

By Doris Brosnan

Thank you, everyone who has contributed to this week's column.

Jim and Monica Swanson are thrilled to report that their grandson, Anson Fairchild of Pendleton, son of Matt and Adrienne, is free of cancer after three and a half years of chemo treatments. When only two-years-old, Anson was diagnosed with a form of leukemia and began years of monthly, sometimes more often, treatments. So, this recent diagnosis for this positive young man with a winning smile was a cause for his family and friends to celebrate and "ring the bell" to announce his news.

Ray Grace reports that he is "healing up very well," and his "rehab is going well."

After surgery in Pendleton and a weekend in the hospital, Ann Murray is home for recovery, although convincing her not to try to go to work on Monday was a challenge.

Maybe it doesn't get much "gooder" than this. Finally, able to relax, Jo-Anne Bursleson did sell her house. Seems to support two old adages - "Third time's a charm." "Better late than never."

A Golden Anniversary congratulations go to Loyal and Betty Burns, who celebrated their 50 years together on March 6, surrounded by their families.

HHS 2018 graduate Wyatt Steagall has reached another step in his career-path goal. As Wyatt is working to complete his journeyman electrician apprenticeship in the BMCC program, he has begun work for Berg Electric in Hanford, WA. Wyatt is also serving in the National Guard with a Redmond unit, as a cavalry scout, not on a horse, his grandmother

Bev reports.

2017 HHS graduate Kane Sweeney will play the part of Jamie in Oregon State University's theatre program's film entitled "Ten Minutes at the Townsend" The scenes were written by current OSU students and include six 10-minute scenes. In Kane's scene, he meets his brother in the Townsend diner in 1987. The event will be streamed on Friday, March 19, at 7:30 p.m., on KBVR YouTube channel and is free to view.

Hunter Nichols's experiences at the NAIANational Indoor Track and Field Championships became better and better each day. Hunter placed 14th in the Thursday prelims for the 1000-meter race; he placed 8th in the semis on Friday, when he earned "All American" status; and on Saturday he placed 5th in the final race.

Last week, Mustangs and Cardinals welcomed busy starts to the newly allowed season for football, volleyball, and cross-country.

The numerous benefits of physical exercise are free to anyone who uses the outdoor-fitness park on Riverside by the pickleball courts. The equipment offers fourteen types of exercises, so a person can choose any that will target specific goals. And since the stations are widely spaced in the fresh air, use can even be a social outing with friends. (Run this by the scientists, as I am only assuming.)

Molly Rhea shares that the Oregon Lions Foundation performed a vision screening at HES last Wednesday, screening "almost 165 kids, K-6th grade in about two hours." She reports that the procedure "was different with

the C-19 rules but went smoothly. The school gets the results, and if a child needs follow-up, the school notifies the parent/guardian." And a Care Team is available for follow-up with a parent, if necessary. Such a helpful yearly commitment by the Lions.

Tomorrow, March 11, Friends Helping Friends will be placing memory shamrocks on a wall in Two Old Hags Pizza, on the tennis-court fence, and on the fence behind the stands at the football field. Although no organized walk/run will be held this year, anyone choosing to walk that route will be able to see many of the 600+ shamrocks, offered since 2010, honoring loved ones who have died. Peggy Fishburne, Patty Matheny, Janelle Ellis, Susan Hisler, and Sandy Matthews continue to serve on the "Friends" committee and recently have been joined by Kathy Dickenson, Kirsten Harrison, Mary Haguewood and Shelley McCabe. This year's donations by the group have gone to Pioneer Memorial Physical Therapy and Willow Creek Terrace Assisted Living.

Although we must wait another year for a "Wee Bit O' Ireland" celebration in Heppner, we can enjoy a reminder of the area's Irish roots thanks to the return of the lighted shamrocks. Yes, some leprechauns have made sure of that. Tate Gentry and Shaun Hisler, representing CBEC, mounted a shamrock on the windmill in Heritage Park; and Tony Doherty, Greg Sweek, Susan Hisler, The Tarnaskys, and Martha Doherty added one to the Tarnaskys' deck and one at the front of the courthouse.

The city's street projects are beginning. Patience

will be rewarded when drivers and pedestrians experience pothole-free use on Gale, Church, Center, Chase, Willow and Jones Streets. Projects will include paving, sidewalks, and curbs. Also, on Main Street, ODOT is planning to revamp the ADA ramps.

Lisa Patton, of the Neighborhood Center, has announced that their services have expanded, so individuals in need of some assistance can ask what is available. Also available at the center are volunteer opportunities.

The Lexington town council shared some good news. They would like to welcome back Janette Eldridge as the town recorder. Janette previously filled that position a couple years ago and agreed to come back.

Recently heard about some job opportunities for qualified individuals. Willow Creek Terrace; Neighborhood Center; School bus drivers (even a sign-up bonus). Contact those entities for information.

I promise to try not to harass anyone for tidbits for this column, except for Kraig Cutsforth at City Hall, so take a few minutes, if you wish, to jot down your good news as an email or call it in. (Just a few ideas: new babies, marriages, anniversaries, new jobs, new businesses, visitors, travels, vacations, adventures, promotions and successes, great pets, children's accomplishments.) Anyone who has a tidbit is invited to email it to dbrosnan123@gmail.com or to call 541-223-1490 (note that this is correct; last week's listing contained a typo).

Hoping some good news comes to everyone reading this.

Dirksen optimistic about extended hours

Morrow County School Superintendent Dirk Dirksen was cautiously optimistic concerning expanding school hours and sports programs after spring break while still adhering to COVID-19 restrictions.

During the district's monthly meeting Monday night via Zoom he said that they were hoping to move secondary education (grades seven-12) to four periods a day. He said that 82 kids are now at home which is "now a manageable number."

He said that the athletics programs were up and running with all COVID-19 regulations in place and the number of fans allowed at the events may double as the district moves from yellow to green (categories laid out by the state). He noted the previous week the district had only three COVID-19 cases and the week before, 19. Dirksen added the district is prepared for COVID-19 testing at the schools.

"We're looking to increase volunteers," he said, however, "We're not looking to have volunteers inside the buildings. We're really limited as to volunteers."

The district has been providing and delivering sack lunches throughout the pandemic, but after spring break it will not be delivering lunches. However, lunches will be available for pickup at the schools.

In other business: -the staff voted, as usual, to commence school next fall before Labor Day, which is Monday, September 6. Nearly 70 percent of district employees fa-

vored the pre-Labor Day start, with school beginning August 30 and ending June 9. Over 30 percent favored the post-Labor Day start, with school beginning September 7 and ending June 16. Winter break for both options is December 21-25.

-Dirksen reported bond meetings will reconvene starting in April with the intent to put funding for district construction and remodels to the voters in May of 2022.

-the board received information from Beth O'Hanlon from InterMountain ESD concerning the district's pension obligation bonds and subsequently passed a resolution concerning the bonds.

-adopted new or revised Administrative Rules on enforcing attendance, compulsory attendance notices and citations, and rescinded previous attendance notices.

-received the following revenue report: \$29,090,427 in revenues; 2021 estimated expenditures of \$29,116,576 for \$26,149 in revenues under expenditures; for a \$3,397,953 beginning fund balance and a \$3,371,804 projected ending fund balance.

-received the following enrollment report for March: A.C. Houghton Elementary, Irrigon-207; Sam Boardman Elementary-336; Heppner Elementary-171; Irrigon Elementary-192; Windy River Elementary, Boardman-256; Heppner Jr./Sr. High-145; Irrigon Jr./Sr. High-365; Riverside Jr./Sr. High School-466; Mor-

row Education Center, Irrigon-123; total-2,261. Most of the schools lost students over last year, however the Morrow Education Center gained 60.

Enrollment by community for March is as follows: Boardman, less 19 for 1,058, compared to 1,077 last year; Heppner, a loss of 11, from 327 last year to 316 this year; Irrigon, a loss of 38, from 802 last year to 764 this year; Morrow Education Center, a gain of 60 students from 63 in 2020 to 123 this year; district totals, a loss of eight from 2,269 last year to 2,261 this year.

-approved the following employment action: resignations/non-renewals-Lindsey Hodges, HES head cook; employment/promotions/transfers-Justin Fennern, HES head cook; extra duty contracts-Cole Ashby, RJSJS junior high assistant boys' basketball coach, Viviana Colin-Tor-

res, RJSJS temporary assistant girls' soccer coach; Alaina Lemmon, HJSJS half-time assistant high school track coach; Yvonne Torres, RJSJS interim head girls' soccer coach; and Hilaree Vanderpas, RJSJS junior high assistant girls' basketball coach.

-approved licensed employment 2020/21 probationary teachers recommended for extension for 2021/22 (Heppner listed only): Tara Proudfoot, HES fifth grade teacher, Mayme Jill Miller, HJSJS/HES counselor, Katelyn Adams, HJSJS special education teacher, Chelsea Matheny, HES K-first grade teacher.

-heard the following announcements: end of third quarter-March 18; spring break-March 22-26; next board meeting, Monday, April 12 at 7 p.m. at Windy River Elementary, Boardman.

From darkness to light

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

We began the Lenten observances with the theme "turn away from sin and turn towards God." During the second week, we reflected mostly on listening to the Lord, to be transformed. On the third Sunday, we were told that Lenten observances are a time to get rid of our bodily passions, worldly pleasures, attachments etc. - we reflected on "destroy and rebuild in Christ as a new being." This fourth Sunday of Lent is always known as the Laetare Sunday, a time for rejoicing. Rejoice in the Lord! We rejoice because we have made it halfway through Lent! John says that when the light of Christ came into the world, some did not welcome it because their deeds were evil, and they were afraid the light would expose them. How do we respond to the light of Christ?

The second book of Chronicles, (36:14-16, 19-23), reflects on the compassion and patience of the Lord God. Because of their sins, God allowed His people to be exiled to Babylon. The last chapter of 2nd Chronicles ends with a note of hope. The kingdom of Judah's last days, which follow the exile to Babylon, and the return to Jerusalem are depicted in the reading. The reason for the exile was that all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all sorts of abominations and polluting the Lord's temple. The Israelites did not obey the prophets, and everything was destroyed. God sent them all into exile in Babylon as servants to the king of the Chaldeans and their sons. God never abandoned them but rather disciplined them for a while to show them their powerlessness without His hand in their lives. If we turn away from the Lord, He will not abandon us. The people of Israel were redeemed by the Persian King Cyrus; similarly, the Lord will never abandon us. At the same time, He will let us go our own way and use that opportunity to discipline us so that we may come to the realization that we, too, are helpless without His Divine Providence. The first reading of the day invites all every believer to realize one's own mistakes and return to the Lord..

In St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (2:4-10), God discloses His immense love and gives us life. He is rich in mercy in spite of our transgressions. When we are dead through our sins by walking in the darkness of worldly ways, He gives us life through Christ. Through His grace, those who believe have been saved. St Paul stresses here that salvation is totally God's gift to us. God loves us very much, and the season of lent is an examination of ourselves to find out how much we love Him in return. These days, science gives meaning and answers to many burning issues and mysteries of the world, but to inherit God and His love, we need the gift of the grace of God and faith in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of the day from St. John (3: 14-21) has two parts. The first is with a prediction: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (3:14). Jesus speaks of how salvation comes through crucifixion; similarly, our fasting and Lenten practices lead us to a new creation in Christ. In the part of the conversation with Nicodemus in today's Gospel, Jesus refers to an incident reported in the Old Testament: When the Israelites grumbled against the Lord during their sojourn in the desert, God sent venomous serpents to punish them for their complaints. The Israelites repented and asked Moses to pray for them. The Lord heard Moses' prayer and instructed him to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. All who had been bitten by a serpent and then looked upon the bronze serpent were cured. By recalling this story, Jesus alludes to the salvation that would be accomplished through his death and Resurrection.

The second part of today's Gospel is a theological reflection, for which the Gospel of John is known, on Jesus's words to Nicodemus. John elaborates on a number of themes that are found in his Gospel: light and darkness, belief and unbelief, good and evil, salvation and condemnation. In John's reflection, we find an observation about human sinfulness. Jesus is the light that has come into the world, but people prefer the darkness. We wish to keep our sins hidden, even from God. The Gospel reflections conclude with these words: "people have preferred darkness to light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everyone who does wrong hates the light and avoids it." This pauses us for a short reflection: whose side are we taking? Do we prefer light or darkness? During this fourth week, the Lord is inviting every one of us to get rid of the works of darkness and live as children of the day. I am reminded of the words of St. Paul's letter to the Romans: "Let us conduct ourselves properly, as people who live in the light of day - no orgies, or drunkenness, no immorality or indecency, no fighting or jealousy" (Rom 13:13).

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\$15,000

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