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FUN IN THE MUD

Pendleton High School's annual tradition continued Wednesday

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A group of Mud Wars participants jumps and plays in the mud pit following Wednesday night's tug-of-war competition at the Happy Canyon Arena in Pendleton

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Every year, teams of adrenaline-charged Pendleton High School girls jump into a muddy pit for a slippery tug-of-war combat. The girls begin the slimy tug fest in pristine costumes that quickly darken to chocolate brown.

It's all good, not exactly clean fun to raise money for charity and school organizations.

It's Mud Wars.

On Wednesday night, to music pulsing from the Happy Canyon Arena speakers, teams scrambled into the ooze and squared off at opposite ends of the mud

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Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A team of competitors attempts to win the tug-of-war at Pendleton High School's Mud Wars at the Happy Canyon Arena on Wednesday night.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Ambulance service in hands of M-F voters

Voters to decide on two measures in November

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — Milton-Freewater could lose its ambulance service unless residents there support a tax rate increase come November.

The Milton-Freewater Area Health District collects about \$165,000 a year on a rate of 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value and contracts with Milton-Freewater Emergency Medical Services for ambulance services. The five-year contract ends June 30, 2022, but district chair Dan Kilmer and fellow members told a small crowd Tuesday night in Milton-Freewater there is no way the private company is going to re-up for another five years at such a

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Umatilla County OKs Amazon deal

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners gave its approval for a 15-year property tax break to Amazon to build new data centers near Stanfield. In exchange, the multinational tech giant agrees to pay tens of millions over that span to the county and Hermiston.

The Hermiston City Council approved the deal Tuesday night, requiring Amazon Data Services to invest no less than \$200 million in the Greater Hermiston Enterprise Zone, which the city and the county co-sponsor. The county board of commissioners took on the matter Wednesday morning in Pendleton.

County counsel Doug Olsen told the county board that in lieu of taxes, Amazon agrees to pay at least \$2 million a year to the county and city. The local governments are working on an agreement about how to spend the money.

Amazon also will pay an annual amount equal to the property tax on an assessed value of \$25 million, but that won't be on the tax rolls. Still, Olsen said,

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2 Oregon counties offer smartphone option to overseas voters

Umatilla and Jackson counties participating in pilot project

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

PENDLETON — Two Oregon counties are offering the opportunity for U.S. military members, their dependents and others living overseas to vote in special elections this November with smartphones, officials announced Wednesday.

While some technology experts have warned that such systems could be insecure, the two counties have already advised hundreds of registered voters living

overseas about the option to cast ballots using blockchain-based mobile voting. Oregon residents normally vote by mail.

Jackson County in Southern Oregon has notified almost 400 voters overseas about the pilot project. Umatilla County in northern Oregon is also participating.

"This is very, very new to me," said Kim Lindell, elections manager of Umatilla County. "I'm not sure how well received it will be."

The county has sent 63 notices to overseas voters that they can vote using the new system, Lindell said.

"It's said to be very secure, and I think that our overseas people will benefit from it if they decide to give it a try," Lindell said.

Blockchain is a digital public ledger that can be shared and used by a large, decentralized network, making it theoretically more resistant to tampering.

Jackson County Clerk Christine Walker expressed confidence in the system and said it will help ensure the votes of those overseas

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EO file photo

Umatilla County elections manager Kim Lindell, left, gives directions on how to handle a replacement ballot to Norma Staebler and Deanna Brandhagen while tabulating ballots in May 2018 at the Umatilla County Elections Division office in Pendleton.