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School board to examine liaison program; district earns 'fantastic achievement reports'

The Morrow County School Board tabled a decision to eliminate the district's school-to-home liaison program until board members have a chance to discuss the program and alternatives at a May 15 work session.

Currently, the district employs non-certified staff to serve as liaisons between families, some of whom are Hispanic, and the schools. Liaisons targeted families with children who have problems with health, truancy or other issues. Superintendent Mark Burrows had recommended that the program, which was funded by Medicaid dollars, be eliminated. Instead the district would employ certified counselors in north Morrow schools to work one-on-one with students.

The recommendation was partially prompted by a reduction in Medicaid monies to only around $50,000. Retaining the liaison program and employing the counselors would cost the district too much, probably in the neighborhood of $200,000, said Burrows

Burrows, Windy River Elementary Principal Thad Killingbeck and A.C. Houghton Elementary Principal John Sebastian said at the meeting that they believe that full-time counselors at Boardman and Irrigon elementary schools would be better able to serve students and having both programs would be redundant.

MCSD English Language Learner director Joel Chavez, who supervises the liaison program, said at the meeting that he believed the program was important to Hispanic families and their children. Chavez told the board that if they eliminate the liaison program, they will probably see an increase in the district's drop-out rate. "Liaisons have been very effective in getting students back in school in Boardman," he said. However, he added that the program has not been as effective in Irrigon.

Additionally, the liaison program has run into other problems. At the meeting Monday night at Windy River Elementary School in Boardman, Elizabeth Melendez, who is employed with the district as a liaison and whose position will be eliminated, tearfully told the board that it wasn't her fault that another liaison and a counselor had visited boyfriends away from school during school hours. "I'm a mother," said Melendez. "I just want you to be aware of what's going on in the schools."

Burrows said he had received an anonymous letter to that effect, but as per policy, the district does not act on anonymous complaints.

After the meeting, board member Berto Hernandez, Boardman, who was the lone dissenter in a vote to eliminate the liaison program and reduce the staff, told the Gazette-Times that he believed the "problem was bigger than that."

"Everybody agrees we have some problems," board member Bill Kuhn told the Gazette later. "Maybe we have the wrong people, maybe we're not paying them enough, maybe it would be more effective with a different program." What became apparent and what prompted tabling the issue until more research, said Kuhn, was that administrators were not unanimous in their assessment of the program's effectiveness.

Burrows said at the meeting, and Kuhn reiterated later, that most of the district employees who will be displaced as a result of eliminating the liaison program, including Melendez, will be rehired in different positions with the district. The elimination of the program will not affect Chavez' job as ELL director, Burrows said.

In good news for the district, Burrows reported that district received "fantastic student achievement reports." Burrows said that district students have already exceeded their scores last year and credited teachers, administrators and assistant superintendent Wade Smith for the good reports. Burrows said the district is looking forward to the school report cards this year. "I'm really, really tickled," said Burrows.

Burrows also said that a job fair hosted by the district was very successful and the district came away with some very good recruits.

In other business, the board:

-learned that the state legislature approved the use of lottery monies for schools, with approximately $180,000 earmarked for the

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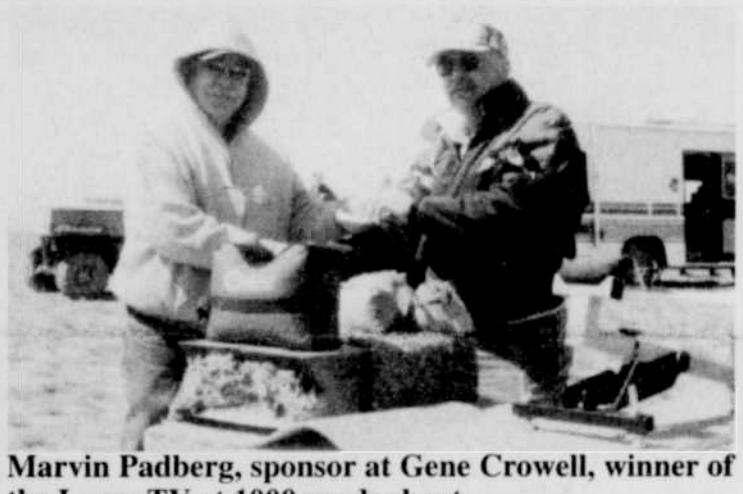
Sixth annual TV shoot winners announced



Marvin Padberg, sponsor at Gene Crowell, winner of the Large TV at 1000 yards shoot.

Jason Friend, winner and Lindsay Kincaid, sponsor for the Small TV at 1000 yards shoot.

Rick Barnett, winner and Loyal Burns, sponsor for the Sign Shooting Contest at 500 yards shoot.

The 1000-yard TV shoot was well attended and supported. Much appreciation goes to all those who helped make the day successful.

The 1000-yard winner was Gene Crowell. Crowell had to have a shoot off with Rick Barnett, but came out the winner. Crowell donated the prize back to the committee for the 4th of July children's prizes.

The winner of the small TV shoot at 1000 yards was Jason Friend. Lindsay Kincaid sponsored this event, with a prize of $100. Rick Barnett was the winner of the Loyal Burns sign-shooting contest. Pat Thompson and Pat Schmitt made the clay pigeon course.

The sponsors were JVB Dairy- John and Janna VandenBrink; Jeff Thompson and Pat Schmitt; Magnum Opus; Rainbow Café; Morrow County Grain Growers; Bob Hubbard; Jordan Elevator Company; J.L. Kincaid Ranch; Wheatland Insurance; Justin and Stacie Miller; Del LaRue; Colliers Market; Pub 212; Bachman Paving; Bill Breshears; Steve's Pump Service; Taylor's Restaurant; Tom and Arlynda Gates; and Loyal Burns.

Heppner City Council passes amendment to allow parking of trucks off street

The Heppner City Council passed and the mayor approved an ordinance to amend a Heppner City Code to allow parking of trucks off street at their May 8 council meeting.

The code was amended with the following language, "A truck without a load that is not a semi-tractor truck (a truck designed to haul a trailer) or a semi-tractor truck without a trailer may be driven to the residence of the owner of the truck for the purpose of parking or for minor repairs. The truck must be parked off-street. Minor repairs are repairs that can be accomplished without the use of power equipment."

An emergency was also declared so the ordinance would be in full force and effective immediately.

In other business, Larry Mills asked the council for permission to use the city park for overflow during Cycle Oregon in September. The council approved the use.

Members of the council will walk through the sewer plant and fire station on Tuesday, May 16.

No action was taken on creating a policy for use of city facilities for religious functions. The discussion stemmed from recent use of City Hall for a National Day of Prayer meeting.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Heppner students celebrate Prom

Heppner High School students celebrated their Prom on Saturday, May 6. The Prom Court included: (Front Row): King Dan Basile and Queen Laurie Murray; (Middle Row L-R): Abby Key, Heather Yocom, Heather Rill and Brittney Herbison and (Back Row L-R): Peter Geer, Rory Kilkenny, Matt Van Cleave and Mikel Britt.

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