

A legacy of music for a new generation

By SHEILA HAGAR
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WESTON — Watching students plunk away at “Don’t Worry, Be Happy,” Principal Ann Vescio herself looked worry-free.

The Weston Middle School head was listening in on one of three guitar classes offered each Friday, a first at the school this year.

Led by guitarist Kolleen Bennett, about a dozen sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders hesitantly strummed guitars while studying Bennett’s own finger placement as she announced each upcoming chord in Bobby McFerrin’s cheery 1988 hit.

That the school, which is part of the Athena-Weston School District, can offer the opportunity to learn the instrument is thanks to the generosity of another adult in the room.

Barbara Palmer was nodding gently to the somewhat disjointed song. A framed photo of her mother sat nearby.

“This is exactly what I had in mind,” she told Vescio with a beaming smile. “Mom would have loved this. She would have just loved it.”

Palmer’s mother was Athena native Althadel Johns Beamer, and Beamer loved everything there is to love about music, her daughter recounted.

“My mom was born with music.”

Indeed, Beamer would become legendary in her hometown for that gift and others she bestowed upon her community.

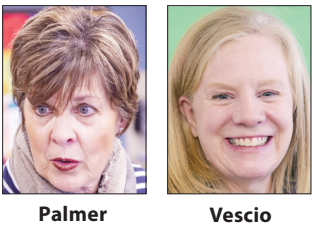
Born in 1927, Beamer went through the local school system before heading to the University of Oregon. There she graduated with a degree in music and brought her talent back home to lead choirs and other musical groups, Palmer said.

“She was always called on and asked to play weddings and funerals. She was able to play by ear. I was always amazed by that gift.”

Her mother, too, was widely



Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Photo/Greg Lehman
Weston Middle School staff member Kolleen Bennett helps Ashtyn Jennings with finger placement on a chord during a recent guitar class.



known for her kindness, empathy and wisdom.

“She always looked to the good,” Palmer said. “In her outreach to Athena, she had a Christian message of loving one another. She was true to her values.”

Beamer died Oct. 1, 1996, at age 68, from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, commonly called mad cow disease. Her death came seven months after onset of symptoms, during which her mother was basically comatose, Palmer recalled.

“It was very sad, the way she died. But they say the hearing goes last,” she said. “We would take a keyboard in to her room and play.”

Through Blue Mountain Community Foundation, the Beamer family, including Althadel’s husband, Larry, established a scholarship in memory of everything their mother and wife cared about.

It’s important the yearly distribution of the fund’s endowment mirror both a love of music and top-notch character, Palmer said.

Over the years, the schol-

arship — while not a grand amount — has helped a single beneficiary or band of musicians, such as Athena-Weston School District’s Pipes and Drums band. The money has paid for music-related goods and travel.

And this year, by happenstance, guitars.

Vescio said she meets with seventh-graders at the end of every school year, to check in on how their middle school experience is shaping up.

“One question I always ask is what electives they’d like on Fridays. The biggest answer last year was a guitar class,” Vescio said.

That sounded great, but where would that many guitars come from, she wondered?

Perhaps Beamer’s spirit had something to do with what came next.

“Within two days, Barb called. She said, ‘I have this money from mom’s foundation, and it has to go to music. Do you have any need for it?’”

Thus \$1,500 and 13 Fender starter guitars later, Bennett is getting to deploy her own gift of music on Fridays.

“I love music, and I love sharing something that’s going to make a difference in someone’s life,” she said. “Music can become a lifelong tool — when the world gets a little heavy, I can turn to my piano or I can turn to my guitar.”

Bennett continued: “Not like algebra or a dangling participle, a guitar is still something I can pick up at 61.”

Whether a Weston Middle School student becomes fluent in guitar or not, passing on a love of song in Beamer’s name is completely fitting, Bennett added, noting she also benefited from Beamer’s kind heart and musicianship.

“She’s a part of my history. ... When I say Althadel was Athena’s ‘welcome wagon,’ I really mean it. She had an amazing heart for people.”

Bennett gives credit to Vescio for finding ways to keep music in the school curriculum despite budget cuts and test-heavy schedules.

Her mother would have approved of all of this, Palmer said with a wave toward youngsters bent over the strings.

“This gives them an opportunity to excel in an area ... maybe they’re not natural athletes or ‘A’ students. My mother would love the harmony of this, the racial, economical and intelligence diversity.”

Vescio and Palmer are looking for a way to add to the school’s guitar cache, so students can check out a guitar for practice at home. For more information on their effort, contact Blue Mountain Community Foundation at 509-529-4371 or bluemountainfoundation.org.

Round-Up opens royalty negotiations with Pendleton Whisky owner

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Round-Up Association is about to open negotiations with one of its most lucrative namesakes.

At a Pendleton Rotary Club meeting Monday, Round-Up General Manager Erika Patton told the audience that the association was set to sit down with representatives from Pendleton Whisky to talk about a new royalty deal.

Along with ticket sales and retail operations, licensing the Pendleton name and Round-Up logo to the makers of Pendleton Whisky has become a significant source of income for the rodeo association.

Royalties and trademarks generated \$1.2 million in income during the Round-Up’s 2017-18 fiscal year, a figure that’s higher than the revenue generated from ticket sales.

The Round-Up’s royalty agreement took on more importance when Proximo Spirits, the American subsidiary of international liquor giant Bece, acquired the Pendleton Whisky brand for \$205 million in 2017.

“It’s just a different kind of relationship with a much bigger company,” Patton said.

Pendleton Whisky’s new parent company seems keen on getting to know its licensing partner: Patton said more than 100 Proximo employees came to the last Round-Up and 150 are expected to attend next year.

She said Round-Up’s

contract with Proximo expires in 2021 with the association looking to enter into a new, 10-year contract.

Patton also provided a brief overview of how the Round-Up and Happy Canyon did in 2019.

She said the Round-Up brought in 58,500 visitors this year, and in an unusual reversal from the usual trend, saw its Wednesday rodeo as one of its strongest draws.

Patton said Happy Canyon brought in 8,395 visitors for the night show and another 7,788 for Professional Bull Riders, a strong showing for the smaller rodeo.

She also highlighted the Happy Canyon kick-off concert, which used Trace Adkins as the headliner to sell 4,300 tickets.

As the Round-Up begins planning its 110th rodeo, which organizers are calling the “supercentennial,” Patton said she would like the association to begin marketing its Let ‘Er Buck Pass more.

Started in 2016, the \$20 pass allows fans to enter the Round-Up Grounds without guaranteeing them a seat.

Although the set-up sometimes leads to encounters between pass holders and fans who reserved seats, Patton said the pass is perfect for more casual fans.

“That’s really what they want to do,” she said. “They want to take it in and leave.”



Patton

BRIEFLY

Vehicle pursuit ends in arrest

HERMISTON — Hermiston and Umatilla police departments arrested a Umatilla man wanted on several warrants for sex crimes Monday morning following a vehicle pursuit across state lines.

Javier Noe Martinez, 29, was arrested after Hermiston police spotted a vehicle he was a passenger in around 8:30 a.m. Police said the vehicle was being driven by Deanna Tinker, 29, of Hermiston.

After police spotted the vehicle, Martinez then pushed Tinker out of the vehicle near West Highland Avenue and Southwest 11th Street in Hermiston. He proceeded to the driver’s seat, and fled the scene. Officers reportedly requested aid for Tinker.

The pursuit left Hermiston, and headed toward Umatilla where officers of the Umatilla Police Department were able to use spike strips to blow the car’s tires. The strips were successful but Martinez continued to drive the vehicle onto Interstate 82 across the bridge into Washington northbound toward the Tri-Cities.

The car came to a stop in the middle of the freeway overpass of Coffin Road, according to the Hermiston Police Department. Martinez was taken into custody and is currently lodged in the Benton County Jail.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said that the interstate pursuits are uncommon, but the severity of crimes committed by Martinez justified the heightened response. He said the pursuit will be reviewed, like all other pursuits, to assure the police department responded within policy.

Yaktri News reported that Martinez was arrested on 10 felony warrants, including one for first-degree rape. He is also facing charges for reckless driving, eluding the police, and possession of methamphetamine.

— EO Media Group

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Cineplex Show Times
\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday @ 12p
North by Northwest
Ford v Ferrari (PG13)
3:30p* 6:40p 9:50p
Charlie's Angels (PG13)
4:10p 6:50p 9:30p
Midway (PG13)
3:10p* 6:20p 9:20p
Last Christmas (PG13)
4:30p 7:00p 9:20p
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Charlie's Angels (PG13)

4:10p 6:50p 9:30p

Midway (PG13)

3:10p* 6:20p 9:20p

Last Christmas (PG13)

4:30p 7:00p 9:20p

Doctor Sleep (R)

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A Healthier Morrow County is Within Me.

I grew up in Heppner so working as a full-time EMT in my hometown is such an honor. I hope to inspire young people in the community to pursue a career in healthcare or become a volunteer like I did when I first started at MCHD in 2016. I found my passion for helping others here and I’m just getting started!

Read About How We are Working Together to be a Healthier Community Today and TOMORROW

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