

OMSI teaching students the wonders of electricity

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A number of La Grande School District grades schoolers had electrifying experiences last week to the delight of their classmates.

The manes and curls of students in third, fourth and fifth grades are standing up, sometimes as much as 6 inches as they learned about the fundamentals of electricity during “Jolts, Volts and Wires” presented by Michael Kirby of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry’s Outreach Team.

Students were getting excited about electricity while participating in demonstrations Kirby conducted with the aid of devices such as a Van de Graaff generator, which uses a moving belt to accumulate an electric charge on a hollow metal globe on the top of an insulated column.

If a person holds the dome, they, too, will become charged, and the individual hairs on their head will stand out and spread away from each other.

Kirby enjoyed the demonstrations as much as the children.

“This is like a dream job,” he said. “I don’t feel like I am working.”

He said that even on days when he encounters groups of students who are hard to instruct, he counts himself fortunate.

“Even when I have students who are difficult, I still feel so lucky,” said Kirby, who rates the La



Michael Kirby, outreach instructor for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, looks on as Abri Meeks, 10, demonstrates a hair-raising experiment using a Van de Graaff generator at a presentation April 4, 2022, in the Island City Elementary School gym.

Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Grande School District’s students among the best he has worked with.

Kirby put on demonstrations last week in the gyms of Island City, Central and Greenwood elementary schools and gave presentations in classrooms. At each, he did much more than operate a Van de Graaff generator. Other demonstrations included

showing students how to create their own circuit by touching each other’s fingers. Two students held a tube-like device with LED lights that turned on when a current from the human circuit passes through.

Kirby said this happens because people generate their own electrical current that passes through others they are touching.

“We all have electricity within us,” he said. “It is a source of energy being generated within us all the time.”

The OMSI educator is striving to help children discover that learning about science is fun and they should not be intimidated by it.

“Everybody has the ability to

become a scientist,” he said.

A return of assemblies

At Island City, Central and Greenwood, Kirby has served as one of the first outside presenters in the schools since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Northeastern Oregon in March 2020. The pandemic forced all in-person instruction in Oregon schools to be canceled in the spring of 2020. When in-person instruction resumed, state safety rules still prevented guests from coming into schools or large assembly gatherings.

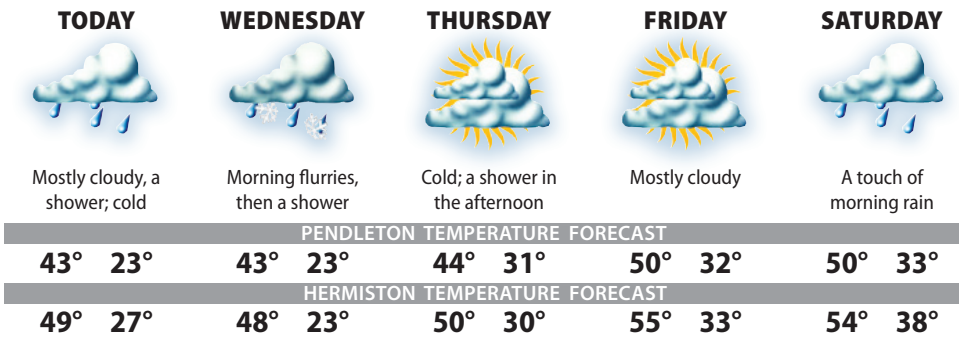
Kirby has been able to give demonstrations in gyms with minimal restrictions only since February after COVID-19 infection rates began dropping. He said he is booked solid throughout the state for the rest of the school year. He credits the busy schedule to the pent-up demand in schools for outside presenters created by the COVID-19 restrictions.

Island City Elementary School Principal Brett Smith said Kirby’s presentation was the first assembly Island City third and fourth graders had attended since the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

“They were super excited. There was a lot of anticipation,” said Smith, who added he is always impressed with the OMSI programs.

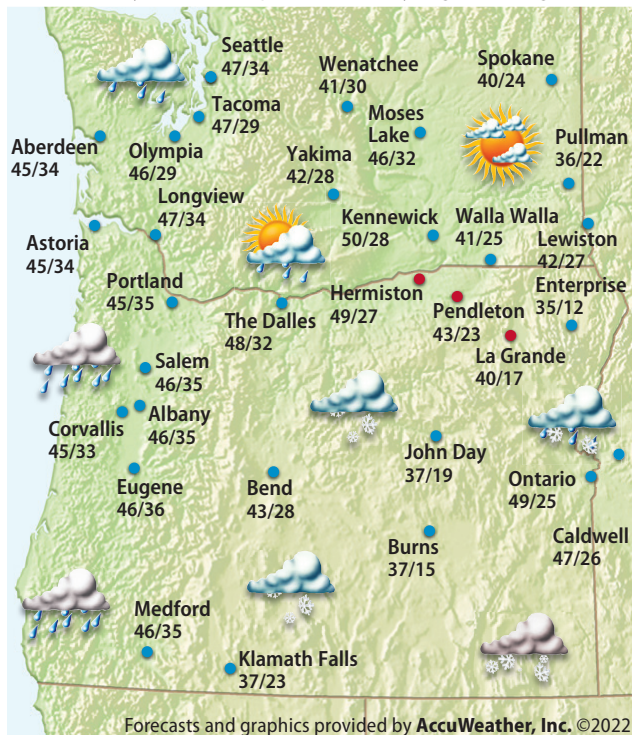
Central Elementary Principal Monica West echoed the sentiment. “It was great to have an assembly like this,” she said. “It was something different, something we had not had in two years.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today’s weather. Temperatures are today’s highs and tonight’s lows.



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	44°	33°
Normals	61°	39°
Records	86° (1913)	17° (1927)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	
Month to date	0.23"	
Normal month to date	0.52"	
Year to date	3.83"	
Last year to date	3.34"	
Normal year to date	4.59"	

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	45°	38°
Normals	65°	38°
Records	84° (1936)	22° (2021)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	
Month to date	0.35"	
Normal month to date	0.30"	
Year to date	2.30"	
Last year to date	1.73"	
Normal year to date	3.07"	

WINDS (in mph)

Today	Wed.
Boardman W 6-12	N 4-8
Pendleton W 7-14	WNW 4-8

SUN AND MOON

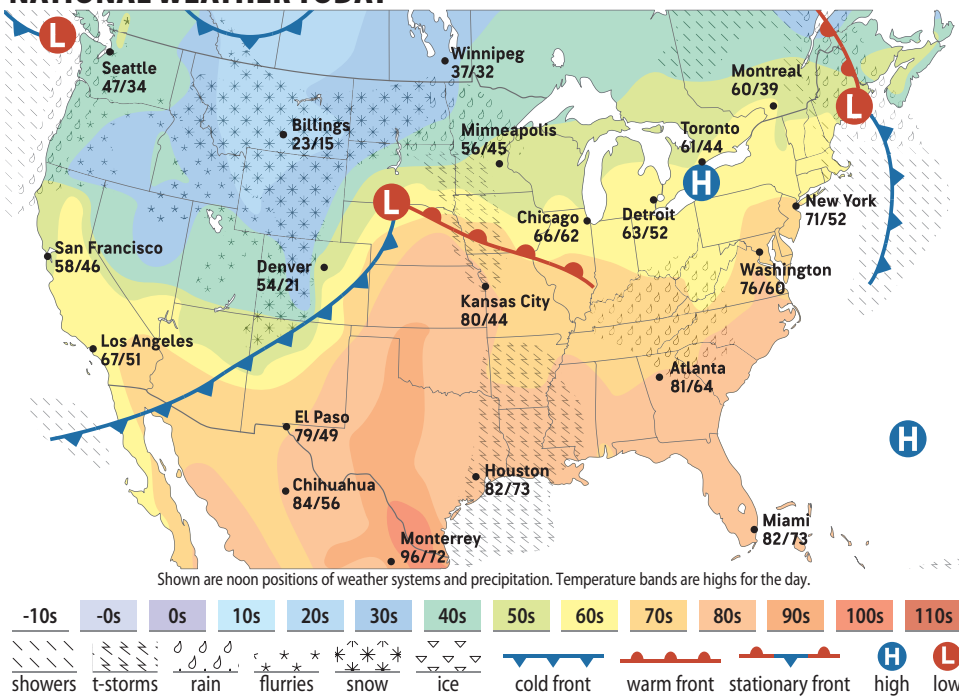
Sunrise today	6:15 a.m.
Sunset tonight	7:38 p.m.
Moonrise today	3:02 p.m.
Moonset today	4:55 a.m.

Full Last New First
Apr 16 Apr 23 Apr 30 May 8

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday’s National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 101° in Zapata, Texas Low 0° in Burgess Junction, Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Wallowa County commissioners back effort for jobs-training grant

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — In an effort to provide local training for skilled workers, the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners lent its support Wednesday, April 6, to a project the Wallowa County Educational Service District is undertaking in a partnership with Viridian Management to create a vocational training center in Enterprise.

The ESD and Viridian — the latter part of the Enterprise-based Chrisman Group — hope to enter into a public-private partnership to obtain a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development grant, which could be anywhere from \$500,000 to \$2 million, would be to purchase the former Chevrolet dealership building in Enterprise, into which the ESD would move. It now shares a building with Viridian.

Patrick Patterson, president of Viridian, emphasized the public-private nature of the project.

“The private entity would be our group — the Chrisman Group and the entities that we have,” he said. “We employ about 250 people. The public group would be the ESD, which would also be the lead applicant of this grant. Should we get this grant, the ESD would be the one who would administer the grant and take possession of anything we purchase with the grant.”

He emphasized that it’s still uncertain if the partnership will be able to get the grant.

“We’re under the gun right now,” he said. “We came across this at the 11th hour, but we felt like it gets every single thing that they’re trying to get with this grant and it supports what everybody’s trying to figure out: to get people trained, to get people interested in training. We just thought it was a natural partnership to involve the high schools and get the kids into that.”

If the grant comes through, Patterson said, Viridian would purchase the ESD’s share of the Wallowa Valley Professional Building, giving Viridian room to expand its training facilities. The ESD

would have more room, too, in the former Chevrolet dealership.

“I would just say that the schools have been fully supportive of this concept,” said Karen Patton, superintendent of the ESD. “We’re all just very excited about the possibilities.”

She added that the public-private partnership would be a lasting one.

“It would be a long-term partnership,” she said.

Patterson said they were not asking the county for money, but told the commissioners that the grant must be matched with 20% nonfederal funds.

“At least 20% of the funds have to come from a nonfederal source,” he said. “We can also do in-kind donations, which means that if someone uses their time, that time counts as a donation. So our funding use if we did this would be to build or support a community facility and to provide worker training to assist them to provide new jobs, create an existing workforce and develop basic skilled workers and improve the opportunities to obtain other high-wage jobs.”

IN BRIEF

Wyden announces upcoming town halls

WASHINGTON — Oregon U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden recently announced he is holding town halls in April across the state, including for Eastern Oregon counties.

Heading into this month’s virtual town halls, Wyden has held 1,007 town halls statewide in fulfillment of his pledge to hold at least one town hall each year in each of Oregon’s 36 counties.

“Keeping my commitment for town halls each year in each of our state’s 36 counties has been essential to my public service because it provides any Oregonian the opportunity to ask questions and share their ideas,” Wyden said in a press release. “And coming off my 1,000th town hall earlier this year, I want all Oregonians to know I’m going to keep my promise to continue these direct

discussions that help to shorten the distance between our state and Washington, D.C. That’s the Oregon Way, and I very much look forward to these upcoming conversations at home in Oregon.”

The upcoming virtual town hall schedule is as follows for Eastern Oregon:

- Gilliam County, 11 a.m., Tuesday, April 19, link to bit.ly/3xgdAXc.
- Umatilla County, 4 p.m., Tuesday, April 19, link to bit.ly/3xim4Nq.
- Union County, 10 a.m., Wednesday, April 20, link to bit.ly/3v7rfx1.
- Wallowa County, 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 20, link to bit.ly/371tkhz.
- Morrow County, 1 p.m., Thursday, April 21, link to bit.ly/3E1byM7.

For Oregonians in those counties who want to submit questions for Wyden, go to bit.ly/38HLLN83.

—EO Media Group

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