

Joseph Charter taking steps to get back to normal

By RONALD BOND
EO Media Group

JOSEPH — A sense of normalcy is beginning to return at Joseph Charter School after a fire in January damaged the school and burned much of its gymnasium.

The blaze displaced kindergarten through fourth-grade students, who were able to return to their own classrooms last week as cleanup crews made their way through damaged rooms. Most of the rooms students vacated either had limited water or smoke damage.

“By the end of this week we’re hoping the high school hallways are open,” Joseph Superintendent Lance Homan said Tuesday.

The return of K-4 put about half of the school’s students back in their classrooms. Seventh through 12th grades remain in temporary classrooms in the school’s career and technical education building, which was finished in 2019, and, Homan said, “we have a modular north of the gym that was cleaned up.”

Homan said the bathrooms are the last places that need coats of fresh paint before the school reopens



Students disembark their bus while teachers and staff direct them on which way to go on Feb. 10, 2020, at Joseph Charter School. That was the first day the K-4 students returned to the Joseph campus after a Jan. 16 fire at the school and spending several weeks in makeshift classrooms at the Wallowa County Professional Building in Enterprise.

the hallway from the main office to the gym. After that work, he said, “we’ll have three high school classrooms opened up. It’ll get us a little bit closer to being normal.”

The cleanup crews have repainted any surfaces exposed to smoke or soot from the fire, Homan said. “As you get closer to the

chairs, though, are in good shape. Technology equipment, such as computers, as well as band instruments are being cleaned, he said.

Homan said a crew has recently moved into the cafeteria, which he expects will take about four weeks to clean. Without an on-site place to eat, buses transport roughly 270 students daily to the Joseph Community Center for lunch.

Ahead are assessments on the school’s library and the gymnasium. Homan said the school’s insurance adjuster will help determine the extent of cleanup needed in the library to see if items, such as books, for example, can be cleaned or should be replaced.

“You kind of do the cost effectiveness,” he said. “That’s what we’re waiting for. Hopefully, this week we’ll have a much better (idea).”

The gym, which suffered the brunt of the damage, will undergo a similar assessment to determine if it can be repaired or should be replaced entirely. That isn’t the No. 1 focus for Homan, even though he doubles as the girls basketball coach.

“Our main concern, at first, is to get our kids back in and be able to have school

and get our cafeteria going,” he said, noting that getting even a ballpark idea is tough with the lights in the gym still down. “As we continue to move forward we’ll be able to pay more attention to the gym.”

Homan estimated the school has received in excess of \$20,000 in donations from individuals, neighboring schools and schools outside the area. Many local schools in the wake of the fire donated their gate from games that weekend to Joseph Charter School.

“You feel very blessed that this place and community has meant so much to people,” Homan said. “Every day it seems like there’s something in the mail.”

He said a card even came from a Houston, Texas, elementary school who has a teacher with connections to one of Joseph’s educators. Homan said the school also has received donations from the local Rotary Club and from countless volunteers.

“It’s way more than just donations, but manpower and hours,” Homan said. “It’s been very powerful, and we appreciate everyone who has helped, wrote letters — it’s helped morale. It’s helped us all.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY

Mostly sunny

WEDNESDAY

Partly sunny

THURSDAY

Mostly sunny

FRIDAY

Beautiful with clouds and sun

SATURDAY

Rather cloudy and cooler

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST									
54° 36°		58° 33°		59° 34°		62° 36°		51° 29°	
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST									
55° 33°		61° 33°		61° 32°		61° 38°		56° 30°	

OREGON FORECAST

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

ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	49°	34°
Normals	49°	31°
Records	72° (1986)	10° (1993)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	2.04"
Normal month to date	0.98"
Year to date	4.06"
Last year to date	4.09"
Normal year to date	2.36"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	52°	39°
Normals	51°	30°
Records	67° (1964)	15° (2005)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.12"
Normal month to date	0.82"
Year to date	0.36"
Last year to date	3.06"
Normal year to date	2.10"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Wed.
Boardman	ENE 3-6	WSW 4-8
Pendleton	ENE 4-8	W 6-12

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	6:42 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:35 p.m.
Moonrise today	8:00 a.m.
Moonset today	7:46 p.m.

First Full Last New

Mar 2 Mar 9 Mar 16 Mar 24

Lawmaker linked to Malheur occupation hosting Washington event

Rep. Matt Shea will emcee Clark County Republican Party fundraiser

By TROY BRYNELSON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SPOKANE — The Clark County Republican Party has apparently tapped Rep. Matt Shea, a Washington state Republican accused of domestic terrorism, to emcee an upcoming event.

Earl Bowerman, chair of the organization, said Friday he asked the “noteworthy” Spokane Valley lawmaker to be master of ceremonies for an annual fundraiser in the Southwest Washington county in April.

“When you’re putting together an event, you want to have people that are well known,” Bowerman said. “So, who is probably the most talked-about political personality in the state of Washington right now? Matt Shea.”

Bowerman said Shea has agreed. Shea could not be reached for comment.

In December, Washing-

ton’s House of Representatives released a 108-page report alleging that Shea, among other things, helped plan the 2016 occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. State Republican leaders subsequently expelled Shea from the caucus.

Shea has denied the allegations in interviews. He has not been charged with a crime.

Bowerman said the organization always tries to attract well-known names to speak and emcee its events. Brandon Tatum, of the Charlie Kirk-founded organization Turning Point USA, is the fundraiser’s keynote speaker.

When asked if his organization supports Shea, Bowerman said the organization respects his views on the U.S. Constitution. He also described the recent events as partisan and unfair.

“What we’re embracing is due process,” Bowerman said. “It could have been Joe Blow in the House of Representatives that this was done to, and we’d still have the

same position.”

The organization’s executive board this month did officially show support for Shea. A Feb. 12 resolution shows the group said Shea was denied due process, and also called the legislative report “heavily biased.”

“If accepted as written, (the report) would incriminate every constitutionally minded and/or religious citizen as a domestic terrorist,” the resolution said.

The Clark County GOP also has something at stake in the fundraiser, Bowerman noted. The group has been on the hook to the Washington attorney general’s office for \$37,372.50 since 2018 for improperly reporting campaign contributions and expenditures. The organization lost its offices as a result.

While it has paid “about 65 percent of that,” Bowerman said, the organization hopes the fundraiser will pay the rest of the tab.

“We want to be able to help our Republican candidates and support them. One of the ways we can do that is to have an office,” he said.

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 90° in McAllen, Texas Low -13° in Daniel, Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

-10s -0s 0s 10s 20s 30s 40s 50s 60s 70s 80s 90s 100s 110s

showers t-storms rain flurries snow ice cold front warm front stationary front high low

BRIEFLY

U.S. pushes changes to Western land plans that affect sage grouse habitat

BILLINGS, Mont. — U.S. Interior Department officials are seeking to bolster their case for easing restrictions on energy development, mining and grazing in western states inhabited by a declining bird species.

A federal judge in Idaho blocked the Trump administration plans last year over concerns that they could harm greater sage grouse, a ground-dwelling bird.

Assistant Interior Secretary Casey Hammond says a new set of environmental studies published Friday clarifies the steps the government will take to conserve the bird’s habitat.

The Interior Department opened a 45-day public comment period on the studies that cover millions of acres of public lands in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon and California.

Sage grouse have been in decline for decades due to habitat loss and other factors, and their numbers dropped sharply last year across much of their range.

Sage grouse territory in Montana, Washington and the Dakotas was not impacted by the proposed changes.

The legal dispute over the administration’s proposal is before Judge B. Lynn Winmill in Idaho. The case dates to 2016, when environmental groups sued the Obama administration over a previous set of rules that they described as insufficient to protect grouse from heading toward extinction.

— 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.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

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East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday,
Monday and postal holidays, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers
Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR.
Postmaster: send address changes to
East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801.
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Single copy price:
\$1.50 Tuesday through Saturday

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Multimedia Consultants:

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Business Office Manager:

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COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Production Manager: Mike Jensen
541-215-0824 • mjensen@eastoregonian.com