



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Max Barth, 7, and Vivian Barth, 5, admire cakes at the Dad's Cake Bake at West Park Elementary School in Hermiston on Monday night.

West Park takes the cake

Proceeds from event benefited West Park Parent Teacher Organization

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Third-grader Glendy Matias Perez, 8, was feeling nervous during the Dad's Cake Bake at West Park Elementary School on Monday night.

She brought a small white cake from the grocery store for the contest and auction, and it would be the last cake for parents to bid on that night.

On one hand, she was worried no one would buy the cake. On the other, she didn't want to bid farewell to the lacy frosting and sparkly cake-topper.

"This is special and so fun and all of the cakes look delicious," she said.

Auctioneer Ford Bonney began the bidding process for Matias Perez's cake — the 45th and final cake of the evening. She sat in one of the front rows of the gymnasium with her mom, fidgeting with anticipation and nervousness. "No one's bought it yet," she said before the bidding process even commenced.

In minutes, bids went from \$20 to \$25, and then all the way to \$37.50.

Moments later, the little white cake sold for \$40.

Matias Perez's mouth dropped open in surprise. The night was over, and she left West Park holding her mom's hand.

Glendy wasn't the only one who had a stake in the cake bake, where kids and parents go all-out to make cakes to auction off. This



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
A Yahtzee-themed cake awaits auction at the Dad's Cake Bake at West Park Elementary School on Monday evening in Hermiston.

year's theme was "family game night," and all the proceeds from the auction were donated to the West Park Parent Teacher Organization.

It was Brody Depew's fourth cake bake. The third-grader, 8, and his mother crafted a larger-than-life game of Yahtzee. Each die was an individual rainbow chip cake with chocolate cookie dots and cherry frosting. The iconic red cup, tilted on its side and spilling out the dice, was composed entirely of chocolate melts.

"It was pretty hard to make," he said. "My mom did most of it."

The cake won the "Most Elaborate Cake" award, and eventually sold for \$95.

There were several ribbons awarded that night to parent-child teams who made unforgettable cakes. The "Most Humorous Cake" went to a family that made a Pac-man cake with small ghost cupcakes and plenty of colorful fondant.

The "Most Original Cake" award went to a family that constructed a bright green putt-putt golf course on a sheet cake.

In total, the West Park Parent Teacher Organization raised more than \$2,500 and doled out many ribbons and honorable mentions.

The highest seller was actually a pair of cakes that were dueling in the board game Battleship and frosted in bright teal. They were auctioned off for \$200.

Kathleen Dopps, a fourth-grade teacher and organizer of the Dad's Cake Bake, said the auction's beginnings are a local legend passed from PTO member to PTO member. Story has it, the cake bake started as a fundraiser in the late 1950s, when parents were advocating to get sidewalks around the school.

The goal was to raise \$600, Dopps said. The city would match the rest of the funds.

"It was a big success and the sidewalks were put in. No more walking in the streets," Dopps stated in an email to the *East Oregonian*.

Principal Kevin Headings said this year was the 62nd annual Cake Bake.

"I think it might be the longest running event in our district," he said.

Details emerge about pesticide spill in M-F

Initial reports contained several inaccuracies about pesticide pellets dropped by helicopter

By DIAN VER VALEN
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — A helicopter accidentally dropped rodent poison on private property along Triangle Station Road earlier this month, causing alarm among several residents and possibly the death of some poultry.

"It flew directly over my house, and seconds after it went over, I felt something fall on me, specifically in my hair and all around me," Laura Pumphrey, who lives on the rural Milton-Freewater road, told the *Union-Bulletin*.

Pumphrey, among others, said the mouse bait dropped from a helicopter flying low with a bait bucket suspended underneath, leaving poison pellets on Pumphrey's deck, hot tub cover and kids' trampoline as well as other locations.

"I have now had one chicken die, and my neighbor, a quarter-mile down the road, has lost seven chickens and two turkeys," Pumphrey said in her report to the *Union-Bulletin*.

Initial reports from the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, called out to investigate the day after the Nov. 7 aerial spill, contained some inaccurate information broadcast over various media in the following days.

That report from UCSO included the incorrect name of the helicopter company involved and speculated about what happened, saying the helicopter company "was contacted by the deputy, and it was explained the property was not targeted ... however perhaps a hopper was not shut properly and mouse bait fell out."

The Oregon Department of Agriculture is still investigating, but a spokeswoman has released several official key facts.

Wildhorse Helicopter Inc., out of Pendleton, was contracted by

Mt. Fuji & the Rocks orchard to legally drop ZP AG rodent bait pellets on about 800 acres in the vicinity of the spilled poison, according to Andrea Cantu-Schomus, director of communications for the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

James Foreman of Wenatchee, who manages the Mt. Fuji orchard, confirmed this information.

"It's obviously a very unfortunate incident," he

"IT FLEW DIRECTLY OVER MY HOUSE, AND SECONDS AFTER IT WENT OVER, I FELT SOMETHING FALL ON ME"

— Laura Pumphrey

said, explaining that the management team has been contacted by the Department of Agriculture and is helping with the investigation.

ZP AG rodent bait is a common pesticide used at orchards in the fall to target mice, which Foreman said are a problem in the wintertime in particular because they eat the roots of trees, especially damaging younger trees.

"We like to do a commercial application ahead of snows to get it on the ground," he said.

The pellets contain zinc phosphide, which when combined with the acid in an animal's stomach turns into phosphine, a "very toxic gas," according to the National Pesticide Information Center.

A fact sheet from the Environmental Protection Agency states it has determined a single swallow of zinc phosphide bait may be fatal to a young child. It is also highly toxic for birds and other small

rodents in addition to the target species.

Wildhorse was selected for the pesticide application at Mt. Fuji & the Rocks, Foreman said, because it's a local operator with a good reputation.

"They have all the appropriate licenses including an aerial applicator's license and a pesticide application license," he said — information backed up by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which sent the *Union-Bulletin* a copy of the licenses.

Several attempts to reach Wildhorse Helicopter Inc. for comment were unsuccessful.

Late last week, the Department of Agriculture said they had two field investigators in the area who continued to evaluate the extent of the pesticide application activity.

ODA continues to secure the GPS flight data to overlay onto maps trying to determine the flight pattern, Cantu-Schomus said. Local veterinarians have been alerted and advised to contact the state.

"Affected poultry have been sent by local vets for necropsy and pesticide analysis," she said. And an agency citizen advocate is contacting residents.

ODA received three calls from people saying their property was affected and two from people saying their chickens were affected.

One chicken was taken to the vet, and one resident was concerned about dogs, which are "fine now," Cantu-Schomus said.

"Smaller animals are more affected than larger animals, which are very unlikely to be affected because the pellets are randomly found. Animals wouldn't consume a large amount," she said.

People can call 211 to report pesticide concerns or call the Oregon Department of Agriculture at 503-986-4635.

BRIEFLY

Morrow County Planning Commission has open seats

MORROW COUNTY — The Morrow County Planning Commission is looking for three new members.

The commission reviews and makes decision about land-use issues throughout the county, maintains the county's zoning ordinance and works with the county's board of commissioners to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Members of the planning commission serve for four-year terms, generally meeting once a month alternating between Boardman and Heppner.

Positions representing the greater Heppner area, the greater Ione area and one at-large position are now open.

Applicants must reside

within Morrow County and in the community they are representing. They can submit a letter of interest by mail to the Morrow County Planning Department, P.O. Box 40, Irrigon, OR 97844, or by email at scooper@co.morrow.or.us, by close of business on Friday, Dec. 6.

Umatilla National Forest seeks public input on project

PENDLETON — The Heppner Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest is seeking public comment on the HK Fire Salvage Categorical Exclusion project, located approximately 40 miles south of Heppner in Morrow County.

The Forest Service will be accepting comments on

the proposal until Dec. 9.

The HK Fire Salvage project was developed to address tree mortality following the 2019 HK Complex fires. The project proposes commercially harvesting dead and dying trees on up to 250 acres. In addition, danger trees will be removed along roadsides within the fire area. Replanting will occur where needed to regenerate forest stands in high-mortality areas.

The Forest Service is seeking scoping comments to help refine the proposed action and identify ways to improve project design. The comment period is an opportunity for the public to be involved in the process and

offer thoughts on alternative ways the Forest Service can accomplish the project purpose and need.

For more information about the HK Fire Salvage Project, contact project lead Katelynn Bowen at katelynn.bowen@usda.gov or 541-676-2105.

M-F seeks 13 people for boards and committees

MILTON-FREEWATER — Milton-Freewater officials are looking to fill 13 positions on the city's various committees and boards.

The list of vacancies

include volunteer seats on the library board, the budget committee and recreation committee.

These committees serve in an advisory capacity and make recommendations to the city council.

All volunteers must be residents residing within the boundaries of Milton-Freewater city limits.

Applications must be mailed or hand-delivered to the city recorder's office or emailed to leanne.steadman@milton-freewater-or.gov by noon Monday, Dec. 30.

For more information, call City Recorder Leanne Steadman 541-938-8233.

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