

HEPPNER

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Wagenblast retires after 18 years

By Andrea Di Salvo

Long-time lone teacher's aide Vicki Wagenblast retired last week, finishing up 18 years working with kindergarten through sixth-graders at Lone Community School.

Wagenblast, 62, was born in The Dalles, OR and raised in nearby Sherman County. Though people in South Morrow County consider this small-town living, Wagenblast says life in Sherman County took small to a different level.

"Here I say, 'I'm from Lexington,'" Wagenblast shares. "People from Sherman County don't say, 'I'm from Moro' or 'I'm from Kent.' We say, 'I'm from Sherman County,' because it's so tiny."

In fact, she spent her first- through eighth-grade years going to school in the town of Kent, one of a class of four. She then attended Sherman County High School in Moro, graduating in 1969. She went on to attend a term at Oregon State University in Corvallis and two terms at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, OR.



Retiring lone teacher's aide Vicki Wagenblast was honored with roses and remembrances at a school assembly at the end of the school year. -Contributed photo

She says she had plans to become a secretary but, looking back, should have had a different goal.

"I should have gone for teaching because I really enjoy it," she says.

Instead, in 1970, she married high-school sweetheart Steve Wagenblast, whom she had met at a livestock show in The Dalles when she was 15. They had three children, Amy, David and Becky, and Wagenblast settled down to work as a mother and farm wife on the family's Lexington-area ranch. It wasn't until their

youngest child left for college that she set her sights on full-time work outside the farm.

In September of 1995, Wagenblast took the job as instructional aide for Lone Community School, then part of the Morrow County School District. She also helped out from time to time at the high school, where she often knew the teens from their time at the elementary level.

"I really enjoyed being a teacher's aide; it was lots of fun." -See WAGENBLAST RETIRES/PAGE FOUR

Sewer fees to increase \$1; late payment to \$5

By David Sykes

Heppner residents will be paying more for their sewer service, as well as paying more if they pay late, the city council said last Monday.

At its regular monthly meeting June 10, the council voted to raise sewer fees from the current \$28.10 per month to \$29.10 per month, an increase that has been planned for some time. At the meeting the council also wanted to raise the amount it would charge if bills are paid after the 10th of the month, from the current 1.5 percentage fee to a flat \$5; however, that was tabled until next month on the advice of the city attorney, who said a city ordinance would have to be changed.

The one dollar increase in sewer fees, which the city utility commission had also recommended, goes into effect July 1. Currently, late fees are based on the amount of the bill at a rate of 1.5 percent per month, and city manager Kim Cutsforth told the council

this is not even enough to cover the cost of rebilling. She said the average late fee is between \$1.18 and \$2 now.

In other action, the council agreed to close city hall on the day after July 4 and give the employees an unpaid day off. Employees who wished could use that day as a paid vacation day, however.

In other action, the council approved an animal permit for Alfred and Pamela Williams at 195 S. Main in Heppner, allowing them to have 15 chickens, three turkeys and two ducks. Cutsforth said the Williams would be given two weeks to get rid of their roosters, however, since there had been noise complaints. The birds are all kept in cages.

The council approved usage of the city park on July 28 and August 25 from 5-7 p.m. for use of Music in the Parks program. The council also discussed discontinuing the requirement for city council action

on park usage and let the city manager handle the requests.

"Is it necessary for people to come to the council to ask for park usage?" Mayor Joe Perry asked.

The council heard a report from Judy Buschke of the Heppner Housing Authority, who said the St. Patrick's Senior Center would be starting on its heating and cooling overhaul. She said Heppner Heating would be doing the work. She said a crane would pick up the old unit off the roof and place the new one. Total cost of the project is going to be \$22,840. Buschke also said there are currently two vacancies at the apartments with "no prospects."

In a report from city Public Works Director Chad Doherty, he told the council that, during the school's recent Mustang Mop-Up, with the help of students the city was able to rehab seven

-See CITY COUNCIL RAISES SEWER RATES/PAGE FIVE

Heppner teacher to retire after 26 years

By Andrea Di Salvo

This month, Heppner will lose another beloved elementary school teacher, Karen Smith-Griffith. Her last official day with Morrow County School District is June 30, but she said farewell to her last class on June 7. The 56-year-old has been teaching in Morrow County since 1987, when she moved here from Spray.

Smith-Griffith was born and raised in Hood River, OR and graduated from Hood River Valley High School in 1975. She went on to attend Oregon College of Education, now Western Oregon University, in Monmouth, OR. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education in 1979 and started teaching in Spray that same year. She also started pursuing a graduate degree in special education at the University of Oregon. She took classes during the summers and eventu-

ally obtained her Master of Education degree.

While living in Spray, she married husband John Griffith; they have been married for nearly 31 years and have one son, Aaron.

After moving to Heppner 26 years ago, Smith-Griffith started out teaching special education at the high school level in Heppner and Lone. She taught special education for the next 10 years before transferring to elementary education in Heppner.

She's been at Heppner Elementary ever since, teaching a variety of grades. While most of her time was spent teaching fifth and sixth grades, she also spent a couple of years teaching third and fourth grades, and finished her career this year teaching third and sixth, as well as Title I, which consisted mostly of kindergarten through second-grade

students. Smith-Griffith says she looks back and sees value in the variety of teaching experience she's had.

"Because I've taught from kindergarten through 12th grade, the positive aspects of all the different levels have been enlightening," she says. "I've probably learned as much from kids as, hopefully, they learned from me."

With free time ahead of her, Smith-Griffith says she has plans for a lot of home projects.

"I plan to refinish some furniture, do some painting and stripping of wallpaper," she says.

She also hopes to see her family in Hood River a little more, and do a little traveling. That includes a trip to New York later this month.

-See SMITH-GRIFFITH RETIREMENT/PAGE TWO



Karen Smith-Griffith

Sandford wins 2013-14 OHSR title

Lillian Sandford, a senior at Heppner High School, has won the title of Miss Oregon High School Rodeo 2013-2014 at the state high school finals held in Prineville last week. Sandford is the daughter of Rick and Sylvia Sandford, and older sister to Ivy, all of lone.

Sandford was the reigning 2012-13 Miss Oregon High School Rodeo and competed with two other young ladies to retain her crown. She competed in impromptu questions, personal interview, written test, speech, modeling and horsemanship. Only three categories were awarded, and Sandford won all of them: interview, horsemanship and speech.

This year, Oregon named a first attendant, who will represent Oregon at the Silver State International Rodeo held in Nevada June 30-July 6. Sam Wymer, a junior from Canby, OR will be attending that pageant and rodeo. She also won the Spirit Award for the pageant. Natalie Scotto was awarded the People's Choice award for the most votes on her picture on the association's Facebook page.

"Now we have to start packing and preparing for the trip to Rock Springs, WY, where I will be competing for the title of Miss National High School Rodeo Association. We leave



Miss Oregon High School Rodeo 2013-14, Lillian Sandford

July 10 to be there by July 12 for check-in with my horse and to pick up our contestant packet," said Sandford. "I am selling

-See SANDFORD WINS OHSR/PAGE THREE

Rattlesnakes on the rise?



Residents in South Morrow have reported seeing what many believe is an unusual number of rattlesnakes this spring, though Steve Cherry of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife says he can't verify if that's the case. "It's not something we keep track of as an agency," says Cherry. "I have heard people talk about them, mentioning seeing a few more than normal this year. We haven't received any complaints." Above: Bull snakes like this one are often mistaken for rattlers at first glance, but distinctive markings—most obviously the telltale rattles—can be used to distinguish the two. -Contributed photo

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