

\$100M in USDA funding available for CSP

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces \$100 million in federal funds available this year through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), part of the 2014 Farm Bill.

CSP applications are accepted all year; however, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners should submit applications by Feb. 27 to ensure they are considered for this year's funding (applications received after that date will be considered for future funding).

This year's total CSP investment may result in the enrollment of up to 7.7

million acres in the program by private landowners.

"CSP is a way of incentivizing farmers, ranchers, and private forest managers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship," said Ron Alvarado, Oregon State Conservation at USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. "By focusing on multiple resource concerns, landowners are able to achieve a sustainable landscape and maintain or increase the productivity of their operations."

Through CSP, participants take additional con-

servation steps to improve the resource conditions on their land, including soil, air and habitat quality, water quality and quantity, and energy conservation.

The 2014 Farm Bill brought changes to CSP including an expanded conservation activity list that will offer participants greater options to meet their conservation needs and protect the natural resources on their land. These conservation activities, called enhancements, include use of cover crop mixes, on-farm forage based grazing systems, and wildlife friendly fencing.

CSP will also help broaden the impacts of NRCS's Landscape Conservation Initiatives through a new pilot effort, which accelerates private lands conservation activities to address particular goals, such as creating habitat for at-risk species and conserving and cleaning water. In Oregon, the Landscape Conservation Initiative efforts are focused on Sage-Grouse.

Learn more about CSP and other NRCS Farm Bill programs online at www.or.nrcs.usda.gov or visit the Heppner USDA service center.

You're never too old to try something new



Ernie McCabe arriving at his 90th birthday party riding on the back of son John McCabe's Harley. It was Ernie's first time on a motorcycle. It goes to show, you're never too old to try something new. —Contributed photo

Churches are on a mission with Valentine's dinner

On Valentine's Day, the Hopeful Saints Mission Trippers will be offering a romantic candlelit four-course Italian dinner at the All Saints Parish Hall, complete with live music and three menu options: lasagna (meat or vegetarian), spaghetti, or seafood fettuccine.

There will be two seatings, one at 5 p.m. and a second at 7 p.m. Reservations are required, and may be made by advance ticket

purchase only, at a cost of \$20 per person.

Proceeds from this event will offset the costs of travel to Haiti for the next well-building mission trip, scheduled to occur the first week in November.

More information about the dinner and the Shared Ministry's well-building activities is available by calling the office of Hope Lutheran Church and All Saints Episcopal Church at 541-676-9970.

Local man to present in debate on evolution vs. creation

A debate on the topic "Evolution vs. Creation: Science or Religion?" will be held on Saturday, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m. in Room 200 in the Science Building at Blue Mountain Community College.

Presenting creation will be Dick Temple of Lexington. Temple, a veterinarian, received a B.S. degree in animal science from Oregon State University and an M.S. in veterinary science and a Ph.D. in veterinary medicine from Colorado State University.

Temple states that his sixth-grade teacher told him that the Bible cannot be trusted. He says he quickly realized that if the Bible is the truth from the creator of the universe, then the creator makes the rules. However, he reasoned, if the creator left no message or there is no creator, then he (Temple) could make his own rules.

Due to the seriousness of the consequences of the issue, he started a life-long quest for reliable evidence on the subject. Temple describes himself as a "seeker of truth." Temple states that he does not represent any organization.

Presenting evolution will be Tim Hoffnagle of La Grande, OR. Hoffnagle is a research biologist with B.S. degrees in fisheries resources and wildlife resources from the University of Idaho, an M.S. in biology from Murray State University, and a Ph.D. in biology from the University of North Dakota.

He has worked/studied in Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Kentucky, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington, and Wyoming.

He is the author of 26 peer-reviewed scientific papers, four book chapters, and numerous reports and presentations on topics including paddlefish, commercial fisheries, fish parasites and diseases, Grand Canyon fishes and their habitat, and salmonid physiology, genetics, and management.

Moderator for the event will be former BMCC president John Turner.

The public is invited to attend. Admission is free.

Live stream will be available on the internet at <http://youtu.be/T15BW-d3eXTk>.

Muslim-turned-Christian to speak on Islam

Is Islam a peaceful religion? What is jihad? What does the Quran really say about women, non-Muslims, and peace/war? What is the mindset of Islamic terrorists (ISIS, Al Qaeda, etc.)? Why do they hate Americans, Christians and Jews? Is peace possible?

A presentation at Heppner Christian Church on Feb. 15 from 6-8 p.m. will attempt to answer those questions and more.

Presenter Pastor Mujahid El Masih was formerly in the Pakistani military, a student of Islam, and a self-professed hater of Americans, Christians and Jews. At age 25 he became a Christian. After persecution and death threats, he

escaped to South Africa and then America. He now travels America "educating on the truth of Islam and proclaiming the truth of the Bible and salvation in Jesus Christ." He is an associate representative with The Voice of the Martyrs, a ministry dedicated to supporting persecuted Christians worldwide.

All are invited to come hear his story and learn the truth behind Islam. Aside from the Feb. 15 evening presentation, he also will be speaking during the normal Bible study from 9:30-10:30 a.m. and the worship service from 10:45-12 p.m.

For further information, contact Eric Schonbachler at 541-975-3161.

HUMC this week

There's lots to do on Sunday morning at Heppner United Methodist Church. A free breakfast open to the community will be held from 8 - 10 a.m. Hot cakes, sausage, eggs and beverages are on the menu.

Jean Brazell will lead this week's service with this message: "God Wants Everyone to Know Him." Liturgist Merle Cowett will read from the Isaiah and Corinthians. Hymns will include "Praise to the Lord the Almighty," "Christ for

the World We Sing," "Oh, I Know the Lord's Laid His Hands on Me," and "Sent Forth by God's Blessing," with Carley Drake as accompanist. The choir will perform "On Eagles' Wings."

A fellowship time will be held in the community room following the service.

Service begins at 10:30 a.m. All are welcome. For more information call 541-676-9224 or e-mail heppneroregonmethodists@gmail.com.

First Friday Friends of Jesus this week

The February session of First Friday Friends of Jesus will be held this Friday, Feb. 6, from 8 a.m. to noon at the All Saints parish hall. Community children ages four through 12 are invited for a morning filled with Bible stories, crafts, games, and a free lunch. More information is available by calling the Shared Ministry office at 541-676-9970.

Holly Rebekah card party this Saturday

Holly Rebekah Lodge will host its monthly card party this Saturday, Feb. 7 at the lodge hall in Lexington. Participants will start playing at 7 p.m. The cost is \$5 per person for an evening of fun, friends and food. This event is open to the public.

Morrow County graduation rates far exceed state average

IRRIGON—All three high schools in the Morrow County School District far exceeded the state average for their respective four-year cohort graduation rates, which were released to the public last Friday. Heppner Jr.-Sr. High School led the pack with a 96.3 percent four-year cohort graduation rate—nearly 25 percent higher than the state average.

Riverside Jr.-Sr. High School (Boardman) had an 83.1 percent four-year cohort graduation rate, while Irrigon Jr.-Sr. High School's was 79.03 percent. The district's average was 83.23 percent, while the state average is 71.98 percent.

The four-year cohort graduation rate includes all students who entered high school for the first time in 2010-2011 and earned their regular or modified high school diplomas by the end of August 2014—essentially the rate of the students who earned their diplomas within four years of high school.

"Our parents and students help complete the whole picture of really completing a student's high school education, and the commitment from our students and families in Morrow County is demonstrated by these high graduation rates," said Morrow County School District Superintendent Dirk Dirksen. "In

addition, recognition of the graduation rates goes to the administration and the teachers' efforts and work to give students all of the opportunities to meet the essential skills through multiple means."

The three high schools also far exceeded the state average for economically disadvantaged students. While the state average sits at 64.24 percent, the district average is 81.3 percent, Heppner is 90 percent, Riverside was 82.81 percent and Irrigon was 77.55 percent.

Riverside and Irrigon high schools both have a high percentage of Hispanic/Latino students, and the four-year cohort graduation rates for those students also exceeded the state average of 64.95 percent, with 87.27 percent and 73.08 percent, respectively. Riverside also showed a strong rate for students with disabilities, which had a state average of 51.11 percent. Riverside far exceeded that with a 75 percent rate.

"While we're extremely pleased with these graduation rates, we know we still have work to do," Dirksen said. "We ultimately want 100 percent of our students to graduate."

For more information on high school graduation rates, visit the Oregon Department of Education's website, www.ode.state.or.us.

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

HEPPNER ELKS MEMBERS VALENTINE'S DINNER

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 14TH STARTING AT 6:00PM.

Menu will be Prime Rib, vegetable, potatoes, salad bar, bread and dessert. Also one glass of champagne per person! The cost for dinner will be \$40.00 a couple.

Please call the lodge for reservations Wednesday-Saturday 676-9181 after 4:00 pm.

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