

Get ready to rumble

Pendleton test blast Thursday is part of \$10.5M water project

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Some residents of Pendleton and surrounding areas may feel a shake Thursday afternoon, May 26.

The city in a press release announced Aggregate Resource Drilling will conduct a test blast between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. that day at the site of a new water reservoir and booster pump station near the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport. The test blast is to demonstrate the project will not produce ground vibrations or air blasts that exceed set limits.

For the test, crews will be blasting and drilling 3-inch diameter boreholes to depths between 6 and 19 feet. The blast will occur within the limits of the reservoir excavation, but it may be felt in other areas of the city, according to the announcement, and the results of the blast will help



Phil Wright/East Oregonian

The Radisson Hotel remains under construction Sunday, May 22, 2022, near the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport on top of Airport Hill, Pendleton. The city announced there will be a test blast between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. May 26 near the airport as part of the \$10.5 million project to improve water pressure and storage on the west side of Pendleton.

crews determine additional needs.

Another two to four blasts will occur in June, and the city will send notices about those when specific dates are determined.

The blasting is one of the first stages of construction for the Airport Water Reservoir and Booster Pump Station Project, part of a \$10.5 million project to improve water pressure and storage on the west side of Pendleton. The controlled blasting and

rock excavation make way for a new 2 million gallon welded steel water reservoir.

“The new airport reservoir will provide additional storage for the city’s gravity water pressure zone, in addition to serving as storage for the airport pressure zone,” according to the press release.

Improvements at the site include a new airport water booster station on the reservoir site. The new booster pump station will handle

4,500 gallons per minute, allowing for industrial growth opportunities under way at the airport industrial parks.

The project is part of the Water System Master Plan the city adopted in 2015. When complete, the project will replace 1940s vintage storage reservoirs and booster pump stations, provide better water pressure for the area and allow for additional development at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport.

The city council in September 2021 approved the project. According to meeting minutes, the money for the project comes from the Federal Safe Drinking Water Revolving Fund Loan through Business Oregon. The city previously secured the loan and had about \$12.7 million remaining for this project, well supply development and water line upgrades.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson at the time said staff was hopeful the work would wrap up in 12 months, but it may end up taking 15 months.

HERMISTON

Horizon Project initiative receives \$220,000 grant

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Horizon Project Inc. recently received a boost for its independent living center in Hermiston.

Horizon is the largest single provider of residential and employment support to adults experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities in Umatilla County. Kuni Foundation, of Vancouver, Washington, awarded Horizon a \$220,000 grant for the Steps to Empowerment Program Center for Independent Living. The award went to a down payment on a new building to increase capacity.

“By purchasing this building, we’re able to expand in a way that’s transformational,” Horizon CEO Terri Silvis said. “We’re trying to give people incremental steps to be empowered and independent to reach whatever goals they want.”

She said the initiative is to help youths transitioning from high school to adulthood live as independently as possible.

“We prepare person-based plans, then our staff provide the help needed on an individual basis,” Silvis explained. “We’ll provide integrated independent living and group homes. STEP centers promote the skills required for independent living.”

Kunie Foundation in a press release stated this grant follows a recent investment of \$850,000 in Horizon Project Inc. to support and expand housing, part of the foundation’s commitment to strengthen opportunities for people with IDD

living in rural areas. Silvis said Kuni Foundation has been a generous donor to the local nonprofit that operates 18 group homes and other sites across Umatilla County for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A three-year award from Kuni allowed Horizon to buy vacant property to expand operations in Hermiston, and Horizon plans to break ground in the fall on a new facility in Pendleton.

“They share our commitment to integrating people with intellectual and developmental disabilities into housing,” Silvis said. “They also helped fund our site office on Main Street in Hermiston and to upgrade our Pendleton group homes.”

Silvis said she hopes to expand space and staff at Hermiston’s STEP center to accommodate transitioning youth, then to build on that experience to bring the program to Pendleton. Given demand in Milton-Freewater, it could be replicated there.

“The model can be improved and enhanced across the county,” Silvis said.

She also explained when people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have stable housing support, it enables them to build skills and invest in their communities. Amid a labor crisis, Horizon can help people with IDD train for jobs, which in turn can help bolster the local workforce and economy.

“We help support active, integrated, meaningful participants in the community,” she said, “and that enhances the community for everyone.”

MORROW COUNTY SCHOOLS

District, EOU partners for reading program

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — The Morrow County School District is looking to continue and expand its reading tutoring program in the fall.

The district implemented Ignite! Reading this spring. Erin Stocker, Morrow County School District executive director of human resources, boasts of the program, which offers one-on-one tutoring from Eastern Oregon University students, matching them with students in Morrow County. She said 30 of the district’s students now are in Ignite! and more should be entered into it at the start of the new school year.

That is, if data plays out the way she said she expects.

Ignite! students study with their tutors for 15 minutes a day, every school day, meeting online. Each session is different, she said, as tutoring sessions are tailored to fit each student’s needs.

Stocker said she has not seen the final report on the program’s success but has witnessed tutoring sessions and seen a lot of progress for most of the students. In sessions, she said, she has seen enthusiastic young people, who seem to want

to be present.

According to Stocker, even the busiest 6-year-olds, who tend to have difficulty concentrating on studies, are sitting down and focusing on Ignite! work. And the students who are making the least amount of progress are not frequently attending the rest of their school.

“It makes sense,” she said.

If students are not present at school to do their Ignite! work, they will not benefit from it.

In addition to praising the program, Stocker also applauded Morrow County School District employees for their efforts.

“I have been extremely impressed with the administrators at the three schools that are implementing this,” she said.

According to Stocker, the program “fell into our lap” just before spring break. MCS D schools, then, had to “hit the ground running at the start of spring.” She said schools had a lot of extra work, satisfying the logistics of the program.

“Everything in education now is heavy, but they made it look like a light lift,” Stocker said.

EOU student says tutoring fun, helpful

Martin Heredia is one of the Eastern Oregon University students helping Morrow County students. An EOU junior, he is pursuing a career in teaching.

He said he meets with students through Zoom, allowing him to communicate with students from his home in La Grande to students in Morrow County. He tutors two fourth graders and two second graders.



Heredia

The tutoring helps students, he said, and it benefits him, too. He said the Ignite! program gives him and other EOU students practice teaching reading. Other EOU Ignite! tutors also have four students each and concentrate on their needs in one-on-one sessions.

Heredia said he had a week of special training prior to starting with his students. He had to learn protocols and theory that allows tutors to maximize the education of short tutoring sessions, he said.

“We only get 15 minutes a day with the kids, but that goes such a long way, because you are working one on one,” he said. “You can see exactly

what the kids are getting and what the students are struggling with,” he said. He said tutors can give corrective feedback right away.

Heredia said one of his favorite things about the program is employing certain “engagement strategies.” After a student does something well, he leads them in various cheers.

“The kids love it, and I love doing the cheer,” he said. “It gets them out of their comfort zone and makes them want to do the lessons.”

Having fun, he guides them from lesson to lesson, advancing them to increasingly difficult levels. And he said this is working; his students are making progress, as are other Morrow County students.

He said the 14 second grade students in the program were at least two grade levels below when starting Ignite!, and they were all able to pass their first progress monitoring assessment.

“So, 14 students covered 25% of their school year in 18 days, and that’s less than 4.5 hours of instruction, which is crazy,” he said.

Students who begin a school year with Ignite!, Heredia said, can close a gap of two-and-half years to one year.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Umatilla National Forest in need of committee members

PENDLETON — The Umatilla National Forest is searching for members to serve on two resource advisory committees.

The organization is looking for nominees to serve on the Southeast Washington or Columbia County Resource Advisory Committees — both groups are key resource advisory committees in the southeast

region of Washington.

Members of the committees work toward recommending projects in order to improve forest health, watersheds and roads and facilities in the Umatilla National Forest area.

Resource committee members serve a four-year term after being appointed by the secretary of agriculture. Members do not receive compensation for their work, but can be reimbursed for travel to and from meetings.

Members are expected to

attend one to two meetings per year, which last roughly three to four hours on average. In order to participate, interested members must be a Washington resident or live in the vicinity of Asotin, Garfield or Columbia counties. Each committee includes 15 members and is broken down into three categories.

Projects for the committees range from fish passage restoration to construction of walking trails. The committees often work with youth

and volunteers in completing projects.

Those interested in applying for the resource committees can fill out and submit a survey at the Forest Service website.

— EO Media Group

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Please join us for a Retirement Reception for VIRGINIA CONRAD
May 24th 4-7pm
Hosted at Pendleton Book Company
125 S Main Street
Coffee and Cake provided
In lieu of gifts, please donate to your preferred charity

Scramble for Scholarships Friday, June 10th
..... 1pm Shotgun Start

GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION
Big River Golf Course - Umatilla
Golfers of all skill levels are invited to participate in the 29th annual Scramble for Scholarships Golf Tournament. Four person teams can sign up together or individual pairings can be made by the tournament committee. Your \$100 entry fee covers green fees, a box lunch, BBQ Dinner, and makes a charitable donation to the Foundation to use in awarding scholarships to local students pursuing careers in a medical field.

Register at scrambleforscholarships.eventbrite.com or call 541-667-3409. Entry deadline is June 6th

Putting contest to win a pair of Blazers Tickets.
Great Prize Holes and Hole-in-One on #1 & #9 wins \$25,000 towards a new car sponsored by **ROGERS TOYOTA** of **HERMISTON**

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For more information, or to schedule, call 541-966-0535, Option 4.