

HES announces October Students of the Month



Pictured are Heppner Elementary School's Students of the Month for October. Top (L-R): Rylee Bray, Tristan Coles, Reiah Waite, Jacee Currin, Kami Holtz, Mason Lehman, Hunter Nichols, and Jackson Lehman. Bottom (L-R): Cade Arbogast, Maddie Lindsay, Ryan Smith, Faith Jones, Sydney Qualls, and Tim Jaca. —Photo by David Sykes

Communications minor provides more options for students

Communication skills are important to the viability of any job and Eastern Oregon University is offering a new minor that will help students hone these skills.

Courses began this fall under the direction of April Curtis, professor of theatre and speech, and Neil Gustafson, associate professor of media arts/journalism at EOU.

"Communications is arguably the most popular major offered by American universities," Curtis said. "EOU's minor is a multidisciplinary program that offers a great deal of choices. It's exciting because students can decide what they want to pair it with."

Curtis researched 42 different colleges and universities similar in size and structure to EOU and formed a Communications Minor Task Force. The goal was to develop a program

that would be of the most benefit to students at EOU.

Curtis and Gustafson believe the task force accomplished its goal.

"April and I had good help on the committee established to form the minor," Gustafson said. "Cori Brewster from English/writing, Greg Monahan from history, and David Komito, director of academic technology, all pitched in. We also had good cooperation from professors of other disciplines, including Richard Croft from computer science/multimedia and Bill Grigsby from sociology, who agreed to allow us to include their courses in our offerings."

The minor includes courses from speech, sociology, multimedia and writing. In addition, there are elective options from the business and media arts colleges. Two-thirds of the courses are offered on cam-

pus while the remainder will be delivered online.

"For the student whose interest is in people, this program is ripe with skills for speakers and leaders," Curtis said. "It can be used in so many fields. If the student is a business major for example, this minor can help prepare him or her to work for a corporation where group presentations are common. Whether preparing a multimedia production, speaking from a lectern or in front of a small group, or writing pieces for publication or broadcast, these courses provide the knowledge and skills necessary for success."

To find out more about the communications minor, call the Admissions Office at (541) 962-3393, or at (800) 452-8639, or e-mail admissions@eou.edu. April Curtis can be reached at acurtis@eou.edu.

USDA announces amended Farm Bill provisions and new sign-up deadline

Larry Frey, executive director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Oregon announced that owners and operators of farms with 10 or fewer base acres now have the opportunity to receive payments for the 2008 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program (DCP).

"President Bush recently signed into law a bill that made amendments to the 2008 Farm Bill," said Frey. "These amendments apply to farms with crop acreage bases of 10 acres or less and to the new Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) Program. These changes and clarifications allow some producers more flexibility in farming practices and create new sign-up opportunities with new deadlines for some farms."

As originally enacted under the 2008 Farm Bill, direct and countercyclical payments (DCP) could not be made with respect to farms with crop acreage bases of 10 acres or less. The new law makes that provision inapplicable for the 2008 crop year. Related to this, producers on a farm with 10 acres or less of base may now, under the new law, enroll their farms until November 26, 2008, in the 2008 DCP program. This extension of the original September 30 deadline only applies to producers who were previously excluded because of the minimum acreage requirement. USDA began issuing payments to producers on farms with 10 base acres or less who had already enrolled in the DCP program soon after the President signed the new law.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will now

resume allowing reconstitutions for farms with 10 acres of base or less according to normal reconstitution rules and policy. Eligible producers may sign up for DCP at any FSA office or enroll on the FSA website at: www.fsa.usda.gov/dcp, click on Access eDCP Services.

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) Changes

Under SURE in the 2008 Farm Bill, producers seeking disaster benefits must generally have obtained crop insurance or coverage under the Non-insured crop disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for all crops on all farms. Under the new law (P.L. 110-398), producers with crops that had 2009 crop insurance sales closing dates before August 14, 2008, may pay a fee through January 12, 2009, to participate in SURE. Producers may make their SURE participation fee payments to their local FSA office at this time.

The SURE program fee is equal to the fee for catastrophic coverage. Payment of the SURE program fee will not make the producer eligible for insurance coverage.

Producers also have a new minimum loss threshold under SURE. Under the new law, to qualify for payments, there must be a production loss of at least 10 percent for at least one crop of economic significance on the farm.

Under the SURE program, the new law provides that when a second crop is planted after the first crop was prevented from being planted, or if such first crop failed, the second planting will not count toward the SURE program guarantee or

total farm revenue. This is true except in areas where double-cropping is a normal practice. Producers also are not required to purchase crop insurance or a NAP policy for the second crop.

By provision of the new statute, the purchase of insurance or a NAP policy for grazed acreage is no longer a requirement for the SURE program. However, such insurance is required as a condition for payment for the livestock feed program, tree assistance program and the emergency livestock, honeybees and farm-related fish programs.

In addition, the new law amends SURE eligibility so that crop insurance or NAP coverage is no longer required for crops that are not of economic significance or those where the administrative fee required to buy NAP coverage exceeds 10 percent of the value of the coverage.

Producers can contact their local FSA office for more information regarding SURE program implementation.

NAP (Non-Insured crop disaster Assistance Program) Application Deadline Changes

NAP application closing dates for the 2009 crops have been extended to December 1, 2008. This extension for 2009 NAP applies to those crops having an application closing date prior to December 1, 2008. This extension was authorized due to the late enactment of the 2008 Farm Bill and to accommodate those applicants wanting to participate in disaster assistance programs under the 2008 Act's Supplemental Agricultural Disaster Assistance for their 2009 crops.

Wheat marketing ed workshops set at OSU Extension offices

A statewide wheat marketing education workshop via Polycom video will be held this Thursday, November 13, at the Morrow County Extension Service conference room, 54173 Highway 74, in Heppner beginning at 8 a.m.

Conferences are also set at the Umatilla County Extension Service Conference Room 100 A, at Umatilla Hall, Blue Mountain Community College campus, Pendleton; the Gilliam County Extension Service conference room, 333 South

Main Street, Condon; the Gilliam County Grain Quality Lab conference room, Industrial Park, Arlington; or the Wasco County Extension Service, 400 E. Scenic Drive, The Dalles. Other workshops have been set up at various sites throughout the state.

The OWGL, BMCC, and participating OSU Extension offices will once again produce and host this workshop for wheat producers throughout Oregon with the latest information on marketing

trends and techniques.

The special guest this month is Richard Meeks from Pendleton Grain Growers who will speak on fertilizer prices, what they have done, what they may do depending on usage and exports. A question/answer period will follow.

Those planning to attend should call their local site to RSVP attendance and confirm their participation in the call.

For more information call the OSU/Morrow County Extension Service, 541-676-9642; OSU/Umatilla County Extension Service, 541-278-5403; OSU/Gilliam County Extension Service, 541-384-2271; Gilliam County Grain Quality Lab, 541-454-0227; OSU/Wasco County Extension Service, 541-296-5494; or Sally Christensen, Oregon Wheat Growers League, 541-276-7330.

Farm Service county committee election ballots to begin

Darcy Vial, county executive director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Morrow County announced that the 2008 FSA county committee elections have begun, as ballots are being mailed to eligible voters. Dec. 1 is the deadline for eligible voters to return ballots to their local FSA offices.

"The FSA county committee system is unique among government agencies, because it allows producers to make important decisions concerning the local administration of federal farm programs," said Vial. "I urge all eligible farmers and ranchers, especially minorities and women, to get involved and make a real difference in their communities by voting in this year's elections."

Committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on disaster and conservation payments, establishment of allotments and yields, producer appeals, employing FSA county executive directors and other local issues. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in FSA programs. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm, can also vote. Agricultural producers in each county submitted candidate names during the nomination period held last summer.

Eligible voters who

do not receive ballots in the coming week can obtain ballots at their local USDA Service Center. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 1. Newly elected committee members and alternates take office Jan. 1, 2009.

Nearly 8,000 FSA county committee members meet monthly at more than 2,300 FSA offices nationwide. Each committee consists of three to five members who serve three-year terms. Approximately one-third of county committee seats are up for election annually.

For more information about FSA county committees and FSA programs, visit: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

NAP December 1 deadline approaching

Darcy Vial, county executive director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Morrow County today reminded producers that the application deadline date for the 2009 coverage on fall seeded crops under the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) is December 1, 2008.

"In order to be eligible for disaster assistance programs, like Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program or SURE, producers are required to timely purchase, at a minimum, catastrophic coverage for all insurable crops and/or NAP coverage

for all non-insurable crops on their entire farm," said Vial.

According to Vial, NAP was designed to reduce financial losses that occur when natural disasters cause a catastrophic loss of production or prevented planting of an eligible crop by providing coverage equivalent to catastrophic (CAT) insurance. Statute limits NAP to each commercial crop or agricultural commodity, except livestock, for which CAT is not available.

Crops with a December 1 deadline include beets, cabbage, canola, camelina, carrots, Christmas trees, flow-

ers, greens, herbs, onions, radish, alfalfa, asparagus, clover and legumes, grass, hops, meadowfoam, mixed forage, small grains, sugarbeets, fruit and berry crops, chestnuts, grapes, hazelnuts and walnuts.

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. NAP coverage for 2009 costs \$250 per crop, but not more than \$750 per producer per county, or not more than \$2250 total per producer for all counties

Producers who already have coverage on 2008 NAP crops may choose to continue coverage on the same crop or crops for 2009, if the applicable service fee is submitted by the application closing date. A new CCC-471, application for coverage is not required to be signed when applying for continuous coverage of the same crop or crops.

For more information on NAP and other USDA programs, contact your local USDA Service Center or FSA County Office at 541-676-9011 ext. 2.



Real Estate

By DAVID SYKES

REALTOR


CONVERTIBLE MORTGAGE

In addition to the well known adjustable and fixed rate mortgages, buyers can also choose from two new variations of them.

Convertible ARM's are adjustable rate mortgages that can be converted into fixed rate loans. Their rates are only a little higher than regular ARM's, but you can convert them into a fixed rate loan without paying high refinancing costs.

Biweekly mortgages are fixed rate mortgages, but instead of one payment a month, you pay half as much every two weeks. So you actually pay the same as 13 monthly payments a year -thus paying off a 30 year loan in 20 years 9 months, and saving a great deal of interest. These mortgages, not yet available everywhere, are increasing in popularity.

With all the varieties of mortgages, you should choose the type that best meets your needs. We work very closely with your mortgage lenders and can help advise you.



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