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WCVEDG gives out community enhancement grants

$60,972 in 14 grants to South County

By David Sykes

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group, WCVEDG, awarded $60,972 in grants to local cities and groups in south Morrow County last week. The grants ranged all the way from $6,000 for a new RV dump station in Ione to $8,618 for work at the little league field in Heppner.

WCVEDG made the grants after receiving the funds from the Columbia River Enterprise Zone, CREZ, earlier this year. WCVEDG advertised that the funds were available and local groups and municipalities submitted requests and proposals for the money. WCVEDG was able to fund all the requests it received.

One particular program funded is a backpack program developed by the Heppner High School Future Farmers of America, FFA. Teacher Beth Dickenson handles the program through her FFA classes to provide students with school supplies and if needed, food. Dickenson said the backpack program started when the FFA had one hog left over at fair last year, which they sold at the auction for $12,000. They then used the money to start providing the packs. The packs originally started out with just school supplies. "If a student doesn't have the supplies they need, how can they learn?" Dickenson said. She added that her FFA students had been raising chickens and hogs and donating the eggs and meat (after proper USDA processing) to the neighborhood center for distribution to those in need in the community. "This was a great learning experience for our kids," she said. "Showing them that they can make a difference in their community."

Sheryll Bates (right) with WCVED presents $5,000 check to FFA Advisor Beth Dickenson for use in a "backpack" program at county schools. The program provides school supplies and lunches for local students. *-Photo by David Sykes*

With the $12,000 they started the backpack program with the school supplies, which are available not just at Heppner schools but all the schools in the county, Ione, Boardman and Irrigon. Dickenson said that in talking to teachers she then learned that some students were not getting a lot to eat on the weekends, when they weren't able to get free and reduced lunches at school, so the FFA is expanding into sending home food with those children in their backpacks over the weekend. "Children can't learn when they are hungry," she emphasized. "And that's not okay." She said they are not just giving the supplies and food out to anyone, but just to those who really need it. "This is a great program and this money will help a lot," she said when accepting the $5,000 grant check from WCVEDG.

WCVEDG is able to give these grants because the money first comes to CREZ by way of payments in lieu of taxes by businesses located in the enterprise zone near Boardman. The zone is set up to offer tax reduction incentives to have new businesses locate there and existing businesses expand there. The enterprise zone has been very successful over the years, allowing the CREZ to grant money throughout the county for schools, public safety, housing and community enhancements. Since 2015 the group has awarded over $170,000 in just community enhancement grants in south Mor-

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Shooting team competes in Texas

Pictured (L-R): Stanley Cutsforth, Heppner, Bill Poor, Texas, Kasey Jones, Heppner and Casey Knorr, Utah. *-Contributed photo.*

Last week Stanley Cutsforth and Kasey Jones, along with two other members of their ELR (Extreme long range) shooting team named Team West ELR, competed in their first World's Longest Shot challenge held at the Valdina Ranch outside of San Antonio, TX. The shoot brought together some of the top ELR shooters in the nation to compete at distances starting at 1,760 yards (one mile) and moved out to 4,900 yards. Each shooter was allowed five shots at each target and their fellow team members were spotting and calling wind to help the shooter get on target.

The first day of the competition, Stanley Cutsforth set a new match and Texas state record by shooting 5-5 at the one-mile target, including the first shot which was cold bore. Kasey Jones went 4-5 at the one-mile, just missing the cold bore shot. At the completion of the shoot Stanley had 2/5 at 2,000 yards, 2/5 at 2,400 yards and Kasey had 2/5 at 2,400 yards.

The shooters battled with 18-mph winds and mirages that made for very poor shooting conditions. Only three of the 30 shooters that competed in the match hit the 2,680-yard target and moved on to try their hand at the two-mile shot. With the poor conditions, none of the shooters were able to make contact at that distance and the competition ended.

According to a spokesperson, Team West did some amazing shooting and walked away with Stanley Cutsforth in 4th place, Kasey Jones in 5th place and other team member out of Utah, Casey Knorr, taking 7th place in the category for above .338 caliber non-factory rifles. You can find the team on Facebook to follow their future matches @TeamWestELR.

Judge and commission candidates speak to Chamber of Commerce

By David Sykes

Two Circuit Court judge candidates and one of the county commissioner candidates came to the Heppner Chamber of Commerce Candidate's Forum and lunch last Thursday to speak to a packed room and answer questions from the public.

Judge candidates Michael Breiling and Robert Collins, both running for Circuit Court Sixth District position one, mostly gave a rundown of their biographies and why they felt most qualified to earn the public's vote.

Judge candidate Robert Collins

Collins is a longtime Pendleton native, having graduated from Pendleton High School and then going on to college before entering law practice with his father and brother, forming Collins and Collins law firm. He said he has a broad background in law in private practice which would make him a good judge. He also cited his extensive volunteer work with numerous charitable and civic organizations.

Judge candidate Michael Breiling

Breiling graduated from Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark College and then went on to serve as a trial lawyer with "thousands of hours in hundreds of trials" for everything from "barking dogs to murder cases" he told the chamber crowd. He said this experience would make him a better judicial candidate than his opponent.

Neither was able to answer many questions from the audience at the Chamber luncheon, as moderator local attorney Bill Kuhn explained that because they may be presiding over certain cases, they do not let their political beliefs be known. As such they did not answer questions about abortion or their stand on sanctuary cities.

Commissioner Don Russell is running for re-election and gave a brief talk on his qualifications for the job, including serving many years on the county planning commission, Port of Morrow and the Boardman Rural Fire Protection District. Russell told the crowd he feels he has done a good job in his first term and would continue to do his best to listen and serve the people of Morrow County if re-elected. His opponent, Raymond Akers, was not in attendance, however, his wife Tanya was there and passed out campaign brochures on his behalf.

Commission candidate Don Russell

Episcopal Bishop makes visit

The Rt. Rev. Patrick Bell, Bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Oregon made his annual visit to Heppner Sunday, where he gave the sermon and then met with parishioners at a potluck afterwards. Pictured above is Rev. Bell with Rev. Katy Anderson, Pastor of All Saints and Hope Lutheran Churches in Heppner.

Perry retires from BEO

By Bobbi Gordon

Joe Perry, 67, will be retiring from Bank of Eastern Oregon on Apr. 30 after serving seven and a half years there. A retirement open house will be held at the bank on Apr. 27 from 1:30 to 4:30.

Perry has worked in the banking business for more than 35 years, stating, "I can honestly say the Bank of Eastern Oregon (BEO) is the best bank I have ever worked for. It has the best management and the best co-workers." He is a commercial loan officer at BEO, processing loans for businesses and farmers. During his years at other banks, he has been a manager but said he has always made loans.

Although he was born in Portland, he only lived there one month and was raised in Pasco, WA. He attended WSU and has his undergraduate degree in economics and a masters in agricultural economics.

Joe Perry

Perry's wife has been deceased for 11 years, but he has four children; a son in New York City, a daughter in Wisconsin, a son in Salt Lake City and a daughter in Camas, WA. He also has 20 grandchildren.

When asked how he feels about retiring, he admitted to having mixed emotions about leaving. He said, "I always felt that people work past their health. I have my health, so should be able to enjoy my retirement."

His retirement plans include visiting family, seeing the country and maybe the world traveling with some of his brothers who live in Pasco, Yakima and Virginia.

Perry indicated one of his retirement goals would be to go on a mission for the LDS church. He stated that the church will send missionaries anywhere in the world if the host country allows it. Younger missionaries are on their missions for a minimum of two years, but older people can go on a mission for six months to two years. He said that missionaries for the LDS church do not get compensated for going on missions, in fact they are required to pay a monthly fee.

He said he plans to continue living in the local area while traveling.