

## Farm computer courses offered

Computer courses for the beginner will be offered through the Farm Business Management Program. Classes for farm managers interested in learning to keep records by computer will be offered Dec. 20, 21 and 22 from 1 to 4 p.m. in Emigrant Hall computer lab, room 105D.

The classes provide an introduction to the Farm Business Management Program, which starts in January. The regular program is designed for the farm or ranch owner, lessee, or manager, as well as anyone responsible for operation record

keeping. Systematic training is emphasized in various phases of farm financial management. The program features the newest financial management techniques, on-the-farm/ranch conferences and consultations, development of records to aid in decision making, and computer analysis. Cost of the entire program is \$150.

To register for the three day computer classes or the entire program, contact your local BMCC area coordinator or Alan Nelson, Farm Business Management Program coordinator, 276-1260 ext 323.

## Coloring contest underway

A Christmas picture has been distributed to area schools for children pre-school through fourth grade to participate in a Christmas coloring contest sponsored by Soroptimist International of Heppner. Pictures may be picked up at the Heppner Elementary school or Murray Drugs and need to be returned to

either place by December 13.

Cash prizes will be awarded to first through third places for pre-school through Kindergarten; first and second grades; and third and fourth grades. Winners will be notified and asked to attend the December 16 noon meeting at the Heppner Elks club to claim their prize.

## Christmas concert at BMCC Dec. 10

Blue Mountain Community College choirs will present their fall Christmas concert on Friday, Dec. 10 at 7:30 p.m. in Pioneer Theater. There is no charge for the concert.

The choral will present a J.S. Bach cantata "Uns Ist Ein Kind Geboren" accompanied by a local string quartet. Other seasonal music including "Shall I Mother", with soloist Lief Egerton, will be performed.

The Blue Jazz will present a varied program with selections including "Love Is", "Walking in Memphis", "Freddie's Walkin'", "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" and songs made famous by Manhattan Transfer, Blenders, Amy Grant, Forrester Sisters and Hoagy Carmichael. Soloists will include Josh Vorvick, Jenna Mason, Margaret Harp, Alisa Bounds and Becca Lemmon.

## IUCC to hold two special Christmas services

Two special events mark Christmas at Ione United Church of Christ. A Christmas play, "With Every Christmas Card I Write", will be presented by the children and youth on Sunday, December 19 at 5 p.m., followed by a potluck supper and caroling.

December 24, a candlelight Christmas Eve service of readings, carols and communion will be held at 6 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

## Creative Arts Club to meet Dec. 13

The Morrow County Creative Arts club will hold their Christmas meeting on December 13, at the home of Beulah Ogletree. The meeting will begin at noon. Those attending should bring Christmas goodies. A gift exchange will also be held. Gifts should not cost over \$5.

## Faith pulls family through desperate times

It's often said that faith can pull you through. For the Alberta and Ralph Akers family of Boardman, that has proven true.

On July 5, 1992, the Akers got the telephone call that every parent fears. Their two sons, Ralph and Raymond, and a third young man, Tyler, whom they consider as close as a son, had been in an auto accident.

The boys had been driving their pickup around a curve. They had swerved to avoid a car coming at them in their lane and Ralph, who had been driving, lost control of the pickup.

Tyler emerged from the accident with a few scratches and Raymond suffered a concussion. But Ralph was admitted to the hospital with severe head injuries. His seat belt had come undone and his head had gone through the driver's side window. The pickup rolled on his head. Alberta says that it had been jacked up and logs placed under it to enable emergency personnel to get him out.

Ralph, senior, and Alberta immediately drove from their home in Boardman, to Spokane where the accident occurred. Ralph, II, had been working there prior to the accident.

The doctor at the hospital where Ralph had been taken said that he would surely die if he didn't have surgery. They also said he would die if he did.

Ralph did make it through surgery and for the next two and a half months the Akers virtually lived in the intensive care unit to be near their comatose son. Keeping a constant vigil at his bedside, they along with Raymond, alternated sleeping in a roll-a-way bed next to his in ICU and on a couch in the waiting room. They even showered at the hospital.

With Ralph still comatose and showing no signs of recovery, the doctors approached the Akers with one of the most important decisions in their lives—whether they should consider pulling the plug on his respirator. Alberta replied in no uncertain terms in a letter to the doctor. Quoting scripture, Alberta emphasized her faith in God and related how He had helped her through many difficult times.

During this time they talked to Ralph, held his hand, prayed with him and massaged "every little knuckle and every little toe." They also learned how to operate much of the equipment that helped to keep him alive.

Declaring Ralph "brain dead" and offering no hope that he would emerge from his coma, the doctors recommended that he be put in a nursing home. Since Ralph had not given his parents power of attorney before the accident, he was made a ward of the court and was assigned a guardian by the state of Washington. The state threatened to send Ralph to a care facility in Michigan.

"I fought it," said Alberta. "God gave him to me and could have taken him. But it wasn't His choice."

The Akers became involved with the Washington State Head Injury Foundation, and, through them, met a woman, Joanne



Photo By Joyce Hughes

Ralph and his mother Alberta Akers

Townsend, who was able to help. After learning how badly the Akers wanted to keep their son out of a nursing home, Townsend opened her home to the Akers family. The guardian reluctantly allowed the Akers to take Ralph to the Townsend home and they moved him in, still comatose.

During their stay at Townsend's home Alberta or Ralph would make a trip home once a month to pay bills and set their affairs in order. But they always returned that evening. Before on eof these trips home, they got permission to bring Ralph's black labrador, "Dog", back. "I took the dog up and we put the side of Ralph's bed down. Dog did a little dance, you know the way dogs do, and then he put his paws up on the bed," said Alberta. The dog licked Ralph's hand, and nudged at his arm sometimes so hard, they feared the dog would break his arm.

On the second day, the dog started barking and getting really excited. "I said, 'What's wrong with the dog?'" said Alberta. "Then dad said, 'Ralph, are you awake?'" Ralph had, indeed, awakened from a three-month-long coma. "I think it had a lot to do with the dog," adds Alberta.

On September 8, 1993 the Akers celebrated Ralph's "early" birthday at Spokane. They were able to take him home for his real birthday Sept. 14 and spent 10 days there.

They celebrated with "over the hill" balloons, not because he was old, he was only 23, but because of the challenges he had faced and won. "The next hill won't be quite as steep," comments Alberta.

Ralph can now remember everything that happened right up to about two or three weeks before the accident. Because his optical nerve was damaged, he can't open his right eye and does not have full movement of his left eye. Right after he emerged from his coma, however, both eyes were closed, so there is still hope

for the right eye also. Ralph has a metal plate in his skull and still suffers from occasional severe headaches.

The Akers brought Ralph home for good a little over a month ago. Since his return he has gone along on rides in the mountains, which he loves, and was able to go along on a hunting trip. "He can even laugh now," says Alberta. "I love to hear him laugh. It's a miracle. That's all it could be. A miracle of God's love."

The Akers would like to hear from friends in the area. Write to them at Rt. 1 Box 55 B2, Boardman 97818 or call 481-2253. Ralph senior grew up in the Ione area. His parents Wilbur and Marie Akers had a ranch there.

## Tax-Aide program seeks volunteers

Would you like to use your math skills and help people? The Tax-Aide Program, sponsored by the American Association of Retired persons and the IRS, offers that opportunity.

Tax-Aide volunteers provide free personal income tax assistance to the elderly, low to moderate income, and disabled taxpayers. Volunteers, who are trained in cooperation with the IRS and Oregon Department of Revenue, spend at least four hours each week from February 1 through April 15 assisting taxpayers. Volunteers are reimbursed for mileage.

Instruction classes for volunteers are scheduled to be held in January. Those in Boardman and Irrigon are asked to contact Vivian Corp at 567-8054. Persons wishing to volunteer in Ione, Lexington and Heppner should contact Sherron Woodside 989-8166.

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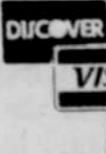
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