

Walk MS back in Heppner for 13th year

Walk to include free brunch for all participants

By April Sykes

The Walk MS Eastern Oregon is back in Heppner again this year. The 5K Eastern Oregon walk,

in its 14th year, was held in Pendleton last year. It will be held this year on Saturday, April 21, with registration and sign-up beginning at 9 a.m. at All Saints Episcopal Church, 460 N. Gale St., Heppner, and the walk beginning at 10 a.m. starting at the Heppner City Park. The walk is wheelchair accessible.

This year the walk will feature a free brunch for all participants with a variety of hot breakfast casseroles, French toast casseroles, pastries, muffins, fresh fruit, juice, milk, coffee and tea.

Walk MS Chair Merilee McDowell says they are offering a brunch this year rather than the traditional ham and pancake breakfast so walkers will have time to stay and enjoy their meal. In the past, she says, some busy walkers may not have had

time to stay for the pancake breakfast. "This will be quicker for people," said McDowell. "People who have things to do can just get in and out."

Anyone who would like to donate items for the brunch, preferably homemade, is invited to call April Sykes, 541-980-4643. A sign-up list with items needed has also been placed in the office at All Saints Episcopal.

Pre-registration is appreciated for the walk, but registration is also available that day at the church. Those wishing to pre-register may do so online at www.walkmsoregon.com or by calling 503-445-8342. There is no registration fee for the walk, but participants are encouraged—but absolutely by no means required, stresses McDowell—to raise a minimum of \$100 per person. Anyone

who brings \$100 the day of the walk will be eligible for a T-shirt that day, while supplies last.

Anyone with questions or who would like a poster or brochure may contact McDowell, 541-676-5853.

Everyone who signs up for the walk will get a free raffle ticket for items to be raffled at the brunch. People don't have to be present to win raffle items, but winners will be responsible for picking up their items.

McDowell and Barb Orwick, both of Heppner, have special reasons for their support of the walk. They both have Multiple Sclerosis.

Orwick, who was diagnosed at 42 years old, has had MS for 14-1/2 years. She was one of 10
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Gazette Times

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Koffler to step down after long BEO career

His tenure sees growth and expansion

By David Sykes

After 34 years in the banking business, most of it spent guiding the Bank of Eastern Oregon through impressive growth and expansion, George Koffler is officially retiring from the bank at the end of this month.

Koffler started his banking career in 1978 when he left a teaching job at Heppner High School to hire on as a branch manager at Fred Meyer Savings and Loan in Portland. However, itching to get back to Eastern Oregon, he was hired one year later as a loan officer at BEO in Heppner. He has been here ever since.

Koffler rose through the ranks at the bank and became President and Chief Operating Officer in 1994, a position he held until 2009. For the past several years he has been Executive Vice President and Chief Credit Officer.

During his tenure, the bank has expanded in size from three branches to the current 12 branches and two loan production offices, all in small communities across northeastern Oregon. Deposits have grown impressively, ten-fold, and during all of this expansion, "We have never had any red

ink," Koffler says proudly about the bank never having a losing year.

Koffler was born in Montana but grew up in Echo, arriving at the age of six months when his dad took a job with the railroad at Hinkle. After graduation from Echo High School, he attended Blue Mountain Community College, where he met his future wife, Debbie. The two have been together ever since and raised two boys, Brian, 33, of Portland and Rick, 36, of Nevada.

After Blue Mountain, Koffler went on to receive his education degree from Western Oregon University. After graduation, he took a job teaching math at Heppner High School, a position he held for four years before taking the Portland job. He also coached football, baseball and basketball at Heppner but, "I just couldn't see myself doing that for the next 25 years," Koffler said of his decision to leave a secure teaching job and move on to a new career in Portland. He says he has never regretted the decision.

"The most satisfying part of this job has been to provide financing opportunities for businesses and create jobs in these



George Koffler on his first day on the job at the Bank of Eastern Oregon in 1979, at the age of 26.

small communities," Koffler says.

He points out that the expansion model the bank chose was to stay in small agricultural communities with populations of less than 3,500, and it has worked very well.

The bank opened branches in Condon in 1995, Irrigon in 1998 and Boardman in 2000; however, in 2003 the bank took a giant leap forward with the purchase of branches from Klamath First in Burns, John Day, Prairie City, Fossil, Moro, Condon and Heppner.

-See KOFFLER RETIRES/PAGE FIVE

Three arrested after police chase

A local woman and two men were arrested Saturday afternoon after a police pursuit along Highway 74.

On March 24 about 2:45 p.m., Deputy Ryan Jundt of the Morrow County Sheriff's Office was monitoring the pursuit, which had initiated in the Pendleton area and proceeded south through Pilot Rock and then out Highway 74 toward Heppner.

Jundt was southbound on Big Butter Creek Road, moving to intercept, when he passed the suspect vehicle about 2:52 p.m. The vehicle was moving north near milepost 10 at a high rate of speed. He observed

at least three subjects inside the vehicle.

The MCSO deputy turned around to overtake the vehicle and found it parked on the side of the road near milepost 7. A female, Keri Anne Martin, was in the stopped vehicle.

The other two occupants had apparently fled on foot, according to Morrow County Undersheriff Steve Myren.

Martin, 33, was taken into custody on an outstanding Hermiston Municipal Court warrant for contempt of court.

Multiple units from

Oregon State Police and the MCSO responded to the area and began a search for the other occupants. Nearly two hours later, around 4:40 p.m., Noah Daley Weatherford, 36, and Frank Andrew Mackey, 36, were located hiding in a draw about 500 yards from the vehicle. Mackey was arrested on a Hermiston Municipal Court warrant for failure to appear. Weatherford was arrested on a Wasco County warrant.

All three suspects were booked into Umatilla County Jail on the original warrants as well as charges related to the chase. The investigation is ongoing.



Noah Daley Weatherford



Frank Andrew Mackey

Ione School Board explores costs of keeping pool open

By April Sykes

Ione swimming pool expenses and whether the Ione School District can continue to support the pool were topics at the ISD work session, which preceded the regular meeting on March 20.

The board discussed costs for replacement of valves and filters and the pool's solar panel project, which is now estimated in the neighborhood of \$24,000. Ione School Superintendent Mark Mulvihill said that it costs upward of \$20,000 a year just to operate the pool. This figure does not include big-ticket repair or replacement items.

Mulvihill said the Willow Creek Park District in some years has contributed up to \$10,000 to the pool fund, but added that the district is not always able to realize that money from the parks district. The 2011-12 pool budget was \$30,000,

of which \$24,696 had been spent as of Feb. 29.

"It's a rare day when we have 20 (kids at the pool)," said Ione School Principal Jerry Archer.

Board member Bink Ramos inquired as to the whether the number of closures due to pool malfunctions and subsequent repairs has affected the attendance, but Archer replied that last summer the pool was down for only a very few days.

"Do you want a half-time teacher or do you want a pool?" Archer asked the board.

Concerning possible funding sources, board member Lisa Rietmann commented that there have been times when the public has supported the pool and noted that virtually all the kids in Ione have learned to swim there.

The board discussed making a specific grant request for funding

overages from the previous bond measure from the Ione Community Agri-Business Organization and the Ione Education Foundation.

The board also discussed a decline in enrollment, with a projected fall enrollment of around 154-160 children, down from around 186-188 for the current year, mostly due to a large graduating class of 25 this year and a smaller projected kindergarten enrollment in the fall. Mulvihill said that the district will need to "start looking at our priorities."

Also at the work session, the board heard an update on the bond project, the Rietmann building status and 2012-13 administrative budget priorities.

At the regular board meeting that followed the work session, the board:

-received a report from athletic director Ryan

-See IONE SCHOOL BOARD/PAGE THREE

Morrow County teacher to retire after 27 years with district

By Andrea Di Salvo

Long-time Morrow County School District teacher Cara Osmin will retire at the end of this school year.

Osmin, 64, has been with the school district 27 years, first as a third-grade teacher at Heppner Elementary for 22 years and then as a Title I teacher at Windy River Elementary School in Irrigon for the last five years.

"One of the most rewarding things is seeing a light go on when a kid who has been struggling finally 'gets it,'" she said. "I've re-

ally enjoyed working with all the different personalities over the years, and I enjoyed working in the north end as well as in the south. It's a completely different atmosphere; it's good to be well-rounded."

Osmin was born and raised in Hillsdale, MI. She graduated from Parkside High School in Jackson, MI in 1965 before

going on to attend Western Michigan University. She graduated from there in 1969 with a B.S. in art education. While attending

college, she also did student teaching in adult education in Livonia, MI.

After graduating from college, in the fall of 1970, Osmin moved to Fairbanks, AK. In Alaska, she worked for the University of Fairbanks, as well as doing a second student teaching and getting certified in elementary education. She lived in Fairbanks until 1975, when she moved to Corvallis, OR.

-See TEACHER RETIRES/PAGE EIGHT



Cara Osmin

Area pastors invited to submit Easter messages

Easter is April 8. The Heppner Gazette-Times invites area pastors to submit Easter messages to be published in the April 4 edition. The deadline is Friday, March 30, at 5 p.m.

Messages can be dropped off at the Gazette office, emailed to editor@rapidserve.net, or faxed to 541-676-9211.

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