

MCS D graduation rates increase

The Oregon Department of Education recently released the graduation rates for the 2019-20 graduating class and for the third year in a row, Morrow County School District (MCS D) improved its overall graduation rate by more than three percentage points, from 88.02 percent for 2018-19 to 91.62 percent for 2019-20. This is 8.99 percent higher than the state average of 82.63 percent. This is the four-year cohort rate, which means students who earned their regular diplomas within four years of high school. The 2019-20 four-year cohort consists of students who first entered high school in 2016-17. ODE also reported the four-year cohort completion rate, which includes students who earned a standard high school diploma, as well as those who were awarded an extended high school diploma, or GED (General Education Diploma), within the four years being measured. Morrow County's four-year completion rate is 98.2 percent. Dirk Dirksen, school district superintendent, said the district had nine students who earned their

GEDs and are included in that rate.

The four-year rates for each MCS D high school are 93.55 for Irrigon Jr/Sr High, 95.83 for Heppner Jr/Sr High, 58.82 for Morrow Education Center, 96.88 for Riverside Jr/Sr High and 91.62 for the district.

The four-year completion rates are 98.39 for Irrigon Jr/Sr High, 100 for Heppner Jr/Sr High, 88.24 for Morrow Education Center, 100 for Riverside Jr/Sr High and 98.2 for the district.

Superintendent Dirk Dirksen said the graduation rates are great news for Morrow County School District. "Having been a part of MCS D for 40 years, I cannot be prouder of the work it took to reach these graduation rates. This takes tremendous commitment and effort by every staff member, parent and student," Dirksen said.

Morrow County Schools, in partnership with families and communities, provide each student the opportunity to develop values, knowledge, skills and self-confidence to become life-long learners and responsible citizens.

Print & Mailing Services
 *Design *Print *Mail
Sykes Publishing
541-676-9228

NEW MCHD ADMINISTRATOR

-Continued from PAGE ONE

signed a new agreement with Pacific companies to recruit an additional MD for Pioneer Memorial Clinic/Pioneer Memorial Hospital. Dr. Hejmanowski's resignation will take providers out of the Heppner Clinic "on multiple days" to provide emergency coverage at Pioneer Memorial Hospital. He said the district is "currently credentialing an interim doctor from Portland who could do some ER shifts, hopefully by April." "We may have to have the providers who take calls go back to the way it has been in the past; they still keep appointments even though they are on call with the patients being notified that their provider is on ER call which may cause last minute cancellations or changes in appointment times."

Concerning the disagreement prospective provider Emily Jack, MD, had concerning the district's base clinic pay for physicians, Houser reported that he inquired about physician's base pay at Harney, John Day, Enterprise, Blue Mountain and Lake District and determined that the median is \$128.55/hr. for family practice providers without obstetrics, compared to the MCHD physician's wage of \$95.40/hour. "MCHD has been very fortunate to have providers that want to be here," said Houser. "They are committed to this community, county and their

patients and while they get recruitment offers all the time, have chosen to stay here. . ."

Houser recommended that the board move the (physician's) base clinic hourly wage to \$115/hr. for 2021-22 and to \$130/hr. for budget year July 1, 2022-23. No additional money would be added to the provider's clinic hourly rate when the provider covers the ER.

In other business: -board member Andrea Fletcher announced her resignation from the board "with regret," citing family reasons. Her term was set to expire in June of 2021, along with John Murray's term.

-the board learned from Patti Allstott, Human Resources Director, of the following recent hires: Rose Kylo, new receptionist at Pioneer Memorial Clinic to replace Felicia Cavan who transferred to the Irrigon Medical Clinic receptionist position; Taylor Muenchow, PA-C, new medical provider at IMC; Antoinette Teixeira, LCSW, new behavioral health consultant at PMC; Suzanne Hurt, community relations and communications director, Mayte Carillo Gutierrez, new screener/backup receptionist; Rhea Duncan, PMH new purchasing clerk to replace Pennie Miller prior to her retirement in March; and Jennie Ohlde, PMH CNA. Allstott said

The amazing authority of Jesus

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

We have all had teachers, and some of those teachers we remember with great fondness. Some of them had a significant influence for good on us. They inspired us with a love for the subject that they taught. They taught us with confidence and authority. They shared some expertise with us and encouraged us to head off in a direction of our own. In today's Gospel, the people of Capernaum recognize Jesus who had come to their synagogue as a teacher; he taught them with authority. This journey of Jesus to the synagogue where He taught with authority and healed a man with an unclean spirit is the first public act of Jesus in Mark's Gospel. Today's readings reveal the power of speech: When certain people begin to speak, we refuse to take them seriously. Why? Because for us their words carry no authority. When Christ spoke, all open-minded people listened. Why was this? Because He spoke with authority. His words had the ring of truth, and people knew He meant them. Do we listen to the words of Christ? What authority do our words carry?

The Book of Deuteronomy (18: 15-20) reveals the powerful communication of Moses before he ends his trip to the Promised Land. He reminds the people of Israel about the work of God, that He will raise up a prophet from among their own people to lead them to the Promised Land. Moses recalls the words of the Lord, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among your kin and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell all that I command him." Just to show the prophet is actually a mouthpiece of God, Moses concludes his speech with a reminder to the new prophet, that in case he fails to speak in the name of the Lord and for the Lord, he shall surely die.

St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (1Cor 7: 32-35) speaks to getting rid of anxieties. He uses the analogy of the married man and woman, how they are constantly anxious and worried about pleasing their spouses, how they are called to care for and love one another. St Paul urges those who are celibate to give their undivided attention to the Lord.

The Gospel of Mark brings us the idea of how Jesus, unlike the contemporary scribes and Pharisees, teaches with authority. Here we see the prophecy of Moses fulfilled in the teaching of Christ.

The gospel presents Jesus as a teacher of the law in the synagogue. There were so many people in the synagogue, only the man with an unclean spirit first recognizes Jesus. He shouts out, "What do you want with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: The Holy one of God" (1:26). Jesus never could tolerate

evil anywhere around him. He chases the Evil One out immediately from His sight. We, too, are called to do the same, never allow for the Evil One to take possession of our lives and power. It is good to ask, "Am I able to differentiate the evils in me and around me? Do I give the devil his opportunity, or do I chase him out when I recognize his presence anywhere around me?"



Fr. Thankachan Joseph

In chapter 3, we read that He calls His disciples to be with Him, to imbibe the same spirit and power. When He called the first twelve apostles, He called them "to be His companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message, with power to drive out devils" (3:14). He gives this power to all of us at the time of our Christendom. We are cleansed from the origin and called to be heirs of this power. What are we doing with that enormous gift we have received in baptism, the power that we all receive to be the children of God and of the Church?

Jesus could send out the demons with the power of God because He had moral perfection. He is calling every one of us Christians to be persons of moral perfection and uprightness. Do I live a life worthy of my Christian call and am I a good example to my family and the society? What do I do with the power that was given to me at the time of my baptism, is vested in me to cast out demons? The Lord made us all His children in order to be Holy and Upright. We are each called to live as a Holy one of God, consecrated and dedicated, to use the power constantly to chase the evil ones from our surroundings. Jesus calls every one of us Christians to this moral uprightness.

The decisions that we make every day in our lives make a deep impact in every one of us, and Jesus gives to all of us authority to be utilized properly. For us as Christians Jesus remains the ultimate authority. That is why we confess Jesus not just as our teacher but as our Lord. We are happy to submit to His authority, to His lordship, because we recognize that in doing so, we will have life to the fullest and, like the man in the Gospel, be freed of those spirits that prevent us from becoming the person God intends us to be. We need to be with Him constantly to charge our divinity that diminishes day by day. I am reminded of the scripture verse, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you please and you will get it" (Jn. 15:7).

COAL PLANT

-Continued from PAGE TWO

to be used as fuel. In the ash disposal area, they are planning on putting down a geomembrane cap called ClosureTurf. With a geomembrane, drainage layer, and artificial grass on top, this branded product permanently caps the ash area to contain waste, control gas emissions, and manage storm water runoff. There will also be 30 years of groundwater monitoring at the ash site.



An artificial turf product called ClosureTurf will be used to top-off and seal the ash disposal area

In decommissioning, workers have been draining all fluids and oil from equipment, cleaning and washing the plant, cleaning tanks, removing ash from plant systems, removing waste and removing underground storage tanks. Once this is completed the company will dispose of unwanted equipment and infrastructure to sell to scrapers or vendors. The

remaining material will go to a demolition contractor.

Prior to demolition the company will identify asbestos, lead paint and environmentally regulated materials. Then they will "make the plant cold, dark and dry and ready for a demolition contractor to demolish the facility. Demolition will include removing buildings and utilities to two feet below grade, and then do site restoration including revegetate the coal yard, cap the ash disposal area and gravel the power block area. PGE plans to turn the site over for demolition between January 2022 to December 2023.

Costs for decommissioning and demolishing the plant include \$14 million employee costs, \$2 million planning and management, \$2.8 million for the coal yard, \$8.4 million for the ash disposal area, \$2.5 million for decommissioning, \$7.3 million in asset write-off, \$34 million for abatement and demolition and \$3.8 million for long-term site care for a total of \$75 million on the project.



All the equipment in the plant will be decommissioned and either scrapped or demolished.

WHEATLAND
INSURANCE CENTER, INC.

Serving Eastern Oregon since 1983.

HEPPNER
294 MAIN ST.
P.O. BOX 755
HEPPNER, OR 97836
Office (541) 676-9113 • Fax (541) 676-9001
1-800-504-9113

IONE
245 NW MAIN ST., SUITE 100
P.O. BOX 26
IONE, OR 97843
Office (541) 422-7410 • Fax (541) 276-7688
1-800-585-7410

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE?

OUR NEWLY UPDATED WEBSITE MAKES IT EASY TO:

- Submit news
- Submit birth, engagement and wedding announcements
- Send us photos
- Submit letters to the editor
- Place ads
- Start a new subscription

WWW.HEPPNER.NET

Weekly deadline for all news and advertising is Monday at 5pm.
188 W Willow, Heppner • 541-676-9228