

# Umatilla robotics team heads to world championships

By ERICK PETERSON  
East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Umatilla High School's varsity robotics team took the top honor this past weekend at the Pacific Northwest District Championship.

Kyle Sipe, Umatilla teacher and robotics coach, explained Team Confidential's recent achievement in which 50 schools were involved April 6-9 in Cheney, Washington.

"The kids won what is called the Chairman's Award, which is the award that, basically, is first place," Sipe said. "All of the other robotics teams try to win this award."

The team set this goal a long time ago, he said, and what was a dream became a reality thanks to planning

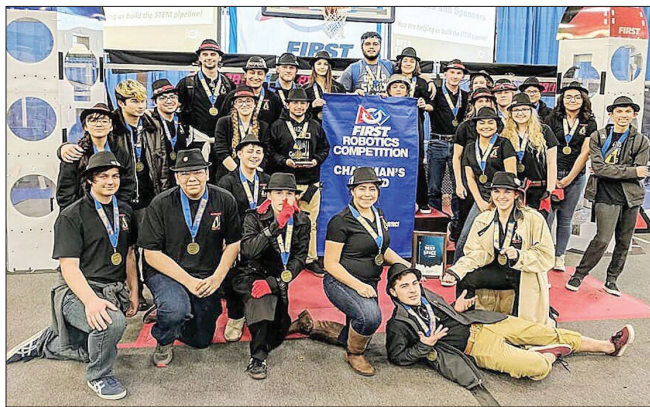
and hard work.

"This isn't just a one-year thing," he said. "It's not as if we're just doing good this year. It's been on our program for a number of years. We've grown it up in the last 12 years to be at the level we are at."

At the district championship, the junior varsity team also competed. That team was vying for Rookie All-Stars honor. The "training team," as the coach calls it, is made up of freshman.

These younger students did not win, but they were promoted to Team Confidential after the varsity competitors won the Chairman's Award.

The unified UHS robotics team of 27 students next goes to a world-level competition. The team



Umatilla High School/Contributed Photo

**Team Confidential, Umatilla High School's robotics team, poses Saturday, April 9, 2022, with the banner of the Chairman's Award for winning the Pacific Northwest District Championship in Cheney, Washington. The win qualified the team for the world championships.**

goes head-to-head against other teams from around the globe, starting April 20, in Houston. Competitors will come from China, Japan,

Israel and other countries.

Leaving on Sunday, April 17, a single bus will cart the Umatilla students and supervisors to Texas.

"We have, approximately, a 32-hour bus trip ahead of us," Sipe said.

The team will arrive the morning of April 20, just in time for the competition.

It is the team's seventh trip to the world finals, fourth to Houston. And this year, he said, Umatilla students could become the champions of the world.

"I'm just confident that our kids are prepared. They've worked hard, and they've built a robotics team that is the model for other teams to focus on and copy," he said.

Win or lose, though, the students will have a terrific time, Sipe said. According to the coach, young people are gaining eye-opening experiences. A trip to Texas, he said, will be a first for some

of them; some of them have never left the region.

Sipe said in the trip to Cheney, the team visited a buffet. Some of the students had never eaten at such a restaurant before. Likely, he said, they will have more first-time experiences on the coming trip.

The coach said in addition to himself, his wife, Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe, and their son, Caden Sipe, fellow robotics coach, would be on this trip, too. He said they would keep a close eye on the kids.

The Umatilla School District Office, 1001 Sixth St., will host a yard sale as a fundraiser Saturday, April 16, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Donations are accepted Friday, April 15, 2-7 p.m.

## Umatilla County awards AWERE grants for 2022

UMATILLA COUNTY — Ten local governments and organizations are benefiting from Athena-Weston Education and Resource Enhancement grants.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners at its meeting April 6 awarded the grants totaling \$180,000. Athena Elementary School received the largest grant — \$46,365.50 for track shade structures. The other amounts and receipts are as follows:

\$2,780 to Caledonian Games for electrical/water.  
\$2,965 to Kees Blue Mountain Cemetery for fence repair.  
\$5,000 to Umatilla

County Pioneer Association for Pioneer Days.

\$10,369.50 to Umatilla County Emergency Management for hazard preparedness.

\$15,819 to the city of Weston for the park kitchen.  
\$17,819 to Weston McEwen High School for LED lighting upgrades.

\$19,819 to East Umatilla County Ambulance for a fire/rescue all-terrain vehicle.

\$19,819 to East Umatilla Fire & Rescue District for an ATV and software.

\$39,244 to Weston Middle School for a playground court.

Each project and

improvements are to be completed by Dec. 31.

Florida Power & Light, a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, is a developer of wind turbine farms in Umatilla County and provided an annual donation of \$75,000 from 2012 to 2021, which funded the grants for community improvement projects within its service area.

AWERE also allocates funds from community services fees under the Oregon Strategic Investment Program, with a balance available of approximately \$180,000. The AWERE Board recommended recipients of the

2022 grants for the funds received in December 2021 for that amount.

The AWERE Board consists of one county commissioner, one representative from each community in the service area and an at — large member. It reviews grant requests for the funds and makes a recommendation to the county board for approval.

Commissioner John Shafer is responsible for donations to Athena, Weston and Milton-Freewater. Commissioners Dan Dorran and George Murdoch supervise those for Adams and Echo, respectively.

## Easter memories



MARC MULLINS

### MARC'S REMARKS

With Easter just three days away from the day this column appears in print, I recall a time 47 years ago when I spent a portion of Holy Week and Easter in Gumaca City in the Philippines. That year, 1975, Easter Sunday was celebrated on March 30.

I was one month shy of my 18th birthday then, and studying my senior year in high school as a Rotary exchange student on the campus of the University of the Philippines in Los Banos, Laguna Province. A group of other exchange students met me in Los Banos on March 26, and we traveled to visit Ginnie Grilley who represented the Pendleton Rotary Club as an exchange student in Gumaca that year. (Many readers will recall Ginnie as a graduate of Pendleton High School and the daughter of Wes and Millie Grilley.) Ginnie's host family in the Philippines had neither electricity nor running water, and I remember thinking how difficult it must have been for her that year. My host home was much more comfortable, with reliable electricity, air conditioning and full bath facilities.

My journal from that visit to Gumaca contains the following entries:

Wednesday, March 26: "... the Rotary Club here is treating us like royalty."

Thursday, March 27: "We went to the beach today and I stepped on a sea urchin. That thing put 12 spines in my foot. ... (went) to the hospital where they gave me six shots of Novocaine while they dug away at my foot ... and I thought stepping on the sea urchin was painful."

Friday, March 28: "We were awakened about midnight (by) the Catholic community ... chanting and reading out loud in a

sing-song manner from their prayer books."

Sunday, March 30: "We saw a parade of people carrying life-size saint statues throughout the streets, as is the custom. ... We also colored about two dozen eggs and gave them to the children in Gumaca. It was the first time they had seen colored Easter eggs."

Remembrances can be good, but they also can bring to mind some painful and trying experiences (as was the case of my encounter with a sea urchin, or Ginnie's experience without electricity or running water). In the Christian faith, Easter is a day to rejoice as the resurrection of Jesus the Christ is celebrated. The week before Easter, Holy Week, is the observance of Jesus' final days leading up to his crucifixion on a cross. It is important to remember his suffering as well as his victory over death. Thereby, we are reminded that indeed there are silver linings behind every storm cloud. And this can be helpful to recall whenever we experience hardships or burdens in life.

Marc Mullins is pastor of the First Christian Church of Pendleton, where he also utilizes his gifts as a musician, singer and songwriter.

## COMMUNITY BRIEFING

### Climate group recaps UN climate conference in upcoming program

PENDLETON — The Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition is set to host its monthly informational presentation next week.

Peter Fargo, a Baker resident and co-founder of ClimateVigil.org, will provide a recap of his time as an official observer for the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Fargo observed the UN meeting, in which member nations pledged to work collectively toward reducing emission of greenhouse gases and limiting the rise of the global average temperature. His speech at the virtual meeting, entitled "Mr. Fargo Goes to Glasgow," will summarize the UN meeting and reflect on impacts on Eastern Oregon.

The coalition hosts the free program virtually, Tuesday, April 19, at 7 p.m. To request Zoom login information, email eastoregonclimatexchange@gmail.com or go to www.eoc3.org for information about joining the zoom meeting. The zoom link will be sent out via email on April 18.

### Library dedication honors middle school teacher

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Public Library is holding a ribbon cutting and dedication Friday, April 15, at 10 a.m. for its new children's area.

The area is due to former Sunridge Middle School Teacher Gayle E. Blek, who donated approximately one third of her estate to the Pendleton Friends

of the Library, according to a press release from the city. The intention of her donation was to support children's reading programs and technology for those birth to 18.

During the course of the last year, PFOL worked closely with the library to identify financial needs that honor Blek's passion for education, the library and technology, the press release stated. The first course of action was to expand the library's programming space. This new space will allow for increased participation in library programs, feature a new mural and contain a dedication to Blek.

"Pendleton citizen's have a strong history of supporting the library through financial gifts to PFOL such as Gayle's," Library Director Jennifer Costley said in the press release. "We are extremely fortunate to have community members who recognize the value of libraries and ensure our success through this type of giving. Pendleton residents can be sure that Ms. Blek's contribution will create lasting change in the library."

The ribbon cutting and room dedication coincide with PFOL's spring book sale taking place in the new space April 15 and 16, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### New dollar-for-dollar match program available in Oregon

PENDLETON — The United Way of the Blue Mountains announced a pilot program to increase fundraising for its partners.

The new program will operate in Baker, Morrow, Umatilla and Union

counties and offer the possibility of matching grants up to \$2,500 per agency, according to a press release Tuesday, April 12. The agencies approach their donors, receive new funds and United Way will match it dollar for dollar.

The program will expand the services in the area, according to the press release.

The United Way will not take any administration fees from these designated donations. Money must be received during the matching period of April 1-30.

### Sunridge Middle School plans talent show

PENDLETON — Sunridge Middle School is inviting the community to the "Sunridge's Got Talent Show" on April 21 at 6 p.m. at the school. The event will feature a variety of SMS students sharing their talents in singing, playing instruments, comedy, art, card tricks and more.

Believe It Or Not I Care, or B.I.O.N.I.C, is organizing the show. B.I.O.N.I.C is a new program at the school that seeks to help students and/or staff members dealing with challenging life issues.

Brandy Dougherty, SMS counselor, said several years ago the school had an annual talent show, and the B.I.O.N.I.C group decided to try it again as a fundraiser to support the group's activities.

Admission to the show is free, but there is a \$2 suggested donation. There also will be a bake sale during Intermission.

— EO Media Group





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