

Gazette Times

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Myren honored for DARE project



Photo by Joyce Hughes

M.C. Sheriff Roy Drago (l) presents plaque of appreciation to deputy Steve Myren at County Court Wednesday. Standing by Steve is Judge Louis Carlson and Commissioner Raymond French.

Morrow County Sheriff's Deputy Steve Myren was presented a plaque from the Morrow County Sheriff's Office for conducting local DARE programs. DARE is the drug/alcohol awareness program Myren taught in the Morrow County Schools.

Myren, who said that the program's first year in Morrow County was successful, said he spent an average of 20 extra hours a week in addition to his regular work week. He said that his extra work has brought results in more positive relationships

between the kids and police and also involves the parents.

Myren's first session was the sixth grade classes, but he said he had recently been involved in the high school driver's ed and health classes. He has been asked to attend outdoor school later this year.

Soroptimist honor Jane Rawlins



Photo by Joyce Hughes

Soroptimist member Gail Burkenbine (r) presents Jane Rawlins with Distinguished Woman award.

Heppner and Ione senior girls and their mothers were treated to the annual Senior Girls Luncheon on Thursday, April 9 at All Saints Episcopal Church. The luncheon is sponsored by the Soroptimist International of Heppner.

In addition to the "lovely salad luncheon" provided by the ladies of All Saints, the girls were entertained with musical selections by Joyce Hughes, and Debbie Miller. Jaclynn Hughes, Mindy and Tammy Smith and Roxanne Miller also sang a special Easter number. Betty Marquardt was accompanist. Guest speaker Birdine Tullis, who has been active in 4-H and Extension, delivered an

"upbeat motivational" talk on success.

Honored at the luncheon was Jane Rawlins, who received the "Woman of Distinction" award for her "tireless" volunteerism and contributions to the Heppner community. Jane is involved in the Garden Club, the senior mealsite and is director of the Intergenerational Theater Group and has been Morrow County First Citizen. The Soroptimist presented her with a plaque and a dozen long-stemmed roses.

The Rev. Lea Mathieu of the Ione United Church of Christ gave the invocation. Jackie Bergstrom was chair of the luncheon.

Voters to receive precinct cards

The Morrow County Clerk's office will be sending out precinct cards to registered voters in the county beginning this Friday, according to Barbara Bloodsworth, county clerk.

Bloodsworth said they are sending the cards because of changes in senate and representative districts.

All Saints Italian dinner set May 8

The candlelight Italian dinner, sponsored by All Saints Episcopal Church is scheduled for May 8, the Friday before Mother's Day. The dinner menu includes minestrone soup or salad, spaghetti, lasagna or seafood fettucini, spumoni ice cream and coffee, milk, wine or sparkling cider.

Two seatings are available for the dinner, at 5:30 and 7:15 p.m. The dinner is by reservation only. Organizer Marcia Anderson says that the dinner is always sold out and encourages early reservations. For reservations call Anderson 676-5182, Aloha DeSpain 676-5376 or All Saints Episcopal Church 676-9970. Cost is \$7 for adults and \$3.50 for children.

Ione egg hunt

The Ione Easter Egg hunt will get underway at 10 a.m. this Saturday April 18.

Preschoolers through kindergarten children will hunt at St. Williams Catholic Church and grades one through four at the Ione City Park.

Council approves motel tax; opponents begin legal proceedings

The Heppner City Council voted in a five-percent transient room tax Monday evening April 13, but Tuesday morning motel owners Tom LaRusso and Dolores Cooper began proceedings to fight the new tax.

LaRusso and Cooper presented Heppner City Administrator Gary Marks with documents to begin an initiative petition to amend the city charter to prohibit new city taxes or increases on city taxes without voter approval, and a referendum which would take the room tax back to the people for approval. As it stands now, only the council can increase or levy a city tax. A vote of the people is advisory only, not binding.

According to documents received by Marks, LaRusso and Cooper are aiming at the November general election. Signatures of 15 percent of the city's registered voters are required to place an initiative on the ballot and 10 percent are required to place a referendum on the ballot.

An initiative is a proposal which is initiated from the people. A referendum concerns a law already in effect which is referred back to a vote of people.

Marks has five days to examine the documents before he must give them to city attorney Bill Kuhn. Kuhn will examine the documents, prepare a ballot title and then return them to the sponsors who may then begin collecting signatures. Signatures collected in a previous petition concerning the room tax are invalid because proper procedures were not followed, according to Morrow County Clerk Barbara Bloodsworth.

If enough signatures are collected and prove to be valid, then the initiative and referendum will be placed on the ballot.

The hotel-motel tax, passed by the council Monday night will go into effect July 1, the start of the 1992-93 fiscal year. Provisions in the ordinance allow for 10 percent of the tax to be kept by hotel owners to reimburse them for collection and bookkeeping. Another 10 percent will go to the city for administration and payroll taxes, leaving 80 percent of the tax money to help fund the part-time chamber of commerce manager's salary.

The ordinance states that the hotel-motel owners do not require bonding. The provision in the ordinance is there if there is a collection problem, according to city attorney Bill Kuhn. The room tax

ordinance could be amended at any time by the council, so the proceeds could be used for some other purposes besides the chamber of commerce.

Dolores Cooper, part owner of Heppner's only motel, the Northwestern, said she didn't object as much to paying the tax as "the way it's been set up. Our books can be inspected at any time," she said.

Her partner, Tom LaRusso, however said the chamber should be doing more fund raisers to support themselves. And he said he thought he and his supporters were doing the right thing in circulating what he thought was a petition to stop the council from passing the tax ordinance.

"We're going to pursue the initiative process to amend the city charter and get it on the November ballot," he said. Two hundred fifty signatures (in opposition to the tax) ought to mean something," he said.

Darlene Scroggins, owner of the local bed and breakfast house said she objected to "being nailed to the cross" even though her small business wouldn't hurt or help much either way. But she added that because her establishment requires a business license, her insurance rates have doubled. She said that her business hasn't been affected by events such as St. Patrick's or the local fair and rodeo, which bring a lot of people into the community.

"It's just bad timing," in light of measure 5 cutbacks, said councilman David Allstott, who voted in favor of the tax. Chamber activities benefit the whole community, not just businesses; but a lot of people see it as opening the doors for additional taxes, he said.

However, Cliff Green, owner of the Coast to Coast store emphasized that the tax ordinance is not breaking any new ground. "It's common place in most towns to collect a motel tax that goes towards economic development. And it's the city's responsibility to be involved in the economic health of our town. In large towns, city employees are hired for economic development roles, but in small towns that responsibility is passed on to chambers and volunteer economic development groups," he said.

Ann Spicer, a Heppner lawyer, said that a research shows that of the 52 Oregon cities with motel

taxes, 40 of them use the tax money for economic development. And 21 cities fund local chambers for the same purposes. But it's not unique to get objections to imposing this tax, she said. For example, it took the city of Umatilla nearly three years to pass a motel tax.

Chamber president LoRayne Bowman, who is also a council member, said that most chamber members are stretched to the maximum when it comes to volunteering for events. "Without a parttime chamber manager to answer phone calls, write letters and coordinate activities, there wouldn't be so many additional community events from which the community as a whole benefits," she said.

Adding to that, Larry Mills, manager of Morrow County Grain Growers, said that when it comes to a motel tax for funding the chamber manager's salary, it was a good thing for south Morrow County. For instance the recent St. Patrick's weekend festivities brought in around \$8,000 to churches, school-sponsored functions and the senior citizens for meals and other events, he said.

Councilman Chuck Holtz, who was the lone voter against the tax, said that most people he had talked to see the tax as a benefit only to businesses. The Chamber manager position does benefit the whole community, he said, but unless a person is a member of chamber, they can't know all the activities that the chamber is involved with, he added.

A consensus of the council members agreed that they were going to get "a lot of flack" by passing the ordinance, but they agreed with council member Martha Doherty, that "more harm could be done by losing the chamber manager position than by passing the tax ordinance." A great deal of consideration by each council member has been a part of the decision-making process, added councilman Bob Jepsen, a retired farmer and city resident. He said that in order to keep a community healthy, economic development and catering to tourism play a major role.

Although business owner Steve McDaniel said he had never been asked to join the Heppner Chamber, manager Claudia Hughes said that numerous letters have been sent to businesses and others who are not currently chamber members. She also said that the chamber has encouraged ranchers and farmers to become chamber members to help support chamber functions. She stressed that without the involvement of a lot of south Morrow county people, the town could have never hosted the Cycle Oregon III event. She also added that the St. Patrick's celebration has grown into a year-long job involving correspondence and planning activities.

In other business the council: -held a hearing on a grievance brought by Police Chief Douglas Rathbun. The hearing resulted in a decision that there was no grievance offense. However, the council approved the adoption of a merit pay raise policy;

-appointed Barbara Watkins to the Housing Authority Board;

-asked that the landfill closure details be brought up at the next meeting;

-requested a public hearing on the animal control ordinance at the next meeting;

-approved putting money from the sale of city-owned ATVs into the police reserve fund;

-authorized a paving contract for the south side of May street;

-tabled resolutions on clean-up of several properties. Letters are to be sent and property clean-up monitored.

Easter egg hunt planned Saturday

The annual Easter Egg hunt for area kids, sponsored by the Heppner Elks Club will be held this Saturday, April 18 beginning at 10 a.m.

Pre-schoolers through

Kindergarten will hunt at the city park next to the library and museum; first and second graders will hunt at the Heppner Elementary School lower field; and third and fourth graders will be at Hager Park.

Forest service to sponsor blood drive

The U.S. Forest Service is sponsoring an American Red Cross blood drive, Monday, April 27 from 1 to 6 p.m. at the St. Patrick Senior Center, 182 N. Main, Heppner. The National Honor Society will provide the canteen.

Any healthy adult age 17 or over who weighs at least 110 pounds may give blood. Blood is used to help

cancer and leukemia patients, burn and accident victims, children with certain disorders and people undergoing surgery.

"When you give blood, you save lives. You give someone another birthday, another laugh with a friend, another chance," said Nancy Adams, donor resource consultant for the Columbia River Region.

T-Ball, Minor tryouts set

T-Ball and minor league tryouts will be held Tuesday April 28 and Thursday, April 30 at the Heppner Elementary school lower fields beginning at 6 p.m. "This is the last time that anyone may sign up so if you would like to play on a team you need to come to one or both of these practices and sign up if you aren't already," says coordinator Joyce

Hughes. If you can't make it to a practice, want to play and haven't signed up please let Joyce know and you can still be on a team. Teams will also be divided at this time. Coaches are also needed. If anyone is interested in coaching or helping please contact Hughes at 676-9959 or stop by the Gazette-Times in Heppner.

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