

Morrow County superintendent evaluates graduation rate

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) recently released high school graduation rates for schools statewide. Students in the Morrow County School District who graduated in the 2016-2017 school year have a four-year cohort rate of 77.84 percent. The four-year cohort rate means students who earned their diplomas within four years of high school. For the three high schools in the Morrow County School District, Boardman, Heppner and Irrigon, there were a total of 194 students in the four-year cohort.

Oregon's statewide graduation rate is 76.65 percent.

Superintendent of Morrow County School District, Dirk Dirksen, provided some calculations regarding the class of 2017 gradu-

ates and those who did not graduate in the four-year timeframe.

Of the 194 four-year cohort students, there were 41 non-graduates in the group. Of those:

-Three students received a GED.

-14 have returned to the school district and are on track to graduate or receive a GED this school year.

-Three students' records were not received from another school district in time to be removed from the MCSD graduation list.

This leaves 21 non-graduates. Based on those facts and figures, Dirksen said, he calculates the district's graduation rate as 89.18 percent. Of those 21:

-Eight of those students moved out of state and the MCSD never received a records request from another

district. In this instance, schools in Oregon must take responsibility for those students not graduating. In other words, those students are counted as non-graduates on the Morrow County School District's rate, although maybe these students did graduate elsewhere.

-This leaves 13 students. Dirksen said that in his opinion, these are the students the district was not able to help graduate in four years, which is still too many students.

Considering those figures, 89.17 percent of the students in the 2016-17 school year either graduated, received a GED, re-enrolled or transferred to another school. "We are always striving for a 100 percent graduation rate, but 89 percent is certainly

not the 77.84 percent that the state has us report," Dirksen said.

In nationwide graduation rates, Oregon usually ranks at the very bottom or close to it. Dirksen believes that comparisons between Oregon and other states are not always accurate - the way rates are calculated and reported vary greatly by state and may not be comparing the same things. "I truly believe that what I have depicted about MCSD is a sample of what happens across the state of Oregon regarding graduation rates. When looked at carefully and individually by district, our graduation rates are not the last in the nation, but our state report makes it look like we are," Dirksen said.

Dirksen said that as long as there is one student

that his district can support in receiving a diploma or a GED, they will. "My belief is that if a student needs more time to accomplish the task, and they are able to receive their diploma or GED in five or six years, the state should report that and recognize that as the responsibility of the district."

Morrow County School District's completion rate over the last 3 years, which includes diplomas and GEDs earned, has averaged 84.73 percent.

Graduation rates for each district high school are Heppner Jr.-Sr. High School, 88 percent; Irrigon Jr.-Sr. High School, 80.26 percent and Riverside Jr.-Sr. High School, 86.08 percent

Superintendent Dirksen reported that he is pleased

with the district's results and continued improvement. "We have put some energy and focus into supporting students towards graduation. We have been monitoring attendance and student progress, communicating and supporting students so they stay on track to graduate. I am pleased and thankful for the relationships, support and dedication our teachers, counselors, administrators and wraparound support staff have displayed toward our students. I am also very appreciative of our students and families as we have all partnered to communicate, stay engaged and support one another so students in the Morrow County School District can be successful in meeting graduation goals," Dirksen said.

Conservation Stewardship Program available

The Conservation Stewardship Program is now available to agricultural producers wanting to enhance current conservation efforts. Through CSP, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps private landowners build their business while implementing conservation practices that help ensure the sustainability of their entire operation.

NRCS plans to enroll up to 10 million acres in CSP in 2018.

The press release indicated that through this program, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and fish and wildlife habi-

tat - all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as precision agriculture applications, on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate and new soil amendments to improve water quality.

Some of the benefits of

CSP include:

- Improved cattle gains per acre;
- Increased crop yields;
- Decreased inputs;
- Wildlife population improvements; and
- Better resilience to weather extremes.

According to the news release, NRCS recently made several updates to the program to help producers

better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources. New methods and software for evaluating applications help producers see up front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds, and allow them to pick practices and enhancements that work for their conservation objectives. These tools also

enable producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.

While applications for CSP are accepted year round, applications must be received by Mar. 2 to be considered for this funding period. For additional information contact the NRCS office at 541-676-5021.

SWCD to hold work session

The Morrow SWCD will hold a work session on Tuesday, Feb. 6 at noon in the Ag Service center conference room to update the long range plan, employee

job descriptions and success planning.

The work session will be followed by a regular monthly meeting at 3 p.m. The meeting agenda

includes minutes of the previous meeting, financial reports, partner reports, staff reports and a surplus property discussion.

The Morrow SWCD meetings are open to the public.

American Sign Language classes offered

Lelia Workman will be conducting American Sign Language classes in Heppner at Sweet Productions Restaurant and Bakery. Classes are free, open to the public and all ages are welcome. Study materials,

which will cost approximately \$15, are at attendees expense.

The current session will start Jan. 30 and classes are offered every Tuesday and Thursday night from 6-7 p.m. for beginners and

every Wednesday night from 6-7 p.m. for level two. Visitors are welcome.

For more information or to register for the classes, contact Jodi Segraves at Sweet Productions or call 541-626-1440.

YOUR Valentine's Day HEADQUARTERS

VALENTINE'S DAY IS WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14TH!! CALL OUR FLORAL DEPT TODAY 541-676-9158

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Sheriff's Report

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office has released the following information:

January 3: Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report on Miller Rd, Boardman that she has been hearing car doors opening and her dog has been barking for the past 15 minutes. RP advises she believes it to be coming from the house across the street which is vacant. Unable to locate.

-MCSO received a report on Hwy 207 Spray, Heppner that there is a dead deer on the side of the road before Willow Creek Rd. Referred to other agency.

-MCSO received a report on Depot Ln, Irrigon that last night someone took out her fence line.

-MCSO received a report on Wagon Wheel Loop, Irrigon that UEC is doing a pump house disconnect and they were told by the new property owner to

stay away as there has been issues there. UEC will be out today to disconnect at about 1 p.m. and requests deputy presence in the area.

-MCSO received a report that Debra Jean Portillo was arrested at UCJ for MCSO warrant. Subject is lodged at UCJ with a bail of \$25,000.

-MCSO received a report at Irrigon Elementary School, SE Wyoming Ave, Irrigon that someone is stalking. Under investigation.

-MCSO received a report at Sergio's Mexican restaurant, E Hwy 730, Irrigon of a found phone. Property was returned.

-MCSO received a report at Irrigon High School on SE Wyoming Ave, Irrigon that a white single cab Doge went to pass her and another vehicle and almost hit the vehicle coming towards them head on. RP advised the vehicle is now

parked at the high school. A very younger gentleman got out and walked inside.

-MCSO received a report on SE Kristen Dr, Irrigon that a 79 year old female is bleeding from sores on her neck. Transported to GSH.

-MCSO received a report that RP found a driver's license in the middle of the street in Heppner.

-MCSO received a report on SE Thirteenth Pl, Irrigon that someone has a gun at the location.

January 4: Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report on W Willow St, Heppner that his son has locked himself in the apartment and the landlord wants him out. Owners were advised they need to go through the eviction process to get him to leave the residence.

-MCSO received a report on Hwy 74, Heppner of a white van on the shoulder

of the road, it has been there awhile. Referred to other agency.

-MCSO received a report on NW Union Ave, Heppner that a deer in the back yard is dead. RP has no way of getting rid of it.

-MCSO received a report on SE Wyoming Ave, Irrigon that there is an assault at the high school.

-MCSO received a report at Heppner Volunteer Fire Department on NW Riverside Ave, Heppner of a driver that may be intoxicated, is all over the road. Jonathan Ceel Vandenberg was given a verbal warning for electronic device.

-MCSO received a report on Columbia Ln, Irrigon that across the street from him there are 3-4 goats being attacked by a Rottweiler and Pit Bull. Referred to other agency.

-MCSO received a report on NW Washington Ave, Irrigon that company that cleans contaminated houses has completed the cleanup and the bank wanted them to advise when it was completed.

-MCSO received a report on Hwy 207 Echo, Lexington that there is a van with flares out changing a tire. Vehicle was gone before deputy arrived on the scene.

-MCSO received a report on SE Utah Ave, Irrigon that a white Geo Metro with blue stripes is speeding.

-MCSO received a report at Heppner Market Fresh on N Main St, Heppner that a dog named Spark Plug is coming into the store. She has attempted to contact the owners and they have not responded. Dog will be transported to owner by a person who is familiar with the animal.

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ADVANTAGE DENTAL CLINICS
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The Advantage Dental Clinic has Re-opened in Heppner!

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The Neighborhood Center strives to end hunger in South Morrow County. Our programs assist the low income with monthly food boxes and emergency rent or utility assistance.



* 797 food boxes were distributed to the low income residents of South Morrow County throughout 2017.
* 20 families received emergency rent and/or utility assistance.
* 26 local families were blessed by community members with gifts from our Christmas "Giving Tree" in December.

The success of these programs was made possible by our amazing team of volunteers who worked a total of 3,579 hours in 2017. Financial donations are always needed and appreciated to ensure this important work continues. Please remember the Neighborhood Center when doing your estate planning.