

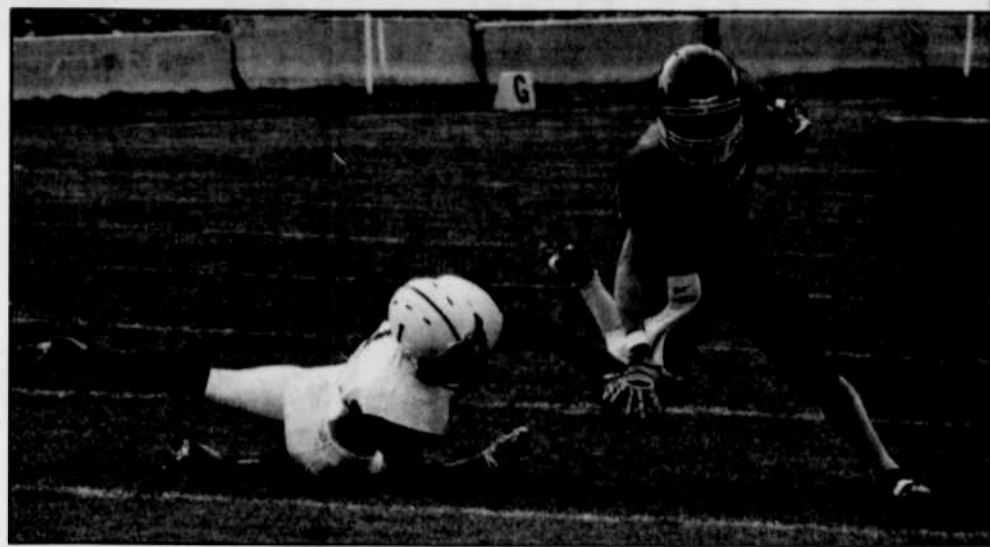
HEPPNER

Bessie Wetzell Newspaper Library  
University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403

50¢

zette  
imes

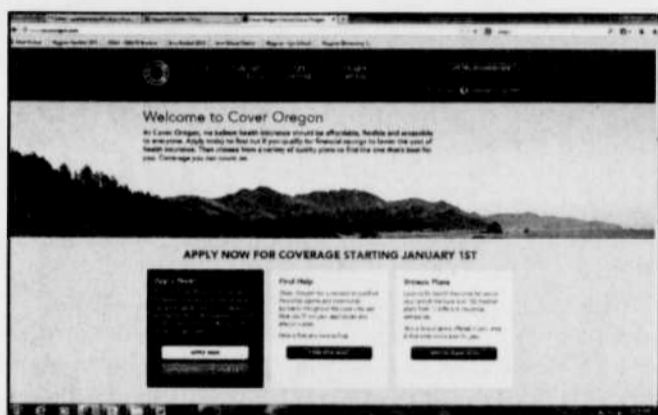
## Mustangs advance to state semifinals



Mustang Senior Jordan Bailey avoids a tackle during the quarterfinals game in Heppner last Saturday. The victorious Mustangs advance to the semifinals in Hillsboro this weekend. —Photo by Sandy Matthews

—See the full story on PAGE SIX.

## As Cover Oregon crumbles, health district works to help consumers pick up the pieces



The much-publicized Cover Oregon website remains at zero enrollments since its Oct. 1 launch.

By Andrea Di Salvo

A month and a half after the much-touted launch of Cover Oregon, a healthcare exchange website designed to help Oregon residents navigate the new healthcare marketplace under Obamacare, the website has yet to enroll a single person.

Cover Oregon enrollment remains at zero not because there have been no applications—

there were around 25,000 applications as of Tuesday according to Michael Cox of Cover Oregon—but because the website itself does not work.

Cover Oregon was largely a result of Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber's "grand vision" in response to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), or Obamacare. While states had the option to use the federal

government's health insurance exchange website or create their own, Oregon leaders determined to create a "one-stop shop" for residents to sign up for insurance, whether they qualify for Medicaid or need commercial insurance. Most states opted for a separate enrollment process for people who appeared to qualify for Medicaid. Despite technical difficulties, though, Oregon officials have stuck to their vision of a single healthcare portal.

However, the Cover Oregon website, which launched Oct. 1, has failed to live up to expectations. According to the Associated Press, Cover Oregon's risk consultant firm, Maximus, warned months ago that the project was in danger of missing the Oct. 1 deadline to go live. Despite concerns,

the program launched, only to grind to a halt. The online system still doesn't work, and the exchange has yet to enroll a single person in health insurance.

Oct. 31, Cover Oregon released a statement that Oregonians who want to get health insurance coverage by Jan. 1, 2014, will still be able to get it through Cover Oregon.

"We're going to make sure that every Oregonian who wants coverage at the beginning of the year gets it," said Kitzhaber. "There have been challenges. There often are when new ideas are put into action, but we're going to get this done."

For many Oregonians, however, the situation has become less a "want to" than a "need to." According

—See COVER OREGON CRUMBLES/PAGE FOUR

## County school district hears of school conference success

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School District heard a presentation by Heppner High School teachers concerning the newly-implemented plan for conferences for all HHS freshmen and their parents at their regular meeting held Nov. 12 at Heppner High School.

HHS head teacher Greg Grant and language arts teacher Jeannie Collins touted the success of the plan, which included

information on diploma requirements, state testing for diplomas, including the PSAT, SAT, SVAB and ACT tests and how to prepare, education, concerning potential career interests and direction, sophomore year schedule planning, the Eastern Promise plan, whereby students can earn college credits while still in high school, and the best communication practices for student success.

Grant also informed the board of junior high

academic conferences and senior transition conferences, both scheduled for Nov. 7.

The board also heard details of the Ag students' trip to the national FFA convention from Ag teacher Beth Dickenson and students Kenzie Gumb and Kaelyn Lindsay.

The board received the following report from Superintendent Dirk Dirksen:

"the Morrow County Education Foundation will

be providing some money to the school district in the foreseeable future" with the timing and amount currently unknown. He said the money would "greatly improve our ability to address our lack of wireless infrastructure district wide";

the district has met with Western Land Consulting, a subcontractor working with American Tower, which would like to

—See SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING/PAGE EIGHT

## City considers ordinance allowing liens for unpaid utility bills

By David Sykes

The city of Heppner is considering adopting an ordinance allowing liens to be placed on properties with overdue water and sewer bills, the Heppner City Council was told at its monthly meeting Monday night. Other cities have such an ordinance. If adopted it would give the city a chance to recover unpaid water and sewer bills that sometimes run more than \$1,000. City Manager Kim Cutsforth told the council. Cutsforth said it gives the city a tool to collect bills when owners sometimes leave town with unpaid bills. If the home has a lien on it, the unpaid

bills will be paid when the property is sold. She said the ordinance should also help with collections even when not enforced.

The council authorized Cutsforth to meet with the city attorney to work on the new ordinance.

In other business the council was told that the city's street sweeper is back in service after having repairs done over the last couple of months, and is doing a good job. The sweeper, which originally cost the city \$40,000, was sent to Portland several months ago for an estimated \$20,000 in repairs. The repair company, however,

revised the repair estimate once the sweeper was in shop up to \$32,000. That amount was subsequently negotiated down to \$28,000 and the sweeper is now back in Heppner "doing a great job," says Cutsforth. The city uses the sweeper about twice per month, she told the council.

In other action the council took the recommendation of Barnett & Moro PC, the city's auditor, and changed the way checks are signed at city hall. In their annual audit report the accounting firm recommended that "the employee preparing and producing bank

checks should not also be an authorized check signer or reconcile bank accounts." The accountant found no evidence of mismanagement, and made the recommendation only to strengthen the city's internal accounting controls.

After hearing the report the council voted to remove the city treasurer Judy

—See CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSES LIEN/PAGE FIVE

## Pioneer Memorial Hospice to present 'Lights of Hope'



Robanai Disque and Carmelo Di Salvo of Pioneer Memorial Home Health and Hospice sit in the spot where the Lights of Hope tree will stand as they discuss details of the upcoming ceremony. —Photo by Mallorie Jones

Those whose loved ones have passed away in the past year will have a special way to remember them this Christmas season, thanks to Lights of Hope, a new project by Pioneer Memorial Home Health and Hospice.

On Dec. 5 at 6 p.m., shortly after Heppner's tree-lighting ceremony on Main Street, the hospice will conduct a tree-lighting ceremony of its own at St.

Patrick's Senior Center in Heppner.

While the tree in the senior center lobby will already be decorated as usual with multi-colored lights and a variety of ornaments, Director of Pioneer Memorial Home Health and Hospice Robanai Disque and Home Health and Hospice Chaplain Carmelo Di Salvo say the

—See LIGHTS OF HOPE/PAGE FIVE

## County programs among 30 to receive Wildhorse grants

Pendleton, OR—The Wildhorse Foundation, a community benefit fund established by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) to support organizations in northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington, announced their grant awards for the third quarter of 2013 last week.

A total of \$176,476 was awarded to 30 recipients, bringing the total for 2013 to almost \$630,000. Of that, \$17,000 was awarded to Morrow County recipients, with another \$12,636 to programs that work in Morrow County.

Local organizations funded in the third quarter for 2013 are: Neighborhood Center of South Morrow County in Heppner, to reconstruct the old, disintegrating cinder-block building on site, \$10,000; Irrigon Little League in Irrigon, OR for a youth sports field complex expansion to include backstop, chain

link fencing, dugout, benches and a scoreboard, \$7,000; Inland Northwest Musicians, Hermiston, OR for music education and performance opportunities for youth of Umatilla, Morrow and Wallawa Counties, \$3,000; and SMART of Portland, OR for Umatilla and Morrow County SMART PreK program expansion, \$9,636. The Wildhorse Foundation Board considers grants that cover the areas of public health, public safety, education, the arts, historic preservation, gambling addiction services, salmon restoration, environmental protection, and cultural activities.

The quarterly deadlines for applications to the foundation are Jan. 1, April 1, July 1 and Oct. 1.

For more information on Wildhorse Foundation guidelines or to receive an application, visit www.wildhorseresort.com or call Tiah DeGroff at 541-966-1628.

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



Powerheat Infrared Quartz Heater  
Duraflame Heaters

15% off

- Energy Efficient
- Warms up to 1000 sq ft
- Safe for kids & family

Several Models to Choose From

Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed  
242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)