



Mike Mehren/Contributed Photo
Bob Coleman poses for a recent photo with a drone he uses for his agricultural monitoring service. He was recognized with the John F. Walchli Ag Entrepreneurs Award for 2020-21.

Drone monitoring technology gets nod with Walchli ag award

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — The winner of the second John F. Walchli Ag Entrepreneurs Award for 2020-2021 is Bob Coleman of Hermiston.

According to a press release from board member Mike Mehren, Coleman has started an agricultural monitoring service using a drone. A 2016 Hermiston High School graduate, Coleman received an agricultural business degree from Oregon State University.

Coleman initially began using the drone as a tool on his parent's farms until neighbors and others heard about its capabilities. Coleman is able to view crops in about 1/10th the time that it would take a person using a vehicle, Mehren said.

The drone also measures details about a crop that can't be viewed from a vehicle. It's equipped with an infrared lens that observes aspects about crops the human eye cannot detect.

Also, Coleman developed a program that converts the raw data into usable information. For instance, the drone is capable of detecting excess water or dry spots, Mehren said, such as from an individual sprinkler head that's not working. In addition, plant growth and health are monitored as well as weeds, disease or parasites. Fertilizer needs also can be determined.

"The drone is an amazing tool that he has been able to adapt to crop conditions and needs," Mehren said.

Also receiving recognition for their livestock enterprise were Kellan Smith and Logan Smith. Both in middle school, the Echo brothers raise sheep, hogs and cattle on their parent's ranch, Mehren said. They show, sell and purchase animals from



Mike Mehren/Contributed Photo
Kellan and Logan Smith, who operate a livestock enterprise, received special recognition during the second John F. Walchli Ag Entrepreneurs Award for 2020-21.

all across the Pacific Northwest. The boys raise money for their enterprise by selling locker meat, showing and selling their stock and working on their parent's ranch.

"They are amazing kids," Mehren said.

The John F. Walchli Ag Entrepreneurs Award is designed to provide support to young people under the age of 25 living in west Umatilla County to achieve their goal in the agricultural world. It's based on initiative and drive to succeed rather than academic performance. The winners, Mehren said, can use their award where it is needed, rather than for tuition only.

The award's namesake, John Walchli, died in September 2018. He began his farming career raising watermelons while attending Stanfield High School.

He and wife, Marge, eventually moved to the Hermiston area, where he expanded his farming operation to include potatoes, asparagus, wheat, alfalfa, cattle and bison. Walchli was known for his generosity to friends and neighbors, and giving back to the community.

For more information about the award, contact Mehren at 541-561-4762 or mehrens@eotnet.net.

Umatilla County holds public hearing on petition for new livestock district

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners this week holds a public hearing on the formation of a new livestock district near Meacham.

The proposal for the Meacham East Livestock District calls for a district of at least 2,000 acres east of Interstate 84 in the Meacham area. The petition came from K & L Madison, LLC, a local property developer, and the principal petitioner for the district is farmer Kent Madison, of Echo, according to county documents.

The hearing is Wednesday

during the board's meeting, which starts at 9 a.m., in room 130 of the Umatilla County Courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton.

The board also will hear a strategic report for planning and developing the "Hermiston to Boardman Connector transit route" and the "Port of Morrow Circular route," according to county documents.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Kayak Public Transit and Morrow County's transit service led the effort. Umatilla County served as a project partner, according to documents.

Echo's Oktoberfest gives rare opportunity to local musicians

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

ECHO — Getting ready for Oktoberfest, a pair of local musicians dressed in lederhosen and tuned their instruments. By start time, they were ready to perform.

Proceeds from the event Saturday, Oct. 16, in Echo, benefitted St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church and local scholarship fund.

Margaret Mayer, a Blue Mountain Community College music instructor, was one of the two performers. She said she has played at a few Oktoberfests and other local events many more times.

"It's fun," she said of Echo's Oktoberfest. As an accordion player, she does not get many chances to perform publicly. And since she enjoys the instrument, she also likes any opportunity to play.

"Everyone remembers somebody who plays the accordion, but no one seems to play it anymore," she said.

She took it up 15 years ago, because a musical needed one. She was in the pit orchestra at the time. With some lessons from a Walla Walla teacher Horrace Lazzari, and some independent study and practice, she was ready to perform for the musical.

More often than not, however, she plays the accordion for her own enjoyment, but she plays other instruments as well. She plays piano, guitar and clarinet, which are all more popular among her music students.

She said she thinks she knows why students do not gravitate toward the accordion.

"It's really hard to play," she said.

One thing that makes it harder than the piano is "you can't see what you're doing." The instrument obscures the views of a player's hands. But there are some masters of the instrument, including "Weird Al" Yankovic, Art



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian
Musicians Margaret Mayer and Alan Feves, both of Hermiston, pose for a photo Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021, at Oktoberfest in Echo.

Van Damme, Dick Contino and Lazzari.

Mayer said likes the variety of the accordions, as well as the versatility of the instrument. Accordions are used in Cajun, Mexican and other musical traditions.

Mayer performs with Alan Feves, who also plays a rare instrument — the bass banjo, which was built for him by banjo maker Verne Marr of Pendleton.

He said he and Marr saw the instrument in an old photo of country musicians, and they thought making one would be an "interesting project."

He said he has seen only a few people with bass banjos. Johnny Peppercraft is one of the few contemporary players.

Feves learned to play on his own, but it was not much of a challenge, because of its similarity to other instruments, he said. The upright bass, for example, has the same tuning as the bass banjo.

"I've been playing the upright bass since junior high school," he said.

Since then, he has played with jazz groups, symphony groups and rock bands. He also plays the electric bass, the bass fiddle and the bass guitar, which also prepared him to play the bass banjo.

"The fingering and notes are the same on all of those instruments," he said.

In addition to bass instruments, he also plays the steel guitar and slide guitar.

He is interested in Oktoberfest not because of heritage, but because he has the skills to entertain, and this event was simply an opportunity.

Both Hermiston residents, Mayer and Feves have known each other and have performed together for more than 20 years. Theirs is a good friendship, they said.

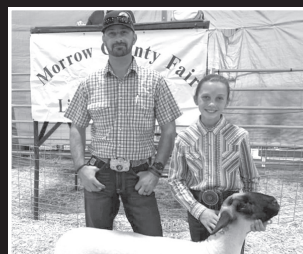
"We don't have to think about it," Mayer said of their friendship. "We just play, and he just moans, like a good bass player."



The Morrow County Livestock Growers would like to thank the following for their support of the 2021 Morrow County 4-H/FFA Auction!



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