



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Robert Peachey spends time at the H&P Cafe when he's not out pulling weeds around town.

Echo man improves city one weed at a time

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

ECHO — Robert Peachey may have lost a leg two years ago, but he didn't lose his drive for community service.

Three months after moving to Echo he has been drawing attention in the community of about 700 people for his efforts combating weeds around town.

Peachey can stand and walk very short distances, but mostly uses an electric wheelchair to get around. He keeps garden gloves and a pair of pliers with him as he rolls through town in case he spots any weeds. He said he spent several hours the past week with a bucket in hand, pulling up weeds along the trail across from Echo School.

"I don't like a mess," he said, pointing to a small green weed poking up through a crack in a sidewalk. "I like things being beautiful. Even seeing that weed there makes me want to pull it because it doesn't belong."

Peachey, who is 59, said he

got bad frostbite during the harsh winter of 2016 while living in Milton-Freewater. He lost a few toes up front, but complications from a hobo spider bite and diabetes eventually led to getting a prosthetic leg.

He said he spent some time being homeless after that before ending up living in an adult foster home in Echo.

Once there, he began taking his chair down to the H&P Cafe on Main Street to grab a cup of coffee and chat with the locals who frequent the cafe. One day, he said, he noticed a bunch of weeds along a street and pulled them up. Things grew from there into a regular hobby.

"It wasn't like I said, 'OK, I'm going to go out and clean everything up.' Something just happened," he said.

He even started doing some work cleaning up an overgrown yard for the owners of the H&P Cafe, pushing a lawn mower and edger in front of his wheelchair. He said he refused the payment owner Mike Barzee offered

him but did relent to trade the help for free coffees instead.

"I'm what you would call a coffeeholic," he said.

Butch McClinton, who works at the H&P, said the help was much appreciated.

"We're always busy here and didn't have time to get over there and the grass was getting long," he said.

Amy Johnson of Echo said she was extremely impressed when she started seeing Peachey across from the school every day clearing out weeds from a long section of gravel. She said she wished more people were like him.

"I think everyone should know what he's doing, because he isn't asking for anything. He's just doing it because he cares," she said.

Peachey said if anyone wanted to help out he wouldn't say no to a bottle of water on hot afternoons. Other than that, he just likes to be paid in smiles.

"People drive by and wave at me, and it makes me feel good, like maybe I'm appreciated," he said.

Hermiston Butte to go up in flames Saturday

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Umatilla County Fire District 1 will set fire to the Hermiston Butte Saturday in preparation for July 4. The burning may be rescheduled if it becomes too windy on Saturday.

The public is invited to observe the burning, which will take place from noon to 6 p.m. The district asks that those who wish to watch stay on the soccer field. Fire trucks will be stationed near the north end parking lots and the water spray park.

Around 30 firefighters will be at the scene from surrounding fire departments, including Echo, Pendleton, Umatilla, and UCDFI. The burn provides an opportunity for seasonal firefighters to train in fire suppression

and cleanup.

Long-time residents will know that the burning is nothing new, but in recent years the controlled burn has stretched from just the north side to the south side of the Hermiston Butte as well following a 2016 fire, when firework embers set the south side on fire during the show.

The purpose of a controlled burn is to remove fuel — brush and grass — from the area to avoid future emergency fires, in part before the Fourth of July Celebration in Butte Park. Controlled burns happen all across the nation to remove different types of fuel, said UCDFI Lieutenant Matt Hodge.

And while firefighters will be tackling the non-emergency fire this weekend, it can be hard to tell if the July 4 weekend will result in many fire

calls. UCDFI has four stations — two staffed and two volunteer — and some years all four get called out. Other years, Hodge said, the district is dealing with as little as one fire.

But high moisture from last winter has resulted in a lot of extra fuel growth, Hodge said.

"It's already very deceptively dry. People need to be extremely careful," Hodge said, "One errant spark could rip off an acre."

According to the UCDFI website, this time of year constitutes a "no burn period." The period excludes burns like small recreational fires, barbecues, and agricultural fires.

People who have questions about the burning policy are encouraged to call Umatilla County Burning line at 1-541-278-6397.

Walden joins with Dem rep to take out robocalls

East Oregonian

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. House Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr., D-New Jersey, and Republican leader Greg Walden, R-Oregon, teamed up to stop robocalls.

They pair Thursday unveiled bipartisan legislation, the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act, to end illegal robocall practices.

"Americans deserve to be free of the daily danger and harassment of robocalls," Pallone and Walden said in a joint statement. "It's time we end the robocall epidemic and restore trust back into our phone system. We're pleased to announce we've reached a deal on comprehensive bipartisan legislation to stop illegal robocalls."

Last year, an estimated 47.8 billion robocalls were placed nationwide, according to the news release from Walden's office, an increase of 17 billion calls over the previous year. The illegal calls affect American life in increasingly harmful

ways, from scams to disrupting the health care system.

The legislation requires phone carriers to implement call authentication technology so consumers can trust their caller ID again, with no additional line-item for consumers, and includes a process to help rural carriers implement the technology. The act also allows carriers to offer call blocking services with no additional line charge on an opt-out basis.

"Americans should be able to block robocalls in a consistent and transparent way without being charged extra for it," the pair stated. "Our legisla-

tion also gives the FCC and law enforcement the authority to enforce the law and quickly go after scammers. We look forward to moving this bill through the Communications and Technology Subcommittee next week."

The new bill also includes provisions from the Support Tools to Obliterate Pesky (STOP) Robocalls Act, which Republican Reps. Bob Latta of Ohio and Mike Doyle of Pennsylvania introduced earlier this year. Latte and Doyle, the chair of the Communications and Technology Subcommittee, are co-sponsors of the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act.

Crash seriously injures Umatilla County resident

East Oregonian

OREGON CITY — A Hermiston woman suffered serious injuries Wednesday in a head-on crash near Oregon City. Oregon State Police also reported three other crashes that day claimed four lives statewide.

Lucia Smith, 28, was driving south on Highway 99E near milepost 16 when a north-going Toyota Tacoma crossed the centerline, smashing into her Jeep Commander. An ambulance took Smith to Oregon Health & Science University, Portland.

State police reported receiving a driving complaint at 3:53 p.m. about the Toyota just before the crash. Hosein Reslman, 36, of Milwaukie, drove the Toyota. He also suffered serious injuries, and an emergency aircraft flew him to Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, Portland.

State police also reported two Arizona residents died Wednesday in a crash near Crane.

Troopers and other emergency personnel at about 11:15 a.m. Wednesday responded to the single-vehicle crash on Highway 78 near milepost 22. Joyce and Arnold Arends were driving east in a GMC Yukon when it went off the road and onto the shoulder. The GMC came



Photo contributed by Oregon State Police

Hermiston resident Lucia Smith suffered serious injuries in this crash Wednesday near Oregon City when another vehicle struck hers head-on. Oregon State Police continues to investigate the crash.

back onto the road, where it rolled multiple times before coming to rest on its top on the south side of the highway.

The Arends died at the scene.

The Harney County Sheriff's Office and Burns Fire Department assisted at the scene, along with personnel from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Two other crashes on the opposite side of the state also were deadly, according to Oregon State Police.

Randy Darnell, 61, of Bay City, died when his Mazda 3 left Highway 6 near Tillamook and struck a tree. And one person died in a head-on crash on Highway 99W near Junction City.

Carol Sedano, 65, of Waldport, was heading

south on the highway when her Toyota Corolla crashed into an oncoming Buick Rea, which then smashed into a tree.

Jeffrey Taylor of Corvallis drove the Buick. He died at the scene. He was 68.

His passenger, Madeline Taylor, 66, of Corvallis, suffered serious injuries. An ambulance took her to a local hospital.

Sedano suffered critical injuries and required a flight in an emergency aircraft to a local hospital.

State police reported it continues to investigate each of the crashes.

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