

EAST OREGONIAN

MARCH 19 – 20, 2022

146th Year, No. 54

WINNER OF 16 ONPA AWARDS IN 2021

\$1.50

'We knew we had to do something'

Job fair helps unemployed workers after Shearer's fire

ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Meeting employers at the entrance of a recent job fair, Val Hoxie said she felt overwhelmed by

the people's expressions of community and warmth.

"People were looking for ways to help," she said.

There were 47 companies represented at 52 tables at the job fair Wednesday, March 16, at the Hermiston Community Center.

Hoxie, Hermiston Chamber of Commerce executive director, helped organize the event in response to a massive layoff following the Shearer's Foods Hermiston

plant fire. The company laid off all 231 of its employees at the facility.

Companies look to put workers to work

Employers at tables met with an estimated 200 to 300 job seekers. By the end of the fair, which took place between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., the employers said they had met with many people, including individuals laid off from Shearer's. They said it

was a successful event, and they hope to begin hiring from the pool of these job seekers soon.

At least one of the company representatives had worked for Shearer's. Candice Chavez, a rack decommission manager for Amazon, said she worked for Shearer's in Hermiston for around 10 years, ending in November 2020.

She called her leaving "bittersweet." She said she

enjoyed working for Shearer's. She grew a lot during that time, she said, and she left only because Amazon gave her even more opportunities to grow.

She said she has seen the Shearer's site since the fire, and it filled her with "a lot of emotions." She put in a lot of hard work there, she said, and it felt miserable seeing everything go up in flames, literally.

Still, she said, there is life

after Shearer's. She was able to move on after she ended her job with the company, and she felt confident other people can do likewise.

"There are opportunities for people out there," she said. "You can see it all over in here. There are places people can go for jobs, and they need to have hope."

Erik Estrada, protection technician with Corteva

See Fair, Page A9

REVELERS GATHER FOR 'WORLD'S SHORTEST PARADE'



Photos by Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

The "world's shortest parade" saunters Thursday, March 17, 2022, across South Main Street, Pendleton, in celebration of St. Patrick's Day.



Musicians in the "world's shortest parade" enter the Rainbow Cafe at dawn Thursday, March 17, 2022, in celebration of St. Patrick's Day in downtown Pendleton.



Peter Walters plays the saxophone Thursday, March 17, 2022, during the "world's shortest parade" at the Rainbow Cafe, Pendleton, in celebration of St. Patrick's Day.

ELECTIONS

Funds coming for equipment upgrades

By JULIA SHUMWAY
Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — County election offices soon will get additional money to replace old election equipment and buy postal barcode scanners to comply with a recent law requiring that ballots dropped in the mail on Election Day be counted.

In 2021, Oregon legislators allocated \$2 million for Secretary of State Shemia Fagan to distribute to counties for election equipment, such as ballot tabulators and post-mark scanners, or to add ballot drop boxes and upgrade video surveillance. That money went unspent, and this year election officials asked the Legislature to change what the money could be used for.

When the money was allocated last year, state election officials were under the impression that many counties needed new tabulation machines, said Molly Woon, senior adviser and strategic projects director in the secretary of state's office. They found that only one county needed such equipment, and started talking to the Oregon Association of County Clerks about better uses for the money.

A little more than half of the available money will be used for postal barcode scanners and other equipment, and Woon expects to announce grants to counties next week.

Dan Lonai, Umatilla County's director of administrative services and president of the Oregon Association of County Clerks, said the law went into effect Jan. 1, and counting ballots with Election Day postmarks presents some challenges and drags out counting ballots.

Oregon, he said, with a few exceptions such as challenged ballots, wraps up its ballot totals on election nights.

See Funds, Page A1

National park boss Sams discusses tribal co-management of lands

By APRIL EHRLICH
Oregon Public Broadcasting

This week was National Park Service Director Chuck Sams' first trip back home to the Pacific Northwest since he was sworn in as the first Native American to lead the public lands agency.

Sams' weeklong tour included a visit to Bend, where he attended the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism, then weaved through Crater Lake, where he met with park leaders. His trip wrapped up Thursday, March 17, with a tour of the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site in Washington state. The former military base and fur-trading site is undergoing a \$15 million renovation funded by the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020.



National Park Service Director Chuck Sams speaks Thursday, March 17, 2022, at the Fort Vancouver Historic Site. This was Sams' first trip back home to the Pacific Northwest since he was sworn in as the first Native American to lead the public lands agency.

April Ehrlich/
Oregon Public Broadcasting

See Sams, Page A9



7 294671 10002 2