

CityFest:

Continued from Page A1

times,” with COVID-19, worldwide violence, and instability. Still, events like this make people feel encouraged.

In contrast to the smaller crowd on Aug. 27, the Aug. 28 attracted thousands of people. Hankel said he was hopeful he and others would be able to reach out to people in need of mental health. Perhaps he could be a friendly voice to someone and share hope.

“I’m the guy who does the triage,” he said. Following his meetings with people, he planned to direct those people in need to proper mental health professionals.

He also was hopeful people would not get sick from COVID-19. He said his own church congregation includes people who have gotten sick with COVID-19 and knows at least one person who died of the disease.

As he made his rounds during the festival, he said he was most looking forward to Palau’s message. And many more people were enjoying the activities on Aug. 28.

Charles Hearn, Pilot Rock resident, said he was having fun and he was happy to bring his children to experience God.

Jason Estle, pastor of Desert Rose Ministries of Hermiston,



Rapper George Moss performs Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, at the Greater Hermiston CityFest with Andrew Palau in Butte Park in Hermiston.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

was likewise impressed, saying CityFest was great and that it was “awesome” to see Christ touch lives.

He said he heard from people with many problems, including issues of addiction. The power of God was making them free, he said.

Estle was working at a prayer tent at CityFest, joined by Hermiston resident Amy Palmer. She said she was glad to be meeting people. People, who were desir-

ing greater connection with God, had been visiting her to ask for and offer prayers.

“This is a wonderful place of prayer,” she said.

CityFest began the day Gov. Kate Brown’s mask mandate for large outdoor gatherings went into effect Aug. 27. The day after the festival, Levi Park, director of festivals for CityFest, said he had a good time. He added all volunteers were wearing masks, sanitation stations were placed

at entrances and requests to mask-up were made from the stage, as promised prior to the event.

“We did our part,” he said. He added he could not force anyone to wear a mask.

The crowd size, based on counts throughout the day, was an estimated 4,800 people. Masks were rare at the event, and social distancing was not followed, even among volunteers.

Principals:

Continued from Page A1

At a recent Pendleton School Board meeting, Superintendent Chris Fritsch said the district was fortunate to have a deep pool of applicants when it opened the positions. In a series of interviews, the three new principals explained why they chose to come to Pendleton and what excited them about their schools.

A career full circle

The first time Sherri Kilgore came to Pendleton, it was because she was a first-year teacher looking for a community offering jobs. The second time around, Kilgore’s application was a little more intentional.

Kilgore becoming the principal of McKay Creek represents a homecoming of sorts, having started her educational career as a middle school English teacher in Pendleton. She loved teaching in Pendleton, but when she and her husband started having children, they felt like they needed to be closer to their families in Wallowa County.

“I did not want to move at all,” she said. “I was not a happy camper.”

But the Kilgore made a life for themselves in Wallowa County, with Sherri serving as principal of Joseph Charter



Kilgore

School, a K-12 school, for the past 17 years. Before she took over Joseph, Kilgore had always considered herself a secondary-level educator, but she grew more interested in the elementary level as she began to work with it as an administrator.

As time went on, Kilgore’s children grew up and moved away from home to go to college and get jobs. And Kilgore and her husband grew interested in returning to Pendleton.

At the same time, Kilgore’s husband was battling Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. Within two weeks of their move to Pendleton he died, but Kilgore said it was still a move her late husband supported.

“The thing about living with someone with a slow terminal disease, you do have time to make a plan,” she said. “He was absolutely part of this decision and the plan to move here. He just needed to know that I was set up and that I was going to be okay, see where I was going to be living.”

Kilgore moved away in 2002, and although a lot has changed in Pendleton since then, she’s already starting to encounter familiar faces. The children of her students from her first stint in Pendleton are now McKay students themselves.

‘A honey spot’

There weren’t many jobs that would have enticed Pat Dutcher out of his job as an administrator for the Salem-Keizer School District.

Dutcher had been a curriculum principal at West Salem High School and spent the past

year as a principal at EDGE High School, Salem-Keizer’s online-only high school. But Pendleton offered several appealing qualities to Dutcher and his family.

Dutcher is as close to being from Pendleton that one can be without actually being from Pendleton. Dutcher’s wife is from Pendleton and much of his family also is from the town, meaning he spent many childhood summers in Eastern Oregon.

“Pendleton is really a honey spot in education,” he said.

While Salem-Keizer is one of the largest school districts in the state, Dutcher also has experience in rural school districts, having served as a high school principal in Scio, a small school district east of Albany. Dutcher said he plans to be a visible presence in the high school, not just during school hours or at sporting events but also at other extracurricular activities like FFA competitions and choir concerts.

Dutcher also serves as the principal of Hawthorne Alternative High School, which has struggled with its graduation rate in recent years. He said he has experience raising high school graduation rates at previous jobs, and he plans to support the school’s current efforts to make Hawthorne’s curriculum more project-based.

Principal experience in two languages

Like Dutcher, J.P. Rich-



Dutcher

ards comes from a much larger district.

Richards came from Bend-La Pine Schools, where he served as the principal of Bear Creek Elementary School. Richards said he wanted to move to a smaller district because it was easier to forge relationships and make an impact with his decisions in Pendleton than the fastest growing metro area in the state.

“It’s just a different feel,” he said.

Richards started out his career as a high school Spanish teacher, and his language skills have carried over to his administrative career. Bear Creek is a dual-immersion school, meaning many classes are taught in both English and Spanish.

Although Richards is fluent in Spanish, he doesn’t plan on turning Washington into a dual-language school anytime soon. He helped start a dual-language program in Tillamook from the ground up, and said it can be difficult to recruit bilingual teachers to a rural area, as opposed to a larger city such as Bend.

However, Richards said he was intrigued by the use of the Umatilla language at Washington, where it’s featured prominently in signs across the school. While not quite dual language, the signs are meant to offer cultural support to students, where more than 1 in 5 students identifies as American Indian.



Richards

Eagles:

Continued from Page A1

Hale has been interested in aviation for around a year and watched a lot of YouTube videos that made her want to look into flying more, even though she’d only ever been on a plane for a trip to Florida once. During her flight at Young Eagles Day, her pilot let her take the controls for a minute and turn the plane.

“It was awesome,” she said.

According to Ron Neeley, the Young Eagles coordinator, the local EAA hasn’t had an event like this in several years even though it has been trying. The Experimental Aircraft Association was supposed to have a Young Eagles Day in 2020 until COVID-19 turned that plan upside down. The chapter then scheduled the day for two weeks ago, but the smoke from wildfires forced pushing the day back to Aug. 28.

Neeley said it took a lot of work to put an all-volunteer-run event like this together, with pilots offering their time and fuel freely to get kids interested. Other EAA clubs, such as College Place, pitched in to help get the event off the ground as well.

David Miller, the chapter president, said his own passion for aviation began young when he participated in a similar program on a family trip to the coast. After passing a small airport his parents turned the car around, pulled over and asked if he wanted to go on a short little plane ride.

“The guy took us up and flew us up and down the coast,” Miller said. “I was kind of hooked from there.”

Unfortunately for Miller, aviation would have to take the backseat as money and time blocked him from getting more involved until he was older. He eventually decided to jump in and started to learn how to fly after talking with a friend.

“There’s just so many cool things about it,” Miller said. “Just the feeling of being able to get up in the air and just, it’s kind of hard to describe, I guess.”

“You’re getting to do something that not a lot of people get to do,” he said.

For Charles and Elizabeth Hearn, an 11-year-old and 12-year-old from Pilot Rock, they got to do something they never expected when their mom surprised them by signing them up. Even though it was a surprise, they said it was fun and were interested in aviation now. The feelings Miller mentioned were on full display.

“It felt like some of my bodyweight just kind of drifted away,” said Elizabeth. “It felt like we were floating through the air with nothing there,” she added later.

“I was kind of nervous at first because I didn’t know what it would be like,” said Charles. “It’s comfortable.”

Steve Lawn, the chief engineer at the Pendleton UAS Test Range who helped set up the event and provided model drones to display, had similar feelings when he had the opportunity as a kid to go up in the air with one of his dad’s friends who had gotten a private pilot’s license.

“From then on I was hooked,” Lawn said. Lawn, who grew up in a military family with his dad in the Air Force, said he was surrounded by aviation from a young age and always wanted to be involved in it.

“Once you get the bug, it’s with you,” he said. “It’s hard to shake.”

The passion that Neeley, Miller and Lawn share for aviation is clear, and the enthusiasm at Young Eagles Day was palpable in their efforts to inspire a new generation of pilots.

“It’s really supposed to be the spark that kindles the fire that propels them into some kind of aviation career,” Lawn said.

Their hopes seemed to have worked. With 28 flights taking youths to the skies for the first time, Miller and the local EAA chapter are looking forward to making Young Eagles Day a yearly event with the help of those who hope that just a little spark can go a long way.

School:

Continued from Page A1

“I’m really excited,” she said. “In-person school is better because you learn a lot more.”

She recalled having some technical problems last year when studying online, as occasional internet failures would lock her out of class. This will not be an issue this year because she physically will be in class. She also said she has no concerns about COVID-19 because she believes strongly in masks and vaccinations. This leaves her free to think about other matters, such as her AP classes, her work as a bilingual tutor and her college applications. She already has applied to Western Oregon University, and she expects to apply to other schools, too.

Senior Katelyn Heideman, a high school basketball player, also is eager to start school. She said she had to find ways to stay motivated at home during the lockdown. Now returning, she is excited to play sports, attend classes, see her friends and involve herself in leadership roles.

A leader at the school, who HHS success coach Jay Ego praised, Heideman said she hopes to help the incoming freshmen be successful.

“You’ve got to come in moti-

vated and set goals for yourself, and you’ll be fine,” she said.

472 freshmen, 1,700 students in all

Michael Thomas, assistant principal who is starting his sixth year, is likewise optimistic. There are 472 freshmen enrolled at the school. Total enrollment is around 1,700 students. He is glad to have them present in school.

“Having students in school makes a difference,” Thomas said.

When they are in the building, working with them is much easier. He also said he is seeing a lot of joyful anticipation amongst students. They will have to grow accustomed to studying in person, but they are up to the task and he does not expect trouble.

“They’ll do great,” he said.

He also is anticipating positivity from the school’s teachers, though he said there are some who “aren’t thrilled” about mask or vaccination mandates. As for himself, he said, “I’ll stand on my head every morning if that’s what it takes to get our kids in school.”

Hermiston High staff will have to wear masks in class, and they will need to get a vaccination by Oct. 18, unless they file a medical or religious exemption.

The welcoming

On the morning of Aug. 27,

the school welcomed its freshmen through the door with a large assembly and group meetings.

Kate Thomas, who works for Link Crew, led the assembly with Hermiston High faculty and student helpers. The students played games that energized them to make them feel comfortable with their surroundings and their classmates. Then, they broke up into small groups for further discussion, a tour and lunch.

Thomas, who traveled to Hermiston from Portland, said it is important to start the school year with a smile. The goal, she said, is to make freshmen comfortable, show them their lockers and teach them how to navigate a lunch line.

“They also make friends and get to know the people who will look out for them,” she said.

Maggie Hughes-Boyd, school counselor, said the Link Crew program “seems magical.”

“The process works,” Hughes-Boyd said. It keeps students moving and having fun and drew about 340 freshmen to an entirely voluntary first day at school.

The staff and teachers

While students learned the ropes of their new school, HHS teachers prepared for instruction the following week.

Erika Hearne, math teacher, was getting set for her first year of full-

time teaching. Prior to this year, she had been a substitute teacher for four years.

“I’m very excited,” she said. “I get to teach a class that supports a skill that feeds into every facet of life whether you believe it or not.”

She missed interacting face to face and found it hard to measure the impact of her remote instruction. In-person schooling should be better, she said, and she hopes the school can remain open.

Ernest Kincaid, math and special education teacher, said he also is happy about this year.

“It was tough last year, especially for our special ed population,” he said. Technological problems hampered his teaching. He also found student motivation lacking at times.

“We made it through,” he said.

Jessica Gormley, math teacher, said many of the same things. It was difficult to keep student attention and fully see her student’s skills.

“I think being in the classroom takes away all those challenges,” she said.

Tori Scott, business teacher, also is cheerful about in-person instruction. This is her first year at the high school. She previously taught at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston.

“It was very difficult,” she said of classes online. Work was not being turned in, and many students

were failing, especially at the start. Being in person, she said, she can get a better read on students to see when they need help.

Now beginning year 27 with the school district, Delia Fields is cheerful to be back behind a desk as a school librarian. For the start of her career with the district, she was a humanities teacher. For the past eight years she has worked at the library, except when she covered art classes recently for Sandstone Middle School.

“It was an entirely different situation for everyone,” she said of her recent stint as an art teacher, though she made the best of it. She used her library background to find resources for teaching, and she used her knowledge of humanities to incorporate art history into her lessons.

Still, she said in-person learning is superior to online classes, as she can better form relationships with students. She said she believes her work is especially important to students who might otherwise be turned loose onto the internet.

More than ever, she said, a librarian’s work is not just books. It is about finding quality information, effectively and efficiently. We drown when we stick our heads under the “Google waterfall” as we try to take a drink. The librarian’s job, like the job of other educators, is to guide students to a faucet.