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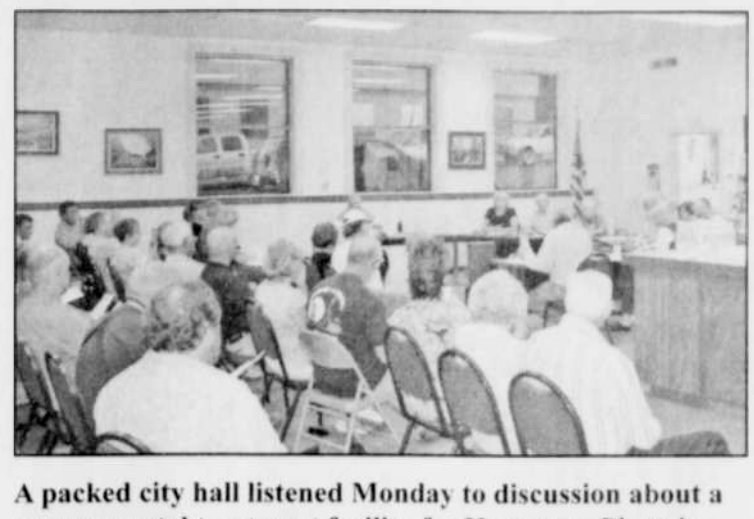
Council gives nod to mental treatment facility

By David Sykes

The Heppner City Council voted five to one Monday in favor of locating an eight-bed secure mental health facility in Heppner.

The vote was the end of a process that saw council discussions, a public meeting and even tours of a similar facility in an effort to bring out public opinion on locating the facility here. In the end the council saw little public opposition, and lots of opportunity, and voted in favor.



A packed city hall listened Monday to discussion about a secure mental treatment facility for Heppner. *-Photo by David Sykes*

The meeting started with members of the audience standing to give statements to the council and the audience. There were six positive comments and five negative. The negative comments ranged from "the facility will cause people not to locate in Heppner," to "it would be a danger to the community." The positive responses centered around the economic decline in Heppner, the loss of jobs and businesses and the economic benefit and the jobs the facility would bring.

After testimony the council was polled with five council members, Judy Buschke, JoAnn Burleson, Kay Robinson, John Bowles and Cindy Doherty saying they had heard little opposition from the public and were in favor of the facility, with Keith Lewis saying he was against. A later vote on a motion to allow the facility to site in Heppner drew the same number.

One particularly vocal opponent of the facility, Denise Goebel, asked that before the council voted there be a show of hands from the audience either for or against. Twelve voted against the facility and 31 in the audience raised their hands in favor. There were also letters of support from the Heppner Chamber of Commerce, the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group, Morrow County Health District and the Morrow County Grain Growers.

Following the vote, a builder who constructed a similar facility in Umatilla said it takes 10 months to have the facility up and running, and that it needed to be finished by June of 2009. A site in Heppner has not been selected, but developers are in the process of looking now.

"I am happy we have let the secure facility come here, and I think we have made the right decision," Mayor Les Paustian said at the end of the meeting.

Four Morrow County schools fail to meet No Child Left Behind standards

By April Sykes

Morrow County School District Superintendent Mark Burrows told the board at its regular meeting Monday night in Irrigon that four schools in the Morrow County School District did not make the federal No Child Left Behind adequate yearly progress (AYP) standards.

Burrows said that Heppner High School, Riverside High School in Boardman, Windy River Elementary in Boardman and Irrigon Elementary School did not meet the federal standards. According to Burrows, a school must achieve 60 percent passing in each subgroup, such as special education or English language learner, for the school to pass. If one subgroup is deficient, he said, then the entire school does not make AYP.

He said that in all four of the schools, either or both of the English language learner and special education populations did not achieve the standards. "This is the first year these schools didn't make it," said Burrows. "They all made it last year. They don't give you credit for progress." He said that all other subgroups at the schools, such as poverty and race, did meet the standards and the population of each school as a whole also met the standards.

This year the standards went up with 60 percent of the subgroups having to pass benchmark exams, up from 50 percent last year.

Burrows said that while Heppner High School did not achieve the federal AYP, it will still probably be classified as an "Exceptional School" by state standards. He said that only three special education students at Heppner High School did not pass the AYP standards, but that was enough to result in HHS not passing.

He added that the percentage of students making the board achievement goal, in which each student will make or exceed gains prescribed by Oregon state grade level standards, rose significantly compared to 2006-07. Ten percent more students achieved the writing standards, 14 percent more achieved the reading standards and 18 percent more achieved the mathematics standards.

Also at the meeting, Rhonda Lorenz, deputy clerk, announced the change in insurance plans to Oregon Educators Benefit Board (OEBB). She said that the certified employees' (teachers) plans were very similar to what they had previously. The classified employees plans will see some changes and their rates are expected to go up, Lorenz said. She said that information on the plans has already been sent to school district employees by the state and added that she is mailing rate information to the employees this week.

In other business, the board:

-passed a resolution approving the six percent PERs pickup for employees.

-learned from Burrows that the district deeded over a 350-square foot piece of property for the proposed ODOT road changes near Heppner Elementary School for $350.

-heard an administrators' report on Irrigon High School.

-approved the 2008-09 substitute teacher pay at $150.16 per day.

-accepted the following resignations/retirements: David Chavez, Irrigon High School assistant custodian; Mike Burrows, A.C. Houghton Elementary head custodian; Lea Mathieu, Riverside High School language arts teacher; Josh Browning, Heppner Junior High School language arts teacher; Petra Payne, HHS Talented and Gifted program coordinator; Judy Daniels, Irrigon High School ed assistant.

-approved employment for: Virgil Hausinger, IHS assistant custodian, replacing David Chavez; Jeff Whitbeck, ACH assistant custodian, replacing Virgil Hausinger; Andrea Nelson, HJHS language arts/social studies, replacing Josh Browning; David Norton, Heppner Elementary/HHS counselor, new position; Sharon Hindman, Irrigon Elementary assistant cook, replacing Lea Nunamaker; Mark Christiansen, IHS art teacher, replacing Ray Davis; Darlene Snyder, Sam Boardman Elementary head cook, replacing Kathy Hyder; Jennifer Hackett, SBE assistant cook, replacing Bonnie Matlack; Alice English, IJHS counselor, re-

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Royalty runs in the family for MC Fair and Rodeo Queen Becky Schiller

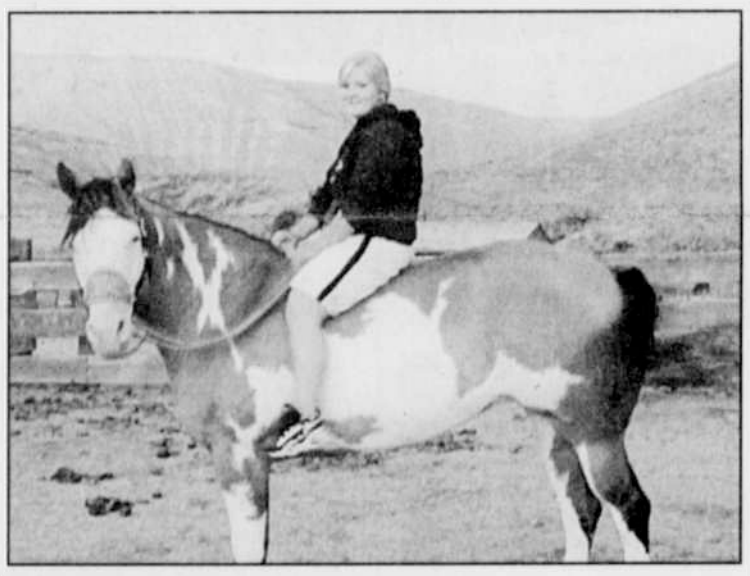
By Autumn Morgan

Not everyone can say that royalty runs in the family. But in Becky Schiller's case, she can.

Schiller comes from a long line of rodeo royalty, serving on the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Court. Her Aunt Verina was a princess and a queen, her Aunt Bonnie was a princess, and Aunt Bobbi was a pennant bearer. Also, her cousin Maci Childers was a princess and queen, and her cousin Genia Grant was a princess as well. Schiller herself was a princess last year and was a one-time pennant bearer. Members of her family have also served on the rodeo board.

Last year Schiller was a princess on the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Court. "Last year was fun," said Schiller. "I like the Morrow County Court." Schiller enjoyed her time as a princess so much that she wanted to be queen this year. So this year, she applied and was named queen.

Schiller enjoys doing the running because she enjoys working with the horses. "I'm looking forward to our home rodeo and riding the cow," said Schiller. She will be riding a paint horse named Peanut that owned by Katie Thompson.



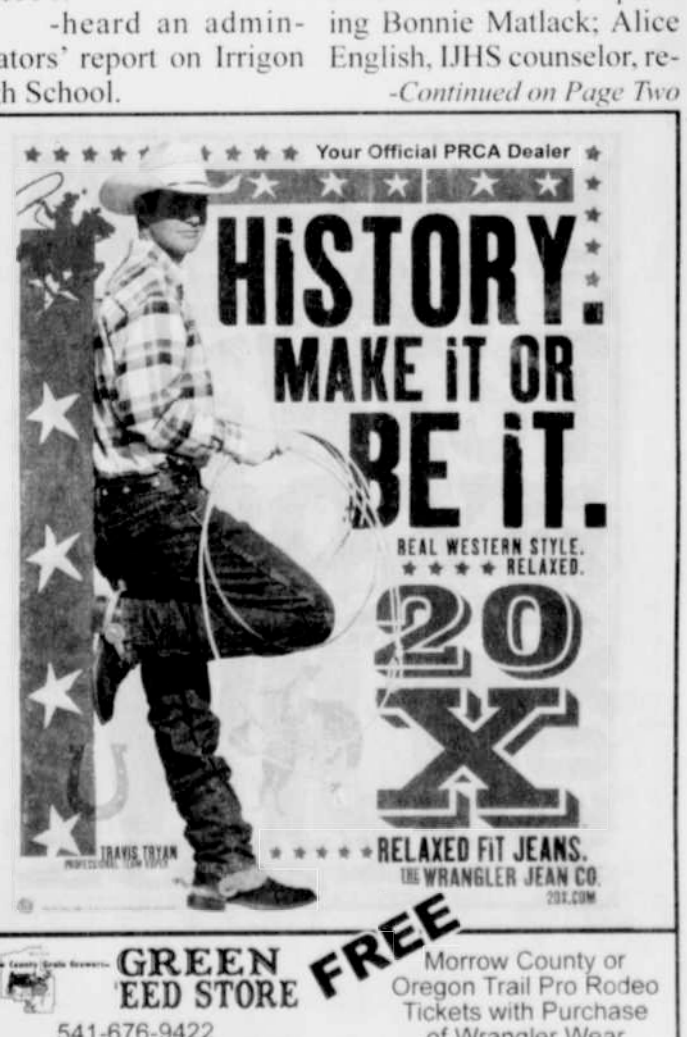
Queen Becky Schiller continues the family tradition of serving on the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Court.

She is the daughter of John and Shari Schiller. She has two older brothers, Jess and Pat. Having lived in Morrow County all her life, she was raised on the Vey Ranch on Butter Creek.

Schiller, who graduated in 2007 from Pilot Rock High School, is attending Blue Mountain Community College where she is studying to be a dental assistant. She has been working this year at Vey Ranch, helping her father with the haying.

Firefighters help with fair and rodeo preparations

Heppner Volunteer Firefighter Jay Keithley lights the hill side a blaze at the fairgrounds preparing for the Morrow County Fair & Rodeo event. Local volunteer firefighters donate many man hours to our community. *–Photo by Sandy Matthews*



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