

Holiday cheer



Above: The Identities (Aaron Henshaw on bass, Ron King on drums and Cody Roderick on lead guitar) entertain at the Sunday’s Great Pacific Christmas Extravaganza. The all-day holiday bash at the Pendleton eatery attracted a standing-room-only crowd. Left: Santa high-fives with a young ice skater during the Skating with Santa event on Saturday at the Roy Raley Park ice rink in Pendleton.

Staff photos by Kathy Aney

EOU ranks top in business and education degrees

La Grande university earns college of distinction honor

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University received a slew of national and regional recognitions in 2019, including a No. 1 spot for its online Fire Services Administration program. The College of Business also earned distinctions for its online economics degree (No. 9 nationally), online business administration degree (No. 12), and its no-application-fee online Master of Business Administration program (No. 16). Now under new leadership from Dean Edward Henninger, the entire college was named a College of Distinction. “Our online College of Business programs continue to receive very favorable evaluations and national rankings by independent online publication sites dedicated to helping students and their families find the right higher education option,” Henninger said. “The rankings confirm our commitment to providing affordable, high-quality and responsive degree programs to serve the diverse academic and career needs of students. We are proud of such recognitions and each serves to heighten our dedication to academic quality, student access and career readiness.”

Overall, EOU was ranked No. 9 for online bachelor’s degrees in Oregon, and No. 10 for accredited online colleges. The university jumped to No. 77 in the U.S. News and World Report’s ranking of universities in the West and came in at No. 37 among public schools in the region. “Rankings like this let prospective students know that EOU is providing high-quality, transformational education in the West,” said Matt Seimears, Dean of the College of Education. Prioritizing access to education, Oregon’s Rural University was also ranked No. 4 for affordable online colleges and No. 5 among those in the Pacific Northwest. Plus, EOU earned a Bronze recognition for being Military Friendly. Specific programs also stood out in the rankings. The newly revived MFA in Creative Writing was named

No. 4 among online master’s degrees in creative writing. Health and Human Performance also saw stand-out reviews for its exercise science program (No. 4) and online public health program (No. 11). The College of Education also earned top honors for its online master’s degree program (No. 20), and online early childhood education program (No. 25). It’s also under new leadership from Dean Seimears and was named a College of Distinction. “When students come into a program and begin to see what their future can look like, that is priceless,” Seimears said. “It’s an important choice, and this ranking shows that EOU is a very good choice. We’re offering high-quality academics, dynamic faculty-student relationships, and our students are learning from experts in the field.”

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BRIEFLY

City to host meeting on north bank of Umatilla

PENDLETON — A 2017 land use battle has evolved into a full-fledged project tasked with improving the north bank of the Umatilla River. According to a press release, the North Bank of the Umatilla Advisory Committee is holding a community meeting on Jan. 22 to show the public what members have been working on and solicit residents’ thoughts on a potential plan for the area. When the Pendleton City Council considered putting some land it owned south of Northwest Seventh Street up for sale with the thought that someone could develop it, a group of nearby residents organized to oppose the move over concerns that it would disrupt their view and wildlife. The council held off on putting the land on the market and formed the committee to study the best use of the land.

While the south bank of the Umatilla includes a levee and the Pendleton River Parkway, the press release listed some of the issues with the relatively undeveloped north bank.

A rise in homelessness has led to more illicit camping along the north bank of the river. The camping, combined with an outgrowth of noxious weeds, has led to an increase in fire hazards.

“There is also a lack of safe public access on the North Bank, leading residents to make dangerous hikes to get to the river. Some landowners have expressed concern about trespassers using their properties to access the river,” the press release states. “The area is littered with trash and debris that is both unsightly and has the potential to pollute the river when substances are carelessly discarded.”

There is also continued debate over the use of goats to graze on the land. While some think it’s a good way to decrease the fire hazard by removing weeds and brush, others say they also remove native plants and threaten wildlife habitat.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. in the Foundation Room at the Pendleton Recreation Center. For more information, visit the Pendleton Parks and Recreation Department’s Facebook page.

Hermiston breaks 86-year-old temperature record

UMATILLA COUNTY — Both Hermiston and Pendleton recorded their warmest days on record last week. The records were broken on Friday. According to Ann Adams, assistant forecaster at the National Weather Service office in Pendleton, the Pendleton airport

recorded a high temperature of 63 degrees that day. The previous high temperature was 61 degrees, recorded in 2018. At the Hermiston airport, the temperature rose to 66 degrees, breaking a record held since 1933. The previous high was 63. The balmy temperatures don’t necessarily herald a green Christmas. There is a slight chance of snow on Christmas Day.

Wallowa County man arrested for sexual assault

PENDLETON — A Wallowa County man was arrested and booked into the Umatilla County Jail on two felony charges of sexual assault. The Wallowa County Sheriff’s Office arrested Benjamin Grey Gibson, 30, Sunday on 13 total charges, including one count of first-degree unlawful sexual penetration and another of second-degree sexual abuse (sexual assault with an object). Both are felonies, and first-degree unlawful sexual penetration is a Measure 11 crime in Oregon, mandating a minimum sentence of more than eight years if found guilty. Gibson was also charged with 11 misdemeanors, including one count of third-degree sexual abuse and two counts each of fourth-degree assault domestic violence and menacing domestic violence. Gibson remains lodged in the Umatilla County Jail with a bail set at \$50,000.

Hermiston City Hall to stay closed through end of January

HERMISTON — Hermiston City Hall will be closed longer than anticipated after a Dec. 17 furnace fire that left the Northeast Second Street building with smoke damage throughout the building and fire damage to the HVAC system. The city originally said the building would reopen Jan. 6, but on Monday announced it would be closed through the end of January. “As we have had the ability to do a more extensive look in to the damage, it has become clear that the cleanup and repairs will not be as simple as originally planned,” Mark Morgan, assistant city manager, said in a statement. “We’re dealing with how to retro-fit repairs to building-wide systems in a concrete structure that was built over 50 years ago.” Until cleanup is complete, staff will be housed in the Hermiston Building Department, 215 E. Gladys Ave., across the street from the city hall building. Phone calls will be rerouted to employees’ new locations. Utility bills can be paid online.

— EO Media Group

Jon Watson, PA-C

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