



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Lyndsay Egerer, 15, moves a pawn Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022, while playing practice matches with fellow members of the Hermiston High School Chess Club in the school's library.

Moving the pieces

Hermiston chess players look forward to tournament

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — At the end of school Thursday, Feb. 17, around a dozen Hermiston High School students gathered in the back of their school's library for games of chess.

The members of the Hermiston High School Chess Club were preparing for an upcoming competition, the Region 23 Chess Tournament.

The tournament is Feb. 26, 8:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Hermiston High School library. Sponsored by Chess for Success, the event brings together kindergarten through high school students from several local counties.

Ernest Kincaid, in his first year as the advisor of the club, said this will be his first competition.

"I love it," he said of the chess club and about the excitement he feels for the tournament.

A math and special education teacher, Kincaid said he enjoys seeing his students get their "brain gears" turning. Chess club, he said, is a good opportunity for students to think. And right now, as they prepare for the competition, they are pushing their brains as hard as ever, he said.

Preparing for the regional competition

Kincaid said he intends to



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Trey Ditchen, a 15-year-old sophomore at Hermiston High School, eyes a chess move Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022, while participating in a chess club meeting at the Hermiston High School library.

go to the regional tournament with 10 students, and one in particular is exceptionally talented. Luke Gray is one of at least three students who should advance to state competition.

Kincaid said he has beaten Gray only once.

"I couldn't believe it, and I don't think Luke could believe it, either," Kincaid said.

But he doubted he could beat the student again. Gray said he has seen Kincaid play multiple times and knows him too well for that to happen.

Other chess club members expressed their admiration of Gray's skills, his friendliness and his positivity. One student laughed at the suggestion that Gray was something of a cult leader.

"Yeah," she said. "That's about right."

Gray was more modest. He said he may be the school's best player, however, there are several good players on the

team, and he does sometimes lose to them.

Although he has been to state a couple of times, he said he has never done very well there. He said he has achieved a better understanding of the game in recent months, though, and he has gained confidence.

"I think I can do better now," he said.

Elijah Robinson, 15, a sophomore is another top player at the school, and he competes for the fun of it.

He said when he was in the sixth grade he learned chess from his grandfather and when he plays, he often thinks of his grandfather, who died three years ago.

Having appeared at state twice with teams, Robinson said his goal is to compete at state as an individual, but added he is less confident he could win a state competition.

"I'd have to get pretty lucky, but I'll try my best," he said.

Sophomore Lyndsay Egerer, 15, said she also was putting forth her top effort. Like some of the other students at the club, she said she first learned it from Gray.

Egerer said she is a competitive person and also takes part in karate and softball. She said it would be fun to earn a chess trophy she could treasure alongside her sports trophies. But she shrugged at whether she could win a title yet.

"I'm getting better," she said. "I practice a lot and learn from that, but I have never been in a (chess) competition before, and I don't know what to expect."

Several of the other chess players at the club meeting also are athletes. For example, Trey Ditchen, 15, sophomore, plays basketball and baseball.

"I'm not amazing, but I'm alright," he said.

Enrique Garcia, 15, freshman, said he has fun improving his skills, too. Also, he said, he enjoys chess because he likes problem solving. It would be a lot of fun to win at regionals, he said, but he expressed mixed feelings about state competition.

"I'd be nervous," he said. Having come to the U.S. from Mexico this year, Garcia speaks little English. Getting around in this country, and navigating his English-language classes is difficult, he said. Chess club, too, is hard, he said, because of the language barrier.

Still, he said he likes to play the game, as it was something he did while in his home country that he also can do here.

To register, players may visit the website www.chessforsuccess.org/play/registration. For more information, contact Delia Fields, tournament director, at 541-667-6144 or 541-571-4219.

COMMUNITY BRIEFING

Hermiston Rotary seeks scholarship applicants

HERMISTON — Applications for the 2022-23 Hermiston Rotary Club scholarships are due March 31.

Any student who resides in western Umatilla County or Morrow County are eligible to apply. Scholarships are available for undergraduate and graduate studies, as well as trade and vocational school studies and apprenticeship programs.

In addition, the Hermiston Rotary Club Foundation also offers a scholarship for college students intending to participate in a study abroad program offered by their teaching institution.

The application process for both scholarships is completed online. For more information, click on the "Scholarships" tab at www.hermistonrotaryclub.com. For questions, email dfialka@gmail.com or winters@eotnet.net.

Read-a-thon planned in Hermiston

HERMISTON — The Friends of the Hermiston Public Library and Altrusa International of Hermiston are promoting literacy and a love of reading with the Read Across Hermiston Read-a-thon.

The event is Saturday, March 5, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Hermiston Public Library, 235 E. Gladys Ave. In addition, it will be livestreamed on the library friends' Facebook page.

It will feature a series of community members reading in 20-minute segments. Participating readers who have confirmed, include Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith, Hermiston School Superintendent Tricia Mooney, Agape House Executive Director Mark Gomolski, Good Shepherd Health Care System CEO Brian Sims and Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorran. Other community leaders will be added as available. They will share from their favorite books across a variety of genres.

In addition, local authors Carol Clupny and Ben Armstrong will share excerpts from their work. Clupny is the author of "The Ribbon of Road Ahead," a memoir of her experience with Parkinson's Disease. And Armstrong, a Hermiston High School student, had his short story, "Sleigh 54," published last fall.

The library friends and Altrusans are asking the community to support their favorite readers by donating to literacy projects sponsored by both groups. Donations may be made electronically through the Friends of the Hermiston Public Library Facebook page, at the Hermiston Public Library and at the Hermiston office of Banner Bank. For questions, call the library at 541-567-2882.

Young ag entrepreneurs eligible for award

HERMISTON — The board of the John F. Walchli Ag Entrepreneur Award is seeking applicants for its third annual award. Applicants must be 22 years old or younger and be engaged in agriculture either directly or in an agriculture-related field. This is a cash award based on entrepreneurship and may be used at the discretion of the recipient — the award recipient does not currently have to be enrolled in school.

To be eligible, the applicant must attend or have graduated from a high school in the west end of Umatilla County, including Echo, Hermiston, Stanfield or Umatilla. The selection is not based on grades, but rather innovation and accomplishments in any field of agriculture.

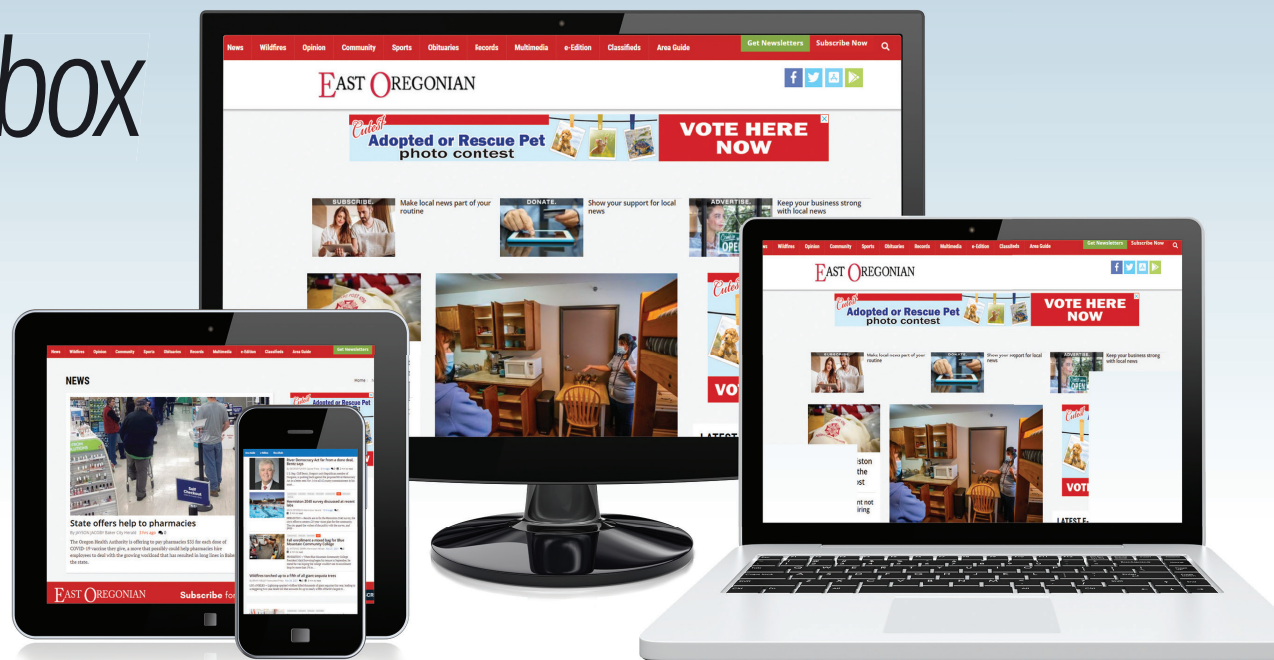
The deadline to apply is March 31. For more information, contact board member Mike Mehren at 541-561-4762 or mehrens@eotnet.net.

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