

RETIREMENT

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role of father as he and wife Sandra, or Sandy, raised sons Matthew, Samuel and James.

Van Liew said he disliked the fixed routine of the custodian job, but he loved getting to know the students and staff. After being a fixture in the daily routine of a couple of generations of students and teachers, that's a lot of lives touched by the quiet, laid-back custodian.

Not everything has been constant, though. Van Liew said he has seen many changes over the years.

"There were no computers when I came here," he said. "I remember when they got one com-

puter and said, 'That's all we're ever gonna need.'"

Van Liew said he wants to use his extra retirement time to visit his boys and, when the time comes, grandkids. Right now, Matthew is a civil engineer in New Jersey, Samuel is an assistant manager for a fish hatchery near Sandpoint, ID and James is a mechanic near Denver, CO.

That said, Van Liew—who already has one part-time job and hopes to sub for the school district—says he doesn't see himself as retiring.

"I consider it a change," said Van Liew. "Basically, I want to slow down a little."

Mmmm...brownies



First-year 4-H cooking students, Payton Miller and Austin Carter, try their hand at one-bowl brownies. Austin and Payton are members of the Cardinal Express 4-H Club and are working toward learning basic cooking skills that will allow them to enter items in the Morrow County Fair. —Contributed photo

Mustangs compete in BEO invitational

The Heppner Mustang wrestlers competed in the thirteen-team Bank of Eastern Oregon Invitational wrestling tournament last weekend. The tournament included nine of the 11 teams from 2A Special District 4. Heppner finished a close third of the teams in the district and sixth overall.

Going into the finals, 3A Riverside and four-time 2A champion Culver were separated by one point from the overall team championship. Riverside came out on top in the end, with Culver second and 4A Mac Hi third.

Seven Mustang wrestlers finished in the top six of their weight class.

Jared Lemmon, Garrett Gibbs and Tim Nelson each made it to the championship semifinals before suffering their first loss. Each won by fall in their next match to take home third-place medals.

Andrew Bara won fourth place after also losing in the championship semifinal.

Treston Maben and Earl Propheter claimed fifth places on the podium, while John Propheter finished sixth.



Jared Lemmon, in Mustang blue and gold, wrestles an opponent during the Bank of Eastern Oregon Wrestling Invitational last weekend. Jared was one of three team members who placed third for their weight classes. —Photo by Jeremy Lanthorn

Mustangs are going to districts

The Mustang boys are going to district finals next week, and the Gazette-Times wants to spread the news with a page of congratulations for the home team.

Anyone who would like to be listed on the congratulations page, either as a business, family or individual, can contact the Gazette-Times office at 676-9228 or megan@rapidsolve.net. Cost is \$10 per name; deadline for submissions is Monday at 5 p.m.

The Heppner Jr/Sr high school wrestling team is collecting batteries for an ongoing team fundraiser. Auto, tractor, RV, and four wheeler batteries will be accepted. Please bring your batteries to the South end Transfer station free of charge located at 57185 Hwy 74, Lexington, OR. For further information or if you need batteries picked up, call Mark Lemmon at (541)215-9248.



Ione defeats Echo at home

Ione soundly defeated Echo at home games on Feb. 3, with middle school girls' A and B teams, junior varsity girls, and both varsity teams winning their contests.

Ione is busy this week, playing Helix at home on Feb. 7, Central Christian at home on Feb.

9, Nixyaawii in Mission on Feb. 10, and South Wasco at home on the Feb. 11.

This marks the last week of regular season play for Ione, which must win all games to hold their position in league standings.

District playoffs will be in Hermiston on Feb. 16-18.



Coach Shelly McCabe with the eighth-grade girls at their last home game on Feb. 3. The team won against Echo. —Photo by Paula Emmel

Colt wrestling takes it to the mats



Members and coaches of the Colt Wrestling Program roll up mats after their practice last week. The program hosts their first meet this Wednesday at 6 p.m. at Heppner High School. Their second and final meet is next Monday, Feb. 13. Colt Wrestling is open to any child ages four to fifth grade. —Photo by Erin Hansell-Heideman

Morrow County residents shed pounds



Biggest Winner participants register for the county-wide event. —Photo by Sandy Matthews

The Biggest Winner weight loss challenge and healthy lifestyle program is entering the sixth week and halfway mark. Three hundred and eighteen people in Morrow County have joined the program to modify health behaviors (nutrition, physical activity and tobacco use) that contribute to the development of chronic diseases.

Shelley Wight, co-coordinator of the Heppner Biggest Winner reflects, "This is much larger than we expected...there are four times the number of participants we hoped for when we began planning. This type of turn-out demonstrates the need and desire our community has for developing opportunities to improve nutritional habits and physical activity in Morrow County."

It is not too late to participate in the Morrow

County movement toward wellness. One does not have to register or participate in the weight loss challenge to attend any of the free weekly sessions and receive general health information, or to participate in group physical activity such as stretching, walking, ballroom dancing, yoga or cardio fitness.

Each community group meets 6-7 p.m. in Ione (Mondays, Ione School), Heppner (Mondays, Heppner Elementary School), Boardman (Mondays, Sam Boardman Elementary) and Irrigon (Tuesdays, Irrigon Jr./Sr. High School). Each site has tailored the program to reflect the interest of the community.

See the Community Health Improvement Partnership of Morrow County website for information and resources at <http://www.ohsu.edu/MCCHIP>.

Get ready to rumble on St. Pat's

Heppner Chamber of Commerce is getting "ready to rumble" at their fifth annual St. Patrick's Boxing Smoker on Friday, March 16 at Heppner High School.

The chamber is still looking for boxers who would like to participate.

Anyone who is interested should contact the Heppner Chamber of Commerce at 541-676-5536 for more information.



Junior Kirk Hagewood during the varsity game against Echo. The exciting win put Ione in third in the Big Sky League standings. —Photo by Paula Emmel

BEO reports strong 2011 earnings

BEO Bancorp and its subsidiary, Bank of Eastern Oregon, announced consolidated year end 2011 earnings of \$2,011,567, an increase of 21.5% when compared to \$1,656,016 in 2010. Earnings per share were \$2.18, up from \$1.80 in 2010. Total assets increased 3.5% from \$251.7 million to \$260.4 million. Net loans ended 2011 at \$199.9 million, up 4.2% year over year. Deposits increased 3.0% from \$223.5 million to \$230.3 million.

"We are very pleased with the 2011 results, especially when you consider the sluggish economic recovery that our nation is experiencing. On a regional basis, the farm and ranch economy performed quite well. We had a fabulous wheat harvest across the region and cattle prices are very strong. The strength in the agriculture sector is helping to support our rural communities in spite of unemployment numbers higher than we would like to see," said president and CEO Jeff Bailey.

Chief Financial Officer Mark Lemmon said the bank's Tier 1 capital ratio of 10.63% matches up favorably to peer banks across the nation, continuing to make Bank of Eastern Oregon the highest-capitalized bank in eastern Oregon.

"Total shareholders' equity increased 12.3% year over year to \$17.55 million," said Lemmon. "Return on Average Assets is 0.79% and Return on Average Equity is 12.12%, compared to 0.67% and 11.0%, respectively, year over year."

Chief Operations Officer Gary Propheter said, "Year-over-year deposit growth has slowed, but we still see growth in spite of the continued low-rate environment. The overall support from our local communities is impressive. The continued trend of growth in core deposits

tells us our customers are happy with Bank of Eastern Oregon's style of banking, our flexible products, and the excellent, professional service provided by our banking teams."

According to EVP and Chief Credit Officer E. George Koffler, during peak

borrowing season their loans were at an all-time high, but with a great harvest and high cattle prices, as expected, the bank experienced pay downs a bit sooner in the cycle than normal.

"This is good news but translates to more modest loan growth when you look at year over year numbers. We continue to see good lending opportunities within our market and are ready to loan money to qualified borrowers," said Koffler. "When we look at provision for loan losses and write downs on other real estate, the 2011 numbers were very similar to 2010. Over the last three years, we have taken prudent steps in aggressively addressing problem loans. Other real estate owned is down 49.6% from 2010. We see this as a very positive sign but will cautiously watch developments associated with the slow national and global economic recovery."

"2011 was a very good year for Bank of Eastern Oregon. The past three years have been challenging for all banks, but thanks to the loyalty of our shareholders, customers and employees, Bank of Eastern Oregon has weathered the storm. Our capital ratios are strong, our troubled assets are manageable, and we continue to fund our loan loss reserve to buffer the possibility of a prolonged economic downturn. Even though there are still a few challenges to be met, I remain confident the worst is behind us and that there are brighter days ahead," concluded Bailey.



Jeff Bailey

Chamber lunch meeting

The next meeting of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce will be Thursday, February 9 at noon at All Saints Episcopal Church.

The guest speaker will be John Turner, president of BMCC. He will speak on what is new on the community college front. Cost of lunch is \$9; The Stable of Youth will cater the lunch.

Those interested in attending are asked to RSVP by Wednesday of each week.