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Crop duster operates out of Lexington

By Bobbi Gordon

Andrew Kilgore has been operating his aerial application business, or crop dusting as most people call it, for nine years, with the past five seasons flying out of the Lexington airport. Kilgore has been serving the Columbia Basin area for eight years, following in the shoes of past applicators Wayne Seitz, Ron Linn, Lanny West and others.

Kilgore told the Gazette, "Most do not know the average age of aerial applicators (crop dusters) across the US is 70. That may seem odd for a job requiring good eyesight and fast reflexes. The question is, who is going to step in and become the next generation?" Kilgore says he hopes to be one of those pilots.

Kilgore originally lived on his family farm in Echo, later moving with his parents and sister to his grandparents' farm in Condon. Andrew's father, Patrick, owned a ground spraying operation for 20 years, which is where Andrew became interested in spraying. "Aerial spraying is similar in all aspects except for the speed and the 10 feet of altitude," Andrew noted.

He graduated from Condon High School in 2003 and immediately joined the Air Force, where he served as an aircraft structural mechanic. After his honorable discharge, he attended Central Oregon Community College's flight program and learned to fly helicopters. Following several years of training and becoming a flight instructor, in 2012 he went to work for a helicopter spraying company in Minnesota.

In 2013 Andrew returned to Oregon and started his own spray business, K2 Aerial Application. He began his business with helicopters for the first three years, even owning a Huey. Kilgore said, "It was a great machine, but the maintenance costs for helicopters was just not sustainable."

Deciding to take a risk, he switched to fixed wing aircraft, saying, "It wasn't easy and was a bit out of my



Andrew Kilgore stands next to his Thrush 710 crop duster.

comfort zone. With a little bit of training and some luck, I was able to make it work." In the fall of 2020, he was able to purchase a larger Thrush 710, which has more capacity and power. According to Kilgore, those are all good things in the ag aerial spray world. The airplane is powered by a turbo prop Pratt & Whitney PT6-67 engine, capable of 1,300 shaft horsepower. The aircraft has a 700-gallon spray tank and a 54-foot wingspan. It also has a dual cockpit, which allows for transport of mixers from one airport to another.

Although Andrew has been spraying out of the Lexington airport for five seasons now, many residents are not familiar with his plane. "If you have seen a red and white turbine spray plane, that is me," Andrew reported. He said he is beginning to pick up more customers in the area after one of the local ag pilots, Wayne Seitz, retired. "Wayne Seitz kindly took the time to introduce me to some of his long-term customers," Kilgore continued.

Kilgore has been spraying seed potatoes for CSS potato and sprays for several dryland wheat farmers in the area. He also works off the airports in Boardman and Hermiston, serving farmers in those areas. He lives in Echo and his plane lives at the Hermiston airport, where he is currently building a hangar.

Kilgore ended by saying, "People ask me how I got into this job. The first thing I think of is a lot of work, a ton of risk and a

little luck. But mostly, it's a passion for aviation that goes all the way back to being a four-year-old boy

going to air shows with the family and watching the crop dusters spray our farm."

New duplex going up in Ione



A new duplex is being built in the Emert Addition #2 in Ione. The units will be two story with three bedrooms and two baths. Each will have its own garage.

The project is a joint venture between WCVEDG and Grow Ione, which developed the Emert Addition.

WCVEDG is providing the funding and Grow Ione donated the lot. The duplex is similar to the two WCVEDG built in Heppner on Cowin Street. Allstott Construction is general contractor on the project as it was for the Heppner duplexes. A completion date

for the duplex has not yet been announced.

WCVEDG receives the funds to build the duplexes from the Columbia River Enterprise Zone II. The enterprise zone gives money around the county for use, among other things, on housing development



A new duplex is being built in Ione at the Emert Addition #2

projects. The construction is meant to help ease what is seen as a chronic rental housing shortage in the south Morrow County area. WCVEDG serves, and has members on its board of directors, from the three cities in south county, Heppner, Lexington and Ione.

County makes \$6.9 million loan deal for new Irrigon facility financing

By David Sykes

Morrow County has closed a deal for \$6.9 million in financing to pay for its new office facilities now under construction in Irrigon. The Commerce Bank of Portland with its affiliate Zions Bancorporation of Salt Lake will be providing the 15-year loan at 1.79 percent interest.

The loan will be a non-secured promissory note pledging revenue income from the county's general fund for repayment, which means no county property was used as security to obtain the loan. Payment terms are semi-annual.

The new mixed-use office space now being built in Irrigon will house a multitude of county offices and departments including the Justice Court, Planning Department, Sheriff's Office, County Clerk, Surveyor, and Parole and Probation. The county seat is still in Heppner and no offices will be closed there. The new Irrigon facility is just an expansion to service the growing north end of the county.

The building is 12,500 square feet and will also have room for the county commissioners to meet there. The sheriff's office north end offices will all be consolidated in the new building. Also, the Sheriff will have storage for their



Construction has started on the new county office buildings in Irrigon.

marine boat for emergencies on the river. The only other county office in the north end is the health department with an office in Boardman and they will stay there. The rest of the county services will be consolidated in the new building.

When obtaining the financing, the county paid James Shannon of Mersereau Shannon LLP law firm of Portland to handle the details of the loan. Shannon said the county got a good deal on interest rates and "it's a pretty straight forward deal," he told the

commissioners at a February 24 meeting.

Gives fuel contract

In other recent county business, the commissioners approved a fuel bid to supply the county with

-See NEW IRRIGON FACILITY/PAGE FOUR

COVID-19 vaccinations available for 65+

Morrow County Health Department continues its efforts to inform residents of the importance of getting vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccine clinics are now open for appointment to persons 65 and older. Public health will also continue to vaccinate additional age groups, essential workers, and the general population in coherence with the Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) phase requirements.

The Morrow County Health Department is currently administering vaccines by appointment.

Please call 541-676-5649, or email COVIDVaccine@co.morrow.or.us for more information. Public health officials urge all residents interested in being vaccinated to complete an eligibility form online to help the county distribute vaccines in an organized and equitable manner. This form and other important COVID-19 information can be found at www.co.morrow.or.us/publichealth. Those who still need to receive their second COVID-19 vaccine dose, please follow up with the office to verify appointment.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE: MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Heppner High sports events begin Attendance limited by location specific COVID risk factors

Heppner High School will begin season two contests this week, starting with volleyball and cross country on Thursday, March 4. "The ability to be a spectator at these events has completely changed," advised HHS principal Matt Combe. Attendance will be limited by the risk factor of the county where the event is held.

Attendance at home contests while Morrow County is in the moderate risk category will be limited to 150, including participants. "We hope to at least stay at the moderate level and hope to get to low in order to add more parent/family attendance," said Athletic Director Greg Grant. "If we slip into high, it will be participants only." Attendance guidelines are set by the Oregon Health Authority and the governor's office. The OSAA manages the guidelines and is providing guidance to help schools put on events. "We are issuing tickets and

contact tracing for everyone who is allowed into our contests."

Schools have agreed to have limited parent/family in attendance only at their home events in Morrow and Umatilla Counties. At this time- Umatilla County schools cannot have any spectators until they are at the low or moderate risk level. "I know this will be a huge change to our parents and fans as we have the most loyal following of any school," stated Combe. "We are making every effort to have video of each contest made available for free so our fans can see the student's events."

"We are excited to finally get our kids out participating in athletics and for families to see their children participate even if it is on a limited basis." For more information regarding the guidelines please refer to <https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHS-Forms/Served/1e3461.pdf> or www.osaa.org.

Going On Now!

20% off all In Stock Apparel
30% off Select UTV/ATV Winches

Contact Lexington Parts Department

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