

Getting to know your exchange students

Umedali Rajabaliev
Age 17, Senior, Ione

Where are you from?

Dushanbe, Tajikistan—the capital city, with a population of nearly 800,000.

Host Family: Mark and Taranna Patton

What do you think of Ione and Morrow County?

“Small town. Smaller than where we live. It’s more fun when you play some sports.”

How has the experience been for you? “It was good. My goal was making friends, sharing cultures. It was also good to try something new like sports—football, basketball, we don’t have these games in my country.”

What was the most difficult thing about this experience? “The language. It was difficult, scary to talk to them. The first few weeks was difficult in class because I didn’t know anyone. The food was different. In America, there is a lot of pork.” (Editor’s note: As a Muslim, Umedali does not eat pork.)

What did you like best? “Spending holidays with my family. It was a new experience. Fishing. I’d been fishing but not like this, in a boat. We caught some really big fish. The best was making new friends, learning about them and their culture. And I hope I can learn more.”

Did you have the chance to attend any special events? What did you think of that experience? “Most of them were American holidays—Halloween, Christmas. It was my first experience with them. I liked it. And celebrating my birthday in America for the first time.”

Anything else? “I am a FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange Program) student. It was the first great goal in my life. It gave me a chance to experience other cultures. I really appreciate the people running this program for giving me the chance. I want to say thank you to my teachers, my friends, my host family—they really gave me a chance to be part of their family.”

Editor’s note: ASSE’s Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program provides youth from the former Soviet Union the opportunity to live and study in the United States.

G-T will be open next Monday

The Heppner Gazette-Times will maintain normal business hours next Mon-

Chamber of Commerce holds annual meeting, elects officers

Cutsforth named 2016 president

The Heppner Chamber of Commerce held its annual meeting last Thursday and elected Heppner City Manager Kim Cutsforth as 2016 president. She will replace outgoing President Les Schwab Manager John Gould.

Pictured right are (L-R) Heppner Principal Matt Combe, First Vice President; Wheatland Insurance owner Nancy Snider, Director; Owner Murray’s Drug Anne Murray, Director; Morrow County Grain Growers Human Resource Director Tawny Miles, Treasurer/Director; Kim Cutsforth, President; and Heppner Les Schwab Manager John Gould, Director. Administering the oath of office is Bank of Eastern Oregon Heppner Branch Manager Tricia Rollins. Not pictured are Bank of Eastern Oregon President and CEO Jeff Bailey, Director, and Heppner Family Food owner Bert Houweling, Director.

In a special award Heppner Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Sheryll Bates recognized Doris Brosnan for her help with chamber projects.

“Doris Brosnan has always been involved in whatever events or activities that I am working on. She serves on several committees and does her part to bring success,” said Bates.

“She helped with the Parade of Lights to make sure everyone was lined up and ready to go. She



Above: Heppner Chamber of Commerce elected officers at its annual meeting recently. (See story for names and titles.) Below: The Heppner High School choir, under the direction of Rick Drake, entertained chamber members at the meeting. -Photos by David Sykes



was a lot of help this year with our Christmas event; she helped to arrange for elves, she helped set up, helped during the event and helped to clean up after the Christmas event.

“I can always count on Doris Brosnan to come to my rescue,” Bates said.

Right: Doris Brosnan (left) received special recognition from chamber executive director Sheryll Bates for her contributions to the chamber’s work. -Photo by David Sykes

City, fire district seal fire hall construction deal

By David Sykes

The City of Heppner and the Heppner Rural Fire Protection District have inked an intergovernmental agreement to guide the upcoming financing and construction of the new \$975,000 fire hall approved by voters in November. Both the city council and fire district board approved the deal at their respective Monday night meetings.

The agreement puts the city in charge of construction and payments during the building process, but requires the city to make

monthly reports to the rural fire district about progress. The new fire hall will be built on land donated by Morrow County Grain Growers on Riverside at the edge of town.

The Bank of Eastern Oregon has been awarded sale of the close to \$1 million in general obligation bonds for construction, with the funds being placed into a new account to be disbursed during construction. As spelled out in the bond issue approved by voters last November, the city is funding 60 percent of the

construction cost and the rural district 40 percent.

Also included with the agreement is the contract spelling out how the city provides protection to residents and property located in the rural fire district. The protection contract is one that has been in place since the 1980s, and previously renewed every five years with sometimes minor changes. As part of the current intergovernmental agreement the protection contract will last

-See HEPPNER CITY COUNCIL/PAGE SIX

Getting to know your exchange students

Pablo Ramos
Age 15, Sophomore, Ione

Where are you from?

Madrid, Spain—the capital of Spain and the third largest city in the European Union, with a metro population of around 6.5 million.

Host Family: Mark and Taranna Patton

What do you think of Ione and Morrow County?

“I thought it would be boring. Now it’s not too boring.”

How has the experience been for you? “Good. The first few weeks were hard. When I need help, they help me. When I need it, they help me to be part of the family.”

What was the most difficult thing about this experience? “The language. You don’t know if you ask well. The schedule—in Spain we eat later than here and go to sleep later.”

What did you like best?

“New experiences, like to go fishing. New food like elk or deer. The people from here are different from the people in Spain, and I like it.”

Did you have the chance to attend any special events? What did you think of that experience? “Halloween. It was my first time having that experience. I went with friends to trick or treat. Christmas—in Spain we don’t put (out) presents before 25th of December. Here they put presents before the 25th.”

Anything else? “I thought it would be harder (than it is) to be one year here. Thank you to all the people who helped me.”

gram directed by Fowler; -See MCS D BOOSTS CTE PROGRAM/PAGE EIGHT

School district announces career and technical programs grant

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board, at its Jan. 11 meeting in Boardman, learned that the district has received a \$390,745 grant for upgrades to the school district’s welding and fabricating facilities and equipment. Project manager/Heppner High School teacher Dave Fowler said that the upgrades were very much needed, since the metal shops at Heppner and Riverside were built in the 1970s with no significant upgrades since and the Irrigon facility was not fully equipped when it was completed.

The funds will purchase electrical and ventilation facility upgrades, computer-controlled plasma cutting, welding and fabricating machinery and virtual welding simulators

for each school, CAD/CAM software, teacher training and curriculum development, and will also support the local chapters of FFA and TSA. He said that the end result will be to build stronger career and technical programs, preparing students for the next steps, such as “Mechatronics” at Blue Mountain Community College, apprenticeships or other post-secondary education.

He said that the grant cycle runs from this January to June of 2017, with bids to be let and scheduling of electrical and ventilation work happening this winter. He said that ordering of equipment and supplies will be ongoing, with professional development occurring this spring and summer.

“Everything should

be up and running fall of 2016,” he said.

Fowler said that the four career and technical education programs of study that utilize the

welding and manufacturing facilities will include the Heppner High School agriculture program, headed up by teacher Beth Dickenson, the manufacturing pro-

WCVEDG plans annual luncheon

Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) will hold its annual luncheon Wednesday, Jan. 27, from noon to 1 p.m. at the Gateway Café in Heppner.

The meal of barbecued ribs, grilled chicken, slow-cooked beans, coleslaw and

corn bread will be hosted by WCVEDG and prepared by Alvin Liu.

Guest speaker Bruce Sorte will provide an update on business retention and expansion projects as selected by the WCVEDG board.

Anyone interested in

attending is asked to RSVP to heppnerchamber@centurytel.net by Friday, Jan. 22.

Anyone who would like to become a member of WCVEDG may contact Sheryll Bates at 541-676-5536 or David Sykes at 541-676-9228.



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