

HEPPNER



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Gazette
 Times

Kids participate in annual exchange



Heppner kids show Centennial student how to tie a goat

Photo by Nova Rietmann

By Nova Rietmann

Twenty-five students from Centennial Middle School in the Portland area were at the Morrow County Fairgrounds in Heppner last Thursday, April 30, watching students from Heppner High School demonstrate rodeo and trying it out for themselves.

The Centennial eighth-grade kids were shown a variety of life in rural Oregon during the week of their exchange with Heppner Junior High School eighth-graders. The theme of the Centennial exchange is to do just that.

The program relies on human resources and the community has been accommodating. Students were placed with families in the community for their week here.

Dave Olcott was the Centennial teacher, along with Bruce Collins and Greg Grant of Heppner. All three stress the importance of the program. "The strength of this program is based on the community," says Olcott. "People open their homes, and donate their time and money for these kids."

"This is a worth while experience, and a unique opportunity for these kids," said Grant. "They are able to compare industries, and ways of life. It is socially and intellectually a good experience."

Monday the kids looked at agriculture and dry land farming; Tuesday they visited Kinzua; Wednesday, a Forest Service presentation; Thursday they watched and watched branding; Friday they had exposure of the schools in North Morrow County.

The program this year was based on last year's itinerary.



Centennial Middle School students Kyle Standing, Brittany Goss, Ashley Michel, and William Blackmore.

Organizers say that Centennial should be around for another 10-18 years.

Kyle Standing, 14, Portland, is the son of Susan and John Standing. He has two older sisters.

"My parents told me that there would be rolling hills, but I didn't expect them to be actually rolling. There is a lot of land," comments Standing about the scenery. "It's hot, and there are no trees. People here don't know what boring is. I like my family a lot, we hit it off. I've met a lot of people."

Brittany Goss, 13, Portland, is the daughter of Shari Lundeen and Eric Goss. She has a younger sister, Danielle.

"I like it here. People in Portland are so worried about looks, and here they aren't," says Goss. "It seems like I have met

the entire town, and every body's related it seems like. People here are really nice. Heppner is in the middle of nowhere. It seems so far from everything. I just wish that I could have met the eight graders here, but they are all in Portland."

Ashley Michel, 13, is the daughter of Pam and Scott Michel. She has a younger brother, Colby.

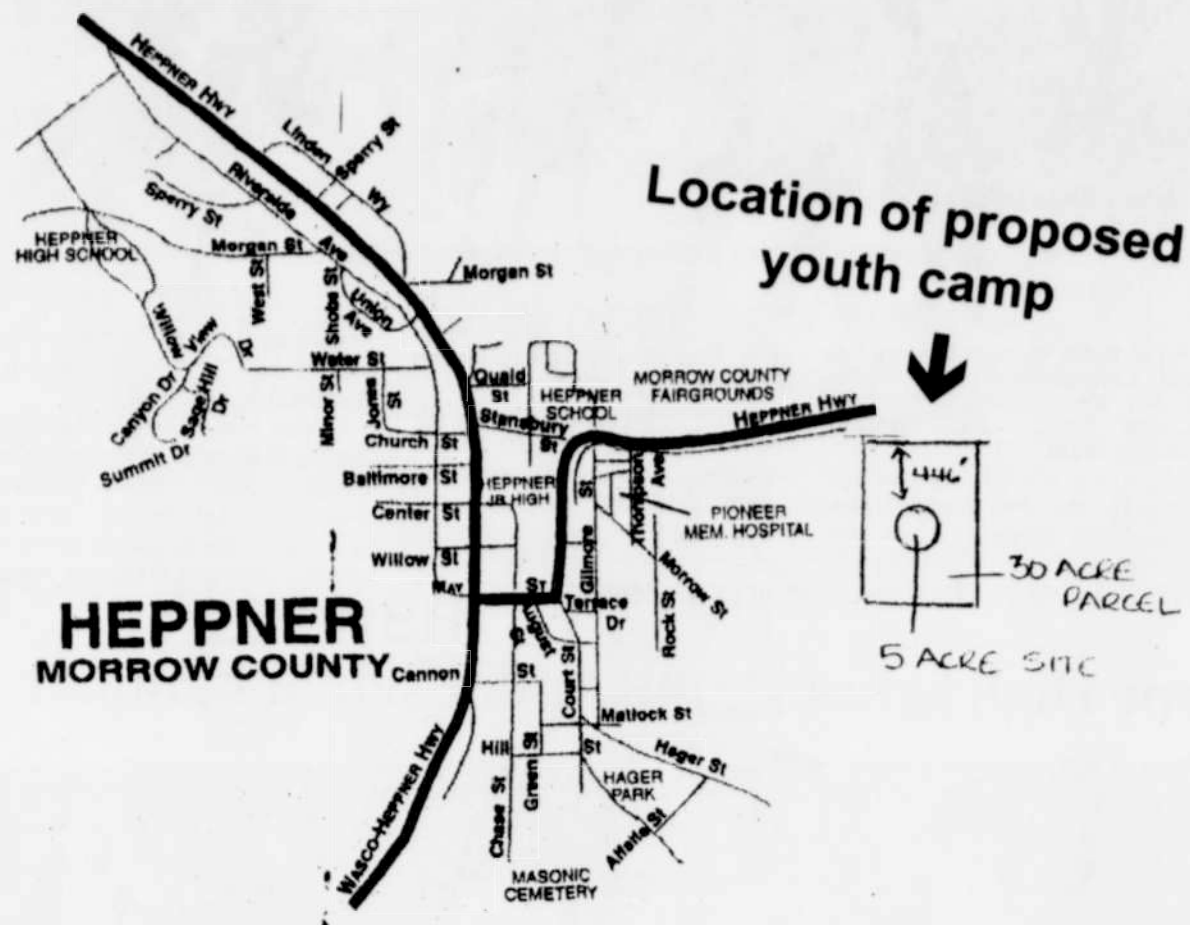
"I like it here," says Ashley. "But I would go crazy. It's too quiet. There is a lot of gossip, people would just tell you stuff. I like my family, they are really nice. I thought it would be awkward at first, but it wasn't at all. It was like I already knew them."

William Blackmore, 13, is the son of Charles and Sheryl Blackmore. He has a younger brother, Matthew, an older brother, Cheyenne, and an older

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Youth boot camp proposed for Heppner

Two sides don't agree on facts



Neither those in favor or those against the proposed Youth Accountability Camp in Heppner seem to be able to agree on the facts surrounding construction and operation of the camp if it is indeed put here.

Oponents of the boot camp say city and county officials have not been open with the public about the cost, future expansion, and the impact on the community the camp will bring.

City and county officials say there are no hidden costs, that future expansion of the camp will be controlled by local people, and that the camp will bring needed economic benefit to the Heppner area.

A group calling itself "The Friends of Heppner" held an organizational meeting at the home of Mike Armato last Wednesday. The group which also includes Terry and Karen Thompson, and John and Diane Kilkenny of Heppner, have already gathered over 200 signatures against the camp and are sponsoring an informational meeting Thursday, May 7 at 7:30 p.m. at the St. Patrick's Parish Hall in Heppner. They also have a question and answer advertisement in this week's newspaper.

The group hopes to pressure officials to withdraw Heppner's application for the camp. The state siting committee has recommended Heppner for the camp, however, final approval has not been given.

Backers of the boot camp so far have already held four public meetings and hearings on the camp, and are sponsoring a question and answer advertisement in this week's Gazette-Times.

Both groups talked to the Gazette about the camp during the past week.

John Kilkenny said that Friends of Heppner requested that all documentation relating to the application be sent to them by the state. Letters, documents and a video tape were sent to them.

From the documents and other correspondence Kilkenny says that the county has committed far more money to the project than has been told to the public. Kilkenny says letters show that the county has estimated a road to the boot camp site will cost at least \$72,000 and maybe more, and the Port of Morrow has been committed to more construction cost that has been announced.

"We are worried for the future of this town," Kilkenny said. "We don't want for this town to be know as a prison town. We have a lot to offer and we don't need this prison here."

Kilkenny said people are scared about locating the boot camp here, and that his group believes the camp will swell from the proposed 52 to 350 inmates within 10 years.

Financially Kilkenny said that the county has already said the road to the site will cost \$72,000 and that there are hidden costs for the county, city and port through the use of public works crews.

"Fifty thousand. That's it.", Morrow County Judge Louis Carlson said Monday about the county's cost toward construction of the camp.

Carlson said the \$50,000 will come not from tax money, but from tippage fees, or money the county receives for use of the big landfill in the county.

Carlson said the project is budgeted at \$30,000 for property purchase (the proposed 30-acre site is owned by Don and Merlyn Robinson), and \$20,000 for road construction.

Carlson says the Port of Morrow has agreed to installation of new water and sewer lines to the site, but does not include purchase of the pipe. The Oregon Youth Authority, which runs the camp, will purchase the pipe and the pump to pump water up to the site.

As far as economic development Carlson said the camp will bring 36 to 38 new jobs to Heppner, with about 50 to 69 percent hired locally. He gave an example of some of the jobs that will be available including a cook's job paying between \$1,500 and \$2,225 per month; a support service accountant and purchasing agent that would be paid between \$1,618 and \$2,100 per month; or a group life coordinator that is paid from \$1972 to \$2617 per month. All jobs are state jobs with full benefit packages.

Carlson also said Blue Mountain Community College has agreed to set up classes to train local people who want to enter the correction field. He also said CAPECO has some job training programs with federal money for tuition available.

Oregon Youth Authority requires apprentice training for the higher paid jobs at the facility. "They will take trainees and place them in a facility somewhere in Oregon," for their training Carlson said.

"My number one goal is not jobs, however," Carlson said.

He said that there are not enough tools available now in juvenile court, and that there is inadequate facilities at this time for a certain class of kids.

"There are certain types of kids

that are taken from bad home situations, and out of peer pressure situations that don't need to go to McLaren type facilities," Carlson said. He said McLaren sometimes only makes borderline in trouble kids more hardened, and that the boot camp facility is just what they need to turn themselves around. "Professional people in juvenile departments and children's services agree that this concept, of a boot camp, appears to be one of our better tools to bring kids around," he said.

Kilkenny says that there could be escapes from the camp, and points to a recent incident where three young people escaped from an Idaho youth correctional center and were arrested after a week-long crime spree in Eastern Oregon, including first-degree robbery, kidnapping and weapons charges. The three boys ages 14 to 17 allegedly held a Unity man at gunpoint and stole his pickup truck. They also allegedly burglarized a house and stole two pistols, cash and a van before being caught. Although the Idaho facility they escaped from was not the same as proposed for Heppner, Kilkenny and others says that is exactly what could happen here if a boot camp is built here.

"The fear that kids 14 to 18 years old will break out of the camp is a horrible indication that we are frightened of our own children," Carlson points out. "So we say not in our backyard. Let someone else take care of our kids. These kids are in their formative years and they can go either way. At this boot camp they learn skills and discipline, and how to respect authority."

One section of the city's application submitted for the youth facility has opponents particularly upset. On the question of expansion the city writes: "The city of Heppner would not only be willing, but would also be excited to help accommodate future expansion of a YAC (Youth Accountability Camp) facility."

Carlson says the way zoning will be set up for the site, any future expansion of the facility would have to be approved by the county planning commission before it could happen. It was also pointed out that the reason 30 acres was needed, when the camp would occupy only about 5 acres, was the road to the facility and a water tank that will be needed to be built on the site.

News deadline
 5p.m. Monday

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