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Gazette Times

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Umatilla and Morrow county nonprofits receive more than $45,000 from PGE employees and retirees

Portland General Electric employees and retirees are doing their part to support local nonprofits in Umatilla and Morrow counties. During the company's annual Employee Giving Campaign, more than $45,000 was raised for 24 Umatilla and Morrow county organizations, including area schools, community groups and service organizations serving those in need.

PGE employees set a new record, raising more than $1.65 million (including PGE's 50 percent match) for community organizations throughout Oregon and southwest Washington in 2010. A total of 63 percent of all PGE employees made donations to 926 nonprofits, nearly doubling the employee-giving national average of 35 percent.

"The Employee Giving Campaign is one of our key employee-led events each year and no matter what the state of the economy, PGE employees and retirees continually increase their generosity to those in need," said Dave Robertson, vice president of public policy, PGE.

United Way of Umatilla and Morrow Counties topped the list of recipients this year with donations totaling more than $15,000 to help fund local health and human service programs.

Other local recipients include: Hermiston Agape House, Hermiston High School, Humane Society of Eastern Oregon - Pet Rescue, Ione Education Foundation, Ione School District, North Morrow Community Foundation, OSU Umatilla County Extension Service and Vange John Memorial Hospice.

During the annual Employee Giving Campaign, PGE's 2,700 employees and more than 1,000 retirees can designate any charitable nonprofit or accredited school to receive their pledges, and PGE matches their contributions by 50 percent.

Since the company match program began in 1998, PGE and its employees and retirees have contributed more than $13.7 million to their communities through the campaign.

Forest Service plans thinning project

The Umatilla National Forest, Heppner Ranger District is beginning planning for a 70 acre commercial thinning project in Wheeler County about 52 miles from Heppner, the district recently announced.

Called the Radar Commercial Thinning Project, the district plans to use a commercial timber sale to thin trees that are diseased and heavy mistletoed. No tree more than 21 inches in diameter will be removed.

"A history of fire suppression has created dense, overstocked stand conditions that are favorable for insect and disease outbreaks and severe wildfire effects", the district said.

The thinning project is located in the Buckhorn Creek watershed.

MCPW taking on Cutsforth Park funding opportunity

Morrow County Public Works Department (MCPW) is applying for a Local Government Grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. This grant will aid in the funding of water, electrical and accessibility upgrades at Cutsforth Park. This project will allow for improvements to primitive campsites, and ADA accessibility. This project is expected to take approximately one year to complete if there is no unexpected inclement weather or unforeseen situations.

Cutsforth Park is a favorite among the three county parks. MCPW strives to offer many upgraded sites with power, water, ADA accessibility, and sidewalks while accommodating as many campersaspossible.Further development will help meet the public's request for more accessibility and amenities at the park.

Letters of support of this project will help enhance MCPW's grant application. If you would be willing to support this grant please contact: Kirsti Cason, Morrow County Public Works Department, P.O. Box 428, Lexington, Oregon 97839. You may also send letters via e-mail to mcparks@co.morrow.or.us – Subject: 2011 LG Cutsforth. For more information call 541-989-9500.

Mark your calendars for annual St. Patrick's celebration

Heppner's 29th annual "Wee Bit of Ireland" St. Patrick's Celebration will be held March 17-20 and the Heppner Community is getting the town ready to celebrate.

The weekend will include, just to name a few, family flags hung throughout the town, Heppner Chamber's Irish Amateur Boxing event, KUMA coffee hour and CEILI, with lots of singing, laughing and celebrating. You will find Leprechauns throughout the city and will have a chance to stop by and Kiss the Blarney Stone. Check out the Cruz-In Cars and save your spot to watch the Great Green Parade. Don't forget to take in the Sheep Dog Trials and sign up to participate in the Irish Bowling team competition. There will be plenty of Irish music and entertainment, local shops for shopping, food vendors and book, crafts and photography fairs. All of the entertainment (Tiller's Folly and Old Time Fiddlers, just name a few) is sponsored by the Morrow County Unified Recreation District and is free to the public.

So go ahead, mark your calendar and plan on participating in some good old Irish activities. The new schedule is being finalized and will be out soon, visit www.heppnerchamber.com or call the Chamber Office at 541-676-5536 for questions or to get a copy of the schedule.

WCVEDG to hold annual meeting

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group will hold their annual meeting on Thursday, February 17, at noon at St. Patrick's Senior Center.

Kurt Christensen, president of Renewable Ag Energy based in Ontario, OR, will be the speaker. He will discuss the purchase and operation of the power plant at the South Morrow County Industrial Park.

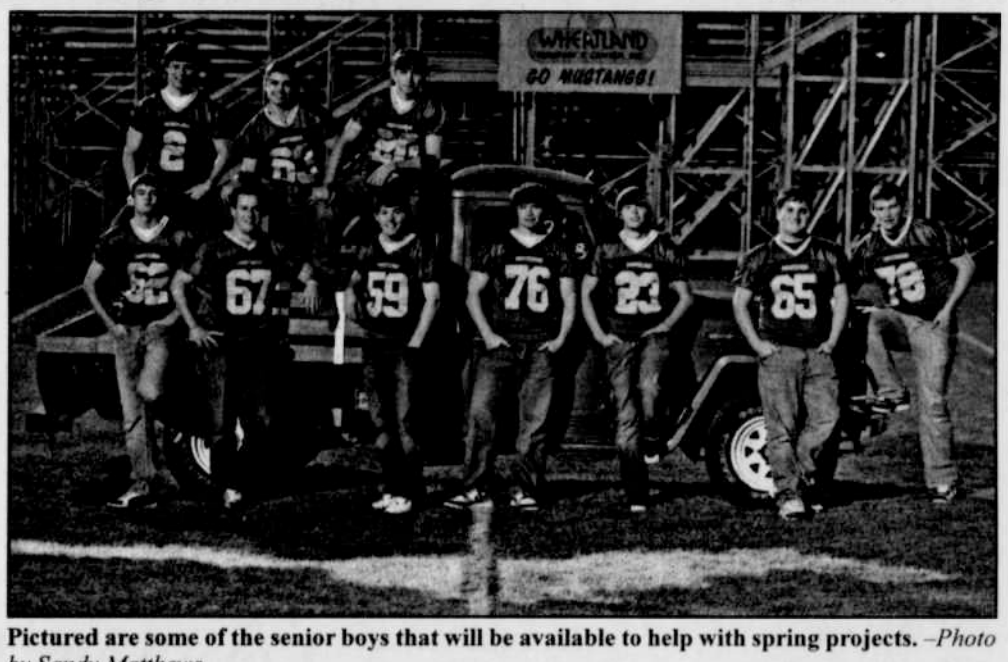
Renewable Ag Energy is a company formed after several years of research in the renewable energy field. Christensen and his partner Lance Wells were instrumental in the formation of a new Farmers Cooperative, Agri Energy Producers Association that operates in both Malheur County and in the Morrow and Umatilla county areas in Eastern Oregon. This cooperative was formed to produce Energy Crops for the purpose of creating electric energy in the local areas surrounded by the grower member's farms. This is the driving factor working toward the purchase and operation of the power plant at the north end of Heppner.

A hosted luncheon will be prepared by Sweet Productions. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP to Marcia Kemp at 541-676-2100.

Colt Wrestling Program holds first tournament

Leo Waite and Justice Petzoldt, members of the Colt Wrestling Program, work on their moves during their first tournament on February 2. *–Photo by Megan Futter*

Heppner seniors begin fundraising for all night drug and alcohol free party



Pictured are some of the senior boys that will be available to help with spring projects. *–Photo by Sandy Matthews*

Saturday will be the kick-off for fundraising for the after graduation drug and alcohol free party. Seniors will be auctioned during half time of the boys and girls varsity basketball games on Saturday, February 12. This auction is a major fund raiser for the seniors. They hope to raise over $1,500 towards the party's nearly $9,000 cost. The auction allows community members to bid on a day of work from two or more students. The students will be available on weekends to perform yard work, office work, painting, farming any reasonable task.

The class will also be selling Mustang water. The water will be in customized bottles and may be purchased by the bottle or case at different events in town. It will also be sold at Heppner Family Foods by the case. Mustang water will be available later in the spring with 100 percent of the proceeds going to the class of 2011 as the water has been paid for through local advertising and support.

This will be the fourth all night party held for the graduating seniors. Seniors arrive in the early evening to find food, inflatable structures for rock climbing, jousting, laser-tag, video games, massages, a casino room, and tables stacked with prizes. Every student receives prizes that are valued over $150 each. Most prizes are items that the graduates will use in college, including microwaves, mini fridges, laundry baskets and numerous other items. "It is not just the fun entertainment and prizes, but also the opportunity for the students to spend a last memorable time with their classmates in a safe environment. It is a perfect way to end high school," said a spokesperson.

Anyone interested in contributing (cash or prize) or to purchase water can contact Heppner High School may call (541) 676-9138. "Please attend the basketball game on Saturday and buy a senior or two to help with a spring project."

Road Bowling returns to St. Patrick's weekend

Heppner's Irish Road Bowling event will draw the St Patrick's Day weekend celebration to a close on Sunday, March 20.

Participants in this fourth-year event will gather on Sunday afternoon before the 1:30 p.m. activity commences. Participants must be eighteen years old or older.

This Irish sport that dates back to the 1600's was played in America by the Irish troops in West Virginia during the Civil War. In recent years, a resurgence of interest in the sport has developed in both Ireland and the United States. Heppner's event has gained popularity since it was first offered in 2006, and entries are limited. If you are interested in participating, entry forms are available at the Chamber Office and need to be filled out and dropped off with the entry fee ($5 per person - $20 team of four) so number of teams can be determined.

Teams of two to four members compete over a course of approximately one mile by tossing the iron- and- steel "bowls" that weigh 28-ounce and are slightly smaller in diameter than a tennis ball. The team that completes the course with the fewest tosses wins. The purse is then divided, with half going into the St. Patrick's weekend fund and half being divided among the top three teams. Names of the winning team's members will be added to the trophy that is on display in the City of Heppner office.

The starting point of the course will be determined and that information will be available at the Information Booth on Main Street on Saturday, March 18. Spectators are welcome at the event but are cautioned to remain a safe distance from the action because the bowls are heavy and have been known to break bones in unfortunate situations.

Don't forget to come by the chamber office and pick up an entry form. They will be available at the chamber office starting on Friday, February 11.

Deadline to file for special district position set for March 17

March 17 is the deadline to file for open special district positions on the upcoming ballot. May 17 is the date for the upcoming election for board members to fill the positions and terms for special districts in Morrow County. Petitions can be picked up at the Morrow County Clerk's office or from the state website at www.sos.state.or.us.

Boardman police chief resigns

Boardman city manager announced on Friday, February 4, the resignation of Boardman's Chief of Police John Zeiler. Chief Zeiler's last day will be March 3.

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