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Gazette Times

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Morrow County's biggest winners announced

More than a ton of weight lost county-wide

The Biggest Winner competition is over, and Morrow County has won by a ton.

For the past 12 weeks, Morrow County residents had an opportunity to participate in a weight-loss competition and healthy lifestyle program. As of April 2, participants in Boardman, Heppner, Irrigon and Ione lost over one ton (2,000 pounds) of body weight.

At final weigh-ins in Heppner, Ione and Boardman Monday night, participants took one final turn on the scale to determine who had lost the greatest percentage of body weight in their individual communities. First-place winners received $500, second place was awarded $300 and third place took home $100. Cash prizes throughout the county totaled $2,700.

Heppner winners were Dennis Lien, winner of first place with 19.6 percent body weight lost; Sarah Good, second place with 15.4 percent; and Virginia Voigt, third place with 14.5 percent. Though they were the only ones who took home cash prizes, they weren't they only Heppner winners…16 people in the Heppner competition lost more than 10 percent of their body weight, and Heppner lost a total of 840 pounds during the 12-week competition.

Winners in Ione were Scott Carter, first place with 18 percent of body weight; Stacy Shelton, second place with 16 percent; and Sharon Camarillo, third place with 14 percent.

Boardman winners were Bill Hancock, with first place for 17.23 percent of body weight; Barbara Hemnes, second place for 14.25 percent weight loss; and Lisa Pringle with third place and 8.64 percent.

Bill Hancock of Boardman donated his first-prize winnings of $500 to the Riverside High School wrestling team to assist with the cost of attending summer camp.

"Supporting the wrestling team is important to me," Hancock said.

The results from the Irrigon final weigh-in and announcement of first-, second- and third-place winners will be available next week, as the program concluded in Irrigon on April 3 and results were not available at press time.

The Morrow County Community Health Improvement Partnership (MCCHIP), a partnership of community members and human service organizations, initiated the Biggest Winner program to increase awareness and educate the community about local health issues. A significant portion of the county population is affected by or at risk for developing chronic disease, which was determined by examining data and information collected in the county-wide health needs assessment. Because health behaviors that contribute to the development of many chronic diseases include obesity, inactivity and tobacco use, the intent of the program was to encourage healthy lifestyle changes in those areas.

"Our whole family made changes to our life, cooking, eating and exercising," said one participant.

"I thought it was a great program," added another. "I came away with lots of good hints and ideas and a better feeling about myself."

The program was made possible by community members and businesses throughout the county, including contributions made to the program, local restaurants that supported healthier eating choices, individuals who promoted physical activities, instructors who provided fitness classes, and the Morrow County Health District and Columbia River Community Health Services for donating lab services. Anyone who wants to improve their own health or is interested in the wellness of Morrow County can visit the website, http://ohsu.edu/MCCHIP.

Top: Heppner winners (L-R) Sarah Good, Dennis Lien and Virginia Voigt. Middle: Ione winners (L-R) Stacy Shelton, Scott Carter and Sharon Camarillo. Bottom: Boardman first-place winner Bill Hancock presents his prize money to the Riverside wrestling team. Not pictured are Boardman winners Barbara Hemnes and Lisa Pringle. *–Contributed photos*

Irrigon principal to retire

By Andrea Di Salvo

Morrow County will say farewell to longtime principal John Sebastian at the end of this school year. The 63-year-old will retire at the end of June after 18 years as principal of A.C. Houghton Elementary School in Irrigon.

Sebastian has worked in education for 41 years. Born and raised in Yakima, WA, he graduated from Eisenhower High School in Yakima. He then earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, as well as a teaching certificate, from the University of Washington in 1971. He graduated from Central Washington University in Ellensburg in 1973 with a master's degree in school administration.

He took his first teaching position in Yakima in the fall of 1971. He taught for four years before moving to an administrative position; he has worked in school administration ever since.

Sebastian moved to Jefferson County, OR after Yakima. Though he moved back and forth between Oregon and Washington throughout his career, working in various administrative positions, he says he spent about two-thirds of his career in Oregon.

"I found the greatest success in the good old state of Oregon, which seemed to have the greatest orientation toward school improvement, which I'm all about," said Sebastian. "The climate for school improvement, and understanding the moves and directions necessary to making that kind of improvement, seemed always to work best in Oregon. When I figured that out… well, I've been in my present position in this state for 18 years."

John Sebastian

Aside from his work at A.C. Houghton, Sebastian has been extensively involved in civic and cultural activities in Irrigon. He ran the Morrow County Ski Club for 18 years, creating opportunities for kids and families to learn how to ski. He originated the Columbia River Duck Race, raised funds for the creation of the greenway through Irrigon, and was continuously part of the city watermelon festival.

"It's been fun. When you get involved, there's a lot of opportunity to make improvements," he said, adding that he saw it as part and parcel of being a member of the overall community. "I saw myself as having a responsibility beyond the schools."

Sebastian said he and his wife, Rose, also love outdoor activities. Their favorites include motor-home camping and boating in their cabin cruiser. Those are both a part of their plans for retirement. Rose, a Title I teacher in Boardman, will also retire this year after 17 years with the district.

They don't intend to spend all their time lazing around, though. The couple plans on maintaining their teaching certificates in Washington so they can substitute teach around their retirement home in Sequim, WA. Sebastian says the money will go to put gas in the motor home and cabin cruiser, and to visit the couple's three grown daughters who live elsewhere. He also plans to continue his pattern of civic involvement by doing professional grant writing and getting involved in service clubs such as Kiwanis and Rotary.

Though Sebastian has big plans for retirement beyond Morrow County, he says he will miss the area and the people with whom he had the privilege to work.

"I had the opportunity to hire 95 percent of the people currently working in this school," he said. "They've turned out to be a fantastic group. The school has been tremendously successful. It has an exceptional school report card. One guy can't do that; it takes a powerful group of people."

Sebastian added that within the last couple of weeks, A.C. Houghton was nominated as an Oregon Blue Ribbon school, a nomination given to only 18 schools out of 700.

"Not only has this been a great time in the community, but it has been a great education experience," said Sebastian. "This is the best place I've ever had an opportunity to work and the best staff along with it. I'm proud of our group here."

Heppner, Ione plan Easter egg hunts

The cities of Heppner and Ione will both offer Easter egg hunts for area children this Saturday.

The Heppner Elks will host Heppner's annual Easter egg hunt on Saturday, April 7, at 10 a.m.

Preschoolers and kindergarteners will hunt at Heppner City Park. First and second graders will hunt at the Lower Field by Heppner Elementary School; third and fourth grade will be at Hager Park.

The Easter Bunny will be at the city park for pictures at 9:45 a.m.; adults are encouraged to bring cameras.

Ione's annual Easter egg hunt will be held Saturday, April 7, at 10 a.m. in the Ione City Park. Children up to the fourth grade are invited.

The event is sponsored by the Bank of Eastern Oregon, The Office Pub & Grill, Wheatland Insurance, Dobyns Pest Control, Ione Market & Deli and many community members who have made donations to keep this annual event going. Anyone wishing to make donations may drop them off at the Bank of Eastern Oregon in Ione.

-See pages FOUR and FIVE for Easter messages; Easter schedules PAGE THREE.

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

NOAA issues monthly climate summary for Heppner

According to preliminary data from NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures in Heppner averaged slightly colder than normal during the month of March.

The average temperature was 43.5 degrees, which was 0.7 degrees below normal. High temperatures averaged 54.1 degrees, which was 0.8 degrees below normal. The highest was 69 degrees on the 9th. Low temperatures averaged 32.9 degrees, which was 0.6 degrees below normal. The lowest was 22 degrees, on the 7th.

There were 10 days with the low temperature below 32 degrees.

Precipitation totaled 1.75 inches during March, which was 0.23 inches above normal. Measurable precipitation of at least .01 inch was received on 12 days with the heaviest, 0.40 inches, reported on the 22nd.

Precipitation this year has reached 3.73 inches, which is 0.38 inches below normal. Since October, the water year precipitation at Heppner has been 5.53 inches, which is 2.64 inches below normal.

Snowfall totaled 2.5 inches with at least one inch of snow reported on two days. The heaviest snowfall was 1.5 inches reported on the 22nd. The greatest depth of snow on the ground was one inch on the first.

The outlook for April from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner rise from 59 degrees at the start of April to 64 degrees at the end of April. Normal lows rise from 36 degrees to 40 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.51 inches.

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