble from the federal government, which still considers marijuana illegal.

As a result, a large portion of the fledgling industry is left to operate on a cash-only basis, which creates security, money laundering and other criminal concerns.

The measure would address that difficulty while helping cannabis businesses that have struggled to obtain the financing needed for operations and expansion.

“The SAFE Banking Act would go a long way toward improving safety, transparency, access and justice in the cannabis industry,” Aaron Smith, executive director of the National Cannabis Industry Association, said in a statement.

Kevin Murphy, CEO of New York-based multistate operator Acreage Holdings, said in a statement that companies that have banking services will have a “profound” positive economic impact in terms of creating jobs and tax revenues.

Financial industry groups such as the American Bankers Association and Credit Union National Association have come out in support of the bill, saying its members have found themselves in a difficult situation because of the conflict between state and federal law.

Education: Value added tax would bring in more money

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Tuesday evening, each of which includes a reduction in personal income tax rates.

The first option considered Tuesday is a commercial activities tax, known as CAT, which would tax company products.

It’s based on a similar tax structure in Ohio and would only grant tax exemptions to petroleum and medical providers due to constitutional limitations and previous tax agreements, respectively.

This is one of the safest options, officials said, since it causes little damage to companies. It also could help increase employment, but that could mean companies offer slightly lower wages.

This would only bring in an estimated $667 million per year, which won’t equate to the $1.9 billion in revenue the subcommittee is tasked to find for 2019-21.

The second option is a valued added tax, known as VAT, which is more of a tax on labor.

The VAT generally would bring in more money for education, totaling around $981 million annually.

Legislators also asked the revenue office to dream up a third possibility — something of CAT/VAT hybrid — that would, ideally, bring in more money, while keeping the financial impact on companies and consumers low.

The modified commercial activities tax, known as the MCAT, would raise $1 billion annually and offer more flexibility to businesses to decide their tax rate and whether it would be subtracted from business inputs — AKA products — or from their labor costs.

The subcommittee plans to continue meeting in the coming weeks to discuss revenue options. Education advocates are demanding more money in order to not only improve but simply keep afloat the state’s K-12 and higher education systems.

Some educators across the state are planning a possible walkout in May should the Legislature fail to find additional funding.