

State audit gives look at county finances

Morrow County fifth highest in income, and sixth highest in property taxes

By David Sykes

Morrow County boasts an above-average income for the state of Oregon, but also a higher-than-average property tax rate, says a recently-released state report on the overall health of Oregon's 36 counties.

According to the report, which is released every two years, residents of Morrow County have an average \$42,033 per-person income, which is

fifth highest in the state and a 30 percent increase from 2009. For comparison, the lowest county income is in Malheur at \$27,661 per person, and the highest is Sherman at \$58,011.

On the other hand, Morrow County residents pay a higher property tax rate than most counties in Oregon. At \$4.13 per thousand dollars of valuation, that compares to a state-wide average of \$2.82

per thousand. Josephine County had the lowest rate at .59 and Sherman had the highest at \$8.71 per thousand.

Also in tax revenue comparisons Morrow County collects \$1,101 on average per year for every person in the county, while the state-wide average is \$300 per person. Once again Josephine is lowest in this category at \$181 and Sherman is highest at \$8,454 in taxes collected per person. This does not mean individuals pay this amount. As the report pointed out "Gilliam and Sherman counties, on average, generated the largest local revenues per capita, which were five times greater than the next highest county. Revenues generated from wind farms, and/or landfill recycling centers contributed to the high averages in these counties," the report stated. The report did not break out how much money was received from wind or other sources in any of the counties.

Issued every two years since 2012 by the Secretary of State, the report's purpose is to show the financial condition of all 36 counties in the state of Oregon. The report looked at 10 indicators of financial health. In addition to those above the following indicators were studied:

Timber revenue: Morrow County has none. The highest in the state is Douglas County with 15.5 percent of its income received from federal timber payments. The lowest measurable amount was Multnomah at .04 percent.

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Merkley to hold town hall in Morrow County

Portland, OR—Sen. Jeff Merkley will stop in Morrow County next week as part of a series of town halls throughout several counties.

The town hall will take place this Sunday, June 26, at 1:30 p.m. at the Lexington Grange Hall, 66296 Marquardt Road, Lexington.

Merkley will update constituents on his work in Washington, DC, answer questions and invite suggestions about how to tackle the challenges facing Oregon and America.

"These town hall meetings are crucial to learning what is most important to Oregonians and how I can most effectively advocate for Oregon's priorities," said Merkley. "I invite all residents of Baker, Union, Wallowa and Morrow Counties to come and discuss what we need to do to strengthen our state and nation."

Since joining the U.S. Senate in 2009, Merkley has held a town hall in each of Oregon's 36 counties every year. Baker, Union, Wallowa and Morrow Counties will be his 282nd-285th town halls as a senator.



Sen. Jeff Merkley

Ione seniors launch into a new life



Ione seniors toss their caps in celebration during the graduation ceremony in Ione. Ione High School recognized its 11 graduates at commencement exercises the evening of June 3. -Contributed photo

Quarterflash to headline at Ione Fourth of July

A full day of fun at Ione's Fourth of July celebration this year will culminate in a headline performance by hit duo Quarterflash at 8:30 p.m.

The popular duo of Marv and Rindy Ross, better known as Quarterflash, is best known for its 1980 chart-topper "Harden My Heart."

While many have heard of that hit single, most people may not be aware that Quarterflash has deep Oregon roots. Rindy and Marv first performed to-

gether in the '70s at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, where they fell in love and got married. While completing their teaching degrees, they began performing in bands, with Rindy playing sax and singing Marv's guitar-driven compositions.

After teaching three years in Central Oregon, they took very early retirements and formed Seafood Mama, a popular dance band that played "every smoky hippy bar between Seattle and Portland" in the late 1970s.

In 1980 they recorded Marv's song, "Harden My Heart," which became their first hit and led to Gefen Records signing them. Over the next decade they released four albums under a new name, Quarterflash, garnering gold and platinum records and tours with Elton John, Linda Ronstadt, and others.

In 1991 they formed Ross Productions to create music for northwest audiences. Their first project was a commission from the state of Oregon to produce a musical based on diaries of immigrants on the Oregon Trail. From that project came The Trail Band and nine CDs of traditional Americana music. A deep interest in Native American music prompted Marv to write his second play, "The Ghosts of Celilo," a Broadway-styled musical featuring Native American music and culture. "Ghosts" was presented in October 2007 by Artists Repertory Theatre at The Portland



Marv and Rindy Ross of Quarterflash

Center for the Performing Arts to rave reviews and 13 sold-out performances.

Recently, Marv and Rindy were awarded Western Oregon University's Alumni Award of Excellence and released a new Quarterflash CD, "Goodbye Uncle Buzz."

While Quarterflash may be the highlight of the evening, there's a schedule full of entertainment during the day and evening July 4 in Ione.

The music kicks off with the Corey Peterson Band at 2:45 p.m. Local talent will take the stage at 4:30 for the talent show, and Iron Butterfly former lead singer Martin Gerschwitz will heat things up at 7 p.m. Gerschwitz is a classically-trained, German-

born keyboard master who performed with German orchestras by the age of 16. In 1968, he discovered rock music, and has since toured the world with legendary rock bands, perfecting his own style utilizing his classical background and rock influence.

All the music is free, thanks in part to funding from the Morrow County Unified Recreation District. Audience members are asked to bring their own chairs or blankets, as no seating is provided in the grass amphitheater.

As if all that isn't enough, there's a full day of activities planned, beginning at 7 a.m. with a 5k fun run and walk, followed by

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Currins qualify to compete at world's largest rodeo

Heppner students Kolby and Jacee Currin have each earned spots on the Oregon state National High School Rodeo team and will be traveling with their teammates to Gillette, WY July 17-23 to compete at the 68th annual National High School Finals Rodeo.

Kolby, an 11th-grade student at Heppner Jr./Sr. High School, qualified in the steer wrestling, cutting and light rifle events. Jacee, a ninth-grade student at HHS, qualified in break-away roping, goat tying and pole bending. Jacee also won the Oregon High School Rodeo Girls Rookie All Around for 2015-2016.

Featuring more than 1,650 contestants from 43 states, five Canadian Provinces and Australia, the NHSFR is the world's largest rodeo. In addition to competing for more than \$200,000 in prizes, NHSFR

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At home on the range



These American kestrels have made themselves at home on the front of the Hardman Community Center. See more HCC news on PAGE THREE. -Contributed photo

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