

# Grant County carnage

Fairgrounds to host 28th annual demolition derby

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

For the 28th year in a row, the Whiskey Gulch Gang is putting on the Demolition Derby.

The event, at 7 p.m. Saturday, will feature a variety of vehicles pitted against each other in a last-man-standing-style brawl.

Longtime organizer Hugh Farrell describes the event as "kind of a madhouse."

Despite this, Farrell said none of the drivers have ever been injured, or at least never complained about it.

Driver safety is a priority. Helmets and seat belts are mandatory, and neck collars and eye protection are recommended.

The derby is split into three heats for cars and one heat for pickup trucks. The winners of each heat will win \$250, and all who are able continue on to a final showdown will compete for a \$2,000 top prize.



Wayne Saul of Mt. Vernon and Steve Patterson of Prairie City wrangle in the arena at last year's derby.

Eagle file photo

"A lot of them get right back in there, beat all to pieces," Farrell said. "You wouldn't think they'd run again, but they do."

Other trophies are awarded for best looking car and most aggressive driver.

No utility vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles or Chrysler Imperials are allowed in the competition.

The Imperials are not allowed because they are significantly tougher than many other vehicles, Farrell explained. Though a wide variety of vehicles are ac-

cepted, American cars built before the 1980s tend to fare better, according to Farrell. Cars suitable for the derby are getting harder to find, and often the ones drivers do find are expensive, he said.

"Some people go to a lot of work to get a car set up properly," he said. "But sometimes a broken wire can put you out. You just never know."

Money raised from the derby helps the Whiskey Gulch Gang host other events.

"If we didn't have the derby, we wouldn't be able to

have the ('62 Days) celebration," Farrell said.

The derby begins at 7 p.m., and children six and under get in free. Tickets can be purchased at the gate or beforehand at Ace Hardware, True Value or Les Schwab Tires.

Those interested in entering a vehicle in the derby or wanting more information should contact Hugh Farrell at 541-575-0329 or 541-620-0931.

A \$50 entry fee covers a car, driver and one pit crew member. Pit passes are \$30 each.



Eagle file photo

Tyler Nodine of John Day waits just moments for a crew to extinguish a fire from the final blow of his derby car. Nodine finished second at last year's Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby at the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day.

## The Eagle wins 22 awards in state contest

Five first-place honors and second-place in General Excellence

Blue Mountain Eagle

The Blue Mountain Eagle was recognized as one of the top weekly newspapers in Oregon, earning 22 awards in the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association Better Newspaper Contest.

The contest was judged by personnel from newspapers in Pennsylvania, and the Eagle competed against weeklies that distribute 2,001-3,000 copies.

The Eagle earned five first-place, eight second-place and nine third-place awards in the annual competition featuring work from 2016.

For the top honor — General Excellence — the Eagle earned second place. The entry is judged based on the overall product, from news and editorial content to photos and design to advertising and reproduction. The samples are taken from three editions from specific months throughout the year. The Sandy Post, a Pamplin Media Group publication, placed first.

"General Excellence award is the top award the Eagle can receive, and it's an honor to be recognized by our peers for our efforts," Editor Sean Hart said. "The staff at this newspaper works hard to deliver the news, and I cannot thank them enough for their dedication."

The Eagle earned first place in the special section or issue category with its breast cancer awareness special edition. The Eagle also placed third in the category with its Journey special section.

Page designer Randy Wrighthouse defended his title, winning page one design

again this year.

Angel Carpenter earned the top honor for lifestyle coverage with a story about Mary Weaver battling cancer a second time.

Carpenter and Rylan Boggs won the photo essay category with a series of shots from the Grant County Fair.

Former editorial assistant Cheryl Hoefler earned the top prize for sports photo with a shot of Buddy, the Easter elk, running in the Dayville Bunny Hop 5K. The story also placed third in the sports category.

Carpenter earned three second-place awards: business and economic issues for a story about eclipse accommodations, sports photo for a shot of the John Day Swim Team and writing for a collection of three stories.

Wrighthouse and graphics designer Alan Kenaga placed second in graphics for a map and photo package about county geographical features that formerly included "squaw" in the title, which were renamed.

The Eagle earned second place for web design.

Editor Sean Hart placed second in headline writing and enterprise reporting.

Boggs placed third in the feature photo category with a shot of Leo Dedmore hiding behind a pumpkin.

Carpenter earned third place in the personality feature category.

Hart placed third in writing and third in the general feature category for a story and photos about salmon being released into the landlocked Malheur River.

The Eagle's website placed third overall. A slideshow with audio of the planned meeting in John Day featuring people occupying the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge placed third in multimedia element, and election night coverage earned third place in the on-line breaking news category.



Contributed photo/Stephanie Falck

High Desert Youth Range campers and staff pose for a photo during the event. Ellie Justice of John Day is on the front row, far right, and her sister Maggie is on the back row, third from right.

## Two sisters enjoy range camp in the High Desert

Maggie Justice chosen as top camper

By Angel Carpenter  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant Union Junior-Senior High School students Maggie and Ellie Justice of John Day experienced a four-day "getaway" at the June 21-24 High Desert Youth Range Camp.

The two sisters joined 11 other students from Oregon, Idaho and Washington at the camp to study rangeland issues at the 16,000-acre Northern Grant Basin Experimental Range near Burns.

Maggie, who will be a senior this fall, was chosen as top camper and will receive an all-expenses paid trip to Sparks, Nevada, to represent Oregon at the High School Youth Forum held during the annual Society for Range Management meeting.

Maggie owns 13 head of cattle, has shown livestock at the Grant County Fair and made a presentation about crested wheat grass at the Oregon Stockgrowers Association last September.

She said her favorite part of the range camp was learning the importance of sage brush and perennial grasses.

"We identified the grasses, and before this camp, I thought it was a bunch of weeds that got stuck in my



Contributed photo/Stephanie Falck

Ellie Justice, top right, of John Day cuts grass during a field lesson at the youth range camp.

shoes," she said. "I think it's important to be aware of your surroundings. You've got to know what's around you and understand the importance of it — just a base knowledge of what's going on out your back door."

Camp coordinator Gabrielle Johnson said they had an excellent and engaged group of campers.

"The students were eager to hear the material presented, were full of thoughtful questions and showed great willingness to learn all they could," she said.

The camp offered more than learning about soils, sagebrush and invasive weeds. It included a hike to a butte, dutch-oven cooking

provided by Harney County Cattlewomen members and a karaoke night.

Ellie, who will soon be a sophomore, said she enjoyed the educational experience, as well as the more entertaining parts of the camp, including geocaching for varieties of grasses, such as buckwheat and needle grass.

"You can't really go there and not learn," she said.

She said she appreciated the opportunity to broaden her horizons at the camp.

"Our environment has so many animals that you can't always see," she said. "It's cool seeing how complex it is."

The range camp is a co-

operative effort between Eastern Oregon Agriculture Research Center, Agriculture Research Service and Harney County Watershed Council with several sponsors and instructors supporting the effort.

Each camper paid \$50 to attend, and sponsors defrayed the cost with a \$125 scholarship for each high school age youth.

The participants also earned two credits through Treasure Valley Community College.

"It's something that I'd recommend for everybody," Maggie said. "You get college credits and free food. What more can you ask for?"

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**Thank you**

I would like to thank Glenn Palmer for the prompt response to my irrigation problems. You have my vote again!

**Joe Phippen**  
Prairie City