

~ Letters to the Editor ~

# Dodge fundraiser to raise money for local FFA chapters

On Oct. 17 between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., Heppner, Ione and Hermiston FFA chapters will hold a test drive fundraiser at Tom's Country Dodge to raise money for the chapters.

FFA members, alumni, friends and the general public are invited to go to the dealership, located on Highway 395 in Hermiston, and take a test drive in a new Ram truck. For each test drive completed during

the fundraiser, Ram will donate \$20 to local FFA, up to \$2,000. Anyone age 18 or over, with a valid driver's license, may drive and earn a donation.

All test drive participants will also be entered into the 2015 FCA US LLC National Giveaway for a chance to win \$45,000 toward any eligible Chrysler, Jeep®, Dodge, Ram Truck, FIAT, or Alfa Romeo vehicle.

## Calling all Cloverbuds

All Cloverbuds and potential Cloverbuds are invited to a harvest party this Sunday, Oct. 18, at 2:30 p.m. Andrea Nelson will host the party at Black Acre Farm, 71634 Baseline Ln., Lexington. Anyone interested in being a part of Cloverbuds 4-H (kindergarten through third grade) is welcome to come.

Contact Nelson at 541-760-1251 with questions.

# Attendance up at harvest festival despite rainy start

Next year's event slated for Oct. 1, 2016

BOARDMAN—The second annual Morrow County Harvest Festival started as a gloomy day, but as the sun came out, so did more than 800 festival attendees.

The Boardman, Heppner and Irrigon chambers of commerce and the SAGE Center present the annual event, which will return Oct. 1, 2016.

"We were all thrilled with the increase in attendance this year. Our hope is that the Morrow County Harvest Festival will continue to grow and bring in new visitors to the region," said SAGE Center Manager Kalie Davis.

Last year more than



From left, Phoenix Davis, 5, and Ava Davis, 3, pet a miniature horse at the Morrow County Harvest Festival Oct. 3 at the SAGE Center. —Photo Courtesy of the SAGE Center

600 people came to the festival.

Event sponsors included Threemile Canyon Farms, Abengoa, Portland General Electric, ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston and

Cascade Specialties, which all help ensure the event is free and open to the public.

"We heard great feedback from the vendors and everyone had a great time enjoying all of the activities

provided by our sponsors," Davis said.

Heppner Chamber of Commerce director Sheryll Bates said she was pleased to see the vendor area full of people from Morrow County.

She added that most people at the festival purchased unique, hand-crafted products from the local vendors.

"This was our second year and I know it will only get more successful as the word gets out," she said. "I am thankful for the many homemade and home-grown community members in Morrow County who made this so successful."

# BOARDMAN MARIJUANA BAN

—Continued from PAGE ONE  
vides for cities within counties that voted not less than 55 percent on Measure 91 the option of prohibiting the establishment of certain state-registered and state-licensed marijuana businesses.

Cities that adopt an ordinance banning such business would have to opt out of receiving state revenue generated by marijuana

sales. Councilors voted 6-0, with one absent, to read Ordinance 6-2015 into the public record.

The ordinance would ban recreational marijuana producers, recreational marijuana processors, recreational marijuana wholesalers, and recreational marijuana retailers within the city limits.

A public hearing and

the second and final reading of the ordinance will be considered at the next Boardman City Council meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 3, at 7 p.m. at Boardman City Hall.

In other city business, councilors met in executive session for the city manager's annual review. They extended City Manager Karen Pettigrew's contract for another year and ap-

proved a wage increase to \$77,500.00 annually.

Also, the council was introduced to Scott Green. He is the new director for the Boardman Park and Recreation's new recreational center.

He said they hope to break ground for the recreational center in March of next year, with a completion date by April or May of 2017.

# INFANT DIES IN IRRIGON

—Continued from PAGE ONE  
infant to Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston.

Only half an hour after the initial call, at 11:27 a.m., Good Shepherd emergency room staff declared

the child dead.

According to Matlack, preliminary investigation uncovered no obvious signs of foul play in the infant's death. However, MCSO Detective Brian Snyder

was assigned to conduct an investigation.

Following state and county protocols, an autopsy was conducted Tuesday at the Oregon State Medi-

cal Examiner's Office in Clackamas, OR.

Detective Snyder traveled to Clackamas to continue the investigation, which remains ongoing.

**MILES & MILES OF SMILES**

**Our success... It's All About Kids, Employees, & Customers!!**  
Mid Columbia Bus Company provides a family atmosphere for the employees to come to work each day and know they are appreciated.  
**NOW HIRING SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS**  
**Starting Wage \$11.75/Hr.**  
Apply at:  
Mid Columbia Bus Co.  
541-676-5861

**MEDICARE PART D  
OPEN ENROLLMENT  
FREE ASSISTANCE!**

**MORROW COUNTY HEALTH  
DISTRICT IS AGAIN OFFERING FREE  
MEDICARE PART D ASSISTANCE  
DURING OPEN ENROLLMENT.**

<b>HEPPNER</b>	<b>IONE</b>
October 19 <sup>th</sup>	October 21 <sup>st</sup>
October 26 <sup>th</sup>	October 28 <sup>th</sup>

**Please call 541-676-9133 or  
1-800-737-4113 to make an  
appointment.**

**MORROW COUNTY  
HEALTH DISTRICT**  
Excellence in Healthcare

# New fire station or time for a change?

To the editor:

The great thing about living in America is that most of the time we have choices in what we support or don't.

In making the decision we like to know as many of the facts and as much of the history about that subject as possible. I would like to share what I know as fact and a summation of 25 years of being a volunteer with the fire department to help you make the choice.

Why do we have both a city fire department and rural fire district? This was my question to Fire Chief Forrie Burkenbine 25 years ago when I signed up as a volunteer. He explained that we were the city fire dept. However, for a flat \$5,000 a year contract agreement, we provided fire suppression for the then 130 square miles in the fire district surrounding the city. The fire district had a board of elected citizens living outside the city that collected taxes from those being protected. The city had elected council members, a mayor, a city manager and an appointed fire chief. The city also had a tax rate for fire protection.

Thanks to Mr. Bill Sizemore, Oregonians voted in Measure 5 and later Measure 50 in an effort to reduce taxes. While these measures may have benefited the residents of the Willamette Valley, rural Eastern Oregon suffered from what is called "compression." Tax rates being fixed in proportion to the tax base became law. Consequently, while perhaps savings in taxes being paid, those counties that had low tax bases due to less population and value suffered to support essential services—schools, hospitals, ambulance service and fire service, to name a few. So in order to support these services, we as residents had a choice; do without the service or vote in bond measures. The result of "compression" both the city and rural tax rates were frozen at a rate of .79 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value for fire protection.

Currently the city fire department maintains an annual signed contract with the Rural Fire Protection Board for fire response. The fire district pays for about half of the fire operating budget. The Rural Fire Protection District has grown by annexation to over 550 square miles. The emergency responses have steadily increased from an average of around 30 calls in the 1980s to over 230 in 2014. We have Mutual Aide agreements to provide help and resources to our neighboring fire departments and districts—Lexington, Ione RFPD, South Gilliam County RFPD, Boardman RFPD, Echo RFPD, Pilot Rock RFPD and Oregon Department of Forestry. The relationship with the Rural Fire District is a good one and is fair. A joint meeting is held with district board members once a year to discuss and approve the budget and needs.

We have grown from a handful of volunteers in the 1980s to over 20 trained and certified firefighters, we have better equipment and newer apparatus, so what is the need? Why do we need a new fire station? Is it the growth of the fire district?

The answer is the fire department's decision to do the "right thing." Late in the 1990s and early 2000s, OSHA, Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office and the Insurance Services Office established rules and regulations to not only provide safety for the public but, more importantly, safety to the emergency responders. The insurance companies also wanted good fire protection for their customers in order to reduce or maintain insurance costs. In order to obtain a good fire protection rating, the department has to comply with higher levels of training, equipment, apparatus, etc.

We had a choice—not comply and have property owners pay higher insurance premiums to their company. We chose to comply and commit countless hours in certified training and wrote countless grants in order to purchase the necessary equipment.

The City of Heppner supported our decision in 1994 to pass a bond measure to add to existing station and purchase a new fire engine. The rural district did the best they could to update the aging fleet of equipment with newer used apparatus. We evolved to be one of the largest all-volunteer fire departments in the state, even with the limited resources and funding, in order to meet the fire protection standards and provide the best insurance rating for all the citizens in the city and the fire district.

In Bob Kilkenny's letter to the editor, he mentioned we do more than show up to fires and accidents. He was correct. Each volunteer has to maintain 52 hours a year of certified training; this does not include the hundreds of hours a year we respond to emergency calls.

Frankly, we no longer have a facility to both house equipment, apparatus and conduct the required training. We looked at expanding next to the existing station but due to being in the flood zone and proximity to other structures, the cost to do so would have been several millions of dollars. This is a public building and has to comply with ADA, Davis Bacon Act, zoning, flood mitigation and the list goes on.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we do have a choice, or option, in my opinion. The city can discontinue the contract with the Rural Fire District. We can give them back the rural apparatus and equipment for them to house, heat, maintain, fuel, insure, etc. Let them take over the Mutual Aide agreements, place the apparatus where they want. Recruit, equip and train their firefighters and operate solely on their budget. They could then deal directly with OSHA, Oregon State Fire Marshals Office and ISO. Having eliminated that equipment and apparatus, the city fire department would have room to conduct the training and ease the congestion inside the existing building. We could concentrate solely on structural fire and rescue training and operate under our own budget. Frankly and selfishly, I like the idea, and it would make my job much easier and less time-consuming.

If you have an opinion or questions, please call your Rural Fire District Board Members.

Sincerely,

(s) Steve Rhea, Heppner Fire and Rescue Assistant Chief and Training Officer