

Good News Only

By Doris Brosnan

Is it true that a sure-fire method of clearing a room/business is to announce, "Here comes the 'Good-news-only' lady?" Hm-mmm....

Good news for our schools, economy, and pool of new ideas and enthusiasm is the filling of positions by some of our large employers, and these new employees are moving to the area.

Good news that our new citizens, as well as others, might not realize is that "The Loop" offers free rides to out-of-town medical appointments. By calling 541-676-5667 three to five days before an appointment, anyone, regardless of age, can access this door-to-door service (even Portland and Spokane are not too far away), which is funded with state and federal grants. In the future, trips for other purposes, including groups' jaunts, can be scheduled, depending on availability, but the Covid-19 restrictions preclude such use presently. Social distancing and sanitizing protocols are now in place. More information is available by calling or going online to the link on the Morrow County website.

Speaking of medical, good news comes from Pioneer Memorial Therapy and Rocky Mountain Therapy Services, which have purchased the Hope Lutheran Church building and will soon begin remodeling. Meeting the community's needs for physical, occupational and speech therapies will be more easily met in the new location that is easily twice as large as the present one. Shelley, Reggie and Crystal hope for a late spring or early summer grand opening.

Also, good news for our new residents and others is that at least four "Dogi-Pot" stations are strategically located about town, three parks and near the post office, making cleaning up after your dog pretty easy. As noted on the bags, using these is "The Smart Solution to Dog Pollution," and is certainly good news for pedestrians who regret the need to side-step dog deposits and property owners who wish to be spared dead spots on their lawns.

Is this writer the last to notice the new waste cans on Main Street? Purchased with grant money, these containers have replaced almost all of the circular cement receptacles that had graced the street for several years. Though pleasing to the eye, the shamrock cut-outs in the covers allowed rain and snow into the containers and made getting some refuse into them difficult. Good news that the green highlights in the new, larger containers suggest an Irish connection.

Aimee Turell, a senior at HHS, recently received the good news that she has been accepted at Portland State University. Aimee hopes to eventually teach advanced math, so she plans to major in education and mathematics.

Good news for Jean Daly was that she was able to celebrate her 67th birthday last weekend with daughter, Jennifer, and granddaughter, Mary, in Pendleton. A perfect-weather day while the ladies were enjoying some shopping and having "delicious" lunches al fresco at the Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery.

Expected next week is a new, larger and improved Hometown Taco truck. Good news for owner Amado Juarez and for their huge clientele.

Andrea and Justin Nelson's good news for the area is that Ida Farra's buildings will soon house an Airbnb rental (to be named "Farra's Place"), a source of

new books ("Flood Town Books"), a pottery studio (good place for pottery and painting classes), and a vintage/collectibles business. Several local resource persons and businesses will assist in the preparation of the buildings as the Nelsons look forward to a spring-time availability for the rental and a summer opening of the other businesses.

A disappointing discovery at the Lott's Electric building is that it is unstable, probably because it was originally a shed-type stable for horses owned by overnight traffic in Heppner. Good news that it didn't fall on anyone, and good news that Kim Cutsforth announces that it will be torn down and replaced with a vintage-look building for the originally planned fitness center, and the store-front sign has been preserved, to be mounted and displayed somewhere.

This "Good News Only" column will appear as long as individuals are willing to share because we all appreciate opportunities to smile over someone's good news. Anyone who has something to share is encouraged to email it to dbrosnan123@gmail.com or to call 541-676-5382.

Hoping some good news comes to everyone reading this.

Jan. temps warmer than normal

According to preliminary data received by NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures at Heppner averaged warmer than normal during the month of January.

The average temperature was 39.1 degrees which was 3.9 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 47.0 degrees, which was 3.4 degrees above normal.

-Continued from PAGE ONE

The company currently has 57 stores located in Oregon and is reportedly on the way to building a new store in Irrigon, where it was welcomed with no opposition.

For those planning on attending the February 8 city council meeting, Cutsforth says because of COVID-19 regulations only five people will be allowed into the city hall meeting room to speak. He urged people to attend the meeting via the Zoom computer platform where their comments can be made. "You as a citizen are always welcome to come to any council meeting," Cutsforth said, "but be aware that we are under extreme circumstances in regard to COVID regulations that limit meetings. The meeting will be limited to the council, two or three staff, the press and very few other individuals to maintain social distancing requirements. We do recommend writing, calling, using a spokesperson, and/or using Zoom to participate in helping to avoid a super spreader event or being turned away because of space. We will have the Zoom information available at cityofheppner.org under council meetings," he said.

Dollar General was contacted by the Gazette-Times to confirm they were looking at a Heppner

location, and the company sent a letter published in this week paper outlining their position. Public Relations person Angela Petkovic said the company is currently in a "due diligence phase" for locating a store here, but no commitment has yet been made, and they anticipate having a final decision in late 2021. "Our customers are at the center of all that we do, and meeting customers' needs is Dollar General's top priority when choosing store locations. In selecting store sites, we take a number of factors into consideration, carefully evaluating each potential new store location to ensure we can continue to meet our customers' price, value and selection needs," Dollar General said. Petkovic said the store plans on hiring six to 10 employees and that 75 percent of store managers are promoted from within the organization.

Dollar General headquarters is in Goodlettsville, Tennessee. It was founded in 1939 and in 2019 had revenue of \$27.8 billion. As of January 2020, it had 16,278 stores located in the continental United States. It is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol DG.

Brannon says he praises the City of Heppner

for "not infringing on the right of obtaining business licenses," and added the support he has received on efforts to block the store have been encouraging and he believes a legal avenue is open to stop the store location. "With such a positive amount of support from local businesses and Heppner residents, we have been advised that creating a new Heppner ordinance is a viable solution to prevent a business such as Dollar General from opening in Heppner," Brannon said on Facebook. "Currently, we understand that Dollar General has all legal rights to break ground in Heppner. However, with the support of other communities that have created the same ordinance to prevent a Dollar General Store (Tulsa, OK) we know how to express our concerns by legal means," he wrote.

Brannon also acknowledged there are limited options to block the store since no city approval is needed for the store to break ground, build and locate here. "Thus far, no applications have been submitted to break ground in Heppner for the Dollar General. There would be no means to get approval by the city because the lot is zoned commercial, fully allowing a Dollar General to be built immediately. This being said, actions that have been taken are attempting to purchase the lot, communicate with city officials and providing transparency to our community about the actions taken so far.

"Heppner does need change; we need new and effective change rather than duplicating already established and struggling businesses. Competition is best for the consumer; however, a monopolized business will only have a negative impact on our schools, small businesses and our lifestyle," Brannon said.

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