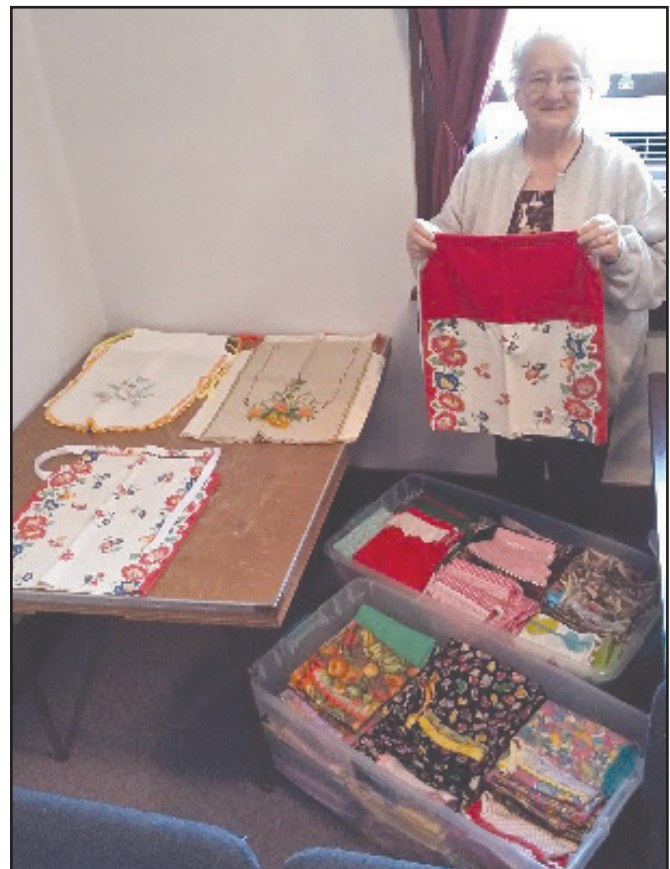


**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR**

the HEPPNER
**GAZETTE
TIMES**

**HAPPY NEW
YEAR**
A LOOK BACK AT
2021

See pages six and seven for a pictorial view of local happenings in 2021.



Lois Connor shows off the simple dresses she makes with double-fold bias tape as the straps. -Contributed photos.



Bull riding fans will get a show on St Pat's Day this year

Gray said the state refused to replace the machine and told them to send it off to be fixed instead.

Purchases new road dept. equipment

In other business at the meeting the commission-

ers approved the purchase of several pieces of road equipment. A 2021 Dynapac asphalt roller, a 2018 Superior rotary broom and a 2020 road widener were authorized for purchase by the public works department.

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VOL. 140 NO. 52 8 Pages Wednesday, December 29, 2021 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Local woman sews dresses for orphans

By Bobbi Gordon

Lois Connor, Heppner, spends her spare time sewing dresses for kids in an orphanage in Africa. Former pastor of the Heppner First Christian Church, Ray DeLoe, usually makes a trip to Africa to deliver the dresses once a year.

She began making the dresses in 2018 when her aunt, Betty Marquardt, asked her if she would like to help out. Betty brought her the dresses she had already cut out along with the pattern and Lois finished them. "Aunt Betty also gave me other stuff to get started," Connor reported. Later a cousin passed away and Connor was able to bring home a lot of the material that she had. The simple dresses she makes are sizes three to eight and take approximately a yard of fabric each.

Connor told the Gazette that so far she has made 815 dresses, with a goal of completing 12 every



Lois Connor

week. When asked when she makes the dresses, she said, "I make dresses all the time."

"I have also purchased some dresser scarves and place mats and made those into dresses," Lois noted. She said most of the material is donated by people at the Heppner First Christian Church, however, she purchases other supplies such as thread, bias tape, etc. herself.

Connor reported that she also made more than 1,000 masks at the beginning of the COVID pan-



Lois Connor makes simple dresses with double-fold bias tape as the straps. -Contributed photos.

demic and gave them to the grocery store in Heppner for their customers. At other times she makes hats for the local grade school kids.

She said she is happy to

receive donations of fabric or other supplies if anyone would like to share. She suggested contacting the church to make arrangements to donate.

Challenge of Champions Bull Riding coming to St. Patrick's Day Celebration

By David Sykes

Bull riding fans will get a special treat this spring when the Challenge of Champions, a major bull riding tour throughout the western United States, brings its show to the Heppner rodeo grounds during the St Patrick's Day Celebration on March 19. The event is being sponsored by the Morrow County Fair, and at their meeting last week county commissioners signed off on the event.

Fair Secretary Ann Jones told the commissioners the bull riding event should draw a good crowd and provide a boost to the local economy. Jones said while the event is not expected to make a lot of money the first year, the fair board liked the idea of bringing in the event during St Patrick's Day weekend and was willing to take a chance on it. She said the cost would be around \$29,000, but there would be activities such as food and entertainment, as well as sponsors to generate an estimated \$15,000 in revenue to help offset the costs. The commissioners voted unanimously to sign a contract with the company.

COVID report

In other business at last week's meeting the commissioners heard a report on COVID-19 activities in the county. Emergency

Manager Paul Gray said as of last week 11 percent of the intensive care units in our region were being used for COVID patients. This compares with 16 percent statewide.

Gray also said there is now a shortage of nurses developing locally and that he was approached by Pioneer Memorial Hospital officials about the shortage. Gray said a request was made to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for assistance in staffing because many of the nurses are leaving to take higher paying jobs as traveling RNs, where they can make up to \$150 an hour, which is more than they make working locally. "We are having issues with our hospital, and they are looking for nurses," he said, adding that the hospital also asked him to make a request for staffing assistance to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay was not pleased with nurses being recruited away. "We have talked about this with OHA because once you start poaching each other's employees, which they have been doing for two years now by paying them more than we can pay them locally, you are not helping," she said. I just throw that out there so the governor

is aware because it is causing a problem, right?" she asked Gray. "Yes," Gray said. He said the hospital made the request so it could be on record asking for the extra nursing staff.

It was also reported that the sixth circuit court has upheld a federal mandate that all employees, including county employees, must now either provide proof of vaccination or get tested weekly. Only 54 percent of county employees have so far provided proof of vaccination, so under the now reinstated federal mandates the county would need to start testing the other 46 percent of unvaccinated employees beginning on February 9. Human Resource Manager Lindsay Grogan said she was surprised with the low rate, saying she expected more of the county's employees to get vaccinated. Grogan also said one employee told her they wouldn't provide vaccination status until they saw a written policy from the county.

Now that the courts have upheld the federal vaccination or test mandate, the county was preparing a memo to send out to employees informing them of the rules. However, last week commissioners were concerned that prior to the February 9 deadline the state could still send out its

own different set of guidelines and upend the whole process. The state can apparently enact stricter rules, but none less restrictive than the feds. "It's a hell of a way to run an operation," Commissioner Don Russell commented in frustration with the process.

But can the county even get the testing kits if needed? Russell related how he saw long lines of people on the news waiting to get tested, and he fears with the mandate "hundreds of thousands" of Oregon workers will now have to get tested, and there will be a shortage of kits. "Where do all the tests come from and the capacity to do the tests? Is the home test a viable option for us?" he asked Gray. Gray said after President Biden recently announced the federal government would send out free tests, it has become impossible to buy them. "I was looking at purchasing them and there was a company who had enough for what we were looking for," he said. "Then Biden said he is going to release 500 million free tests and all those that were available are no longer available," Gray reported. He also said the health district has a mechanical COVID testing machine, with results available in 15 minutes, but it is broken.

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