



**SWISH!**

Cross-county rivals clash on the courts

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# New hearing set for convicted cop-killer

Porter could be freed – or face 2 more years

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

SALEM – Sidney Dean Porter, who killed a John Day police officer nearly 23 years ago, will get a new shot at freedom next week in a hearing



**Sidney Dean Porter**

ing before members of the Oregon Board of Parole. Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter said he will travel to Salem to testify at the Jan. 27 hearing, and he has already submitted a package of materials about the crime to the board.

"I will ask them not to release

him," Carpenter said, noting he will underscore the depravity of the crime.

"The facts of the crime are unfuted by anyone, except Porter himself," he said.

Porter, now 55, was sentenced in 1992 for the bludgeoning death of Officer Frank Ward, who had gone to Porter's home on a domestic assault call.

This is the second time Porter has come up for release. The board ordered his release in 2012, after a hearing

missed by then-DA Ryan Joslin.

The decision to release a convicted police officer killer, coming with no local law enforcement input, sparked protests across the state from police officials and prompted a legislative committee hearing. The board reopened the hearing in 2013, this time deferring Porter's release until at least June 2015.

Next week's hearing will set the stage for release or up to two more years of incarceration.

The hearing will be held at the Oregon State Correctional Institution in Salem, with public attendance only by prior arrangement with the Corrections Department.

Described as an exit interview, the hearing allows the board to review psychological or psychiatric evaluations, discuss the offender's conduct in prison, and examine his parole plan.

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# New MV mayor at the helm

Anderson looks to future city improvements

By **Angel Carpenter**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

MT. VERNON – New Mt. Vernon Mayor Andy Anderson is picking up where former Mayor Sue Horn left off.

A longtime Mt. Vernon resident, Anderson was sworn in at the Jan. 13 city council meeting.

Elected councilors Wayne Saul and Jan Lowry, and appointee Mike Cearns Sr. also were sworn in, joining Eva Dougharty on the council.

Anderson volunteered to move from his position as councilor – which he held for several years – to mayor due to Horn's illness.

Horn was diagnosed with brain cancer last summer.

"We sure didn't want to see that change because she's a great gal," Anderson said. "She served the city for a long time as a council member and mayor."

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## STUDENT ART



**Kayden Mumpfield**  
Teacher: Becky Sharp  
Prairie City School



# BLAST OFF

## Team suits up for space

Project designed by GU students is picked for orbit

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – A team of students from Oregon's frontier is getting a shot at the fabled "final frontier" – space.

Grant Union ninth-graders Zack Dieter, Elijah Humbird, Duane Stokes, Dante Valentine, and Cay Weaver recently were named winners of a countywide competition to design a science experiment that will be tested in low Earth orbit.

In all, 33 teams from Grant County entered the contest, conducted as part of the national Student Spaceflight Experiments Program. The program encourages real-world science and engineering education and is a national model for STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – education for grade 5 through college.

The spaceflight competition challenges student teams to come up with experiments that can be tested in a "weightless" environment by astronauts on the International Space Station.



The Eagle/Scotta Callister

**Above: One of the challenges facing students proposing experiments to send into space was the tight fit – the project had to fit in a small tube. Here, teacher Sonna Smith holds one of the tubes in the lab at Grant Union. Top photo: Serious science can be fun, as these Grant Union ninth-graders demonstrate for the camera. The team – Dante Valentine, Cay Weaver, Duane Stokes, Elijah Humbird, and Zack Dieter – designed a project that won a countywide contest and will be tested in space.** Contributed photo

The Space Station astronauts are scheduled to conduct the Grant Union team's experiment during a six-week

orbit this spring.

Sonna Smith, who teaches chemistry and science at Grant Union, is the

local coordinator for the program. She was impressed with all of the local entries, and the creative approaches students took toward solving problems in microgravity.

"I was amazed at the variety of ideas the kids came up with," she said. The topics ranged from how to culture yogurt in space to a test of Henry's law, a chemistry principle applying to the solubility of gases.

The local effort began in the fall with students learning about forces and motion in science classes at their schools. Then they formed teams to research and design their experiments.

The experiments had to be space-worthy, include a maximum of five steps, and require no refrigeration. And here's the big catch – the experiment's components had to be compact enough to fit into a small tube for transport into space.

As the students honed their entries, Smith pulled together a review board made up of local professionals in science and engineering. The board members and their areas of expertise were Jeff Campbell, microbiology; Ryne Smith, chemistry; Holly Bentz, aquatic restoration and engineering; Al Denman, science educator; and Kyle Sullivan, soil science and chemistry.

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# Bentz takes rural case to urban audience

Rep sees key issues coming up for agriculture

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – State Rep. Cliff Bentz admits it's frustrating to try to convince urban west-siders about the plight of Oregon's rural counties and the need to make better use of our natural resources.

"They just don't get it," he said. But Bentz said he's found a theme that seems to get through the haze – "the old 'what's in it for me' approach."

Bentz (R-Ontario) spoke at the Grant County Farm Bureau annual meeting



**Rep. Cliff Bentz**

In a recent interview, Bentz reiterated that rural recovery should matter to the more populous west side.

"We have billions of dollars of minerals, timber, grass and water which we are not using to good effect," he said.

He said it's in the state's best interest to make use of those resources, if only for the beneficial ripple effect it could have

for our children and their education.

He noted the state struggles to fund schools and universities, but the revenue from resource industries could do a great deal to ease that challenge.

Bentz also cited some other issues that could arise at the Legislature, with impacts for rural Oregon counties. Among them:

- County roads. He noted that Grant County, unlike many rural counties, is fortunate to have "a sizeable savings account" in its road fund. However, he noted that fund will erode over time, and something must be done to help the rural counties fund their roads and services.

Bentz, who serves on the House Transportation and Economic Development Committee, said he's asking all

five of the counties in his district for their ideas on future funding for county roads.

- Possible listing of the sage grouse as an endangered species, a specter that's been described as agriculture's version of the spotted-owl issue.

Bentz outlined one possible way to forestall the listing: a proposal to put a tax on birdseed and salt feed for cattle. The tax would raise about \$1.5 million on birdseed and another \$400,000 on salt, the proceeds going toward improvements for songbirds and non-game birds including the grouse.

It could fund juniper removal, water supply enhancements, and other measures after wildfires.

Bentz said he wants to hear from

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