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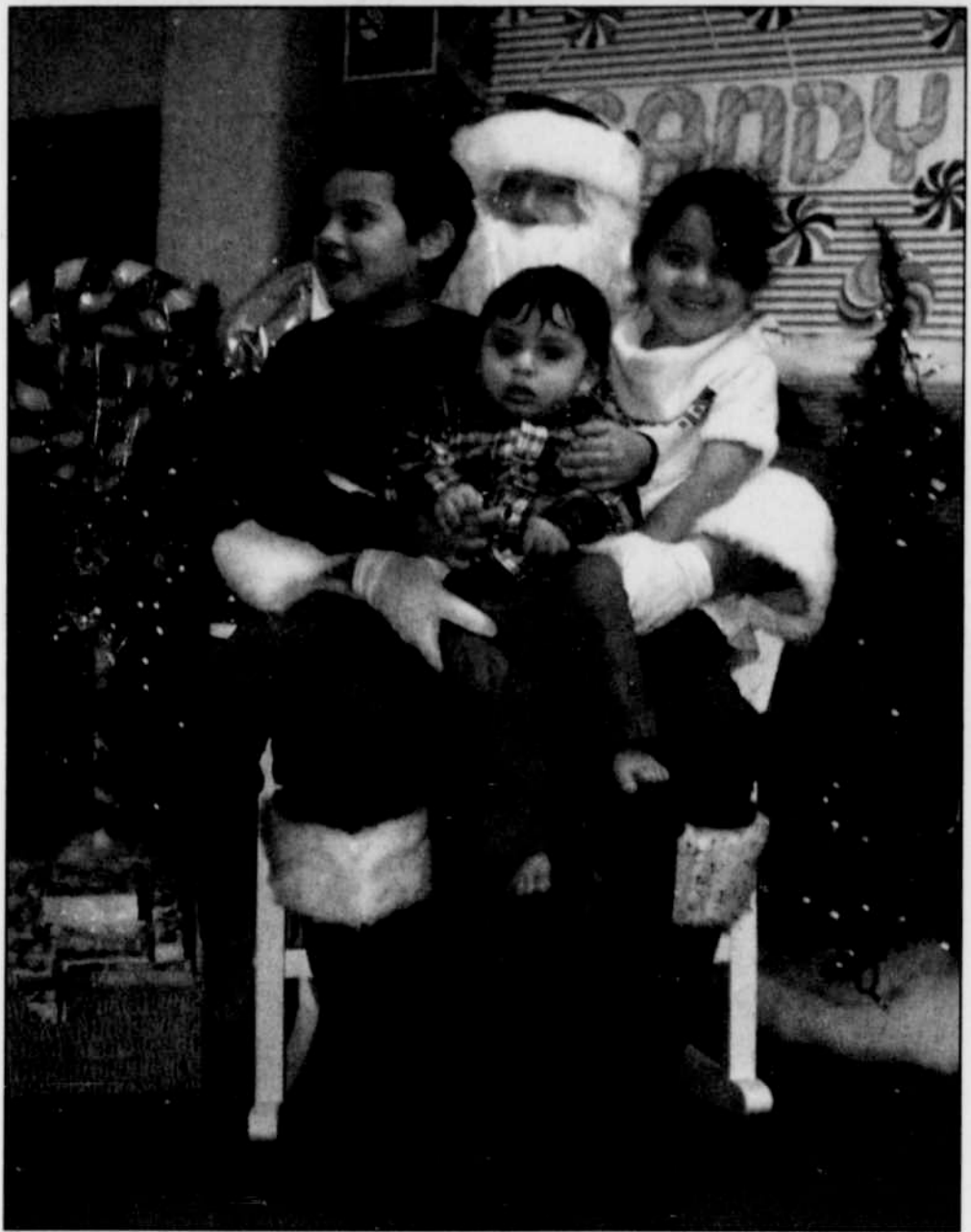
VOL. 133 NO. 44 8 Pages Wednesday, December 24, 2014 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

The Reason for the Season...



This nativity scene, or creche, in front of the Christian Life Center glows in the twilight as it celebrates the "Reason for the Season." For more Christmas inspiration from area churches, see PAGE SIX; Christmas greetings from local businesses are found on pages FOUR and FIVE. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner celebrates Christmas



Enoc, Emily and Adrian Sanchez are all smiles after their conversation with Santa at the Heppner Chamber of Commerce's annual Celebrate Heppner Christmas event. The festive evening last Thursday featured food, pictures with Santa, encounters with Scrooge, and numerous prize drawings sponsored by local businesses. -Photo by Megan Futter

Lexington declares council vacancies

The Town of Lexington has declared three council vacancies following the Nov. 4, 2014 general election.

Lexington was in the unusual position of having openings for the mayoral and all four council positions this election, with only one candidate, Deona Sjex, running for Lexington Town Council Position 2.

While all the other council positions received write-in votes, Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers says only mayoral write-in candidate, Arletta

Arnspiger, responded to accept her election. Since none of the other write-in vote winners responded to accept the council positions by the Dec. 19 deadline, those council positions remain vacant for the time being.

Lexington City Recorder Kevin McCabe says the Town of Lexington is now seeking letters of interest for council positions 1, 3 and 4.

Letters should be addressed to Town of Lexington, PO Box 416, Lexington, OR 97839 and need to

CREZ makes grant awards

Commits funds to housing and "Community Enhancement"

By David Sykes

The Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) last Friday awarded a total of \$500,000 in grant funds throughout the county, earmarking half for housing and the other half for "community enhancement."

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG), representing Heppner, Lex-

ington and Lone, received \$100,000 to continue its popular housing grant program. Under the program purchasers of residential real estate can receive up to a \$5,000 per purchase. Boardman also received \$100,000, and Irrigon was awarded \$50,000. Anyone in South Morrow County interested in the program details can contact WC-

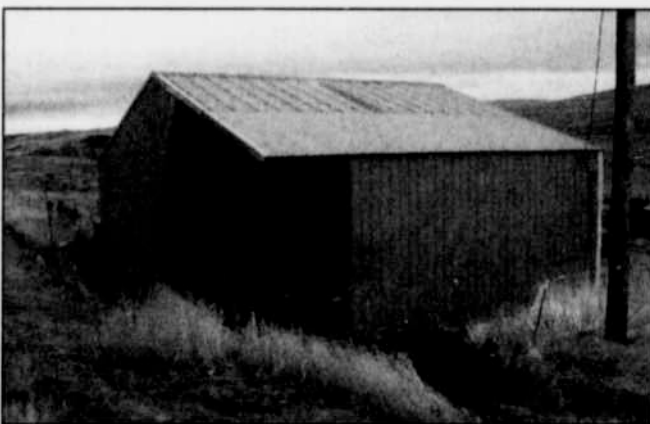
VEDG director Sheryll Bates at 541-676-5536.

In addition the CREZ also made \$75,000 available to WCVEDG for use in a new community enhancement program. Details of this program have not yet been worked out by the WCVEDG board of directors, but will be announced later. Irrigon also received \$75,000 and Boardman

\$100,000 for enhancement.

CREZ disbursed money from funds received from various business which have located or expanded in the enterprise zone, located at the Port of Morrow near Boardman. The money is collected in lieu of higher property taxes, a technique used to entice new business to locate there.

Local man killed in single car crash



Local man Ryan Bennett was killed when his car crashed into this airplane hangar between Bunker Hill Road and the old Kinzua Mill site. -Photo courtesy of Oregon State Police

that killed 21-year-old Ryan Bennett of Heppner. The single vehicle crash occurred on Highway 207 between Heppner and Lexington.

On December 20 at 9:32 a.m., OSP troopers were dispatched to the single-vehicle fatality crash on Highway 207 near milepost 42, between Bunker Hill Road and the Kinzua Mill site. According to investigators, Bennett's 2002 Hyundai Elantra was southbound on Highway 207 and failed to negotiate a curve. His vehicle left the

roadway and crashed into an airplane hangar adjacent to the highway.

Bennett, who was the sole occupant in the vehicle, died at the scene from injuries sustained in the crash.

Investigators believe that speed was a contributing factor in the crash; seat-belt use was undetermined.

OSP was assisted at the scene by Morrow County Sheriff's Office, ODOT, and Heppner Fire Department.

-See obituary PAGE TWO

G-T closed for Christmas, New Year's

The Gazette-Times will be closed Thursday, Dec. 25, and Friday, Dec. 26, for the Christmas holiday. Normal business hours will resume Monday, Dec. 29.

The Gazette-Times will also be closed Thursday, Jan. 1, for New Year's Day. Normal business hours will resume Friday, Jan. 2.

We wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas season and New Year.

G-T Trophy Corner



Diana Healy, 15, of Heppner bagged this cow elk recently in Sugar Bowl. -Contributed photo

American Sniper movie set for Christmas, January release dates

For those who have been following the progress of Heppner native Scott McEwen and his involvement in "American Sniper: The Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. History," there is a new milestone on the horizon.

The American Sniper film, directed by living legend Clint Eastwood and starring Hollywood heavy hitter Bradley Cooper, will hit select theaters Christmas Day, with a general release Jan. 16. Unfortunately, local viewers will have to wait, since that Jan. 16 release date includes theaters in Hermiston, Pendleton and the Tri-Cities.

Along with Cooper, the film's cast also includes Sienna Miller, Luke Grimes, Jake McDorman, Cory Hardrict, Kevin Lacz, Navid Negahban and Keir O'Donnell. Oscar-winning filmmaker Clint Eastwood ("Million Dollar Baby," "Unforgiven") directed

"American Sniper" from a screenplay written by Jason Hall, based on the book by Chris Kyle, with McEwen and Jim DeFelice. The autobiography was a runaway bestseller, spending 18 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list, 13 of those at number one.

Last time the Gazette-Times spoke with McEwen, he was pleased with the film's progress.

"I felt like the filming was really compelling. I felt like the storyline and the points that were getting into the scenes were amazingly well done. I'm not a pro



Heppner native Scott McEwen was involved in the making of the American Sniper movie, which stars Bradley Cooper (pictured) as Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle. -Contributed photo

at this by any means, but the scenes felt very, very compelling to me," he said.

Reviewers in general seem to agree. Todd Mc-

Carthy of The Hollywood Reporter wrote, "Starring a beefed-up and thoroughly

-See AMERICAN SNIPER MOVIE/PAGE THREE

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