

Taking a seat on the state ag board

Morrow County farmer joins State Board of Agriculture

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — Eric Orem of Heppner said he hopes his experiences and personal story will prove to be a boon as he joins the State Board of Agriculture.

“I felt that with the board experience that I have,” he said, “having served on co-op and commodity group boards, that I can bring something, maybe a different perspective to the board of ag.”

Orem owns and operates a diversified dryland wheat, hay and cattle farming operation in Heppner. Gov. Kate Brown recently appointed him to the board. His four-year term began immediately, according to a press release Wednesday, Dec. 8, from the governor’s office.

The state ag board advises the Oregon Department of Agriculture on policy issues, develops recommendations on key agricultural issues and provides advocacy of the state’s agriculture industry in general. Orem, who grew up in Morrow County, said he is excited for these challenges and enthusiastic about joining this 12-member board.

He is a past president of the Oregon Wheat Growers League and said people from the league encouraged him to “throw his name



Eric Orem/Contributed Photo
Brandi and Eric Orem of Heppner pose in spring of 2021 in one of their fields north of Lexington. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown recently appointed Eric Orem to the State Board of Agriculture.

into the hat” for the agriculture board appointment. He applied for the position, and he said he was a little surprised to be selected. He also expressed feeling humbled as a result.

Born in Oregon City but raised in Ione, Orem was no stranger to agricultural work. His grandfather had a small farm and his father worked for a wheat and cattle ranch. As he got older, he graduated high school, having worked for farmers all through high school.

“From a young age, I had a passion for agri-

culture, but I never thought I would get to be a part of it or own my own operation,” he said. “It just wasn’t in the cards.”

He was told that farmer owners had to either inherit their farms or marry into them, he said. “I don’t know if that is true, but it is tough,” Orem said.

After his high school graduation, he attended and graduated from Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton. Then he started working for Les Schwab Tire Center,

and “moved around in management,” he said.

After being away from the area for nine years, an old employer contacted him. One of his old bosses, who had no children of his own, told Orem he was getting ready to retire, he said, and he offered Orem the chance to lease his farm.

It was 2001, and Orem said he was thrilled for the opportunity to become the farmer he had always dreamed of being. He took the offer and he relocated his young family.

“From there, we’ve grown,” Orem said.

He picked up other leases, started doing custom seeding and spraying for neighboring farms.

Orem grows hay to feed his cows and sells hay to others. He farms 7,000 acres of dryland wheat in the Lexington area and has 100 head of cattle.

“Oregon agriculture has been good to me,” he said.

He said he thinks by sharing his personal success story and networking he was able to gain the attention of the state board. In becoming a part of the board, he said he hopes he can do good work. He said he wanted to give back to the industry that has given much to him during the past 20 years.

“I am not going into it with a set agenda,” he said. “I’m hoping to help guide agriculture, not significantly change it.”

Painter loves tricking the eye

Pendleton artist wins commission for art installation in La Grande

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Most all of us have experienced looking at something and seeing only a jumble, then marveling when everything suddenly resolves into crystal clarity.

Pendleton artist Jason Hogge cultivates those moments in the art he creates. He loves optical illusions, three-dimensional pieces and anything that tricks the viewer’s eye.

Last month, the La Grande City Council approved Hogge’s idea for a large public art installation to sit in front of Cook Memorial Library. The La Grande Arts Commission earlier selected the artist and his concept and needed a go-ahead from the city council.

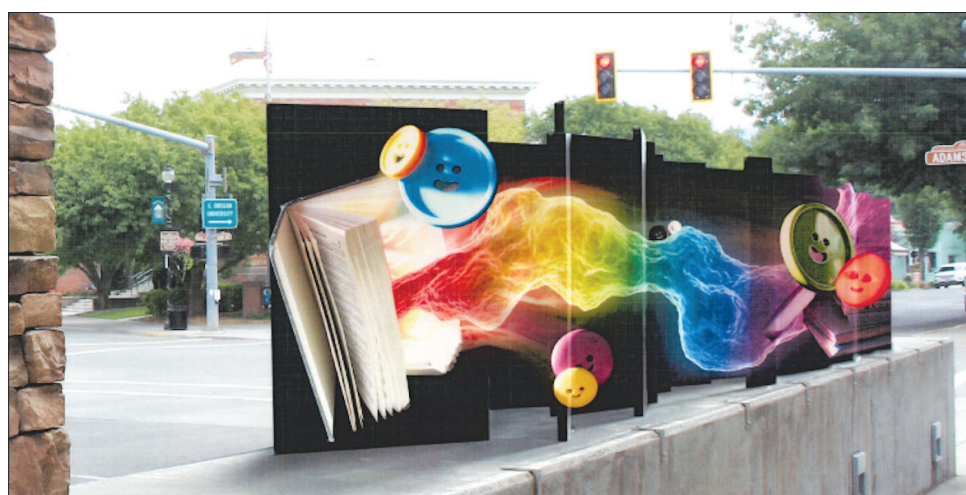
Hogge envisions about 25 concrete panels that will become pieces of several murals, viewable from four spots.

“It’ll be partly sculpture and partly mural using concrete panels that look randomly spaced and turned at different angles,” Hogge said. “When you stand directly in front of it, it looks jumbled.”

Viewers will gaze at each from separate designated spots at eye level, though the last is meant to be viewed from a child’s height.

“Adults will have to get down on their hands and knees to be low enough to see it,” Hogge said.

The first mural will depict two Native American women gathering camas backdropped by a wide expanse of the Grande Ronde Valley. Hogge modeled the



City of La Grande/Contributed Image
A rendering shows a potential new public project Pendleton artist Jason Hogge is working on for outside the Cook Memorial Library in downtown La Grande.

scene after a photo of one of his wife’s ancestors and another woman digging for camas root. His wife, Ethel Hogge, and her niece, Irene Jackson, modeled for a newer photo, which Hogge will paint.



Hogge

He bases the second mural on an old photo of a Black logger named Lafayette “Lucky” Trice who logged in Wallowa County and later was a well-known businessman in La Grande. Hogge’s mockup of the mural also includes an old bridge, a water wheel, the historic staircase leading to Eastern Oregon University and four railroad workers — two of them Chinese — operating a handcar.

The third mural will highlight La Grande as a place of recreation, education and the arts. In the mockup, a salmon swims toward a fishing lure. Bear prints and the footprint of a hiking boot mark the soil. A paintbrush and a graduation tassel float midair. Like the others, this mural is still developing in Hogge’s fertile imagination.

The last mural, the most

surreal and colorful of the four, speaks to the future and may include a hidden image for children to find.

Northeastern Oregonians who don’t recognize Hogge’s name might have seen his art without knowing it. He painted the huge wolf that adorns the gymnasium wall at Blue Mountain Community College. He created art and logos on display at numerous local venues, including one that honors veterans at Helix School and two in the hallways of Sunridge Middle School.

Hogge doesn’t remember a time when he didn’t want to be an artist. He spent his boyhood in Pendleton drawing and inventing things and studying with artist Antoinette Kennedy, who taught art privately. He dreamed of a career as an artist.

“As a kid, my family wasn’t really fond of the idea of me jumping into art to make a living,” Hogge said, grinning. “But while I wasn’t as encouraged to go into art as a profession, they always entertained my ideas. They let me dream.”

Hogge hung on to his ambition of being a full-time artist as he grew up, married and started a family. He established a fine art/graphic

design business, but took other jobs to pay the bills.

Hogge, now 50, is a patient man. He did custodial and maintenance work while building his artistic resume over the years. Early on, he favored watercolor painting, but these days prefers oils and the interesting way the colors blend. He also sculpts and carves.

With his personal projects, Hogge can be painstaking and indefatigable. He started one painting 15 years ago that he is still perfecting. The piece features a Celtic knot made from one line that weaves in and out.

In 2017, Hogge enrolled at Pacific Northwest College of Art and later finished his degree at Blue Mountain. He continues to take classes at Eastern Oregon University.

These days, Hogge is finally the full-time artist he dreamed of being in his boyhood. He said he looks forward to turning his mockups of the La Grande art installation into reality. The artist said after funding comes in he expects the work to take four-to-six months and to be in place by the end of next summer.



John Lauck/Contributed Photo
Hermiston High School students Dillon Herron, Joey Gerguson and Gavin Doherty pose for a photo on Nov. 17, 2021, during a Knowledge Bowl meet at Echo High School. Ferguson, the team captain, is a senior, as is Doherty. Herron is a junior.

Hermiston knowledge bowl tests their mettle

Team has upcoming competitions

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Take the number of legs on Santa’s reindeer from the number of geese a-laying in the entire song “The 12 Days of Christmas,” and what is the answer? If you answered six, you might be a good fit for Hermiston High School’s Knowledge Bowl team.

Of course, you would also have to be a HHS student.

Big things are happening for Hermiston’s Knowledge Bowl bunch, according to John Lauck. Lauck, a retired HHS teacher, is the school’s Knowledge Bowl team co-advisor. He works with Maggie Hughes-Boyd, fellow co-advisor and high school counselor.

Their team competes against teams from Umatilla, Echo, Helix and Stanfield in a local Oregon league. Pilot Rock and a few Washington schools soon may be competing against Hermiston, too.

The big news, Lauck said, is this year’s team is large. The team boasts at least 17 students who appear at practices, he said. He said this is enough students to form four teams and is the largest group he can remember.

Schools will convene for a competition Jan. 12, 2022, at 4 p.m. at Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St., Hermiston. At the competition, there will be three rounds of 50 questions. Teams, each with three to five members, will answer questions. When they have an answer, they will hit a buzzer and respond.

Questions are difficult, he said, and they can be on many topics, including math, current events, art and biology.

A dinner break is scheduled for the students after round two. After dinner, the teams compete for a third round, then a final for the top three teams.

He said the students seemed to enjoy the last meet, which took place Nov. 17 in Echo. Hermiston teams took first and third at that meet, which was the

school’s first Knowledge Bowl competition of 2021.

It was nice to have this meet, the advisor said, as the last meet was in 2020. The 2020 meet was the only meet that year, a small competition in Echo that included one Hermiston team and two Echo teams.

This year’s team includes experienced and new competitors, he said. Among the competitors are three seniors and a handful of promising young freshmen. He said he expects them to do well, depending on the other teams that appear at future meets.

Lauck said he is hopeful his students can face off against bigger schools in Washington.

“Some of them are just outstanding,” he said of the Washington teams, but he added the Hermiston students are good, too, and the competition should be interesting.

Historically, he said, Hermiston High performs well at local Knowledge Bowl meets. This is the way it should be, Lauck said, as Hermiston is a comparatively large school. Echo, though, is a competitive team that “should be hard to beat.” Helix, too, has had good teams.

“You’d be amazed what these kids know,” Lauck said, “especially when they work as a group.”

NWS forecasting light snow later this week

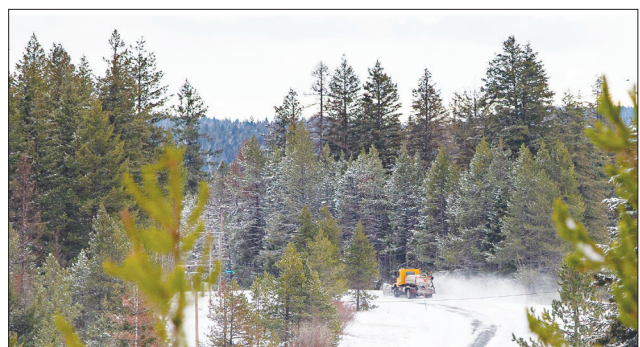
By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Eastern Oregon is set to get some snow this week, but how much each community gets depends on the elevation.

The National Weather Service is forecasting wet conditions throughout the week, but as temperatures begin to drop, the agency anticipates some snowfall across the region.

Matt Callihan, a forecaster at the service’s Pendleton office, said communities in the lower Columbia Basin likely won’t get cold enough to see a significant amount of snow. But cities near the foothills of the Blue Mountains, including Pendleton and Milton-Freewater, could see up to a half-inch of snow.

“It’s going to be very minimal,” Callihan said.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File
An Oregon Department of Transportation snowplow clears snow Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, along the Old Oregon Trail Road near Meacham. The National Weather Service is forecasting snowfall across the region, with higher elevations in the Blue Mountains getting as much as 10 inches.

The higher the elevation, the more snow predicted in the service’s forecast. Callihan said higher elevations in the Blues could see as much as 10 inches of snow. While most communities in Umatilla and Morrow counties shouldn’t see too much snow come there way, Callihan said locals may want to

proceed with caution when traveling east as heavier snow combined with strong winds could make conditions hazardous.

Earlier this year, the weather service reported there was a good chance this year could see a La Nina, an atmospheric phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean that

usually portends wet weather in the Northwest. Callihan said winter conditions have been slow to develop in the region this year, but signs still point to La Nina conditions this year, meaning January could bring more snow to Eastern Oregon.

Meanwhile, the snowy conditions in the Blue Mountains aren’t waiting until January to wreak havoc on roads. On Sunday, Dec. 5, the Oregon Department of Transportation closed Interstate 84 east of Pendleton after some semitrailers spun out on the highway.

“Winter is here and more mountain snow is expected this week,” an ODOT press release stated after the department reopened the highway.

Before heading out, check highway conditions at TripCheck.com or call 511 or 800-977-6368.

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Cineplex Show Times

Theater seating will adhere to social distancing protocols
Every showing \$7.50 per person (ages 0-3 still free)

Spider-Man: No Way Home (PG13)
Dec. 17-19
1:00p 2:00p 4:20p 5:20p 7:40p 8:40p
Dec. 20-21
4:20p 5:20p 7:40p 8:40p
Dec. 22-23
1:00p 4:20p 7:40p

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The Matrix Resurrections (R)
Dec. 22 & 23 • 1:30p 4:50p 8:10p
.....

Sing 2 (PG)
Dec. 22 & 23 • 1:10p 3:50p 6:30p 9:10p
.....

The King’s Man (R)
Dec. 22 & 23
12:50p 3:40p 6:40p 9:30p
.....

West Side Story (PG13)
1:40p 5:00p 8:20p
.....

Encanto (PG)
1:20p 4:00p 6:40p 9:20p
.....

Ghostbusters: Afterlife (PG13)
12:40p 3:30p 6:20p 9:10p
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