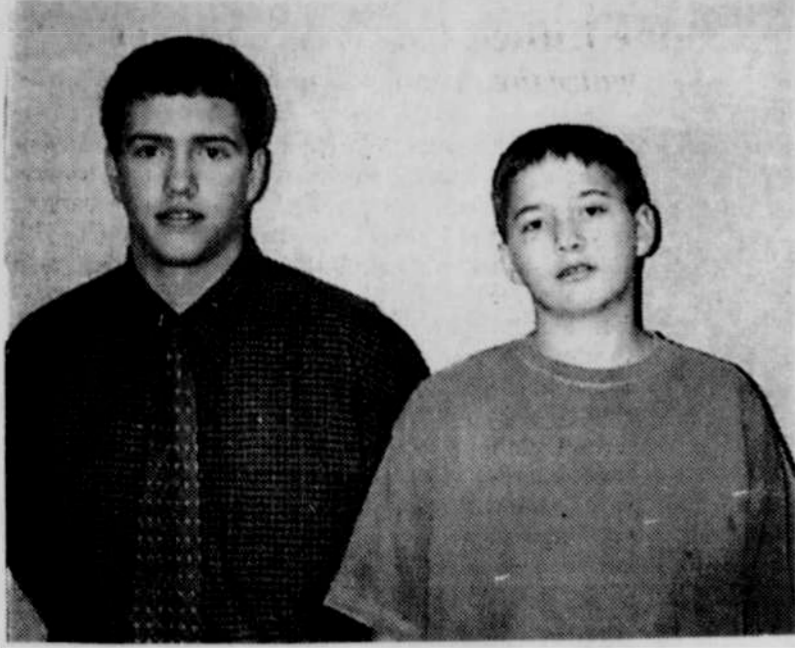


Local boys safe after Willow Lake boating accident



Brandon (left) and Matt Young

A Heppner area family has much to be thankful about this Christmas--their children are safe and sound after a frightening incident at Willow Creek Lake.

Sunday, December 12, Brandon Young, 16, and Matt Young, 14, the two older sons of Bruce and Debbie Young, decided to go duck hunting in their boat on the lake. Around 11 a.m., the wind started to come up, so the boys decided to pick up their decoys and go home, when a flock of ducks flew overhead. The boys knew that it wasn't legal to shoot out of a boat with its engine running, so they turned off their motor to take a shot. Just as they had done so, a wave and a gust of wind blew up at the same time.

The boat had a duck blind built up on one side which acted like a sail and the boat overturned, throwing the boys in the water and trapping their 1-1/2 year old golden retriever, Max, underneath. The dog was able to escape when the boys climbed on the overturned boat, but then the boat sank and the boys' heads were above water. "At first I thought, 'Oh, shoot, my shotgun,'" said Brandon, "but then I realized it was more serious than that. I wasn't really that scared at the time. I just figured we needed to get to shore."

Luckily, the Jim Geer family from Hermiston watched the scene from the shore and immediately called 911. Brandon, who had chest waders on, was afraid the waders would weigh him down, so he tried to remove them, but as he loosened the belt, the waders began to fill up with water. Miraculously, they didn't completely fill up till Brandon was near shore and both boys made it in safely, as did

Max. Once they got to shore, they wrung out their clothes, put them back on for a little protection and put the dog on top of them to keep warm.

The EMT crew arrived on the scene by the time the boys started swimming, but the rescue took a little longer. Because there is no rescue boat in south Morrow County, the rescue workers had to break into the Corps of Engineers' shed at the lake to get a boat. They also had to cut a cable to be able to get to the south side of the lake where the boys were.

In the meantime, the boys' parents were rushing to the lake from their home up Willow Creek about 30 minutes away. They had learned of the accident from Debbie's parents, Les and Jan Paustian, Heppner, who listened to the report on their scanner and called them in a panic. When the Youngs arrived at the lake, they were told the boys were okay, but had already been taken to the Pioneer Memorial Hospital where they were treated for hypothermia. The water at the lake was around 38 degrees and the boys' temperatures had dropped to the mid-80s, said Debbie.

Debbie says that the family is grateful that all they lost out of the ordeal was a shotgun and a work coat.

The incident didn't sour the boys on hunting on the lake. In fact, Brandon, who is a junior at Heppner High School, says that he and Matt, an eighth grader at Heppner Junior High, will definitely go duck hunting again. But, he added, in the future, "We'll make sure it's a calm day and put on our life jackets as soon as we get into the water."

The Youngs are the first ones to donate to a fund to buy a rescue boat for Willow Creek Lake.

Ground breaking ceremony held for Ione UCC



Dot Halvorsen and Brenna Rietmann break ground for the new United Church of Christ building in Ione while the Rev. Paul Clay looks on.



Diana and Lindsay Kincaid cut the ribbon to the lot where the new Ione United Church of Christ will be built.

St. Patrick's holds dinner, children's pageant

St. Patrick's Catholic Church held its annual Christmas dinner and children's pageant on December 19.

The attendance was the "best seen in many years," said a church spokesperson.

The St. Patrick's CCD classes kindergarten through eighth grade performed the Christmas play, "The Greatest Gift of All."

All children participated and there were special speaking parts by Laurie Murray, Jackie Meyer, Meg Armato, Nacho Elguezabal and Kelly Straley. Gospel readings during the play were done by Tanner Britt, Luke Murray, Kyle Huddleston, and

Chewy Elguezabal.

Christmas carols were sung during the play and guitar accompaniment was provided by Faith Healy. The play reminded the audience that the greatest gift of Christmas was the life and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The program ended with a special visit between the children and Santa Claus.

The family of Jack and Gwen Healy, three generations worth, and many others assisted in making the potluck dinner a big success. Kay and Mike Proctor and family donated the decorations and beautiful Christmas tree.

Open house set at Hermiston circuit court

Judge Jeff Wallace, on behalf of the Sixth Judicial District of Umatilla and Morrow counties, invites the public to an open house at Hermiston Circuit Court on Thursday, December 30, between 3-5 p.m.

"Judge Wallace voices the Sixth Judicial District's commitment to offering the citizens of Umatilla and Morrow counties suitable court facilities," said a news release. "As a result of the steady 'West End' growth, the judges, county commissioners and the trial court administrator have answered the need for courtroom enhancements at the Hermiston Circuit Court."

"He would like to commend all those that have served as jurors, as well as the attorneys that appear in his courtroom, as they have been very patient with the remodeling project that began last May, coupled with the fact that the Hermiston Circuit Court is a small facility that the West End is quickly outgrowing."

Though there has not been any addition to the square footage of the building, the changes have resulted in the ability to conduct 12-person jury trials for felony and civil trials without having to schedule hearings assigned to the

West End's circuit court to be heard in one of the Pendleton circuit courtrooms. The previous courtroom layout would only accommodate six-person jury panels."

"He states that the West End County Facilities Study Committee and the Umatilla County Commissioners are hard at work on developing a comprehensive plan in the hope that in the early years of the new millennium the Hermiston Circuit Court will relocate to a larger facility that will better serve the West End needs. Until that goal is realized, the Sixth Judicial District will continue its commitment of doing the very best to provide a partnership with the community for justice and public safety."

Hermiston Circuit Court is located at 243-B East Main Street. For more information, contact Judge Wallace's office at 541-567-5225, ext. 225.

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We will be closed on **December 24-25**

December 31st - Friday
NEW YEAR'S EVE CRAB FEED. Also serving Baron of Beef. Dinner will start at 6:00 p.m. Music starts at 9:00 p.m. with Full Tilt Audio. Party favors and special commemorative champagne glasses will be handed out. Elks members and out of town guests only, please.

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