

# Elgin Opera House youth actors win big

Group wins top honor at California festival

By SABRINA THOMPSON  
EO Media Group

ELGIN — The Elgin Opera House Youth Actors won big last weekend at the iTheater Junior Theater Festival in Sacramento, California. The team of 24 students and their director took home the top award of the competition and four individual awards.

“I am so incredibly proud of the kids, they worked hard and it paid off,” said Terry Hale, the executive artistic director for the opera house.

The troupe performed a 15-minute version of its 2019 summer production of “Aladdin Jr.” for the festival judges and won the Outstanding Performance award, the top award of the competition. The group competed against more than 2,000 other youths from around the world to win the title for a second year in a row.

According to a news release from the opera house, one of the judges said the performance was a “feast for the eyes.” Winning the award also meant the students performed at the festival’s awards ceremony in front of a audience exceeding 2,000 people.

“We tried to pick parts that highlight the best work of our performers,” Hale said. “Winning this award puts our youth theatre pro-



The Elgin Opera House Youth Actors competed last weekend in the iTheatre Junior Theatre Festival in Sacramento, Calif., and took home five awards, including the top award of Outstanding Performance for their production of “Aladdin Jr.”

gram on the map.”

Hale also won an award himself, as one of eight instructors selected for the Freddie G. Fellowship. Hale will receive \$5,000 for the program and spend four days this summer in New York

City working with Broadway and industry professionals.

“I’m blown away by this fellowship and am truly honored,” Hale said. “It is a coveted award among musical theater professionals and I couldn’t be happier to have won.”

Additional winners include Hale’s daughter, Abigail, who came away with the Outstanding Performance by an Individual for her role as Genie. Olivia Sturm of Union and Maia Vandervlugt of La Grande earned spots on the festi-

val’s all-star group for their performances as well. Hale said winning these accolades showcases the dedication and hard work the students put in.

Getting to California was perhaps the second hardest task for the performers, right behind competing, according to Hale.

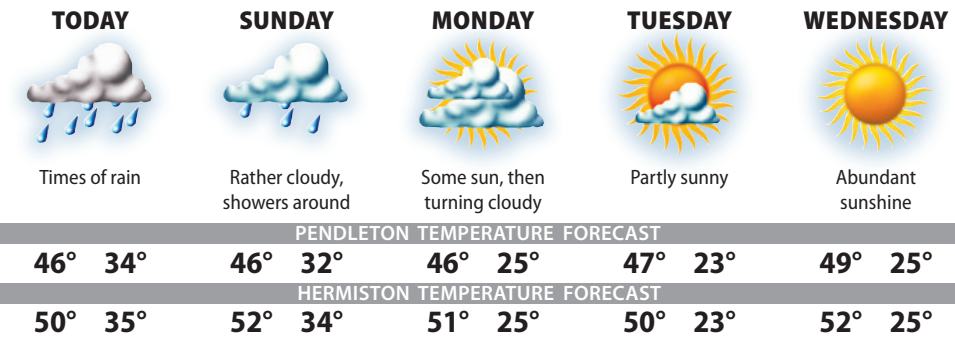
Each student paid for themselves through personal fundraising. The opera house helped offset the costs through small fundraisers or donating proceeds from some shows, but it’s up to the youths to cover the majority of the cost.

The festival also had opportunities for students to participate in workshops led by industry professionals, and a small team of students participated in the festival’s Tech Olympics, which tests the technical elements of theatre, such as lighting, sound, costume changes, rigging and more. Hale said the team did not make it to the final rounds, but for the group’s first year competing in that part of the festival, they had a lot of fun.

This was the opera house’s third year as part of the iTheater Junior Theater Festival. Going to this festival and competing, Hale said, is a wonderful opportunity for the students to meet people who share their interest and passion in theatre.

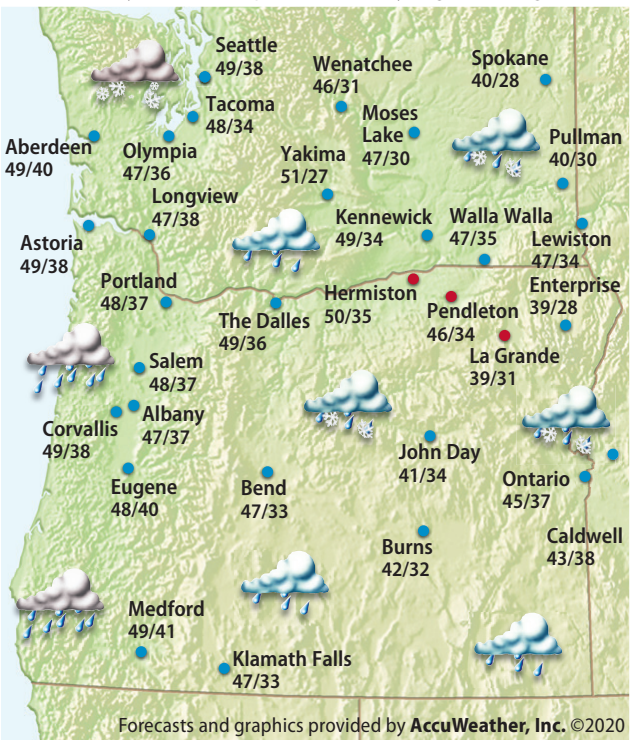
“Theatre is a creative outlet for some of these kids,” Hale said. “They may not go on to pursue it professionally, but at least while they are in the program they have a safe place to explore and learn.”

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

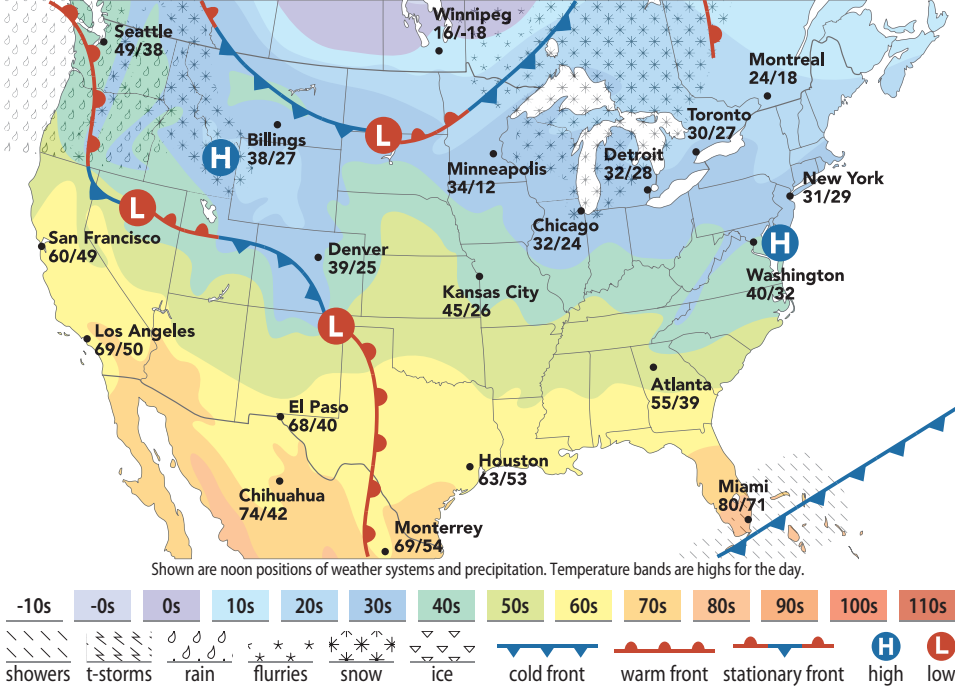
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## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 88° in West Palm Beach, Fla. Low -39° in Cotton, Minn.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Oregon landfill took 2 million pounds of radioactive waste

Associated Press

ARLINGTON — A chemical waste landfill near the Columbia River in Oregon accepted hundreds of tons of radioactive fracking waste from North Dakota in violation of Oregon regulations that has alarmed environmental advocates. But the company won't be fined because state officials believe landfill operators misunderstood state guidelines, authorities said.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported that Oregon Department of Energy officials on Thursday issued a violation notice to Chemical Waste Management for its landfill near the small town

of Arlington for accepting a total of 2 million pounds of Bakken oil field waste delivered by rail in 2016, 2017 and 2019. Arlington is about 140 miles east of Portland.

With landfill officials' permission, a Montana company dumped the waste, some of which registered radium at 300 times the state's limits. On average, the waste dumped at the landfill about 8 miles from the Columbia River registered radium at 140 picocuries per gram, according to Jeff Burright, a state nuclear waste remediation specialist.

Picocuries are a measure of radioactivity and the state's maximum level for waste stored at the landfill is

5 picocuries.

The state's Energy Department regulators said the landfill won't be fined for accepting the radioactive waste because officials believe landfill operators misunderstood state guidelines and were unaware of the violations.

Environmental advocates plan to pressure state leaders to determine how Oregon became "a fracking dumping ground," said Dan Serres, conservation director of the Columbia Riverkeeper group that lobbies to protect the river and its water quality.

"The big question now is what happens to this waste that has been illegally dumped in Oregon?"

## BRIEFLY

### Concordia University students protest closure

PORTLAND — Concordia University students walked out of their classes on Thursday in protest of the Board of Regents recent decision to close the 115-year-old institution this year.

The private Lutheran university's board voted last Friday to cease operations and sell Concordia's 24-acre campus in Northeast Portland.

Concordia enrolls about 5,700 students, but sources estimate only about 1,200 of them attend classes on campus. Most of the students study remotely through Concordia's online classes.

Students spoke on campus Thursday morning outside the president's residence holding signs asking "Where did my money go?," "Almost graduated" and "CU in court," The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

In a poster calling for the walkout, students outlined a list of demands targeted at the Board of Regents: clear financial records, questions answered regarding the sudden closure, and a support plan for students, staff, faculty and the surrounding community.

On Wednesday, school officials notified the state that the closure will eliminate 1,518

jobs. It's unclear how many of those positions are full-time.

### Idaho, other western states to study big game range land

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho has been awarded a grant to study how elk herds move through a Northern Idaho migration corridor also used by grizzly bears and Wolverines.

The grant, announced by the U.S. Department of the Interior on Friday, is part of \$3.2 million in funding for big game rangeland studies in 11 western states.

Idaho's research will focus on the McArthur Lake area, which serves as a link between the Selkirk and Cabinet mountains used by grizzly bears, wolverine and elk. Scientists will put GPS collars on 40 elk to monitor their movements over two years, and then combine that data with information from a grid of 119 trail cameras. The findings will be used to map seasonal ranges, movement routes and stopover areas, according to the Interior Department.

Other states that received grants are Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

— Associated Press

**CORRECTIONS:** The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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