

LOCAL BRIEFING

Merkley plans virtual town hall

GRANT COUNTY — U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley will hold a virtual town hall meeting for Grant County residents at 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20. Following the usual format for an in-person town hall, the senator will speak and then take questions and comments from constituents.

To join the meeting by computer or mobile device, send an email to TownHall@merkley.senate.gov with Grant County in the subject line. To join by phone, call 669-254-5252, then enter meeting ID 160 850 4332, participant ID # and passcode 28152932.

Malheur archaeologists publish work

JOHN DAY — The work of two Malheur National Forest archaeologists is showcased in the winter 2021 edition of the Oregon Historical Quarterly, a special issue on the Chinese diaspora in Oregon. Don Hann's article, "Chinese Mining Kongs in Eastern Oregon: A Case of Cultural Amnesia," discusses the joint ventures formed by Chinese miners and the important role they played in Grant County's mining boom.

In "Stacked Rock Features: Archaeological Evidence of Chinese Miners on the Malheur National Forest," Katee Withee shines a light on the daily lives of Chinese miners in Grant County as revealed by excavations of their camps, often marked by carefully constructed stone hearths. More information about the special edition of the quarterly is available online at https://tinyurl.com/5672adsa.

ODOT seeks input on funding decisions

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Transportation is seeking ideas from the public on the best way to spend \$412 million in flexible funding coming to the state under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The agency has submitted a proposal to the Oregon Transportation Commission that lays out nine program areas to invest in, including accessibility, public transportation and highway enhancements. The proposal is available online at https://tinyurl.com/yekhkvbv.

There are three ways for the public to provide feedback on the proposal:
• An online open house, which can be accessed at https://tinyurl.com/5dyfs3mk.
• Written comments, which can be submitted through the commission's public comment page at https://tinyurl.com/bdfv8uz7.
• Commenting at a meeting of the commission on Thursday, Feb. 17, or March 10; instructions on how to sign up can be found online at https://tinyurl.com/2fdva9k3.

Student makes college dean's list

FREDERICK, Maryland — Destiny Fairless of John Day was named to the Hood College dean's list for the fall semester, the college announced. The list recognizes the academic achievements of students who earn at

least a 3.5 grade point average while completing a minimum six semester hours of coursework. Fairless graduated in January with a bachelor's degree in history.

Blue Mountain Eagle



Patty Ross, left, presents Nichole Rule with a check donated by a Grant County resident on Friday, Feb. 11, 2022. Ross helped organize a fundraising dinner at the Mt. Vernon Community Center for Rule, who is fighting cancer.

'There is hope in humanity'

Friends, family rally to help Mt. Vernon woman with cancer

By STEVEN MITCHELL Blue Mountain Eagle

MT. VERNON — More than 100 people showed up to the Mt. Vernon Community Center Friday, Feb. 11, for a benefit dinner and auction for a woman recently diagnosed with cancer. Doctors in December diagnosed Mt. Vernon resi-

dent Nichole Rule (who goes by Nicky) with bladder cancer. Since then, accompanied by her husband, Rusty Rule, and her cousin, she has been making long trips outside the county for chemotherapy, and surgery is in her future. Cancer treatment isn't cheap, and the bills quickly began piling up. But friends rallied around to help, and the result was last week's spaghetti dinner and auction. Patty Ross and a handful of other volunteers kicked into gear and reached out to businesses for items to

donate to the auction. Ross said \$11,000 came in from the dinner and auction and that others made monetary donations. According to Ross, even people who did not know Nicky and Rusty showed up for the event to make donations. Not only did the event raise money to help the Rules, but it brought their extended family together. Nicky's siblings, whom she had not seen in years, came out for the event, along with her kids, who traveled

from Las Vegas, Idaho and the other side of the state. "I'm just so overwhelmed," Nicky said. "For everybody to come together for me, it's just been awesome." Ross said the auction, dinner and fundraising effort left her and the handful of volunteers who organized the event with a "really warm feeling just to know that you're helping somebody that's going through a really rough time." "There is hope in humanity," Ross said.

OREGON CAPITAL INSIDER We're investing in Salem coverage when other news organizations are cutting back. Get the inside scoop on state government and politics!

Bringing back 'old-time religion'

By ERICK PETERSON East Oregonian

ECHO — Not every churchgoer appreciates the tide of change, according to one Hermiston resident. Doug Fehrenbacher said there are many believers, like himself, who prefer hymns. They have been sidelined, in his estimation. He is trying to bring them back to popularity with musical services at Echo Community Church on the first Sunday of every month at 5:30 p.m.



Doug Fehrenbacher flips through a hymnal Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022, in the living room of his Hermiston home.

"I think a lot of older people, people who have been Christians for a long time, feel left out," he said. "The last thing an 80-year-old woman wants is to learn a new song. They like the ones they know." He said people are allowed to sing the hymns they choose at his services from provided hymnals. Attendees are accompanied by Louise Sundvall, a fellow Hermiston resident. "She is just absolutely outstanding," Fehrenbacher said. "Not only does she know all

the songs, but she can run that keyboard so beautifully." Sundvall said she has been playing piano for around 80 years, though she has not played hymns exclusively. She started with classical music, then played for churches. "I add my style to it," she said of church music. She described her style as "Southern gospel" with "life and pep."

Sundvall plays piano, but it is Fehrenbacher who is the worship leader. He sings and directs the service. He said he used to hold his services at a church in Hermiston; however, his services became a problem. "As our numbers grew and grew, it seems like we were interfering with the other ministries," he said. He expressed his feeling the services were unappreciated, so he took them elsewhere. The Echo church invited him, he said, and has "bent over backwards" helping put this together. "They've been just wonderful," he said. "I can't say enough about them." In one of his Echo Community services, attendees sing six songs. Then, they have what Fehrenbacher calls "a special." One or two peo-

ple will stand up in front of the congregation and sing by themselves. He said the special gives a person an opportunity to shine, and sometimes the singer will amaze others with their talent. "It's a very unorganized and nondenominational," he said. "We have some Adventists. We have all the denominations, represented at one time or another."

The importance of hymns

He called his services important because music is vital to the Christian faith. "I feel in so many church services they use the music as a means of bringing people from their problems and off the streets to where they can focus on the spoken word," he said. In his services, however, Fehrenbacher puts total attention on the music, he said. His services do not even have a sermon. After the hymns and the special, there is only a fellowship get-together, which is at the end of the service. He said people have a good time with this and travel from Richland, Washington, and Walla Walla to attend. These hymns have served him, as well as his congregation, Fehrenbacher said. He added that hymns such as "It is Well with My Soul" have helped him during dark times. He said he will continue singing hymns and giving others opportunities to sing them for as long as he can.

Balbina Escudero January 20, 2022 Balbina Escudero, 93, of John Day passed away on January 20, 2022 at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton, Oregon. Balbina was born and raised in a small farming community in Northern Spain to Mariano and Josefa. In October of 1948, she married John Escudero, who lived in the same small town. In 1958 they moved, with their two sons, from Spain to Bates, OR. They lived in Bates until 1975, when the sawmill and Bates itself closed. They then moved to John Day, where Balbina lived the rest of her life. In John Day she worked at Dreamers Lodge for many years. She enjoyed traveling and exploring new places and cultures. While traveling she met some wonderful people and made dear friends that were very special to her. Throughout her life she loved to make things grow. She always had beautiful flowers around her house, and always had a garden, including last summer. But for Balbina the most important things in her life were family and friends. She was strong willed and fiercely independent, caring and loving, and she enjoyed life. Balbina was preceded in death by her husband John Escudero, her parents Mariano and Josefa, and her siblings Samuel and Prepe. She is survived by her sons John and Joe Escudero, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. A Mass of Christian Burial attended by family was held on Thursday, January 27th, 2022 at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church in John Day, followed by interment at St. Andrews Catholic Cemetery in Canyon City. There will be a Celebration of Life service in late spring to be announced. Memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude's Children's Hospital through Driskill Memorial Chapel at 241 S. Canyon Blvd., John Day, Oregon 97845. Paid for by the family of Balbina Escudero 5281707-1

DGDriscoll's BOOKS! Spring is Coming! Planning, Planting, Pruning; We have the books you need. Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat; 10 til 6 248-719-2122 In Canyon City just across from the post office

Last Week's Temps John Day HI/LO Wednesday 55/32 Thursday 59/32 Friday 58/29 Saturday 56/29 Sunday 56/32 Monday 44/29 Tuesday 43/27 24/7 FORECAST AUTOMATED: 541-575-1122 ROAD CONDITIONS: 511; TRIPCHECK.COM NOAA WEATHER RADIO FOR JOHN DAY 162.500 MHZ

WEATHER FORECAST FOR THE WEEK OF FEB. 16-22 Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday Monday Tuesday AM clouds PM sun Partly cloudy Mostly cloudy Partly cloudy Snow showers Mostly cloudy Mostly cloudy 45 52 55 53 38 38 40 24 28 28 32 28 27 26