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Gazette times

VOL. 123 NO. 39 8 Pages Wednesday, September 29, 2004 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Mush?



Alaskan dog sled runner/racer Doug Ruzicka

Heppner Elementary students and teachers learned some fascinating information Monday. They now know that you can be a "musher", but that real mushers never say "Mush." (He usually says, "Hike.") They learned how many dogs can pull a sled, what happens if you spit in 50 degree below zero weather, what 50-degree below zero temperatures do to unprotected hands, how you can protect those digits from said conditions and how you wipe your nose while running a dogsled.

The kids and teachers were fascinated with the answers (you can have as many as 26 dogs pull a sled, but in the Iditerod race you must end up with at least five dogs, spit freezes in mid-air, hands freeze all the way through if you don't wear mittens, you wipe your nose with the fur-covered back of your mitten) and much more information supplied by real-life dogsled runner/racer Doug Ruzicka of Anchor Point, Alaska, who spoke to the entire elementary school assembled

on the playground. Ruzicka, who was born in Nebraska and raised on a corn and soybean farm, said he discovered Alaska after he started driving truck right out of high school. He began running a dogsled team shortly after he moved to Alaska 13 years ago, but only fairly recently got involved in racing, after some of his children became interested, and has raced in the famous Iditerod dogsled race.

Ruzicka demonstrated his sled, unfortunately without the benefit of his sled dog, which was stolen while he was on the road visiting classes in Nevada, and told the kids how he keeps the dogs from running away with the sled if he happens to fall off, which happens often, he said. He also showed the parka, boots, mittens, flashlight and the cooking/heating pot that he uses while running his dogs. He reported that the night before when he called his wife, his town had received its first snowfall, in contrast to the very warm autumn day

in Heppner. Ruzicka says he normally spends about nine weeks each spring and fall traveling throughout Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah and Idaho visiting schools, but says he needs to spend more time at home and plans to cut back to only spring tours. He and his wife have six children, ranging in age from two to 25 years. One of his sons recently returned home after spending 15 months in Iraq.

Local teacher to go to Afghanistan

Heppner Junior High School teacher David Melville emptied his desk, packed up his papers and pencils, and the photo of his wife and young daughter and spent his last day at HJH Monday.



David Melville during last day at Heppner Junior High

Heppner City Hall now open on Main Street



Heppner City Hall employees Alice Ployhar (left) and Rene Devin man the desk at the new city hall building at 111 N. Main Street in Heppner. The city hall is now located at the old Klamath First bank building.

Drug investigation leads to arrest of locals



Morrow County Sheriff Verlin Denton with seized marijuana plants

A Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team (B.E.N.T. Drug Task Force) investigation led to the seizure of a large number of marijuana plants from two commercial size marijuana growing operations in South Morrow County and the arrest of three individuals on Friday, Sept. 24, according to Morrow County Sheriff Verlin Denton.

The first grow operation was located at the home of Michael Duane Stahl, 43, and his wife, Shari Lynn Stahl, 38, of 63317 Meadowbrook Farm Lane in the town of Lexington. Some 132 marijuana plants were seized from several locations inside the residence, outside storage buildings, and from open air locations on the Stahl property. The grows which were located inside the residence and in the storage buildings were equipped with artificial lighting systems, or "grow lights," commonly used in indoor

marijuana grow operations, said the MCSO. Also located in the residence was a quantity of finished product, a set of scales, marijuana smoking pipes, and other paraphernalia, said MCSO.

Several hours after dismantling the marijuana grow at the Stahl residence, B.E.N.T. detectives went to the home of Jered Lee Wicklund, 28, of 380 Union Street, in Heppner. Detectives discovered an indoor marijuana grow operation in the crawl space of Wicklund's residence. The crawl space of Wicklund's residence contained two grow rooms, each containing numerous marijuana plants in individual pots. A total of 247 plants was seized from the Wicklund crawl space, MCSO said.

The crawl space had been excavated and otherwise modified to facilitate the two room growing operation. The two grow rooms were each equipped with grow lights

which were hard wired into the residence's electrical system. In addition to the grow lights, numerous pots, bags of fertilizer, and other items were found. Several ounces of finished product were located in the living area of the residence, according to MCSO.

Morrow County Sheriff Verlin Denton responded to the Wicklund residence and assisted detectives in dismantling the grow operation and later disposing of the almost 400 marijuana plants. Marijuana growing operations were nothing new to Sheriff Denton, who spent a number of years as a narcotics investigator prior to being elected as sheriff of Morrow County, he said.

The suspects in these cases were not lodged in the jail facility as jail space is in short supply, said Denton, and they were not considered to be a flight risks. Both cases will be referred to the office of the Morrow County District Attorney David Allen. The task force will recommend that the suspects be charged with Manufacturing and Possession of a Schedule I controlled substance, marijuana. A pound of marijuana sells for between \$300 and \$1,000 dollars depending the quality, said MCSO. MCSO estimates that a mature marijuana plant will produce from one to two pounds during a growing season.

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