

Police arrest one in Irrigon break-ins

Morrow County Sheriff's Office is currently investigating a rash of vehicle break-ins in the Irrigon area.

One such attempted break-in occurred on October 5 in the area of Depot Lane and 8th St. West in Irrigon. The MCSO received a report of the attempt at 10:24 p.m. The dispatcher also received a report that shots were fired at the scene, but conflicting statements made it unclear who fired the shots.

A description of the suspect's vehicle was reported to 911; Sgt. Mark Pratt with MCSO attempted to stop the vehicle moments later on Paterson Ferry Rd. When the vehicle failed to stop, Pratt pursued the vehicle off the road and onto farm ground to the east of Paterson Ferry. Pratt then lost sight of the suspect vehicle among the crop circles.

Units from MCSO, Boardman Police and the Oregon State Police began a search of the area. Around 12:20 a.m. searchers located the vehicle near the Umatilla Army Depot fence, some four miles from Paterson Ferry Rd. The vehicle was abandoned, and foot tracks led onto the Army Depot property. Police sought and obtained permission to enter the depot and search for the suspect.

After an extended foot and K-9 search, no suspects were located. The vehicle used in the incident was identified as one that had been stolen in Irrigon during the previous 48 hours.

At 3:20 a.m., police received a lead that the vehicle's driver was at the Irrigon Circle K. Deputy Scott

Carter went to that location and detained 19-year-old Zachary Bartz. Bartz was then lodged at Umatilla County Jail on a number of charges.

Since October 1, MCSO reports that there have been 12 instances—with more coming in daily—of unlawful entries of motor vehicles. Unknown suspects have taken items from several of these vehicles. In one instance, a firearm was stolen.

In nearly all of these cases, the vehicles that were entered were left unlocked with valuables clearly visible through the windows. In at least one case, the keys were left inside the vehicle.

"MCSO reminds all residents to please remember to secure your vehicles and make sure to remove any valuables from the vehicles," said a statement by Undersheriff Steven Myren.

Police also said that, though an arrest has been made, the problem is not over.

"There was an arrest made in a similar case, but it is important to note that some of these thefts have occurred while that particular offender was lodged in jail," reported Myren. "It is believed that multiple parties are involved."

Due to the investigative status of these cases, no further information will be released, as it may compromise the ongoing investigation. MCSO is currently working a number of leads but asks that anyone with information please call the dispatch center at 541-676-5317. Informants can remain anonymous if desired.



Zachary Bartz

Heppner celebrates the blue and gold



Mustang cheerleaders revved up the home crowd at this year's Homecoming Week. —Contributed photo

By Andrew Bara

This year's Homecoming Week consisted of four fun-filled days, starting with Monday: Neon Day. During Monday's assembly, there was a contest that pushed classes to make the craziest hair-do with shaving cream and makeup crayons. Tuesday was Superhero Day. Wednesday this year included a mud dodge ball tournament, which was hosted at the rodeo grounds, rather than the previous years' mud tug o' war. Following this eventful tournament was a bonfire. Everyone said it was a lot of fun; the music and sound system by Dale Bates added a lot to the night.

Thursday was Blue and Gold Day. In the afternoon, each class deco-

rated a float to compete in the noise parade. Heppner also had a volleyball game against Pilot Rock; the JV girls won their match 2 out of 3, and the varsity won in a straight 3, dominating the entire match.

Friday, the football team fell to Enterprise 6-14, but picked up their feet and had a great night at the dance. The Homecoming Court was comprised of the couples of Cody Orr and Carrie Haguewood, Drew Brannon and Tayllor Gould, Cam Day and Natalie Rauch, Bryce Fowler and Tessa Gould, and Aidan Wright and Emma Osmin. The crowned Homecoming King and Queen were Drew Brannon and Tayllor Gould.

Rocket club plans public launches

Starting October 30, South Morrow Rocket Club (SMoRC) will host public launch days every other Sunday at the Flynn Ranch site.

The club will make a go/no-go call on the prior Thursday, based on the weather forecast for the weekend. The range will be set up for operations by 10 a.m. Launches will run until weather fatigue, motor exhaustion or 4 p.m., whichever comes first.

This site does not have any kind of 'comfort facilities' or extensive

parking, so SMoRC asks participants and spectators to travel light and plan ahead.

Other planned launch dates are November 13, and December 4.

New members are welcome to join this unique club.

"We need new blood," says club leader Pat Struthers.

For more information, call Pat Struthers at: 541-676-9158 or email him at patstr@uci.net.

Merkley, Wyden sponsor PO bill

A bipartisan coalition of Senators recently introduced the Protecting Rural Post Offices Act, which would require that a post office closure cannot result in more than a 10-mile distance between post offices. The bill is sponsored by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Jon Tester (D-MT), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Mark Begich (D-AK) and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

"In Oregon, 80% of the post offices on the potential closure list are more than ten miles from the next nearest post office. That is unacceptable," Merkley said. "Rural post offices are the hub of community life and an essential communications link. Post offices are the bedrock of rural communities. We must ensure everyone has access to a post office."

"The post office is

not only a place where people send and receive mail and packages, including mail-order prescriptions, but it is often central to the identity of a community where residents can congregate, meet with neighbors and, in Oregon, vote-by-mail," Wyden said. "If post offices in rural Oregon were closed, residents would have to drive, 20 or 30 miles one way to get to the nearest post office. This is a particular hardship for elderly and disabled residents. It is unreasonable to ask anyone to drive more than an hour round-trip to have access to a post office."

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is considering closing 3,700 post offices across the country, most of which are in rural America. In Oregon, USPS is considering closing 41 post offices.

St. Patrick's to hold fall festival

St. Patrick's Catholic Parish will have the annual children's fall festival on Sunday, October 16. The festival will begin at noon in the St. Patrick's parish hall.

Activities will include a hoop toss, fish pond, "name that saint" golf putting, dessert walk and bingo. The men of the Holy Name Society will be serving hot dogs, macaroni and cheese, chili, sauerkraut and chips. There will be a drawing for a fruit basket.

Proceeds from the event will be donated to the Roy Proctor Fund. All are welcome to join in the fun.

Men's breakfast October 16

Lexington Community Bible Church is hosting a men's breakfast on October 16 at 8 a.m. All local men are invited to join church members for a morning of food and fellowship.

Justice Court Report

Morrow County Justice of the Peace Ann Spicer has released the following Justice Court Report.

-Kyle John Vanderwalker, 19, of Heppner pled guilty to a charge of minor in possession of alcohol/open container. Total fines, fees and assessments were \$289.

-Kenneth Matthew Dixon, 29, of Heppner pled no contest to a charge of maintaining a dog as a

public nuisance. He was charged \$215 in fines, fees and assessments.

-Lindsay Anne Orem, 34, of Echo pled guilty to violating the basic rule by driving 84 mph in a 55 mph zone. Total fines, fees and assessments were \$257.

-Kirk Alan Looslie, 31, of Lexington pled guilty to MVA/providing a vehicle to an unlicensed driver. Fines, fees and assessments were \$156.

Storyteller provides thrills and chills



Award-winning storyteller Christopher Leebreck entertained young and old alike at his afternoon and evening performances at the Heppner Elementary School October 6. The sessions were sponsored by the Friends of the Heppner Library. —Contributed photo

County Court news

The following is provided by Commissioner Leann Rea.

The Morrow County Court met on September 28 in Heppner with Judge Tallman and Commissioners Grieb and Rea in attendance.

The court reviewed and approved the minutes of September 7, 2011. The court also reviewed and approved the voids, payroll payables, payroll payables monthlies and account payables in the net amount of \$93,651.92.

Land Use Board of Appeals Final Opinion & Order-Invenenergy Wind Noise Complaint: The Court reviewed the "Draft Final Opinion & Order" and requested some minor changes be made before they took formal action on the order. Some of the land owners and their attorneys requested that they be able to make comments regarding the order. They were told that no comments were going to be taken, this was the time set aside for the commissioners to take action on the Order, adding that the decision had been made at the earlier hearing after hearing all of the testimony.

Health Dept.: Director Sheree Smith reported to the court that one of her nurses had requested her hours be reduced from full time to a 0.9 time. Smith stated that she has another person that is willing to work 18 hours per month. This change would be a reduction of \$752.10 per year on the county budget. The court approved the request.

Road Report: Over the past couple of weeks the crew has finished repairing dust holes on Strawberry Lane, Juniper Canyon Road and Cutsforth Road. The pavement was cut and the soft spots were excavated under the pavement at the Bombing Range Road and HWY 207 junction. The area was patched with hot mix. Pot hole patching on Rippee Road, Root Lane, Olson Road, Columbia Lane out to the Wildlife area, Pleasant View Road, Rand Road, East 15th and East Oregon Lane was completed. Water was hauled to the Blake Ranch Road from Willow Creek Road to the main entrance into the Blake Ranch, the road was then graded. One grader has also been working on Upper Little Butter Creek Road (between Blake Ranch Road and Shaw Grade), and the Shaw Grade Road. One grader is also working on Upper Rhea Creek Road, and one on Ditch Creek Road. The crew is in the process of cleaning out the ditches along Willow Creek Road from just above Black Mountain Lane down toward Heppner. They are cleaning out all the rocks, mud and debris that had filled in the ditches during the earlier flooding. They have been using that material to fix other areas along the Blake Ranch Road. The crusher crew is continuing with crushing one inch road rock at the Halvorsen pit. Recently the crew started the Spring Hollow Bridge project. The old fences and corals have been removed and they are now working on removing some trees along the new right of way, trimming other trees next

to old bridge, and the contracted driller is currently drilling where the new road will be located to the new bridge.

Public Hearing: Road Vacation for a portion of Road Canyon Road: The hearing was opened; the Planning Director Carla McLane provided the staff report and stated that two of the three applicants had withdrawn their request to vacate a portion of Road Canyon Road. There was a discussion as to whether to go ahead with the hearing or find the application void because of the withdrawals. It was decided to go forward with the Public Hearing. Road Master Burke O'Brien provided additional information as staff stating that Road Canyon Road is one of only six access roads to the mountains. No one spoke in favor of the vacation action. There were eight individuals that spoke in favor of denying the request to vacate. The reasons ranged from safety concerns, to access of the mountains, potential economic activities, loss of a scenic drive, legal access for nearby landowners, hunting and wood cutting activities and heritage dating back to 1923. After the public hearing closed, the court denied the request to vacate Road Canyon Road.

Contracts: The court reviewed and approved the following: An Intergovernmental Service Agreement between ESD and Emergency Management for a Depot Hazard Analyst Workstation Restoration Project in the amount of \$20,000.

Treasurer and Finance Dept. review of General Fund Cash Balance: Treasurer Gayle Gutierrez and Finance Director Rick Worden provided the court with information regarding the shortage of funds to get the county through the receipt of property tax payments. It was decided that all Department Heads and employees should be notified that all non-essential spending needs to be eliminated immediately. The court also decided to place a hiring freeze, meaning that anyone who retires or leaves will not be replaced until further notice. Staff was instructed to conduct research regarding interest rates and loan fees from all banks located in Morrow County and to have an "Order" prepared that would allow the county to borrow operating funds through December 1 ready for signatures at the next meeting.

The court conducted the following business: Reviewed a Notice of Intent to Transfer CSEPP Purchased Property/Equipment for the telephone system and related supplies purchased for CSEPP. Since there will be several of these transfers in the near future, the court authorized Judge Tallman to sign the transfers unless he has concerns; those items will be brought to the court for action.

Reviewed misc. correspondences and discussed upcoming meetings.

If you would like to be placed on the list to receive County minutes, please contact Karen Wolff at (541)676-5620.

Walking group invites participants

The Willow Creek walking group invites members of the community to join them on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at noon. Walkers will meet in front of Murray's Drug for a leisurely stroll or a vigorous walk, for any length of time that fits lunchtime schedules. For more information, contact Kelly Boyer at 541-989-8510.