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Gazette Times

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Industrial park purchase from Port moves closer to reality

Following a meeting last Wednesday a deal to purchase the South Morrow Industrial Park (formerly Kinzua Mill) from the Port of Morrow by Western Sates Land Reliance Trust (WSLRT) moved a step closer to reality.

WSLRT has proposed to buy the site and restart the co-generation plant to produce electricity from wood and other waste. The trust has also said it plans to bring in additional businesses interested in using the low pressure steam left over by the facility to grow or manufacture other products.

Wednesday the Port appeared to hammer out the final kinks in the deal that will see the property leased to WSLRT for up to two years until it could be purchased for around $10 million from the Port.

The two years are needed to monitor water quality in Willow Creek to satisfy requirements of the Department of Environmental Quality. After satisfactory monitoring the DEQ would issue a "no further action" letter that clears the way for WSLRT to purchase the property.

At the annual meeting of the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group Jan. 26, featured speaker Dan Desler of WSLRT, said he wanted to get a lease established soon so his group could begin development and operation of the industrial park. Desler, whose group has environmental experience from working with other abandoned mill sites, said he saw no problems with eventually getting the DEQ clearance.

Desler mentioned a veneer plant, glue lamination company, mushroom growing operation and an ethanol plant as some of the businesses he has already been in contact that are interested in the site.

Following the port meeting, several port members said they hoped to have a signed lease agreement with WSLRT in a couple of weeks, and possibly receive the first lease payment by the end of February.

New sculptures adorn HHS walls

New sculpture located in stairway when leaving HHS gym.

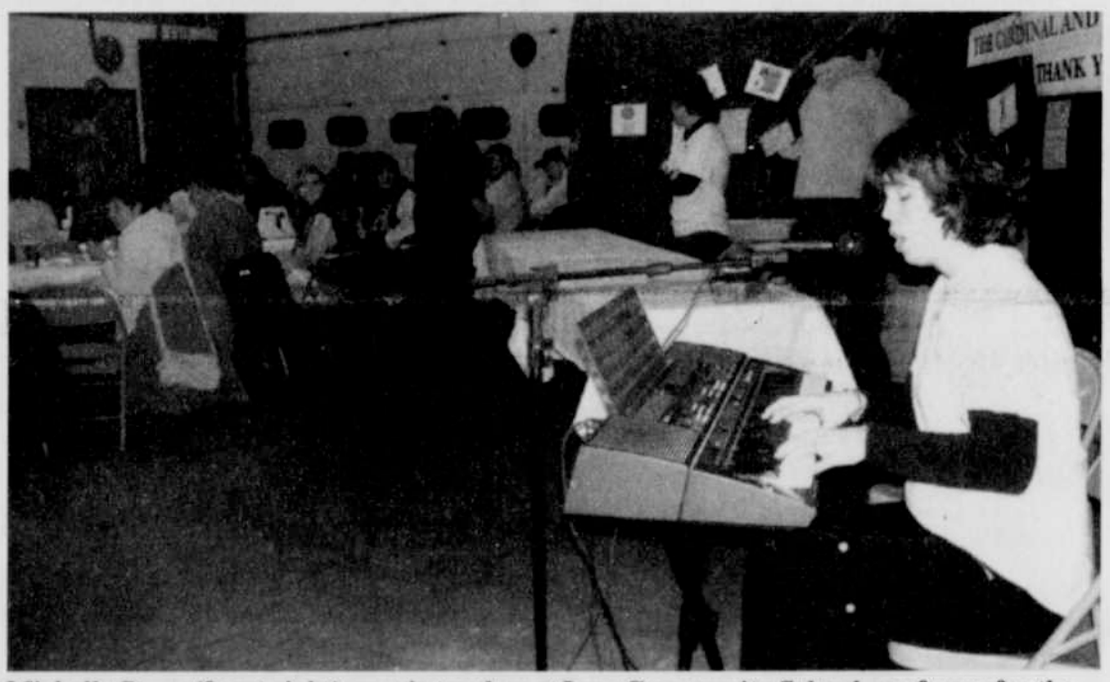
Two new sculptures have been added to the wall of Heppner High School. The first is a new mascot, made of steel, of a blue horse with a flowing blue and yellow tail. It was unveiled during the HHS game versus Irrigon. The second sculpture is also made of steel and features a waterfall and scenery.

The pieces were made by artist James Montgomery from Gresham. He works out of his home, but also displays his work in galleries in and outside of Oregon.

The work is funded by the student body, the Heppner High School Booster Club, which is applying for a grant and community members who have donated toward the project. HHS Principal Daye Stone saw Montgomerty's work on display at South Wasco High School and took a group of student leaders, including student body president Laurie Murray and student body publicity director Heather Rill, to see the artwork there. They liked it and commissioned Montgomery to do the work for HHS.

New Mustang mascot located in the Heppner High School gym.

Combined Ione- Heppner Booster Club dinner deemed a success



Michelle Stone (front right), music teacher at Ione Community School, performs for the attendees of the annual combined Ione and Heppner Booster Clubs Dinner.

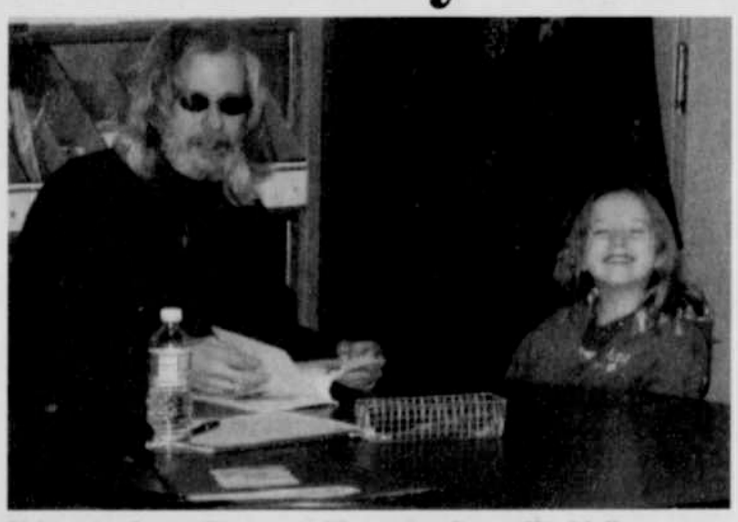
The combined Heppner and Ione Booster Club dinner, held on Feb. 4 and sponsored by Morrow County Grain Growers, was a "huge success," said Lynn Dee Ramos, Cardinal Booster Club president. Diners enjoyed a steak and salmon dinner, along with live entertainment, a raffle and an auction.

Approximately 275 were served at the dinner and many stayed to participate in the raffle. An impromptu auction was also held, with the left over steak and salmon being auctioned and a bike, which had been won in the raffle, donated back for the auction.

Performances for the evening began with Amy Jepsen playing the harp and later, Michelle Stone, Ione Community School music teacher, played the keyboard and sang several songs.

Monies raised will be split between the Heppner Booster Club and the Ione Booster Club. The Booster Clubs, along with Morrow County Grain Growers, plan to keep this an annual event.

Community volunteers make reading program successful



Volunteer James Pappas, with reader, Becca Waddell.

The SMART (Start Making a Reader Today) program is continuing strong at Heppner Elementary School. The program, which has been at HES for the past three years, currently helps 36 students in the kindergarten through third grades. Thirty volunteers from throughout the community take an hour each week on Tuesdays and Thursdays to read for a half-hour at a time with two separate students.

The program is to help give a little boost to the readers, as well as the build a love of reading. "Children learn to read in kindergarten through third grade and afterwards, have to read to learn," explained SMART coordinator Barb Moore. Volunteers don't teach the students to read, but lend the encouragement to create strong reading habits.

Along with the time spent with adults reading, the SMART program provides each child with two books a month of their choice.

The students also have the chance to work on their accelerated reader goals during their SMART reading time. Each student has a set goal of books to read, and after they read each book, they take a short test on it to review the book.

The SMART readers have also been working on completing a project of choosing the "Top Book." Each year all of the SMART coordinators vote for their favorite books and a committee chooses a "Top 10" list, which the students then have a chance to read the books on the list and then vote on them. After all the student votes are tallied, a top book is chosen and each student gets a copy of that book. Voting is still in progress.

On Tuesday, Jan. 31, the HES SMART group held a special presentation, where they awarded volunteer Kelly Vanderwalker with the Volunteer of the Semester award. Vanderwalker put in three extra hours over all the volunteers.

Volunteers are always welcome and currently the program is looking for at least three extra volunteers to serve the children. If you can't volunteer your time, there is also the opportunity to donate to the program. The program is funded by private donations and by business sponsorships. Wilcox Furniture has been active in sponsoring the program throughout Morrow and Umatilla counties.

If you have questions, you can contact Barb Moore, SMART coordinator, at Heppner Elementary School at 676-9128.

Volunteer of the Semester, Kelly Vanderwalker, with reader, Jessy Wolford. Photo by Alita Nelson.

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