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County OHV park usage on the rise

By David Sykes

Since its opening in 2003, the Morrow County Off Highway Vehicle Park 35 miles from Heppner on Highway 207, has seen a steady increase in visitors and usage, chair of the Morrow County Parks Board Betty Gray told the Heppner Chamber of Commerce last week.

Gray said usage went from 4726 visitors in 2003 to 33,798 in 2009. She also pointed out that this year's usage will probably set a new record with visitors already numbering 21,942.

Revenue is also up with the park taking in $63,646 between March and Dec. 2009. Gray also released figures for the county's two other parks, with Anson Wright taking in $16,533 and Cutsforth Parking grossing $26,532. "We had a good year at all the parks last year," Gray said.

Gray said many people around the state and from other areas are already booking stays for this year. "Hunters like to have the same campground, and we have a big clientele from the Tri-Cities," she said. There are also visitors from Canada.

Gray said the pond at Cutsforth Park has been fixed and restored. It had washed out but was now ready for fishing. There is also a new restroom and two new cabins at Cutsforth, as well as a new sidewalk, fencing and new campsites.

The OHV Park has three ponds, Anson Wright has a pond and she said all the parks are being stocked with fish.

The county keeps getting grants to improve the OHV Park, and Gray said they have so far received over $6 million in grants. Most of the matching money from the county has come in the form of in kind services such as use of equipment and labor. She said there were quite a few volunteers who help upgrade and keep the 8,000 acre park looking and operating well. She said one of the reasons the county gets so much grant money is that Morrow County is the only county in the state that does not have a state park.

HHS stage transforms into "Wonderland"

Members of the Heppner High School Drama Club rehearse a scene from "Wonderland." Performance dates are April 28 and 29 at 7 p.m. and April 30 at 8 p.m. in the HHS cafetorium. *–Photo by Autumn Morgan*

Boardman interchange bridge deck repair scheduled for June

The Oregon Department of Transportation has installed signs along Interstate 84 near the Boardman interchange announcing bridge work in June that will include closing the Main Street Bridge in downtown Boardman.

The overpass bridge is scheduled to be closed for up to four weeks, starting around the first of June to facilitate a bridge deck resurfacing project. Pedestrian access will be maintained during the closure and the freeway ramps will remain open. Motorists needing to cross from one side of the structure to the other will need to detour to the I-84 Exit 165 interchange. The closure is needed to ensure the project is completed as quickly as possible and to facilitate curing of the micro silica concrete used for bridge deck resurfacing.

"The bridge was built in 1965 and the deck is in poor condition with damaged section and exposed rebar in some areas," said ODOT Project Leader Tim Rynearson. "The work is needed now before more extensive repairs are required, which could lead to greater impacts and longer, more costly delays."

ODOT has been working with the City of Boardman and held a public meeting regarding the project in February. Members of the public who gave input favored the work taking place during the month of June, compared to the later summer months when freeway traffic can be busier.

"ODOT is aware there will be inconveniences to Boardman citizens and the travelling public," Rynearson said. "Our goal is to get the work done as quickly as possible and minimize the impacts."

The bridge project is expected to be under contract in May. Additional updates will be issued prior to the scheduled June bridge closure.

Project information is available by contacting Rynearson by phone at (541) 963-1364, or by email at Timothy.w.rynearson@odot.state.or.us.

Second annual Ione Hall of Fame induction ceremony to be held

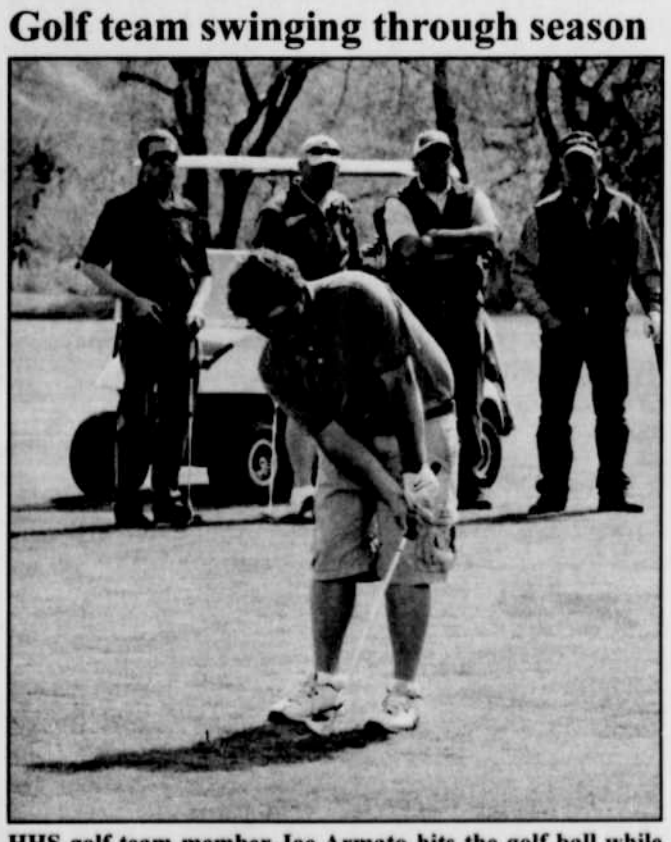
The second annual Ione Hall of Fame induction ceremony and Hall of Fame Dinner will be held Saturday, October 2, at the Legion Hall in Ione. Area of nomination will include State Champions, All State, Academic, Citizenship, and outstanding Civic achievements.

This is the second year of the Ione Hall of Fame. Last year 52 members were inducted into the Ione Community School Hall of Fame. This year the nominees will be from 1922 to 1970.

This is to honor outstanding individuals who, through their exceptional achievements, have brought honor to themselves, Ione High School, and the Ione Community. The committee will accept these nominations until May 3. Nomination forms can be found on the Ione Community School website under Booster Club. Nomination forms can be submitted to Jeri McElligott, president of the Ione Booster Club or Betty Gray, Ione Hall of Fame Committee.

Further information will be announced in the future. For more information contact Jeri McElligott at 541-422-7257 or Ryan Rudolf at 541-422-7131.

Golf team swinging through season



HHS golf team member Joe Armato hits the golf ball while supporters of the HHS Golf Scramble keep a close eye on him. *–Photo by Sandy Matthews*

Merkley to hold Morrow County town hall

Oregon's Senator Jeff Merkley will hold a town hall meeting at the Port of Morrow in Boardman on Saturday, May 1, at 1:30 p.m.

He will update constituents on his work in Washington, DC and answer their questions and invite their suggestions about how to tackle the challenges facing Oregon and America.

"Advocating for Oregonians is my number one responsibility," Merkley said. "I invite all residents of Morrow, Umatilla and Baker Counties to meet me and discuss what we need to do to get Oregon working again and strengthen America."

In 2008, Merkley pledged to hold town halls in each of Oregon's 36 counties every year. He upheld his pledge in 2009 and is quickly advancing it in 2010. Morrow, Umatilla, and Baker Counties will be his twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-second town halls of the year.

Health district board approves nearly $9 million proposed 2010-11 budget

By April Sykes

The Morrow County Health District Board, at their Monday night meeting in Lexington, approved a proposed $8,885,206 budget for the district for the 2010-11 fiscal year.

The budget includes over $5 million in anticipated revenue from Pioneer Memorial Hospital, $888,751 in Pioneer Memorial Clinic revenue, $471,661 in Home Health and Hospice revenue and $383,786 from the Irrigon Clinic. Anticipated revenue for the Boardman Ambulance service comes in at $217,891and revenue from the Irrigon Ambulance service at $383,786. Tax revenue was estimated at $1,136,804.

MCHD Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney said that next year's budget includes a four-percent rate increase district-wide, except for the swing bed facility, which is tied to Medicare rates.

Projected expenditures include $4,791,191 for PMH; $902,761 for PMC; $601,521 for Home Health and Hospice; $302,501 for the Irrigon Clinic; $262,145 for the Boardman Ambulance and $125,061 for the Irrigon Ambulance.

The proposed expenditures also include $859,571 in revenue deductions and bad debt; $590,000 in capital purchases; $149,890 in long-term debt principal reduction and $80,000 in capital lease principal reduction.

Out of the $590,000 in proposed capital purchases, the district plans to purchase a lab analyzer at $13,000, a car as per a scheduled replacement at $16,000, a black flow device on the main water line into the hospital at $6,000, a remodel of the PMC reception and lab area at $30,000, concrete steps and ramp at PMC for $25,000, architectural services for "phase1" of the proposed Irrigon Clinic expansion at $50,000-all with cash on hand; and a CT scanner replacement at $590,000 to be purchased with loans, grants and cash.

This year's budget is $439,570 over last year's adopted budget with $8,445,636 in resources, including over $1 million in tax revenue.

At the meeting, CEO Michael Blauer introduced Darryl Denison, new physician's assistant at the Irrigon Medical Clinic. "I'm thrilled to be there," said Denison. "I've wanted to be there about two years. It's a dream come true." Dr. Kenneth Wenberg had been the provider at the clinic.

The board discussed a proposed remodel of the Irrigon Clinic and Blauer stressed the importance of having a stable provider at the clinic. Blauer and the board concurred that community involvement is crucial in working toward that goal of improving the clinic.

In other business at the meeting, the board:

-learned from board Chair Larry Mills that the district will not receive monies from the county's needs and issues fund. Mills said that the monies, received from tippage fees, are "just not there". He said that the reduction in funds is due to a reduction in garbage. He said that the economy and conservation result in fewer garbage fees. "The big thing is the lack of construction," added board member LeAnn Rea, who is also a Morrow County Commissioner.

-discussed fixing the basement at the administrator's home, which is owned by the district. The flooring in the basement is mainly concrete, said Blauer.

-approved credentialing for Dr. Roger Blair, a radiologist, and Dr. Larry Adams, a pathologist, who have consulting privileges with the district.

-approved the district's mission statement, which includes the district's mission, vision, values and strategic goals.

-approved surplusing several unused items.

-received the following financial report; The district received $599,512 in gross patient revenue for March with $142,085 in revenue deductions, $95,521 in tax revenue and $15,493 in other revenue for $568, 441 in total operating revenue, with $596,202 in total operating expenses and a $10,700 non-operating gain for a $17,060 loss for the month and a $1,188 average monthly year-to-date gain. Mahoney said that gross revenue was up for the month, however a very high contractual adjustment to Medicare, in the amount of $55,000, resulted in a loss for the month.

-received the following report: Pioneer Memorial Hospital had 10 admissions in March, four swing bed admissions, 13 admitted for observation, 479 outpatients, 76 emergency room encounters, 1743 lab tests,149 x-ray procedures, 25 CT scans, 26 EKG tests, two treadmill procedures, three endoscopy procedures, 116 respiratory therapy procedures; Pioneer Memorial Clinic had 523 patient visits with 46 new patients, 51 seen by a nurse and nine no-shows; Irrigon Medical Clinic had 183 patient visits with 25 new patients, 36 seen by a nurse and 15 no-shows; Heppner Ambulance had 20 page-outs with 17 transports for $23,948 in revenue, Boardman Ambulance had 34 page-outs with 13 transports for $15,653 in revenue, Irrigon Ambulance had 20 page-outs with 11 transports for $11,802 in revenue; Home Health had 93 patient visits; Hospice had one admission ; pharmacy had 1,540 drug doses for $58,939 in revenue.

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

At the MCGG GREEN FEED STORE in Heppner:
Buy any Women's Wrangler Jean or shirt & get $5 BACK by mail (May 1 - May 9, 2010)
Mother's Day is May 9th!
Now in stock Montana Silver 20% OFF
Hanging basket planters & Color Bowls 15% OFF
Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed
242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)