

HEPPNER 50¢ Gazette Times

VOL. 132 N.O. 17 8 Pages Wednesday, April 24, 2013 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon



Students provide encouragement

Ione students in kindergarten, first and second grades decorated water bottles to help support students in grades 3-6 while they took their state tests. Students drew colorful pictures and added motivational sayings to help encourage their friends. Bottom Left: Nicolas Carey, Katie Spivey, Liam Heideman, Martin Medina, Aiden Osborne, Second Row: Destiny Yates, Chloe Burke, Jerson Peralta, Hailee Peck, Mason Orem, Corey Rice. Third Row: Kelly Doherty, Charlie Smith, Lexi Gurinko, Callie Yates, Calvin Rietmann. Fourth Row: Andrew Stanger, Karensa Jones, Sunem Calvillo, Madi Orem, Nevaeh Chamberlin. Fifth Row: Cameron Proudfoot, John McElligott, Daralynn Teeman. Top Row: Bryce Rollins, Fernando Ramirez, Lewkus Burright and Carson Eynetich

School children, USDA 'energize' Earth Day

Over the weekend, USDA Rural Development employees and several partner organizations gave up their Saturday to celebrate Earth Day with elementary and middle school-aged children at the Castle Rock farm worker housing complex in Boardman, Oregon. Volunteers from Energy Trust of Oregon, CASA of Oregon, Sustainable Agriculture and Energy (SAGE) Center, Wind Turbine Industries Corporation, and Kardon Construction joined USDA to lead a variety of interactive educational activities about energy conservation and renewable energy alternatives.

"This event was a chance for USDA to join our community-based partners and residents by celebrating environmentally friendly growth and devel-

opment in rural areas," said USDA State Director Vicki Walker, who joined in the activities.

USDA Rural Development provided a \$2.4 million loan to the Umatilla County Housing Authority for the construction of Castle Rock Apartments, which opened in September of 2012 to provide additional rental options for the many farm and food processing workers who previously needed to commute long distances between their jobs and adequate, affordable housing. The facility was constructed to meet Earth Advantage Gold and LEED Platinum standards, featuring added insulation to reduce heating and cooling costs, Energy Star appliances, low-flow faucets and toilets and solar panels.

USDA Rural Development delivers more than 40

programs that help rural communities, businesses and residents develop infrastructure, improve housing availability, and create jobs through a variety of economic development activities.

"In all of our work, whether it's a new hospital, school, or a business development, USDA strives to incorporate earth-friendly designs and innovative energy solutions," Walker said.

In addition to support for rural housing and community facilities, USDA Rural Development also provides grants and loan guarantees to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses save energy and install renewables to save money while reduc-

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Ione resident Dorothy Stefani will soon deliver her last piece of mail

By Patty Nance

For the past 31 years Dorothy Stefani, Ione, traveled an 81 mile mail route three days a week. On April 29, at age 85, Stefani will hang up her keys and get on with her retirement.

Stefani began her career as a mail carrier by filling in for her mother-in-law, Cecil Stefani, who had the route for many years. "I have had the route for 31 years," she said. "It was always the same route - 81 miles round trip - three days a week." Stefani said if people wanted their mail the other two days they had to come to town and get it. Mail is delivered to Valby once each week on Friday.

Her day began at 8 a.m. when she went to the post office and sorted her mail. She then left the post office, mail in tow, to begin driving her route. Stefani said she never minded the drive.

"I loved it," she said. "I loved to see what the farmers were doing and see the baby calves and lambs."

Stefani has seen changes of a global nature in her 31 years. "We used to have a lot harder winters she said. "The snow would drift off the fields and across the road but I would put on my chains and try to get through." She said people on her route looked out for her and if she didn't arrive on time they would begin to check with neighbors to see if she was alright. "All the people were just real good. They always looked after me," she said.

Stefani recalled an early spring incident in the 8 Mile Canyon that could have had tragic consequences.

"There was a dip in the road and water was backed up the canyon. It broke loose and my husband, who



Dorothy Stefani

An open house celebration for Dorothy Stefani will be held on April 29 from 1:30 - 3 p.m. at the Ione Post Office

was with me, told me to get out of the truck and get into the back but the water was too high," she said. "We finally got into the pickup and a county road grater came along and saved us." Stefani said the mail was lost along with the pickup. "Afterward we walked and tried to find that mail but we couldn't find it," she said.

Another change has been the absorption of smaller farms and ranches by neighboring operations. "These places have gotten so big," she said.

Stefani said she will

miss all of her friends at the post office but admits she is ready to give up the chill of the early morning air.

As a mother of four and grandmother of 14, Stefani thinks he will have plenty to do in her retirement. "I love sports and try to go to as many of my grandchildren's as I can," she said. She also thinks she may go to the senior center for lunch on Wednesday or maybe plant some flowers. "I don't know exactly but I know I will find something to do," she said.

Sage Center set to open June 1 manager tells Chamber members

A great experience for everyone

The manager of the soon to open Sage Center at the Port of Morrow in Boardman gave an update last week to the Heppner Chamber of Commerce and said the center is set to open to the public on June 1.

Kalie Davis said the center will feature a theater, souvenir store, simulated hot air balloon ride and will show off the technologies, processes and products that drive the economy in rural Morrow County. Davis said a complete tour of the center will take one to one and a half hours to see everything at the 23,000-square-foot complex.

General admission will be \$5 for general admission, \$3 for students and senior and under five years free. She hopes to have

lots of student groups use the facility as a learning experience.

In one corner of the exhibit hall, visitors will



Kalie Davis gives the Heppner Chamber of Commerce an update on the soon to be opened Sage Center at the Port of Morrow in Boardman.

be able to step into what appears to be the basket of a hot air balloon.

The basket will lift and then rock back and forth as large movie projections help passengers imagine they are soaring over forests in the north end of Morrow County, through irrigated wheat fields and along the Columbia River to the Port of Morrow.

The 10,000-square-foot exhibit space also will feature a moving sculpture that shows how a potato becomes french fries as well as a tractor ride that lets drivers plow virtual fields and then see how straight their paths were.

Davis invited everyone over for a great experience about Morrow County.

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